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Master's Thesis

19th Century Monster Literature

and its Didactic use in the English Second Language classroom

Lektorutdanning i engelsk

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“If we find monsters in our world, it is sometimes because they are really there and sometimes because we have brought them with us.”

- Asma, S. (2009, p. 14).

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Abstract

This thesis aims to answer *what the didactic benefits of using 19th century monster literature to promote the LK20 core values are* by exploring *how 19th century monster literature is relevant to the LK20 core values* and *how we can use 19th century monster literature to promote the LK20 core values*. To explore these research questions, the thesis primarily relies on literary analysis of two 19th century monster literature novels; *Dracula* (1897) by Bram Stoker, and *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818) by Mary Shelley, structured after four chosen core values from the Norwegian LK20 core curriculum; *Human Dignity, Identity and Cultural Diversity, Critical Thinking and Ethical Awareness*, and *Democracy and Participation*. These novels are chosen because of their immense renown and cultural significance, although other novels within the same genre could provide similar educational value and relevance. In order to anchor these literary analyses to the English Second Language (ESL) subject of the Norwegian upper secondary classroom, this thesis also explores monster literature theory, didactic theory, the teaching of literature, and possible classroom implementations. The purpose of this thesis is to map and showcase potential didactic uses and benefits of using 19th century monster literature in the upper secondary Norwegian ESL classroom to promote the Norwegian core curriculum values recently revised through LK20.

Norsk sammendrag

Denne masteroppgaven forsøker å *kartlegge de didaktiske fordelene ved å bruke monsterlitteratur fra det 19. århundre til å promotere LK20s verdigrunnlag* ved å undersøke *hvordan monsterlitteratur fra det 19. århundre er relevant for LK20s kjerneverdier og hvordan vi kan bruke monsterlitteratur fra det 19. århundre til å promotere disse kjerneverdiene*. Oppgaven hviler primært på litterær analyse av to monsterlitteratur-romaner; *Dracula* (1877) av Bram Stoker, og *Frankenstein; eller, Den moderne Prometheus* (1818) av Mary Shelley, strukturert etter fire valgte kjerneverdier fra den norske LK20-læreplanen; *Menneskeverdet, Identitet og kulturelt mangfold, Kritisk tenkning og etisk bevissthet, og Demokrati og medvirkning*. Disse tekstene er valgt på bakgrunn av deres berømmelse og kulturelle omfang, selv om andre bøker innenfor den samme sjangeren kunne hatt lignende pedagogisk verdi og relevanse. For å forankre disse litterære analysene til engelskfaget i det norske videregående klasserom, utforsker denne oppgaven også monsterlitteraturteori, didaktisk teori, litteraturpedagogikk, og potensielle klasseromsimplementeringer. Formålet med masteroppgaven er å kartlegge og fremvise potensielle didaktiske bruksområder og fordeler ved monsterlitteratur fra det 19. århundre i det norske videregående ESL (Engelsk som fremmedspråk)-klasserommet, med formål om å promotere de nylig reviderte kjerneverdiene i den norske utdanningen.

1. Introduction

At the time of writing, LK20 has recently replaced LK06 as the newly revised Norwegian curriculum. With its arrival it brought with it a multitude of fresh possibilities, especially in the realm of teaching literature and interdisciplinarity. Literature has always been a passion of mine, something I expect I share with many others in my chosen profession. Monster literature especially has always captured my interest and piqued my curiosity. It is therefore perhaps not surprising that the chosen subject for my master thesis ended up being the incorporation of monster literature in the Norwegian upper secondary ESL classroom. My excitement in exploring this area is furthered by the new Norwegian curriculum (LK20) and the doors it opened regarding creative teaching strategies and new ways of exploring subject matter.

1.1 Thesis aim and research questions

As the title suggests, the purpose of this thesis is to explore the didactic benefits of 19th century monster literature in the English Second Language (henceforth ESL) Norwegian classroom. In that regard the core curriculum and especially the core values presented by the recent Norwegian curriculum revision (LK20), implemented in the schoolyear 2020/21, are especially interesting points of exploration.

To achieve this, I have chosen to focus on two well-known examples of 19th century monster literature; *Frankenstein* (1818) by Mary Shelley, and *Dracula* (1897) by Bram Stoker. My reason for selecting these two works in particular is their solidified footing in pop culture and their incredible recognizability. For pupils working with literary texts their familiarity with the subject matter could prove a valuable asset in the classroom. In addition, these novels, perhaps more so than their contemporary literature, shift their focus away from physical monstrosity into the realm of psychological Othering and discourse centering on identity and culture. These themes, as I will discuss later in my thesis, are of particular importance to the LK20 core values. Although I perceive all monster literature to have a place in the Norwegian ESL classroom, it is my belief that these two 19th century novels are particularly well suited.

The overarching research question of my thesis is:

What are the didactic benefits of using 19th century monster literature to promote the LK20 core values?

In order to explore this thesis aim, I will address the following sub-questions:

How is 19th century monster literature relevant to the LK20 core values?

How can we use 19th century monster literature to promote the LK20 core values?

Monster literature is riddled with themes and questions regarding culture, identity, society, humanity and inclusion, or exclusion. As Alexa Wright (2013) writes, the transgression of monsters “is a creative force that challenges established laws, limits and social structures and compels them to respond to modifications in human understanding, values and belief systems” (p. 17). As these themes coincide almost perfectly with many core values of the current curriculum, I wish to explore the potential benefits of utilizing and implementing this type of literature.

1.2 Methodology

For this thesis, I have chosen an approach relying primarily on document analyses of monster literature and the LK20 Norwegian curriculum, as well as theory pertaining to monster literature and pedagogy relevant to the teaching of literature. As there are not yet many academic texts written about LK20, my own document analysis will form the foundation of chapter 3, where I discuss and interpret LK20 more in-depth. There is, however, a multitude of academic texts centered around teaching monster literature and how to work with monster literature in the classroom. My thesis rests largely on my literary analyses of popular monster literature in chapter 4, which are informed and structured by the themes explored in chapter 3. Such an approach will necessarily be restricting on literary analysis, as there are aspects of the novels the discussion only briefly touches on and others it ignores altogether, such as the novels’ contemporary religious and social issues and the genre of the gothic. My theoretical chapters on monster literature and didactics form the structure necessary to anchor my thesis to my research questions and make these possible to answer. The suggested teaching approaches in chapter 5 are included in order to bring the theoretical focus of the thesis into the classroom and show potential practical approaches. As this thesis draws on insights from

several areas, an overview of previous research, or a literature review, has not been provided. Previous research is instead introduced at relevant places in their specified chapters.

1.3 Relevance

I believe my thesis to hold educational, societal and practical relevance for my educational program. As the main focus of my thesis is English literature, the topic is highly relevant to the English subject, while the theoretical framework anchors my thesis in pedagogy and didactics as well. I have chosen my thesis aim primarily due to literature's high status and importance in the Norwegian ESL classroom, and LK20's relatively new reformation of the Norwegian curricula. While literature teaching has a long and established tradition within the ESL classroom, its relevance in accordance to LK20 is less explored (at least at the time of writing). As *literature* is too broad a topic to satisfactory cover in the confines of a master thesis, 19th century monster literature narrows this down sufficiently, and allows my thesis to focus on a genre I believe to be highly relevant to the core values within the curricula. Finally, my thesis' practical relevance comes in the form of practical suggestions for implementation in the classroom, attempting to form an applicable usage of 19th century monster literature in the Norwegian ESL classroom.

1.4 Outline of thesis

In chapter 1, I present the purpose of my thesis; its thesis aim, research questions, relevance and methodology. In chapter 2, I discuss the theory of monster literature in order to provide a background necessary for understanding the rest of my thesis, as well as an understanding of what monster literature is, and its central themes and ideas. In chapter 3, I explore LK20's competence aims and core values to identify which parts of the curricula are especially relevant to monster literature, and to establish which core values will form the focus of my literary analyses presented in chapter 4. Chapters 2 and 3 therefore form the theoretical framework necessary to understand my later analyses. In chapter 4, I analyze my two chosen works of literature; *Dracula* (1897) by Bram Stoker, and *Frankenstein* (1818) by Mary Shelley, by discussing the themes in both novels most relevant to the LK20 core values.

Chapter 5 aims to utilize the previous theoretical framework of chapters 2 and 3, and the examples provided in chapter 4, to form suggestions for practical implementations of monster literature into the Norwegian ESL classroom. Chapter 6 contains my final concluding remarks.

2. Monster Literature

This chapter aims to exemplify and define the monster literature genre in order to form a common understanding of its relevance pertaining to later chapters. Primarily this chapter aims to explore central themes in monster literature with the purpose of exploring their relevance to the core curriculum values examined in chapter 3, and to provide the theoretical framework necessary for an academic anchoring of chapter 4. In so doing, this chapter explores the objective of monster literature by examining crucial themes, purpose and motivations.

Monsters are ubiquitous and ever-lasting. They have existed in every culture, and continue to haunt the human psyche in the age of technology and information – seemingly far removed from the cave-dwelling human huddling around a fire, imagining strange beasts in the dark. Something about monsters fascinates us so intensely, despite our simultaneous repulsion and rejection of them, that we immortalize them and keep returning to them. As literary devices they are especially fascinating not necessarily for their attributes, but for what they represent and symbolize in text.

The word *monster* likely originates from the Latin words *monstrum* (portent; omen), *monēre* (to warn), and *monstrare* (to demonstrate). (Oxford English Dictionary, (n.d.) / University of Cambridge, 2015). At their core, then, monsters are created as an indicator of cultural and/or social disturbance. J. J. Cohen (1996) describes literary monsters as “a fixation that is born of the twin desire to name that which is difficult to apprehend and to domesticate (and therefore disempower) that which threatens” (preface, viii). Monster literature then, can be seen as an attempt to bring to light, understand and make natural that which is foreign to us, or that which is too complex to easily grasp. In this way, literary monsters exist to expose or unveil elements within our culture or society that requires attention.

Monsters take many forms, the most significant of which being their role as social, cultural and political disruptors. In the land of fiction, it is the monster’s purpose to ask questions and demand answers. In the words of one of the most famous literary monsters of all time: “Remember that I am thy creature” (Shelley, 1818, p. 83). The monster unveils inherent flaws with the society that has created it and forces us to reevaluate our ingrained and long-standing assumptions.

2.1 The Purpose of Monster Literature

The literary monster is a threatening one, not because it poses a danger to life and limb, but because it threatens to unravel and destroy our preconceived notions of society, culture and identity. The literary monster forces us to re-examine our beliefs about what it is to be human, and question our familiar, and thereby safe, preconceptions. Human society, culture and indeed existence, is dependent on a set of categorizations and systematic order which the monster threatens to reveal as arbitrary limitations. In the words of J. J. Cohen (1996):

These monsters ask us how we perceive the world, and how we have misrepresented what we have attempted to place. They ask us to reevaluate our cultural assumptions about race, gender, sexuality, our perception of difference, our tolerance toward its expression (p. 20).

In a world without underlying biases, subconscious prejudices or social challenges, the very nature and purpose of monster literature might very well be lost.

2.1.1 Social and cultural disarray

The monster, then, serves to visualize social and cultural disarray. It does not *bring* existential crises, rather it simply holds these issues to the light, forcing us to confront them. In Oscar Wilde's foreword to *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890) he famously writes: "The nineteenth century dislike of realism is the rage of Caliban seeing his own face in a glass" (preface, v). Caliban, the half-monster (and importantly half-human) from Shakespeare's final play *The Tempest* (1611) is as reluctant to face his own monstrousness as we are to face ours; it is in fact during moments verging on true self-reflection that Caliban becomes increasingly monstrous. Monster literature holds up the symbolic mirror whether we wish to gaze at it or not, its purpose being to teach, lecture or indeed *warn* (*monēre*). Through monster literature we take a closer look at well-established markers of our social and cultural identity, and question the validity of their existence. It creates an uncomfortable, but ultimately necessary, social and cultural introspection, and threatens to upend established "truths".

2.1.2 Opening up discourse

Monster literature does not attempt simply to criticize society, but to open up discourse for social and cultural identity, as well as social and cultural issues. Where the monster points to flaws in our understanding and construction of the world, so too does it demand explanation and betterment. It typically does not beg absolution; the monster is aware of its own monstrousness, but asks us nevertheless *why* it is considered monstrous, and *how* it has become so.

As representative manifestations of societal shortcomings or limitations, we are ultimately responsible for the creation of the monster and its perceived monstrousness. By raising questions about what constitutes humanity, how valid categorical limitations are, and why we feel threatened by that which is Othered, they welcome interesting discourse highly relevant to the Norwegian ESL classroom, as I will further illustrate in chapters 4 and 5. This in turn results in discourse about inclusivity and exclusivity, where we draw the line for acceptance, and why.

In rejecting the monster, we must first justify its rejection, which is made difficult when the novels familiarize and make known the monster's intentions. Nowhere has this become more apparent than in Shelley's *Frankenstein*, where the monster devoid of society, class or even *name*, all markers of identity and social belonging, is still made relatable enough to beget sympathy from the reader. By revealing the humanity within the monstrous, or going further to reveal that humanity *is* monstrous, and that the human / monster dichotomy is not only false, but misleading and entirely arbitrary, monster literature aims to open up socio-cultural discourse by revealing our fallacies and guiding us to new ways of thinking.

2.1.3 Familiarizing the Other

Monsters could not categorically be labeled monsters without an element of the Other. Monsters exists as a counterweight to the normal, as a separate entity from what we perceive as human. It is possible to define monsters as a mirror in which we clarify who we are as humans by pinpointing what we are *not* (or do not wish to be). It can be easy to read the monster, then, as a natural exclusion from society, something never to be accepted as part of humanity. The underlying fear in engaging with the monster, however, stems often not from

a fear of bodily harm, but from a fear of contamination or corruption. Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) explores this topic by showing Mina, Jonathan Harker's fiancée, wrestling with her attraction toward Dracula and the vampiric forces she has been exposed to. J. J. Cohen (1996) argues that parallel to our fear of the monster lives an equal attraction toward monsters. Its monstrous shape and nature let the monster explore past the borders of appropriate human behavior, letting it freely indulge in all things taboo. "We distrust and loathe the monster at the same time we envy its freedom, and perhaps its sublime despair" (p. 17). By linking the monster to human desire in this way we reveal that the difference between *human* and *monster* might not be a difference in nature, but rather a difference in restraint and limitation. In 19th century monster literature especially, this overstep often represents things we today no longer consider taboo to the same extent, such as divergent sexualities or gender, racial backgrounds, cultural minorities and class divides. One could argue then, that exposure to the monstrous normalizes the monstrous, and threatens to expose the arbitrary nature of Othering it. Kritzman (1996) rejects any deviation from the normative as anything other than a symptom of our own ignorance about the world, and asserts that "if time and spatial proximity make strangeness familiar, it is because strangeness is but a "symptom" of our own inexperience before the threatening diversity of the world" (p. 173). What is *different* is but a reflection of what we have yet to learn about. In Kritzman's view, there is nothing that can be considered opposite to nature, and what one considers *normal* is simply a culmination of what is familiar and known. By revealing this falsely dichotomic relationship between normal and Other, between integral and external, monsters vehemently reject societal and cultural exclusion on the basis that they are in fact not inherently different as much as they are *yet to be known*. Uebel (1996) proposes that the monster's purpose is to "expose classificatory boundaries as fragile by always threatening to dissolve the border between other and same, nature and culture, exteriority and interiority" (p. 266). Many of the same Othering tactics have historically been targeted toward minorities and "undesired" groups of people in the real world, such as LGBTQ+ or dark-skinned peoples, and it is through exposure and enlightenment alone that we come to understand these groups as non-threatening, and indeed as natural and equal.

2.1.4 Breaking borders

J. J. Cohen devotes three entire theses to the border-dwelling monster in his *Seven Theses* (1996), claiming among other things that "the monster dwells at the gates of difference," and

further that “the monster is difference made flesh, come to dwell among us” (p. 7). Cohen explains in great detail how monster literature has historically been used as a tool for Othering not just the literary monster, but the real-life minorities they often tend to represent (p. 7 – 11). Persons of different cultural and/or social backgrounds are vilified or belittled as wild savages or devil worshipers, among other derogatory titles. Nowhere is this perhaps as clear as in Lovecraftian horror, where indigenous peoples are presented as part of the eerie and uneasy horror atmosphere. In *The Call of Cthulhu* (1926/2008) for example, Lovecraft describes an encounter with a voodoo cult in New Orleans, where the members of the cult are “men of a very low, mixed-blooded, and mentally aberrant type” (p. 213) seen speaking in tongues. Similar notes are made of the peoples of New Zealand and “degenerate Eskimos” (p. 210). Such observations are abhorrently ethnocentric in nature, and served at the time as a justification for Western superiority and the ill-treatment of other cultures through monstrification of certain races.

Despite the original intent of invalidating other cultures, history has revealed these cultural differences, frightening as they appeared at the time, rather as simply variations on life. Once we accept cultural relativism as a superior evaluation of other cultures and societies, these monsters fall short of their mark as objects of terror. As J. J. Cohen writes; “[b]y revealing that difference is arbitrary and potentially free-floating, mutable rather than essential, the monster threatens to destroy not just individual members of a society, but the very cultural apparatus through which individuality is constituted and allowed” (p. 12). In other words, the monster’s perceived harmlessness holds deeper implications for established society than the fear-mongering monster of difference and Otherness once did. In this sense the literary monster can be seen not as a shameful parody of Othered peoples, but as a champion of the Othered, roaring to have its voice be heard, and destroying preconceived notions in its path. Once the monster is sufficiently understood, it holds the potential to reconstruct our entire understanding of our individuality and our very identity. “Monsters call for change, but they also reveal fear of changes to the existing order of things, and perhaps most fundamentally a fear of the possibility that we might not be who we think we are” (Wright, 2013, p. 166).

2.1.5 Introspection

Finally, monster literature aims to force introspection, holding the society that created it, as well as the reader (as part of that society), accountable for its monstrous creation. “They ask us why we have created them” (Cohen, 1996, p. 20). As previously discussed, the greatest danger of the literary monster is forcing us to reevaluate the frames and categories we use to define ourselves within a society. Once that framework is questioned, it can potentially create a domino effect of massive introspection and paradigm shifts. If one or several ingrained preconceptions are revealed to be false or severely lacking, it leads one to further question other preconceptions and taught behaviors. Such realizations are valuable stepping stones to free individual thinking. As monsters can be created by external forces, it stands to reason that the humane can also become *inhumane*, given unfortunate circumstances. The fear of the monster stems in some part from fear of *becoming* the monster ourselves. Asma (2009) explains that “we wonder what we would do if someone held a gun to our head and told us to cut someone else’s throat. [...] If we were in that situation, would we become monsters? Or does such a heinous action require freewill agency in order to qualify the perpetrator as monstrous?” (p. 7). The question then becomes not if we are capable of monstrous acts, but in what circumstances we can be held accountable for these monstrous acts – how much agency we can lose before the monstrous seems an acceptable route. The difficulty, of course, is in knowing the monster’s motivations from an outside perspective. Literature often plays a vital role in this regard, by providing inside information through its narrative exploring the monster’s perspective. A monster’s behavior can still not be ascribed to outside forces entirely. As Asma (2009) goes on to explain, “monsters may be harassing us from the external world, but now we must recognize that our own desires and emotions are harassing us from inside as well” (p. 58). A human not in control of their own tremulous emotions may be capable of acts equally monstrous. This is perhaps one of the major themes of *Frankenstein*, as the reader explores and questions who is truly the more monstrous character; Victor Frankenstein, or his creature.

2.2 Deconstruction of binary thinking

Monsters become monstrous precisely because of their inability to *fit in* or be easily categorized – they are at once part of no category, and simultaneously crossing boundaries and forming unlawful hybridizations of multiple categories. Frankenstein’s creature is not monstrous because he does not belong to a category, but because he represents a *collection* of categories, as with the ancient griffin or mantichore. As chapter 2.1 illustrated, this transgression is both the origin and the purpose of monsters, but their existence is not solely given purpose by being categorically divergent, they must also deconstruct these same categories as fundamental fallacies. In his exploration of the premises of modern rationalism ‘*We have never been modern*’, Bruno Latour (1991/1993) supposes that this modern hyperfixation on constructed categories is not only a social fiction or invention, but also an incomprehensible impossibility when scrutinized – no element of our world, whether natural or social (or indeed both), can be neatly contained in their intended boxes, everything is always at play through innumerable connections and ‘networks’. Although Latour concerns himself with social ‘monsters’ (mainly through the hybridization of nature and society/culture, instead of the fictional monstrosities examined in this thesis), our fictional monsters serve as mere representations of the socio-cultural monstrosities which Latour attempts to expose – I pose that they are one and the same. In a hypocritical twist of irony, Latour suggests that it is actually “the work of purification” – the modern man’s obsession with categorical control – which “accounts for the proliferation of hybrids” (p. 14). In other words, our need to deny or expel hybrids, or monsters, is exactly what causes the very births of these hybrids. In a world without categories to which we attempt to sort everything, there would be no such thing as a monster, because everything would simply exist and be accepted in its actual state, and *nothing* would be categorically pure. Without the false and rigid understanding of how things ought to be, the outliers of these limitations would be considered as natural as the norm. We see this with how the current youth is becoming increasingly averse to rigid gender roles and ideas about sexuality, race, class, etc., and how this causes deviance from traditional gender and sexuality to lose its implicit monstrosity. Those who would defend a strict purification of categories are exactly those who ultimately create the monsters which they so ardently abhor. In Latour’s words: “To put it crudely: those who think the most about hybrids circumscribe them as much as possible, whereas those who choose to ignore them by insulating them from any dangerous consequences develop them to the utmost” (p. 41).

If monsters are therefore only monstrous because we have no other label – the category ‘monster’ substituting for a more legitimate categorization – the removal of labels altogether acts to expose the monster (either the fictional kind, or the socio-cultural monster they represent) as more natural than at first assumed. Only at this point will our monsters be satisfied, and finally vanquished. As I mention briefly several times throughout this thesis, monsters are terrifying ultimately because they expose the blurred lines between ‘human’ and ‘inhuman’, ‘normal’ and ‘unnatural’, or perhaps most frightening of all ‘us’ and ‘them’. The monsters themselves do not blur these lines, they simply point them out – the lines themselves have always been blurry, or more likely even nonexistent in the first place. With this revelation, our monsters aim to debunk such false dichotomies and challenge the inefficiencies of binary thinking. In a classroom setting, and with young pupils, monster literature thus becomes an asset and an aid in the deconstruction of binary or dichotomous thinking, training the pupil to see the intricate nuisances of which the world is effectively built up of, instead of limiting their intellectual scope to strict, learned, predetermined and misleading categorizations. In this way the monster literature invaluablely trains both a critical, as well as an open, mind – critical to institutionalized and pretensive limitations, whilst open to the unlimited possibilities of endless connections and natural hybridizations.

2.3 Summary

The literary monster is above all a cultural monster, born of the society it haunts. The monster is awoken in times of cultural or social crisis to illustrate or warn (*monēre*) of these structural flaws. In other words, the monster’s purpose is to visualize difficulties within the society or culture that gave it life. Because the monster is representative of socio-cultural tensions, monster literature is ideal for discourse about these selfsame issues.

Despite being brought forth by humanity’s own weaknesses, or perhaps because of it, the monster is perpetually Othered and shunned as an unacceptable and unnatural part of the society it inhabits. Monsters, however, are often considered monstrous because of their sexual, cultural, physical or other deviances that on a further glance are revealed to be arbitrary or unimportant, especially to the modern audience. By confronting this fear of the Other we also open up discourse around inclusivity and the role of the literary monster – we must ask ourselves why we consider the monster monstrous, and whether or not that categorization

speaks more of our own insecurities and ignorance than the supposedly *wrong* nature of the monster.

In questioning our own social and cultural background, we must also question our own identities and where it belongs in this socio-cultural reality. Monster literature forces a form of intense introspection that is perhaps uncomfortable, but nevertheless vital in nurturing independent thought. This quality is an important aspect of monster literature, and more importantly an invaluable part of the Norwegian classroom.

Monsters also work to expose the fallacies of limited dichotomous thinking, and in doing so open up a world of nuance that forces a rethinking of preconceived ideas and (until now) unquestioned teachings, in which we can deconstruct binary thinking and examine the intricate connections between all things. Because nothing can be considered contrary to, or outside of, nature (as all things are equally an irremovable part of nature, and derived from nature), monsters serve to question how their hybridization can even be considered an unnatural transgression.

Many of the common themes found in monster literature invoke values of the Norwegian core curriculum (as further discussed in the next chapter). The strong correlation to critical aspects of the Norwegian curriculum makes monster literature an excellent guide for navigating central topics of the Norwegian education. Through my literary analyses in chapter 4, I hope to exemplify this monster theory, and link it more closely to the core values discussed in chapter 3, so that I may come back to this theory on monsters through my didactic exploration of my chosen literary monsters in chapter 5.

3. LK20 – The New Norwegian Curriculum

LK20 is the current Norwegian curriculum, outlining educational competence aims, curricula, core values and core skills related to the primary Norwegian educational system, years 1 through 13. It was implemented in the school year 2020/21, revising the longstanding LK06 and reevaluating what constitutes quality learning. LK20 in many ways completely reworked how teachers approach a subject, especially when it comes to the more flexible subjects such as English. With the new Norwegian curriculum, new teaching possibilities opened up through revised competence aims and core elements, and a greater focus on interdisciplinary topics and in-depth learning, especially with regards to teaching literature. This chapter aims to explore the parts of LK20 most relevant to monster literature, and to identify the most important core curriculum values for later use in my literary analyses (chapter 4). To achieve this goal, this chapter will first examine the core curriculum values of the Norwegian education most relevant to monster literature, before exploring the relevant competence aims of the English subject plan, and finally discussing the didactic and pedagogic theory of teaching literature. Chapter 5 will later connect the theory from this chapter to the idea of critical literacy.

3.1 Core Curriculum Values

The Norwegian core curriculum was updated with the arrival of LK20, and outlines the key skills and values that pupils should develop through their primary education. Most importantly, it outlines six core values of education; human dignity, identity and cultural diversity, critical thinking and ethical awareness, the joy of creating, engagement and the urge to explore, respect for nature and environmental awareness, and democracy and participation (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017). Out of these six, four core values can be especially linked to monster literature:

3.1.1 Human dignity

The Norwegian core curriculum says about human dignity: “The objectives clause is based on the inviolability of human dignity and that all people are equal regardless of what makes us different” (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017). In fact, the word *equal* is mentioned five times in as many paragraphs, underlining the importance of acceptance and tolerance toward differences. The curriculum closely connects human dignity to human *rights* and states that “[t]hey [human rights] are based on universal values that apply to all people regardless of who they are, where they come from and where they are” (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017).

As previously discussed in chapter 2.1, monster literature targets this core value well, by asking the essential question of ‘what is difference?’, and perhaps even more importantly ‘is *difference* an arbitrary social construct?’. Pupils are often bombarded with words such as ‘equality’ or ‘tolerance’ without often reflecting on what these words mean or how to apply their intentions in the real world. Monster literature forces this necessary reflection, not only on how society can be made more tolerant and inclusive, but also how the pupil as an individual can reassess their own long-held beliefs and preconceptions so that they may more fully embody the values of tolerance and equality.

3.1.2 Identity and cultural diversity

According to the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, it is important to give pupils a historical and cultural context for the society they are an integral part of, as well as help pupils “to preserve and develop her or his identity in an inclusive and diverse environment.” (2017). Although this core value focuses a lot on the Norwegian cultural heritage and national belonging, it also credits national minority groups and other cultural influences that have helped shape the Norwegian society, and underscores that “A good society is founded on the ideals of inclusiveness and diversity.” (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017).

In an increasingly globalized world, Norwegian society is becoming more and more accepting of external influences and a multitude of cultural expression. This core value resonates with 19th century monster literature not just because they are textual sources of English-speaking (i.e., other) cultures, and thus represents a cultural diversity, but also because monster

literature highlights the cultural diversity within a single larger society. Especially 19th century monster literature simplifies this by being set in a time before the massive influx of globalization, open borders and information, and external cultural influences. There can be no question that Dorian Gray's habitus differs from that of his friend Henry, or that Frankenstein had a much different upbringing (and hence identity) to that of his monster. These literary texts present questions of culture and identity, how culture and identity is formed, and how we can find a common understanding despite our perceived differences.

3.1.3 Critical thinking and ethical awareness

The Ministry of Education and Research spends most of the *Critical thinking and ethical awareness* sub-chapter focusing on the aspect of critical thinking, reliable accumulation of knowledge, established truths, methodologies, and scientific approach. However, they also specify that “ethical awareness, which means balancing different considerations, is necessary if one is to be a reflecting and responsible human being” and that “the pupils’ ability to make ethical assessments” and being “cognizant of ethical issues” are key factors in their cultural and social development (2017).

In essence, this skill becomes useful when discussing subjects where there is no one clear, correct answer, as is often the case in ethical dilemmas. In the Norwegian upper secondary education these questions are often tackled during social studies classes, but can be equally potent in literary analysis as part of the English subject. Most literary texts and genres are in fact suitable for this purpose. Especially *Frankenstein* is a good example to use for highlighting appropriate issues regarding ethical awareness. We may, for example, ask ourselves ‘who is the monster?’, a prominent question in much monster literature such as *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* or *Wuthering Heights*. *Frankenstein*, however, has perhaps taken this question to new extremes. While reading the novel we are required to ask which acts make one monstrous, and how they could have been prevented. Digging deeper we might also be obliged to ask ourselves which monstrous acts can be considered justified, or at the very least forgivable, and in which situations they become that way. These questions bring up another issue commonly handled in the social studies classroom (especially when tackling criminology and the justice system); whether the fault of the monstrous act (or crime) lies with the individual, or with the society that created and shaped the individual.

3.1.4 Democracy and participation

As a society heavily reliant on, and protective of, our democratic values, it comes as no surprise that this core value is reflected in the Norwegian curriculum. This core value is perhaps one of the most connected to monster literature, as it promotes “counteract[ing] prejudice and discrimination” and “respect[ing] the fact that people are different and learn[ing] to solve conflicts peacefully.” (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017). School is therefore not only responsible for instilling an appreciation and respect for democratic processes, but also for nurturing attitudes necessary for a pluralistic democracy to function. “Participating in society means respecting and endorsing fundamental democratic values, such as mutual respect, tolerance, individual freedom of faith and speech, and free elections.” (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017).

Discussion tasks and ethical analysis help to foster an environment in which all voices and ideas are welcome and valued. Literature in general is a good source for understanding other points of view, and other experiences than one’s own. Monster literature specifically adds to this the complex scrutiny of culture and society. The purpose of participating in democratic processes is to ensure betterment and progress, and we do this by carefully discussing *what* needs to change, and *how* best to change it. There are no simple answers to these larger questions, but monster literature helps prepare the pupils to be introspective of their own wants and reflective on society and their role in it, by forcing them to reevaluate and confront their preconceptions and bias, as explored in chapter 2.1.5. In addition, monster literature helps simplify the complexity of pluralistic systems and lays a foundation for discussing differences and how to overcome them. Just as with Shylock’s famous appeal in Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice* or the Frankenstein monster’s confrontation of his creator, literary monsters beg for understanding and compromise. It is how their adversaries or antagonists respond to their request of being considered human or equal, or at the very least deserving of love and respect, that determines much of the tragedy that inevitably follows, as further explored in chapter 4. In this regard, monster literature teaches its audience the importance of listening to another’s needs, and discussing in a healthy and productive manner to reach a satisfactory compromise. In further discussing the issues presented in these novels, monster literature can also be used to practice dialogue and expression of differing opinions within the safety of the classroom.

3.2 Key Points from LK20 Relevant to Monster Literature

As LK20 has, as of 2021, only been implemented in the first year of upper secondary, I will be using the competence aims of this grade (Vg1 General studies and Vg1 Vocational) as the focal point of this subchapter, in order to connect the core curriculum to the English subject curriculum. As the paper aims to analyze English as a Second Language, it will naturally also only focus on the English subject plan.

The competence aims outline useful language skills that will form the pupils' assessment in that subject. Many of the competence aims can be met from using literature in general (competence aims retrieved from the Ministry of Education and Research, 2019):

- express himself or herself in a nuanced and precise manner with fluency and coherence, using idiomatic expressions and varied sentence structures adapted to the purpose, receiver and situation
- explain the reasoning of others and use and follow up input from others during conversations and discussions on various topics
- read, discuss and reflect on the content and language features and literary devices in various types of texts, including self-chosen texts
- read, analyse and interpret fictional texts in English

Other competence aims can be met when looking at 19th century monster literature specifically and the opportunities for discussion, reflection and learning that it provides:

- explore and reflect on diversity and social conditions in the English-speaking world based on historical contexts

19th century monster literature is in a particularly relevant position with regards to this competence aim, as it can be placed as a historical source of 1800s culture and society. Furthermore, monster literature, as previously discussed, is above all a commentary on social conditions and Othering within the society and culture that produced it. Monster literature is therefore an ideal starting point for discussions surrounding diversity and social conditions. As my chosen novels were written by English and Irish authors during the 19th century, they are also great examples of the culture and society specifically linked to the English-speaking world.

- discuss and reflect on form, content and language features and literary devices in different cultural forms of expression from different media in the English-language world, including music, film and gaming

This competence aim is perhaps simple to meet by using *any* well-known literary works that have been adapted into music, film or gaming. 19th century monster literature, however, and especially my chosen works, have achieved an immense popularity granting them status as not only classics, but cultural phenomena. *Frankenstein* and *Dracula* have spurred hundreds of adaptations between them, and are continuously spawning fresh and modern adaptations. With such a vast amount of works to choose from, it is a simple task to find material that fits your specific classroom needs, and that can be adjusted according to your lesson plan. A plethora of adaptational works to choose from also allows pupils more agency and freedom in picking self-chosen texts and media where applicable and appropriate to the lesson plan.

3.3 Theory of teaching literature

Now that chapters 3.1 and 3.2 have explored LK20, this chapter aims to briefly discuss the teaching of literature in a more generalized context. The following chapter 3.4 will continue this thread by furthering the discussion into a more LK20-oriented context and exploring how LK20 has recently shifted our understanding of literature teaching in the classroom.

The English language constitutes one of the most important subjects in the Norwegian primary education system (Flognfeldt & Lund, 2016, p. 15), owing to its high level of priority in both primary and secondary school, as well as its usefulness and necessity as a *lingua franca* in an increasingly globalized world. As such, the quality of English education is absolutely essential. To this effect literature plays an important role in the formation of pupils' understanding of language (and the cultures the language represent). So important, in fact, that immersive language strategies such as extensive reading (the act of reading many texts over shorter periods for the purpose of enjoyment) could be considered more beneficial to a pupil's understanding of language than even coursebooks or teacher guidance (Munden & Sandhaug, 2017, p. 310 – 311). This form of self-regulated language immersion gives pupils an automated, subconscious knowledge of how to use the language they are attempting to learn (grammatical structures, situational language variety, authentic language patterns, etc.). This

type of learning can significantly improve a pupil's innate understanding of *how* to use a language and their understanding of *what* words mean (vocabulary), but do little or nothing to instill a deeper understanding of for example *why* a sentence is considered grammatically correct. Although it is important to encourage an active reading environment and self-regulated extensive reading, it could therefore also appear important to incorporate appropriate pre- and post-reading exercises and guidance when using specific texts in the classroom. A combination of both strategies (extensive reading *and* teacher guided exercises and discussion) could seem like the most beneficial in the pupils' long-term education. Borg (2003), however, claims that a "function-based orientation towards reading instruction – emphasising authentic language, situational contexts, and meaningful communication" is the most commonly-held theoretical belief and methodological approach to second language teaching (p. 102). This trend seemed especially true amongst newly educated teachers, suggesting a prevalent preference in recent teaching education. One could argue, then, about the importance of intricate grammatical knowledge and a deeper understanding of the linguistic structures that make up a language, as long as the pupil is proficient in the use of English as a communicative tool. Native speakers, after all, rarely know themselves *why* a language is used the way it is, despite being fluent communicators. In addition, Munden and Sandhaug (2017) argue that a teaching approach over-focused on the theoretical applications of grammar is likely to demotivate and perhaps even frighten pupils (p. 193), while Borg (2003) maintains that, in a study conducted, "the teachers' beliefs about the motivational needs of their students [...] appeared to be more powerful than the beliefs held by the teachers about effective language instruction" (p. 103). Grammatical knowledge should, of course, never be entirely neglected in the second language classroom, but there might be a critical error in the assumption that pupils do not learn grammar outside of theoretical teacher instruction.

Improved linguistic skill is an important factor in the teaching of literature and the use of literature in the classroom, but the benefits of literature have longer-reaching implications on also the pupil's understanding and knowledge of culture and identity. Hoff (2013) asserts that "[b]ecause fiction creates an illusion of reality, the learners' own pre-judices and fixed opinions about other societies may be challenged as they interact with the text on a personal level" (p. 31). Where it remains impossibly impractical to physically transport the pupils in order to witness different cultures and customs, literature provides a window into the lives of others. Additionally, literature provides the opportunity of not only observing the cultures from the outside, but to partake in them through the eyes of a member within that society. In

this manner, the culture and society of the ‘Other’ briefly becomes a culture and society with which the reader identifies and engages with. Literature thus creates a phenomenon where the cultures of the reader and the protagonists briefly merge, potentially resulting in a deeper understanding of both. Hoff (2013) explains this as a “communicative experience” and states that “[t]hrough the encounter with the text, the learner may achieve a fuller understanding of the foreign culture [...], but equally important is the fact that he or she gets to know him/herself better in the process” (p. 32). Through this reading experience, pupils develop not only their understanding of foreign cultures, but also their own culture and self-identity, a development which importance was previously discussed in chapter 3.1.2. In using literature to explore different cultures, however, one must be conscious of the pupils’ potential prejudice, Hoff (2013) asserting that “[w]ithout conscious work on attitudes and the provocation of preconceived opinions, the English lessons may in fact serve to promote cultural stereotypes and prejudices towards a foreign culture rather than subvert them” (p. 39). While attempting to dismantle prejudice, we also run the risk of unwillingly enforcing the stereotypes we examine. This could be the reason Hoff (2013) states that “the development of intercultural competence is a challenging process which requires an attentive and sensitive teacher” (p. 43). Controversial remarks in the classroom, whether genuinely held beliefs or a way to stir up reactions in others, can be beneficial as a way to expose and challenge harmful prejudices; however, toward this goal, Hoff (2013) uses the example of a boy who argues that the language used in a film the class had watched was the result of African Americans being “less intelligent than the white population”, an argument swiftly countered by others in the class expressing their disagreement and giving examples of intelligent African Americans (such as Barack Obama) (p. 39 – 40). I argue that counter-arguments that challenge such claims must be presented based on more than opinion, as these anecdotal dissensions do more to signal disapproval than to dismantle or disprove the original argument or claim, and that the teacher must be adequately prepared for such controversial statements in order to properly navigate the intricacies of such a discussion without unintentionally causing harm. We must examine *why* these beliefs are held and *why* such beliefs are built on fallacies through evidence-based discussion, in order to effectively alter contentious opinion. Despite these potential risks, literature remains a supremely beneficial way of examining and interacting with different cultures, if one is conscious of how to navigate discussion around these topics.

When working with literature and literary analysis in the classroom, a central challenge lies in the pupil’s low confidence and uncertainty in their learning capabilities – they are unaware of

how much they are actually learning (Hoff, 2013, p. 42). This challenge presents itself in pupils who are unwilling to participate in classroom discussion, and who adamantly avoid contributions toward content analysis. Hoff (2013) believes this to be a result, in part, of them being conditioned to writing reviews or plot summaries after exploring fiction, fostering a belief that “their contribution was worthless unless they were able to recount every detail of what had happened” (p. 38). This uncertainty among pupils can perhaps be partially explained by a result-oriented school system, and their anxieties upon discovering there is no one *right* answer. I believe that through constant performance measuring in schools, we are creating result driven pupils with little confidence in their own critical thinking or opinion forming, both crucial skills in developing one’s literary literacy. The belief that introspection, discussion and analyses do not equal meaningful, applicable knowledge likely stems from an inability to accurately measure or test a student’s competence in areas such as intercultural understanding or indeed literary literacy. Munden & Sandhaug (2017) claims that *readicide* (the act of killing one’s pleasure of reading) often comes from “an overemphasis on technical analysis” and “an overwhelming focus on using literature to teach language and culture instead of helping pupils appreciate literature for its own work” (p. 393). Such teaching methods suggest a pattern of teachers steering the pupil’s literary education toward areas that are easier to measure, further reaffirming the belief that performance and test results are what pupils ought to strive toward. Hoff (2013) affirms that “values and attitudes are not skills which can be measured or tested” and that “the main concern for the teacher should be to create situations for learning which enable this development to occur, rather than judging the results of the process” (p. 45). This challenge can be partially solved by a patient and open-minded teacher who consistently reaffirms that while there is indeed no one *right* answer, there is also no *wrong* answers, provided that they are able to draw examples from the text to support their argument. To this end it is important when using literature in the classroom that the teacher’s personal analyses and opinions of the text do not overshadow or lead the pupils’ own interpretations. In much the same way that the author’s intention behind a text is ultimately meaningless or unimportant, so is the teacher’s subjective views on a text. The teacher’s role is in essence to guide and support a pupil’s own interaction with the literary work, or “to find ways of combining joy in reading with the development of literary literacy” (Munden & Sandhaug, 2017, p. 393). A related challenge can be found in the pupils’ underestimation of literature’s importance – even if a teacher manages to instill pleasure in reading, the result-oriented pupil may fail to see the *necessity* of literature or literary analysis. With the current school system, we run the risk of pupils not seeing the point of a literary exercise if it won’t

directly correlate with their grade average, as all teachers have likely heard the dreaded questions; “*why are we learning this?*” and “*will this be on a test?*” I believe these attitudes to have more to do with an unfortunate trained behavioral response through external motivators than their innate internal motivation for learning and exploring, and it will be the literature teacher’s job to soften these preconceptions in order to engage with their pupils in meaningful communication with literature and fiction.

3.4 Teaching Literature in LK20

The ways in which we teach literature has changed over time in accordance with different teaching traditions and educational practices. Naturally this adaptive process will be furthered with the incorporation of LK20 in the Norwegian upper secondary classroom. This shifting approach to teaching literature suggests there is no one straight-forward teaching method we can deem superior or correct. Instead, our chosen approach to teaching literature must reflect the pupil’s desired learning outcomes.

According to Popova (2010), the currently popular communicative approaches have morphed literature in the classroom into an effective tool for language acquisition (p. 11). Popova declares that there are two distinct paths toward linguistic competence: learning and acquisition, acquisition being the preferred or more natural approach to linguistic competence. She defines acquisition as a “subconscious process of which the individual is not aware”, and learning as a “a conscious process” (p. 11). Using these definitions, we can say that acquisition is an unintended learning outcome, in the same way that a child learns to walk, or how to speak its mother tongue. In a linguistic setting, acquisition is the most authentic accumulation of knowledge, and perhaps the most motivating path.

Reading, in a learning environment, is primarily a way to acquire language. While a teacher may assign their pupils literature with a specific learning goal in mind, or in an effort to teach a linguistic skill, the pupil engages in reading activities with the primary intention being entertainment and enjoyment. A pupil is not typically aware of the language comprehension or linguistic competence they are acquiring through the process, nor are they typically focused on the grammatical rules or structures they are familiarizing themselves with. This form of language acquisition is effective in that it, given the pupil’s interest in the reading material,

stimulates an easy, motivating and enjoyable learning experience that can be contrasted to formal learning situations which over time can feel draining, unmotivating or tiring.

The English Vg1 curricula from LK20 states that “The teacher shall facilitate for pupil participation and encourage the desire to learn by using a variety of strategies and learning resources to develop the pupils’ reading skills and oral and writing skills.” (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017). Working with literature builds a relationship between pupil and reading based on desire rather than strict necessity. Acquiring reading skills through reading fictional literature should ideally be an entertaining learning method as opposed to reading non-fiction, scientific articles and textbooks. Additionally, working with literature in the classroom after the initial reading of the novel, comic, short story or other textual literary work, allows for further development of the pupil’s oral and/or written skills as well. This can be facilitated by promoting classroom discussion or written analyses of the chosen work. If pupils were to also be given freedom to either self-choose a work of literature, or collectively choose which works the class are to work with, pupil participation will also have been met.

The curriculum further states that “The teacher shall plan and facilitate for the opportunity for pupils to demonstrate their competence in various ways, including through understanding, reflection and critical thought, and in various contexts.” (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017). In all subjects and academic tasks are these competences important, but perhaps nowhere are reflection and critical, independent thought better expressed or more essential than in the more flexible subjects such as language and literature.

As multiple competence aims in the English upper secondary curriculum dictates use of literature in the classroom, teachers are not faced with the question whether to incorporate literature, but in what capacity, and using which teaching methods. The ways in which we teach literature has changed and developed over time, and will continue to do so while it is still an integral part of the English subject curriculum, but there can be no doubt that it is an absolutely vital part of the Norwegian pupil’s language education, whichever form it takes.

Chapter 5 will continue to explore the use of literature, and specifically 19th century monster literature, in the Norwegian ESL classroom, but for the purposes of my thesis I will first present my literary analyses in chapter 4 to provide concrete examples for further discussion.

4. Literary analysis

This chapter will conduct a literary analysis of the 19th century monster literature novels *Dracula* (1897) by Bram Stoker, and *Frankenstein* (1818) by Mary Shelley. The purpose of this literary analysis is to identify and exemplify common traits and themes within 19th century monster literature that can be deemed useful to the Norwegian upper secondary ESL classroom, with a primary focus on the core values of the LK20 curriculum (previously discussed in chapter 3). To foster this connection, these literary analyses are structured after the four core curriculum values deemed the most relevant to monster literature in chapter 3.1; *Human Dignity, Identity and Cultural Diversity, Critical Thinking and Ethical Awareness* and *Democracy and Participation*.

4.1 Narrative structure

When analyzing written literary texts, the structure of the novel becomes an important aspect of consideration. My two chosen works are similar in that they both exclusively utilize a first-person perspective, rendering both subjective tales prone to narration bias. While *Frankenstein* is technically told through an independent third party (Mr. Walton), it is ultimately Frankenstein's own revisions and interpretation of events that structured the story. Because the novel is told exclusively through Mr. Walton, however, there is no certainty that Victor Frankenstein and his creature even existed, and were not simply a figment of a broken, destitute mind in desperate need for companionship and distraction. The reader of the literary novel is ultimately entirely reliant on the narrator, meaning that a key part of literary analysis is often to question the single narrative. Although *Dracula* at first glance seems a more objective and trustworthy source, with its multiple narrators and objective newspaper cuttings, this novel's narration can also not be taken at face-value. As all narrators are effectively part of the same group, and on the same 'side', there is no guarantee that the narration is not the result of group-think or mass hysteria.

This type of questionable narrative and its effect on my chosen novels are further discussed in chapters 4.2.3 and 4.3.4. Such a narrative style is not entirely possible in other forms of media, where imagery and audio help the audience form more independent interpretations. Films such as *Joker* (2019) famously toe this line by making the visual part of Arthur's delusional

storytelling, but this form of multimodal narrative is nevertheless quite different from a written, fictional text, where the reader has very little to navigate the story other than the narrator's words. This perspective forces readers to read between the lines and navigate the complexities of a narrator's potential bias and other unreliableness (memory, missing knowledge, etc.), which in turn helps them develop useful critical thinking and source criticism skills, as well as literary literacy and imagination.

The type of narrative structure we see in *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* forcefully excludes other perspectives, especially those of the monsters that are so central to the plot. As the readers, we are never made to know more than our flawed protagonists in their limited perspectives, meaning that the vast majority of the story is never actually told, simply implied or guessed at (if even that). This immense gap in knowledge lends itself well to further creative exercises (mental or actualized), and although the upper secondary classroom is often not afforded the creative writing exercises that are more common earlier in the school system, the awareness of this knowledge gap may trigger further analysis and potential when working with these novels.

4.2 Bram Stoker's *Dracula*

4.2.1 Introduction

Dracula (1897) is the tale of a Transylvanian vampire Count eager to relocate to London, England, and the small group of people attempting to hinder this invasion. The novel closely follows the protagonist group through journal entries, diary entries and similar personal writing, in their battle with vampirism and its unfortunate victims. Although *Dracula* is not the first piece of literature focusing on vampire lore, it is by far the most recognizable, the word 'Dracula' having become almost synonymous with the modern understanding of 'vampire'. According to Aygün (2020), there exists a total of 2691 entries in Goodreads correlating to *Dracula*, while the three preceding works of vampire literature combined received a total of just 270 (p. 652). Aygün goes on to argue that "Dracula is a hybrid of the preceding vampire fiction in English literature, and it proved to be a successful vampire strain in evolutionary terms" (p. 655). As such, *Dracula* has heavily inspired vampire fiction through over a century.

The novel's main themes include common monster literature topics such as difference (especially cultural), Othering, and morality, but it also contains more specific themes such as power, class divide (Count Dracula being significantly wealthier and of higher rank than our (for the most part) middle class protagonists), imperialism, xenophobia and not least sexuality. The circumstances around *Dracula's* conception have lent themselves to scholarly debate around *Dracula's* subtexts and exploration of sexual deviancy. As Stoker's personal friend, and contemporary author of monster literature, Oscar Wilde was being prosecuted and tried for his homosexuality at the time of writing, an argument could be made for *Dracula* being a tool for defending, or at the very least exploring, homosexuality and other deviant sexualities (Senf, 2010, p. 72). While there is much academic debate about Stoker's intentions, they are, ultimately, unimportant to the reading of the novel. Whether or not a homoerotic subtext is intended, the choice to include or exclude this notion are both valid interpretations – the point being that the novel *can* be read mindful of this context, not whether or not it *should* be read in this way.

As many of the novel's themes can be read as a way to illustrate such contemporary problematic social issues, these potential interpretations can be used to infer interest and engagement with the novel, especially amongst a generation largely characterized by its members' rejection of seemingly arbitrary categorizations (of for example sexuality or gender) and high political engagement. In addition, *Dracula* resonates with many of the LK20 core value themes, as explored further in this chapter (4.2.2 – 4.2.5), giving it a multitude of potential uses and educational possibilities.

4.2.2 Human dignity

Degradation of human worth in Dracula

Human dignity, human rights and human worth are convoluted themes in *Dracula*. As in all monster literature, the element of Othering creates a layer of dehumanization. By dehumanizing the monster, we distance ourselves so we can more easily justify the hunting down, harming and killing that follows. In *Dracula* this process is complicated by the intrinsic nature of vampires; they are not a separate species, and they were not born monstrous, but are instead described as polluted (or corrupted) humans. This makes vampires all the more frightening, as they make us question the fragility of our own humanity, and how we are at

risk of losing it if we are not careful. The characters of *Dracula* are in fact more fearful of this loss of humanity than they are of even death (p. 229). Vampires force us to acknowledge the false dichotomy between human and inhuman/other – they are both. In the case of Count Dracula his humanity is easily overlooked, due to the vast amount of time that has passed since his transformation. The reader is never introduced to Dracula in human form, and it is therefore easy enough to disregard the possibility of his humanity. The human monster is harder to ignore in the cases of Lucy and Mina. Their slow metamorphosis from human to something *other* showcases how small the difference truly is, and how little separates the human from the inhuman. Mina seems to realize this predicament when she herself is on the threshold of becoming a vampire, urging the rest of the protagonist group to pity, rather than hate, the Count: “Just think [...] that ... perhaps ... someday ... I, too, may need such pity, and that some other like you, and with equal cause for anger – may deny it to me!” (p. 298). The group spends shockingly no time outside of this brief plea to contemplate the vampire as something deserving of consideration, but the reader may infer deeper meaning to these implications of the vampire’s humanity.

As mentioned in chapter 4.2.1 and discussed further in chapter 4.2.4, the literary vampire is commonly interpreted as a metaphor for sexual deviancy or sexual liberation. Such a reading would suggest *Dracula*’s dehumanization of vampire kind is on the basis of subjective human ethicality, contradicting the idea that all humans are deserving of human dignity and human rights (or in this case, as being considered human at all), regardless of their differences and way of life. The representation of vampires is almost manifested as a version of Plato’s monster, no longer controlled by self-constraint or societal rules, but entirely at the mercy of its own desires and appetites. One could argue how harmful this sexual appetite really is, and whether or not there is any validity to the condemnation of carnal desires. The assumption that a human being can become “unclean” or “polluted” (p. 286) to the point of no longer deserving human dignity based on their sexuality, however, is thoroughly refuted by the Norwegian curriculum’s core values, and is in such a stark contrast to our modern understanding of humanity and human dignity that it makes for an intensely interesting discussion point.

Treatment of the mentally ill in Dracula

A final point of interest with regards to human dignity in *Dracula*, is the treatment of the mentally ill, a moral dilemma entirely overlooked by the characters of the novel, including Dr.

Seward himself, owner of the asylum at which large portions of the plot takes place. Just as with the vampires, there is little to no consideration for the well-being or mental health of Dr. Seward's patients, Dr. Seward concerning himself instead with how *interesting* the cases are. As he never really mentions his other patients, bar the mention of the odd scream, his treatment of Mr. Renfield, the zoophagous, is our only indicator of the general treatment of the mentally ill, but it is a prominent one. At the first mention of Mr. Renfield, Dr. Seward explains that he has chosen this particular patient to study because of the intricacies of his case. Seward described Mr. Renfield as a "study of much interest" and as a "mystery" (p. 60). This is a different form of dehumanization to that of the vampires, but a form of dehumanization nonetheless. To Dr. Seward, Mr. Renfield is exclusively an interesting case, and not necessarily a person. This view is confirmed in his own reasoning for the way in which he treats the patient: His plan of action is concocted "with a view of making [himself] master of the facts of [Renfield's] hallucination" (p. 60). Dr. Seward's ultimate goal seems frequently to be understanding of Renfield's mental faculties for the sake of science, rather than an attempt at care or rehabilitation. There seems to be little to indicate human dignity in Dr. Seward's treatment of Renfield, and Renfield is neither consulted nor considered when Seward, seemingly without much thought, decides to repeatedly grant entry of his room to non-medical personnel (ex. p. 224 and p. 234).

There are parallels to be drawn between Mr. Renfield and Quincey Morris, in that they both die a hero's death attempting to stop Count Dracula from harming others. Where Mr. Morris is, however, celebrated as a hero, dying surrounded by a group of friends that care deeply for him, and being honored through the name of the Harkers' son (p. 365), Renfield receives no such recognition, and is left utterly alone and in pain during his final moments. His passing is mentioned briefly, almost as an afterthought, with no semblance of grief or mourning to follow (p. 275). The only person to react to this news, despite Dr. Seward also being present in the room, is Jonathan Harker, expressing a less-than-sympathetic "God's will be done!" (p. 275). It is hard to imagine that any of the other characters would be disregarded quite so cruelly, and Renfield's tragedy becomes aggrandized when considering his supposed intimate relationship with Dr. Seward. Renfield is often seen seeking confidence from Dr. Seward, and states rather clearly his fondness of the doctor, when he is puzzled by the attendants' distrust: "They think I could hurt you! Fancy me hurting you!" (p. 105). Dr. Seward seems himself aware of this trust and bond, as he states in his diary: "Renfield might not speak so freely before a third person as when he and I were alone" (p. 259). Seward does acknowledge a sort of "cruel"

treatment of Renfield early on, when he admits: “I seemed to wish to keep him to the point of his madness” (p. 60), but although aware, this is not the last time he can be seen toying with Renfield’s emotions, at one point even purposefully torturing his mind (p. 260 – 261). It is worth note that Dr. Seward spends over four months intimately studying and interacting with Renfield, and his inability to feel seemingly anything at all about Renfield’s death comes with deeply disturbing implications. In many ways the dehumanization of Renfield, on account of his mental illness, is more complete than even that of Dracula. The historical stigma toward the mentally ill (or poor mental health) is intensely apparent in *Dracula*, creating an interesting topic of discussion especially potent in a modern society that places great value and attention on improving mental health, while still not being entirely rid of the complicated stigmas surrounding mental illness.

4.2.3 Identity and cultural diversity

Cultural diversity in Dracula

Unlike my other chosen novel, *Dracula* presents a multitude of different peoples (American, Romani, Dutch, German, Jewish, etc.). The multiple settings of *Dracula* lend themselves to a cultural diversity you would otherwise not see in 19th century Western writing. The way in which these diverse nationalities and cultures are presented in the novel has become a topic of much debate, making *Dracula* a prime choice for cultural discourse.

Count Dracula’s Romanian nationality is by no means arbitrary. On a surface level, making the monster a foreign entity helps establish monster literature traditions (geographical distance between modernity and the ‘land of monsters’), and an eerie sense of dread as the monster inches closer to one’s own “backyard”. Stoker, however, goes further in his alienation of the foreign, and *Dracula* enforces the strangeness as a way to Other the Count exponentially. As early as Chapter 2, we are introduced to Dracula’s insatiable desire to learn all things British; history, geography, politics, law, etc., but most of all the language. Dracula himself seems to be intensely aware of the Othering his foreignness will result in, and is determined to hide any trait that might give away his nationality. As he puts it:

Here I am noble. [...] But a stranger in a strange land, he is no one. Men know him not, and to know not is to care not for. I am content if I am like the rest, so that no man

stops if he sees me, or pauses in his speaking if he hears my words, 'Ha, ha! A stranger!'

 (p. 21 – 22).

It is unclear if Stoker meant to draw attention to and criticize this perceived xenophobia, but the quote gives immediate pause to reevaluate our preconceptions and possible feelings of superiority toward that which is different. Percec (2018) notes that Dracula himself is, by all accounts, “a multinational, pluri-lingual figure: he rules over a multi-ethnic region, speaks several foreign languages, has a library full of English books, [and] has travelled across the continent” (p. 146). This cosmopolitanism affords the Count a form of cultural relativity and equality (despite his apparent pride in his heritage) that sets him apart from the protagonists’ imperial approach.

It is interesting that Dracula later goes on to identify himself as a “foreign nobleman”, using the not-so-subtle alias “Count de Ville” (p. 262), an allusion to his own self-identification as the devil. The choice of this alias is such an interesting decision, and the only real clue we receive as to the vampire’s own introspection. Does the choice suggest an internalization of the Othering the Count has been subjected to? Is it a confession as to his nefarious intentions, a hint to his self-awareness as a cruel tyrant? Or is it a re-branding of labels that have been unfairly given to him? The possible implications, and diverse interpretations, of this simple alias are endless.

Count Dracula is not the only main character with a minority background, however; Quincey Morris is decidedly (and stereotypically) American, while Dr. Van Helsing is Dutch. Despite their foreign nationalities, they are both held in high esteem within the group, Van Helsing as the highly educated, resourceful and knowledgeable de-facto leader of the group, and Quincey Morris as a brave and noble-hearted hero. Mina, the beloved heroine of the story, also bears a common Irish surname; Murray. In these cases, their backgrounds seem to have no effect on how they are viewed by the other characters of the novel. Even Van Helsing’s broken English and poor grammar are disregarded and overlooked entirely. This could be viewed as Dracula being mistaken in assuming the British people’s xenophobia, but is more likely a result of Dutch and American cultures being similar and familiar to the British, whereas the Transylvanian culture is more unknowable. As Dracula tells Jonathan Harker; “Transylvania is not England. Our ways are not your ways, and there shall be to you many strange things” (p. 22). Senf (2010) accredits this to an innate human anxiety toward the unknown; “familiarity with Gothic texts suggests that people fear what they perceive as different from themselves,

often labelling it not as exotic or interesting but as evil” (p. 62). As discussed in chapter 2.1.3, the monster is frightening simply for being *unknown*, and therefore unpredictable.

Other minor characters of *Dracula* are perhaps where the ethnocentrism of the cast is most prominently presented. Already in chapter 1, Jonathan Harker describes Slovaks as “[t]he strangest figures we saw,” and as being “more barbarian than the rest” (p. 5). A band of Slovaks also thwart Jonathan’s escape plans (p. 42 – 43), cruelly mocking his pleas for help (p. 44), and is seen in general to aid Dracula immensely (other Romanians are however seen to defy the Count, and at one point asks for his coffin to be dropped in the ocean (p. 336)). Dracula’s dependence on Gypsies and Slovaks to carry out his tasks in daylight is so monumental that their lack of involvement would be detrimental to his plots. Their unwavering loyalty to the Count (to the point of risking their own lives in an attempt to save the vampire from the protagonist group (p. 362)) is so inexplicable that Stoyan Tchapravov (2015) refers to them as “vampires in human flesh” and declares that “the Slovaks and the Gypsies become as monstrous as the Count himself in the novel” (p. 528). Although very briefly mentioned, the portrayal of Jews is also not ideal – the one Jewish character in the novel, Immanuel Hildesheim, is described exclusively in stereotypes; “a Hebrew of rather the Adelphi Theatre type, with a nose like a sheep, and a fez” (p. 337). Hildesheim also needs to be bargained with for information (a common Jewish stereotype), and is found in a position of abetting Dracula in his escape.

Although *Dracula* is, to the modern audience, problematic in its portrayal of racial and cultural minorities, the novel raises many relevant questions regarding culture clashes, and how one approaches a foreign culture. By thoroughly examining these elements within the novel, one can create a valuable discourse surrounding cultural sensitivity to promote cultural relativity rather than prejudiced stereotyping. Even the negative portrayals can start a reevaluation of one’s own prejudices and how these are tackled. Subconscious biases are typically enmeshed within literature, whether it be fiction or news coverage, and by thoroughly exploring, discussing and questioning these biases it is possible to achieve a more nuanced and objective perspective that can soften the impact of one’s own biases.

Traditional family values, sexuality and gender identity in Dracula

Count Dracula and his companion vampires are monstrous perhaps most of all for the threat they pose to traditional family values. Vampiric targets in the novel are all infants, children, fiancées or newlywed women, suggesting a hinderance toward the establishment or survival of nuclear families. Jonathan Harker's end note (p. 365) mentioning the birth of a son between him and Mina Harker following their successful hunt and murder of Count Dracula, solidifies their victory over evil and its corrupting forces; the family unit has been saved and remains intact.

This threat to family values is not merely realized by the threat of physical harm to women and children, but also manifested as a corrupting force that drives "good" women toward sin and impurity. To understand this threat, we must first explore the common reading of *Dracula's* vampirism as a metaphor for sexual desire and deviancy. There is a strong case to be made for the connection between blood and other bodily fluids, such as semen (Gelder, 1994), and how one must be almost willfully blind to ignore the sexual connotations inherent in the scenes where vampires "feed". Jonathan Harker admits to this feeling of desire as he writes in his journal: "There was something about them that made me uneasy, some longing and at the same time some deadly fear. I felt in my heart a wicked, burning desire that they would kiss me with those red lips" (p. 38). He goes on to say "There was a deliberate voluptuousness which was both thrilling and repulsive", and "I closed my eyes in languorous ecstasy and waited, waited with beating heart" (p. 38). Certainly, Harker is conveyed as a willing participant in his own seduction, and it seems not unlikely that his fear and uneasiness are emotions tied to his own sinful desires, rather than the vampire itself. Mina admits to similar feelings when describing her encounter with Dracula; "strangely enough, I did not want to hinder him" (p. 276). Indeed, throughout the novel, vampiric feedings are described with words such as *love* or *kiss*, suggesting an intimate affection rather than vile assault. The frequency with which Stoker uses the word *voluptuous* in direct reference to vampires is also telling, the word deriving from the Latin *voluptas* (pleasure) or *volup* (pleasurable) ("Voluptuous", n.d.).

If we consider vampirism as a direct metaphor for sexual desire, the threat becomes not death or bodily harm, but seduction and "perverted" sexuality. The vampire's sexuality is the very thing that repulses Jonathan Harker, causing him to describe them as no longer women at all; "Mina is a woman, and there is nought in common. They are devils of the Pit!" (p. 53). It is

implied that the proper woman is without lust, and perfectly asexual, and therefore these creatures cannot qualify. These perversions are worsened with the Count's homoerotic manner toward Jonathan, where he insists toward his female companions "[h]ow dare you touch him, any of you? [...] This man belongs to me!" (p. 39), and where it is later implied that the Count has drunk his blood in the night. As mentioned previously in subchapter 4.2.1, these homoerotic undertones are perhaps not accidental, but a willful and obscured exploration of homosexuality within the safe confines of a novel.

Another point of contention is the existence of Dracula's three female companions. These are commonly referred to as Dracula's "brides", but there are notably no such descriptions of them in the novel, the novel choosing instead to describe them as "companions" (p. 277). Nevertheless, these vampire sisters can easily be read as an example of polygamy or polyandry in *Dracula*, especially since they are noted to be sleeping in the same chambers (chapel) as Dracula himself (p. 357 – 358). Lucy Westenra brings forth the question of polyandry once more, and in more thorough explorations of the topic. Even disregarding her childlike pondering as to why one is not allowed to take multiple husbands (p. 59), there is much to be said for her relationship with her three suitors once she falls victim to the vampire.

Needing in her treatment a series of blood transfusions, Lucy receives blood first from her fiancé Arthur Godalming, but later also from her previous suitors Dr. Seward, and Quincey Morris, as well as from Dr. Van Helsing himself. Arthur, unaware of the subsequent blood transfusions, says about his contribution that as he had given her blood of his own veins, it felt as if they were already married in the eyes of God (p. 168). This personal and intimate bond between blood giver and receiver is confirmed by Dr. Seward when he says "[n]o man knows, till he experiences it, what it is to feel his own lifeblood drawn away into the veins of the woman he loves," and again by Van Helsing when he stops the transfusion abruptly, stating that Arthur Godalming was allowed to give more because "[h]e is her lover, her *fiancé*" (p. 125, Stoker's italics). Parallels could easily be drawn to the notion of premarital sex, a connection strengthened by the party's shame and reluctance in telling Arthur about their own blood transfusions. Van Helsing goes so far as to call Lucy a polyandrist for it (a possible euphemism for 'prostitute' (Senf, 2010, p. 68)).

If we suppose that vampirism and blood transfusions are then equally intimate acts, this begs the question of why one is considered acceptable, while the other abhorrent. The novel frequently stipulates that to die is a better fate than to be a vampire, or indeed to be the victim

of one. None of the men, however, stop to question the ramifications of blood transfusions, suggesting perhaps a sort of unconscious hypocrisy. Ken Gelder (1994) proposes that “the vampire is to be redeemed – the problem lies, instead, with the upstanding heroes” (p. 66). The question that requires pondering is where the line should be drawn between the acceptable and the unacceptable.

Such a reading brings into question the validity of the good/evil dichotomy of the novel, and makes us wonder if the differences between human and vampire can be attributed to differences of culture and identity, rather than “unholy” or “immoral” actions. As previously examined in chapter 2, the literary monster is indeed often such a monstrification of Othered cultures, rather than a reflection of inherent evil. Gelder (1994) proposes an interesting question in that regard, when she writes that Van Helsing, priding himself on maintaining an open mind, presents as surprisingly close-minded in certain situations; “his claim that hypnosis ‘would have been deemed unholy’ by less up-to-date scientists provides an interesting auto-critique of his own view of the ‘unholy’ vampire (is Van Helsing, then, not up-to-date with *Dracula*?)” (p. 66). Not everyone would share Gelder’s favorable interpretation of the vampire, but it is certainly an interesting point of discussion, and decidedly a worthy question to pose. With the novel being written entirely by first-person accounts (and none from the vampire’s point of view), there is also the question of the reliability of the narrator; how much of what is written about the vampire can be said to be objective truth?

Finally, the novel has several mentions of the ‘New Woman’, interestingly enough made by Mina Harker herself. The ‘New Woman’ was a new movement of liberated women at the time, seeking personal freedoms, independence and education, while rejecting traditional gender roles such as motherhood or ‘wifely duties’ (Buzwell, 2014). The mentions of the ‘New Woman’ in *Dracula* are not to be glossed over as trivial, as the mentions are often made in connection to a desire within Lucy or Mina. With this context, *Dracula* poses a final threat to traditional family values – the sexual liberation of women. The role of women in *Dracula* is in fact so complex, despite at first seemingly archetypical of damsel-in-distress plot devices, that it deserves a thesis of its own to do it justice. For instance, despite the men’s recurrent attempts at silencing and excluding Mina from their work, she remains *Dracula*’s strongest foe, and provides much, if not most, of the information necessary to defeat the vampire. Mina’s strong will and heroism warrants a status as a feminist icon, although her contributions are continuously dissuaded and discouraged. Before *Dracula* even sets foot in Mina’s bedroom there is a palpable fear, amongst the men, of her growing independence and wit. When *Dracula*

does infect her, this fear is strengthened tenfold, but seems to spring from the exact same worry that she is becoming too liberated. Gelder (1994) boldly states that “women, rather than Dracula, are the central horror in the novel: the vampire is simply the means by which that horror can be realized” (p. 77), but he is hardly the only one to make the leap. Senf (2010) equally states that “[a]ware[ness] that women sought economic, political and sexual equality resulted in fear that equality would transform women into monsters” (p. 56).

The slow corruption of Mina’s purity following her “rape” by Dracula aids this interpretation, as the men around her keep a keen eye out for any transgressions or vampiric similarities (p. 311 – 312). When Mina later encounters the three sister vampires, they call out to her: “Come, sister. Come to us. Come!” (p. 355). It is worth note that Mina is not threatened by these women, and says as much to Van Helsing: “None safer in all the world from them than I am” (p. 355). The sisters’ sweet calls, arms linked as in a show of unity, laughter ringing out into the night air, seems to the objective reader potentially more of a warm invitation than ill intended. Van Helsing’s anxiety about Mina transgressing to the “other side” and subsequent relief when he sees her still disgusted by these women (a potential sign of internalized misogyny) (p. 355) feels, in light of this, as a man grappling with the possibility that he is losing his power and authority over the “meek and subservient” woman.

It is my interpretation that the novel reads as a contentious exploration of sexual identity and gender identity, creating ample opportunity for insightful discourse and creative discussion around the topics of identity diversity, acceptance and inclusion. The topic is especially interesting as many of the divergent sexualities and gender identities hinted toward in the novel are more widely accepted in modern Western society – with the notable exception of polyamory and polygamy still holding a noticeable taboo. As these topics are integral to the educational core values outlined in chapter 3, they form interesting literary examples to explore and expand upon these core values in the classroom.

Othering in Dracula

The Othering in *Dracula* differs from my other chosen work, as well as most monster literature, in that the other side (the point of view of the vampire) is never expressed. Dracula is never confronted with his crimes, and he never attempts to reason with the group or explain his actions, nor does any other vampire. We are thus left without a crucial piece of information,

and cannot ascertain the objective monstrosity of Dracula, underscoring the fact that monstrosity is constructed and not objectively extant. In addition, the Count's criminal actions (kidnapping, imprisoning, fraud, etc.) are condemned with good reason, but it is never stated exactly what makes vampirism in and of itself unacceptable. The reader must take the protagonists' word that vampires are unholy, soulless and unclean, a state worse than death, without any further elaboration or reasoning from the group. At first this labeling of vampires seems justified, as holy and religious symbols harm them, suggesting that these creatures are perversions even to God himself. However, this is problematized by the fact that Mina herself is burned by the wafer (p. 286), despite never having committed any condemnable acts, and the group wholeheartedly agreeing to her innocence and purity.

Dracula is also fraught with comparisons between vampires and animals/beasts. Mr. Renfield, despite not being a vampire, is also subject to these derogatory descriptions on account of his mental illness. For example, Jonathan Harker writes of one of the sister vampires; "she actually licked her lips like an animal" (p. 38), and Dr. Seward notes of Renfield that he was "lying on his belly on the floor licking up, *like a dog*, the blood which had fallen from my wounded wrist" (p. 138, my italics). Of Dracula, there are many such references, comparing him to a plethora of animals. At our first introduction to the Count, he is described as having "peculiarly sharp white teeth", "extremely pointed" ears, "hairs in the centre of the palm", and nails that are "long and fine, and cut to a sharp point" (p. 19), all features that resemble the fur, fangs and claws of an animal. The claw connection becomes increasingly clear when he later uses his nail to cut open a wound on his chest (p. 277). Before long he is also noted by Jonathan Harker to have climbed the outer wall of the castle "just as a lizard moves along a wall", and questions his humanity at once: "What manner of man is this, or what manner of creature, is it in the semblance of a man?" (p. 35). Mina reinforces this view of Dracula as well: "The thing is not human – not even a beast" (p. 220). Likening the Count to beasts (or worse) effectively strips him of his humanity, thus completing his Othering. It is this perceived lack of recognizable humanity in him that the group later uses as justification for the crusade against vampires. It is not surprising, then, that Van Helsing later likens the deaths of the sister vampires to "butcher work" (p. 358), while implying that it is not in fact murder: "I shudder *as though* I have come to do murder" (p. 357, my italics). Van Helsing's hesitation, however, may allude to his subconscious recognition of the vampire's residual humanity, despite his self-assurances of their monstrosity.

This form of Othering is common (I dare say necessary) in monster literature, perhaps especially of the Gothic kind, but it is particularly intriguing in *Dracula* due to the subjectivity of the narrators. It is certainly not the only monster literature making use of subjective first-person narration – it is not even the only one of my chosen works – but whereas *Frankenstein* introduces an outside perspective in Mr. Robert Walton, however briefly and equally unreliable, and devotes six entire chapters to the monologue of Frankenstein’s creature (p. 86 – 122), *Dracula* is shockingly devoid of alternative perspectives. This is made all the more bewildering when we begin to question the reliability and even sanity of *Dracula*’s narrators. Jonathan Harker’s initial journal entries, making up the first few chapters, already question the validity of his retellings at the time of his writing. In chapter 3, Mr. Harker begins to doubt his own sanity: “Whilst I live on here there is but one thing to hope for, that I may not go mad, if, indeed, I be not mad already” (p. 36). When he is later diagnosed with a “violent brain fever” (p. 98), the likelihood that we are given an accurate account of recent events is further diminished. The protagonists frequently question the sanity of themselves, as well as each other, but the topic becomes even more convoluted when both Dr. Seward and Van Helsing begins questioning the nature of sanity itself, especially when Van Helsing admits that “[a]ll men are mad in some way or the other” (p. 116). This confession is remarkable in light of Van Helsing being the singular protagonist who seems never to question his own mental faculties, even during the infamous King Laugh scene (p. 168 – 170), where his neurotic laughter and fragmented reasoning, flush with hysteria, gives Dr. Seward cause to question his sanity. Van Helsing’s continuous insistence on his own sanity is however, less than comforting, as seconded by Dr. Seward himself; “[h]e seemed so confident that I [...] felt awe and vague terror” (p. 129). Mr. Renfield brings additional layers to the debate on sanity, when he – a mental patient of Dr. Seward’s asylum – in moments of clarity displays such a highly educated background and eloquent speech, that he briefly convinces even Dr. Seward of the restoration of his sanity (p. 235 – 236). This sets a disturbing precedent of certifiable men being able to seem rational and of sound mind. Senf (2010) comments on this madness amongst the protagonists, stating that “these individuals, all of whom question their sanity, construct a narrative that pits them against individuals they characterize as monstrous and Other” (p. 60). It is up to the reader, then, to determine if the narrators of *Dracula* are relaying a factual tale, or if they are constructing a convenient narrative.

When one begins to question the reliability of the narrators, one must also question the rationality of their Othering of Dracula. It is entirely possible that the Othering is a symptom

of their own xenophobia, without any objective merit, and that the protagonist group is guilty of not only prejudices and dangerous bias, but ultimately of groupthink. There exists a definite chance that in place of rational objectivity, the reader is being deceived by the narrator into accepting fiction as fact. In Senf's (2010) opinion, "what is so frightening and so modern about *Dracula* is that, because Stoker provides no certainties, readers question everything they have come to believe" (p. 76).

4.2.4 Ethical awareness

Morality in Dracula

The question of morality in *Dracula* is largely founded on previously discussed notions of culture and identity, as well as (or in connection with) traditionally religious values. Whenever discussing morality in monster literature, it is essential to first clarify whether the monster is indeed immoral, or *amoral*. Immorality implies an accepted set of ethical values similar or identical to one's own, that is being willfully broken or neglected. An amoral monster does not hold, accept or understand these ethical structures. A human criminal (barring mental illness) could be said to be immoral, while a natural disaster or a wild animal attack would be classified as amoral. A third option, which seems relevant to *Dracula* is simply a different set of ethical values. Dracula being educated, well-read and having previously existed as a human, makes him so aware of human norms and general ethical consensus, that it would be a difficult task to argue his amorality. There is a case to be made for the vampire's *immorality*, as they are often described in moments of transgression to be "gloating" (p. 38) or "mocking" (p. 277). This description would imply an intentional violation of ethical boundaries, but this is a case built solely on (as discussed in chapter 4.2.3) dubious testimony. A different interpretation would paint vampires as adhering to a different ethical code altogether, or not accepting the arbitrary limitations apparent in the protagonist humans' ethicality. As an attestation to this theory, Count Dracula is seen taking delight in howling wolves (the very thing that makes Jonathan Harker uneasy), likening it to music, and declaring that "dwellers in the city cannot enter into the feelings of the hunter" (p. 20), insinuating with this that the vampire is no more inherently evil for hunting humans, than humans are evil for hunting deer. It seems unlikely, then, that Dracula subscribes to the same ethical norms as Jonathan Harker.

If we presume that vampirism is to be interpreted as a metaphor for sexuality, gender identity and cultural diversity, we must also grapple with the ethical ramifications of such a reading; what does the novel say about sexual morality, or the morality of women who diverge from traditional gender roles, when transgressions in these areas are met with such ethical repudiation? The moral corruption that the protagonist group is so alarmed and frightened by is, conceivably, innately linked to behavioral expectations of the time rather than what we today would characterize as an ethical dilemma. This not only speaks to a historical shift in ethical awareness that is worth examining, but also has the potential to spur interesting discussion prompts such as whether or not any sexuality can be considered unethical, how ethical teachings change over time, if our sense of ethicality is innate or a product of culture, or whether or not ethical stipulations are constant or flexible.

With the addition of religious symbology, *Dracula* claims a sort of objective ethicality similar to that in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890), where Dorian's portrait acts as a divine judge of his character. Vampires being harmed by, or shunning, religious symbols such as wafers or crosses speaks to the existence of a higher, more objective judgement. Whether these effects prove the existence of a deity within the novel, or are examples of self-actualizing results, is too big a question to answer within the confines of this thesis. For the sake of discussion, we will assume the presence of a higher power, the presence of which has deep implications for an ethical reading of *Dracula*. If we are to believe that God himself is casting judgment on the vampire race, it can be difficult to argue against their moral impairment. However, one rather large discrepancy between modern Western ethic teachings and the divine judgement apparent in *Dracula* is made clear: the characters are judged not by what they do, but by what they *are*. Unless we attempt to argue that the intimate (sexual?) encounter between Count Dracula and Mina (p. 271) was not an assault, but that Mina was a willing participant, there is little in her actions that would justify a godly deprecation. Still, she is, the same as vampires, seared, and left scarred, by the wafer, (p. 286) until her soul is purified by the death of her molester (p. 364 – 365). Mina herself claims rejection by God when she says “[u]nclean! Unclean! Even the Almighty shuns my polluted flesh!” (p. 286). Religious undertones heavily guide the protagonists' actions throughout the novel, the group often claiming to be agents of God in their purge of the unholy. Yet, Purcell (2018) claims this is simply an elaborate excuse to justify their own moral shortcomings: “Jonathan's willingness to sell his soul and his all-consuming desire to condemn Dracula's indicate that vengeance, not piety, motivates his murderous actions”. Mina's use of the word 'flesh' is not unimportant either, as it is indicative

of a polluted state of being, and not a polluted *soul*, or act. This is not altogether surprising, as it was only in the late 18th century that monster literature began moving away from physical deformity as an indicator of monstrosity and corruption (Wright, 2013, p. 79). The practice of physiognomy, however, (linking outward appearance to a person's virtue) remained exceedingly popular throughout the nineteenth century (Wright, p. 61). Such deterministic notions of human beings being inherently 'good' or 'evil' independently of their actions is suggestive of the idea of original sin and its eternal damnation of entire bloodlines. In traditional monster literature, this is a common justification for Othering of the monster – its physical difference providing sufficient proof of villainy – and one that dates back to the Biblical curse of Cain. Our oldest surviving piece of monster literature, *Beowulf*, notably also labels its monsters as children of Cain, the original cursed bloodline (Hall, 1892, chapter 2, lines 53 - 61), and uses this as justification for the purge of their kind. Stoker's vampires are seemingly in a parallel situation, banished from God in the moment of their vampiric birth, long before any sinful action actually takes place. This idea of sinful being rather than sinful action is largely incompatible with the modern Western consensus on ethics, and is feasibly an even more interesting source of discourse for its dissimilarity to our own line of thinking.

4.2.5 Democracy and participation

Cooperation and team work in Dracula

A stark difference between *Dracula* and my other chosen work is the reliance on an entire group of people and their individual narratives to piece together the plot. While *Frankenstein* has one clear protagonist, it's a complicated task to boil *Dracula* down to a singular main character. Without the formation of the protagonist group, the plot of the novel would inevitably fall apart. As the group working together is such a pivotal part of the story, a large portion of the novel hinges on the characters' ability to cooperate and make group decisions effectively. This capacity for team work is what ultimately results in their successful confrontation and killing of Dracula. Mina seems the most aware of this advantageous coming together, as she is seen advocating for it on more than one occasion. She tells Dr. Seward early that "[w]orking together and with absolute trust, we can surely be stronger than if some of us were in the dark" (p. 215) and later addresses the entire group with a similar sentiment; "[y]ou are strong in your numbers, for you can defy that which would break down the human endurance of one who had to guard alone" (p. 316). This type of positive reinforcement of

collective thinking is critical to instill a respect for democratic values and participation. Seen in contrast with my other chosen novel, the protagonists of *Dracula* are the only ones to emerge victorious and at peace by the end of the novel, a testament to the strength of the group over the individual alone, albeit also a testament to the threat of group-think and social pressure.

Agency and Influence in Dracula

In spite of Mina's insistence on the importance of working together, and her notable contributions, she is repeatedly excluded from the group – an exclusion that results in rather grave consequences. Being frequently left to her own devices puts her in a vulnerable position, despite the male protagonists' insistence on her safety. They seem to almost willfully ignore that their absence and exclusion of women in matters of importance is exactly the course of action that led to Lucy Westenra's death. Van Helsing refuses to consort with Lucy's mother, or the female servants, leading to erroneous decisions on their part, the outcome of which would have been preventable given a free flow of information. Although the male protagonists are in agreement, Van Helsing is particularly vocal about his exclusion of the female characters. Initially, their exclusion of Lucy's mother could be perceived as a kind-hearted intention on account of her heart failure and fragile state, but Mina, despite her health, is equally kept in the dark owing to her gender. Van Helsing's reasoning proves nothing short of sexist stereotyping, as he tells Dr. Seward:

[I]t is no part for a woman. Even if she be not harmed, her heart may fail her in so much and so many horrors and hereafter she may suffer – both in waking, from her nerves, and in sleep, from her dreams (p. 227).

Mina herself is thoroughly against being sidelined, citing reservations, but ultimately acknowledging her lack of agency in the matter: “[T]heir minds were made up, and though it was a bitter pill for me to swallow, I could say nothing, save to accept their chivalrous care of me” (p. 233). This exclusion coming a mere one day after Mina's speech on “working together and with absolute trust” (p. 215) is a particularly heavy blow. Despite Mina being denied any form of meaningful agency, however, she holds an immense influence within the group – her secretarial work and ideas (although she may not be permitted to act on them herself) forming the foundation of the group's uprising against the tyrannical vampire. In this way she defies

her limitations, allowing her to become one of the strongest and most prominently influential characters of the novel, even if the men of the group deny her the recognition. Toward the end of the novel, however, Mina is becoming increasingly overlooked, Senf (2010) stating that “[a]s the narrators race to Transylvania, she becomes more and more marginalized, and by the end of the novel totally silent” (p. 65). In light of this, Mina’s story ending in that of traditional motherhood feels almost a tragedy and injustice to her character.

The characters’ view on gender roles and womanhood does not, however, appear to line up with the author’s. *Dracula*’s portrayal of women is actually remarkably liberal for the time it was written, and Stoker is prone to showcasing the competence and contributions of women. It is, in fact, when these attributes are ignored by the male protagonists, that they become most vulnerable. For example, Lucy’s mother removes the warding from her daughter’s bedroom, because she was never informed of its significance (or even considered) by Van Helsing and Dr. Seward (p. 131). Similarly, the servant stealing the golden cross from Lucy’s corpse did so because she was uninformed of the true ramifications of her actions. In Van Helsing’s own words; “[s]he knew not altogether what she did” (p. 161). This predicament is not unique to the female characters, as Dr. Seward would also have been able to make more well-informed choices regarding Lucy’s care, had he been fully aware of her situation. Nevertheless, he is quickly brought on board, and the most harrowing example is found in the lack of communication between Mina and the rest of the established group. As Mina is at this point a trusted and well-established member of the group, there seems to be no reason for her exclusion save her gender, and her ignorance and inability to communicate effectively with the group concerning all things related to Count Dracula is the very thing that leads to her vampiric corruption. This ironic twist is too plain for Stoker to have been unaware of its implications and how it conveys an explicit defense of female agency.

Chapter 5.2 will take a closer look at how these explored themes and literary examples can form didactic benefits and potential areas of use within the Norwegian ESL classroom.

4.3 Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*

4.3.1 Introduction

Frankenstein; or The Modern Prometheus (1818) was written by British author Mary Shelley, only 19 years old at the time, and initially published anonymously. Mary Shelley's husband, P. B. Shelley, was himself an author, albeit a largely unsuccessful one. Although the first edition of *Frankenstein* alone outsold all of P. B. Shelley's combined works (Bennett & Curran, 2000, p. 43), it was rejected by all the top publishers of the time (p. 41), and received very modest sales figures in the decades following its publication (p. 50). Bennett & Curran (2000) attributes this rejection among publishers not to the quality of the text, nor the potential sales earnings, but to doubts regarding the blasphemous themes and morals of *Frankenstein* (p. 43). The difficulty in drawing any definite and righteous moral lesson from the novel also caused contention with critics of the time (Seed, 2005, p. 459). The Victorian era of the late 19th century would mark a significant change in the novel's popularity – the copyright expired and publishers began satiating the market with affordable printed versions, creating an instant explosion of sales and demand (p. 49). *Frankenstein* had effectively been brought back from the brink of death.

As the daughter of the two most prolific radical political thinkers of their time (Mellor, 1989, p. 8), it comes as no surprise that Mary Shelley's work is itself radical and controversial. *Frankenstein* presents a plethora of moral dilemmas irreconcilable with core religious beliefs, such as the asexual creation of life and the many references toward suicidal tendencies by both of the novel's most prominent characters; Frankenstein and his monster. While these elements may have been seen as blasphemous and antithetical to religious morality in its day, their incorporations create intricate ethical discussion and analyses.

The novel's exploration of difficult themes (humanity, scientific power, ethicality, belonging, socio-cultural contention, sexuality, etc.), though controversial at the time, makes it ideal for working with themes from the LK20 core curriculum values, as I will explore in chapters 4.3.2 through 4.3.5. The difficulty in drawing a definite moral lesson also makes it ideal for classroom discussion and introspective contemplation, toward the development of critical/independent thinking skills. More than perhaps any other work of fiction, *Frankenstein*, by keeping its moral lines blurred, challenges the dichotomic views on 'human' versus 'monster', 'good' versus 'evil' and 'us' versus the 'Other', establishing an entirely gray spectrum of

ethicality (as opposed to ‘black and white’ thinking) more closely resembling the complexities of real life.

What makes *Frankenstein* such a compelling novel for use in the classroom is that it prompts pupils not to find answers, but to realize that no clear answers exist – that all things can be possible at the same time; Frankenstein’s creature is neither victim nor abuser, but a disturbing mixture of the two. Frankenstein himself is neither father nor unrelated, but complexly bonded to his creature. While the literary monster works to defy categorization and to expose societal issues, as discussed in chapter 2, it is the novel itself which beautifully exposes the intricate and undefinable realities of the world.

4.3.2 Human dignity

Humanity and monstrosity in Frankenstein

According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, all humans have the inviolable right to freedoms such as “equality in dignity and rights”, “life, liberty and security of person”, protection from “inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment”, “protection against discrimination”, protection from “arbitrary [...] exile”, protection against “attacks upon his honour and reputation”, “the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution”, “the right to marry and to found a family”, and “the right to education”, “without any distinction of any kind, such as [...] birth.” In addition, “everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself [...], including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services” (United Nations, 1948). Frankenstein’s creature is not afforded any of these rights, and is alone in questioning their absence. Despite not yet having committed any crimes, he is stripped of human dignity from the moment of his birth, when even his creator denies him any consideration. The novel largely justifies this inequality by separating the creature entirely from humankind; the creature is frequently described as a separate species to human by both Frankenstein and himself, and is altogether removed from human society. In part, this separation is due to the creature’s physiognomy and superhuman abilities, but is for the most part reliant on humankind’s arbitrary Othering of the creature. The creature’s capabilities, which Frankenstein later takes as proof of the creature’s inhumanity, were once something he strived for in pursuit of betterment of man (p. 27). In theory, then, the monster’s superior physique was not originally

labelled monstrous or inhuman, and these attributes cannot account for his supposed lack of humanity. More likely, the creature's Othering is a result of a willed distancing based on his perceived difference and lack of belonging within societal structures. In other words, humankind's inability to conveniently place him inside preconceived and preestablished categories forms an uncomfortable, arbitrary distancing; or Othering. As his creator, Frankenstein himself saw no theoretical or conceptual flaw in his creature until he was brought to life. Once he was born and began seeking human society and companionship, the irreconcilable uncanny familiarity seems to have been what frightened Frankenstein – the creature is at once *not* human and *too* human. This initial divide between the creature and humanity only widens throughout the novel as the creature begins to internalize his alienation. The lingering question becomes whether the creature is devoid of human rights due to his monstrousness, or if his lack of human rights is what inevitably causes his monstrousness. In trying to define the monster, Michel Foucault asserts that the monster is an embodiment of juridical violation of law (whether social or natural) (discussed in Zanello, 2021, p. 2). In *Frankenstein*, the asexual and unnatural conception of life is a clear violation of both social and natural law, making the creature a perfect specimen of monstrosity. Foucault's definition is not shared with everyone, however, as it absolves the violator, while labeling the violation. Nevertheless, this understanding of the term *monster* helps explain why the creature is considered monstrous through no fault of his own, and predating any erroneous action on his part.

Monster literature has always been ripe with questions about what constitutes humanity, what makes us human, and what makes the monstrous *inhuman*. Frankenstein's creature, however, is not objectively unassociated with humanity. His desperation for social contact and his emotional spectrum is quite clearly a result of his intrinsic humanity. His ethical deliberations and sense of morality is innately human, his behavior showing clear signs of predetermined ethicality even before he is guided by external influences such as the De Lacey family or his acquired books. Even his outward appearance, though the main source of his Othering, is entirely made up of human parts. Daniel Cottom argues that Frankenstein's monster is in actuality the perfect representation of humanity, and that it is exactly this which makes him monstrous: "It is as if Victor sees in his creation the breakdown of the concept of man into an irreconcilable diversity of individuals or of qualities within individuals – a breakdown that leaves representation as a groundless, disordered, monstrous affair" (1980, p. 61). Perhaps the strongest case for the creature's humanity is how he himself feels initially connected with

humankind until he learns that he is different, describing his ‘infancy’ such: “[M]y soul glowed with love and *humanity*” (p. 83, my italics). The creature is deemed inhuman not through any act or being of his own, but because Frankenstein, and other humans, have universally decided through fear of association that he is. Frankenstein especially goes to great lengths to ascertain the creature as something other than human. From the moment of the creature’s conception, Frankenstein avoids descriptors that could cause association with humanity, and uses instead labels such as “demoniacal corpse”, “creature”, “monster”, “spectre”, “enemy” or even “a thing such as even Dante could not have conceived” (p. 44 – 46). These labels are all attached before Frankenstein’s creature has so much as uttered a single word or performed a single action. When the creature later does commit immoral crimes, Frankenstein uses this to reaffirm his righteous exclusion: “Nothing in human shape could have destroyed the fair child” (p. 60). This stance feels unfairly naïve, as there have of course been instances of humans committing horrifying crimes in the past, such as even the creature abhor:

For a long time I could not conceive how one man could go forth to murder his fellow, or even why there were laws and governments; but when I heard details of vice and bloodshed, my wonder ceased and I turned away with disgust and loathing (p. 101).

It would appear that even his crimes are not sufficient to justly deny his belonging to the human race. The exact basis of his perceived inhumanity becomes apparent in his meeting with the blind man, De Lacey, when after a brief conversation, De Lacey admits to being persuaded of the creature’s sincerity (p 114). His son, Felix, however, having never before met or conversed with the creature, instigates a savage attack motivated only by the creature’s appearance (p. 114). This immediate prejudice is an obstacle even Robert Walton struggles to overcome, only managing to address the creature after averting his eyes (p. 191). Even Frankenstein somewhat admits that his hatred of the creature stems primarily from his appearance; when he feels himself beginning to sympathize with the creature, looking at him is all it takes to resurrect the initial feelings of abhorrence:

I compassioned him and sometimes felt a wish to console him, but when I looked upon him, when I saw the filthy mass that moved and talked, my heart sickened and my feelings were altered to those of horror and hatred (p. 125).

Allen (2008) perceives this reluctance in Frankenstein and Walton to look upon the creature, as a sign of their inability to “fully open their eyes to the truth”, proving that they are “lacking

[...] insight or enlightenment” (p. 41). The irony of Frankenstein’s hatred for his creature’s outward appearance is that he fashioned the creature’s loathsome features with his own hands. As a lifeless, scientific experiment, Frankenstein had no qualms about the creature’s hideousness, but once it becomes a manifestation of Frankenstein’s own prejudices and monstrosity, he can no longer look upon him. I will elaborate further on this parallel monstrosity between Frankenstein and his creature in the upcoming section of this chapter.

The birth of a monster

One of *Frankenstein*’s main themes, that is deeply explored throughout the novel, is the philosophical question of how wickedness is created. Although it is not always a simple task to recognize ill intent, it is an even more demanding task to pinpoint its origin. Shelley appears to promote a very clear interpretation of the question of nature versus nurture in her portrayal of Frankenstein’s creature, although no answer is ever definitively given, leaving room for discussion and reflection for the reader.

As Frankenstein flees from his laboratory (p. 43) before the creature has even processed his own existence, Frankenstein’s monster awakens to life “cold [...], and half frightened, as it were, instinctively, finding myself so desolate” (p. 86). His account of his birth is remarkably similar to what you would expect of infant children; “I was a poor, helpless, miserable wretch; I knew, and could distinguish, nothing; but feeling pain invade me on all sides, I sat down and wept” (p. 86). As the importance of parental love and affection during these initial moments of life is well documented and instinctively known, the creature’s birth becomes a brutal display of social deprivation. This moment alone and the immense trauma that such a start to life can (and likely will) produce, is sufficient in explaining anti-social behavior, but by the creature’s own account, he still “glowed with love and humanity” (p. 83) at this point in life. His primary introduction to human civilization and society is an equally cruel experience, as men flee from him (p. 88) or beat him until “grievously bruised by stones and many other kinds of missile weapons” (p. 89). His primary socialization, then, has been a lesson in the “barbarity of man” (p. 89). Upon finding the De Lacey family, he would be expected to harbor anger or hatred toward humans, but is instead shown to experience curiosity and great compassion. The creature can hardly be blamed for his need of love, as it is a vital necessity for all humans or other social species, but he appears almost apologetic in his first requests for it; “I asked, it is true, for greater treasures than a little food and rest: I required kindness and

sympathy; but I did not believe myself utterly unworthy of it” (p. 112). This lack of proper socialization goes on for months while the creature isolates himself in fear of humankind, but once he has finally gathered the courage to ask De Lacey for help, the blind man’s answer marks a pivotal point of reflection. Upon hearing the creature’s plea to “not be driven from the society and empathy of your fellow creatures”, De Lacey answers pointedly: “Heaven forbid! Even if you were really criminal, for that can only drive you to desperation, and not instigate you to virtue” (p. 114). The importance of proper socialization and human attachment for the development of morality and social functioning cannot be more plainly stated, and is a point which is frequently repeated throughout the novel. While the birth of the creature can be dated further back, I argue that the birth of the *monster* happens after his definite rejection from the De Lacey family. Although beaten and hated, the creature blames himself for introducing himself too hastily, and even then aspires to mend the relationship between them. When he learns of their departure from the cottage, and feels that he has lost all hope of human connection, this is the point in time where the creature first recognizes his capacity for destruction: “For the first time the feelings of revenge and hatred filled my bosom, and I did not strive to control them, but allowing myself to be borne away by the stream, I bent my mind towards injury and death” (p. 117). Not letting these feelings fester, however, he attempts twice more to connect with humanity (p. 119, 120), being callously rejected on both occasions. This is the moment he seems to abandon all hope of human connection, and in doing so loses sympathy for the people he is now recognizing as his enemy. The creature poses the rhetorical question to Frankenstein in an attempt to garner understanding: “There was none among the myriads of men that existed who would pity or assist me; and should I feel kindness towards my enemies?” (p. 115).

When discussing the transformation from virtuous creature to monster, one cannot ignore Frankenstein’s own descent into madness. Although he is viewed drastically different by his fellow humans, he follows a remarkably similar path to that of his creature. His intense and prolonged self-isolation begins to prey on both body and mind, making him both erratic and prone to emotional outbursts. Frankenstein himself considers this a great flaw when he proclaims that “[a] human being in perfection ought always to preserve a calm and peaceful mind and never to allow passion or a transitory desire to disturb his tranquility” (p. 41). In addition, his forceful loss of human connection (through the deaths of his friends and family), creates the same vengeful disposition toward the perceived source of his social destitution. Although Frankenstein toward the end of the novel begins to describe himself identically to

that of the creature (comparing himself to a spectre on p. 147, and to Satan on p. 184), he remains oblivious to the parallels between them. He does, however, somewhat concede to his own monstrosity: “How [humans] would, each and all, abhor me and hunt me from the world did they know my unhallowed acts and the crimes which had their source in me!” (p. 161). *Frankenstein*, interestingly enough, can be considered not the tale of a monster, but the tale of *two* monsters, each a different side of the same coin, existing in parallel with one another. Both creature and creator blame the other for their misfortune and misery, and uses this as justification for their blind anger and monstrous acts. Unlike the transformation of his creature, however, Frankenstein’s prejudice and abhorrence toward his creation is an instant reaction to its mere existence, and not a slow build-up.

Frankenstein’s almost complete disregard for other perspectives and the experiences of others is astonishing. When contemplating his actions, he seems not primarily preoccupied by how these actions affect others, but by how they form consequences that will affect himself. The sympathies he does afford others seem strictly reserved those in his closest familial circle. In the entire year following his creature’s birth, he not once considers its well-being or experiences, or even its whereabouts; an indifference bordering on the sociopathic. Since Frankenstein admits to a happy childhood surrounded by kind and empathetic people, it is puzzling to consider where these monstrous tendencies originated. It is Frankenstein’s existence, and not that of his creature, that complicates the question of whether wickedness is innate or created. Furthermore, Frankenstein’s self-conditioning, convincing himself of the creature’s monstrosity, justifies in his own mind the mental torment he subjects the creature to. According to Bernatchez (2009), “individuals can perpetrate inhuman crimes, because torture reinforces in the individual the aggressor-state’s assumption of justification and superiority” (p. 209). This in turn results in Frankenstein’s self-victimization and inability to sympathize with the creature’s pain: “Even though Victor has been integral to the creation of the situation he bemoans, he insists that he alone is the innocent sufferer; he denies the Creature’s right to sympathy or justice” (p. 209). This conditioning is not solely for the purpose of self-victimization, however; in some ways, Frankenstein comes to actively depend on his creature’s monstrosity as a distraction from his own. Cottom (1980) states that “Victor cannot recognize his kinship (or twinship) to his monster because to do so [...] he would no longer be able to use his view of the monster as a means of displacing his own monstrosity” (p. 63). On a subconscious level, then, Frankenstein must be somewhat aware of his own tendencies toward the monstrous.

4.3.3 Identity and cultural diversity

Seclusion and xenophobia in Frankenstein

As mentioned previously, Frankenstein's self-isolation is a driving force behind his mental deterioration. His isolation during his studies is entirely self-inflicted, but his seclusion from society does not begin with his stay at Ingolstadt. Frankenstein's childhood in Geneva being extraordinarily secluded, seemingly devoid of any meaningful secondary socialization, it is little wonder why he chooses to remain shut off from the world in his adult life. Frankenstein seems fully aware of this truth as he mentions of his childhood that "the lives of my parents were passed in considerable seclusion" and that "it was my temper to avoid a crowd and to attach myself fervently to a few" (p. 24). He goes so far as to admit his distaste of new people: "My life had hitherto been remarkably secluded and domestic, and this had given me invincible repugnance to new countenances" (p. 32). After the deaths of his family members, Frankenstein remains reluctant to form new friendships, fervently believing that no man or woman could measure up to his childhood attachments (p. 185). With this ingrained belief, Frankenstein's later revulsion and rejection of his creature seems inevitable. Frankenstein works for nearly two years without thought for the consequences of his success, seeing his creature as nothing but a scientific experiment until the moment it is infused with life. Arguably, Frankenstein's rejection of his creature may have less to do with its horrific appearance, and more to do with the creature gaining personhood, rendering it a stranger. Frankenstein has hitherto considered the spark of life to be the end of his experiment, and failed to consider the ramifications and the responsibilities he would then be burdened with. At the end of his life, Frankenstein recognizes his neglected duties, but maintains that his duty to his own kind outweighed that of his creature; a false dichotomy seemingly concocted to justify his actions, but nevertheless a show of his priorities and familial loyalties:

In a fit of enthusiastic madness I created a rational creature and was bound towards him to assure, as far as was in my power, his happiness and well-being. This was my duty, but there was another still paramount to that. My duties towards the beings of my own species had greater claims to my attention (p. 189).

Frankenstein's own father seems aware of these xenophobic tendencies in his son, as it is Alphonse's decision to send him to Ingolstadt for the continuation of his studies, Frankenstein stating that "my father thought it necessary for the completion of my education that I should be made acquainted with other customs than those of my native country" (p. 30). During his

two years in Ingolstadt, however, he never once makes the effort to befriend any of his fellow students, and limits his social contact to that of his professors'. This ignorance toward other peoples and cultures creates a forceful ethnocentric perspective that leads to an Othering of everything that is not intrinsically familiar to him.

Traditional family values in Frankenstein

One of the biggest horrors of *Frankenstein*, and what publishers and contemporary critics seemed to protest most strongly was the perversion of the natural cycle of life and death (Bennett & Curran, 2000, p. 52). Frankenstein's creation of life is a blasphemous mockery of Abrahamic religions, where the power to bestow life is reserved for higher powers than humankind. Shelley herself somewhat acknowledges this in the subtitle of her novel, '*The Modern Prometheus*'; Prometheus being the mythological titan who stole fire from the gods to give to mankind. Shelley makes clear through this titling that the power of creation was not intended for humans, and that this scientific overstep is a grievous sin. Prometheus, just as Frankenstein, was punished severely for his transgressions, but subsequently celebrated as a herald of human knowledge and wisdom. Frankenstein can thus be seen as both a blasphemer and a benefactor to humankind for his scientific contributions. The real offence, however, is not Frankenstein's conception of life, but the asexual nature of it. Without marrying or naturally producing a son, Frankenstein has attained a grotesque sort of fatherhood, threatening the foundation of the traditional nuclear family. This threat becomes manifested through the murder of Elizabeth, Frankenstein's wife, at the hands of Frankenstein's creature (his premarital, asexual son). This sinful secret becomes the effective ruination of his legitimate marriage. If we do, as previously proposed, consider *Frankenstein* a tale of *two* monsters, Frankenstein's sexuality becomes a key factor in his symbolic monstrosity. Although not as grievously divergent as for example the homosexuality or promiscuousness of *Dracula*, at least not at an immediate glance, his asexuality begins a course which results in the destruction of his entire family line, save perhaps for his sickly brother Ernest, whose fate remains ambiguous at the end of the novel. Ernest's illness, however, is likely to result in premature death or the inability to produce any heirs, especially once his family and caretakers are all lost to him.

Apart from the asexual conception of his creature, Frankenstein's greatest mistake is his inability to take responsibility for the life which he has created. Parenthood and its

commitments form a main theme in *Frankenstein*, with both Frankenstein and his creature contemplating in which ways a father is dutybound to his children. One of the novel's primary morals seems to be the repercussions of parental negligence, a topic Mary Shelley potentially contemplated often as a result of her own husband's parental negligence toward their daughter (Mellor, 1989, p. 32). According to Mellor, Mary's own lack of nurturing and loving parental figures could also have caused an obsessive need for stable family ties (1989, p. 36). This background frames *Frankenstein* as a perhaps intentional exploration of the dangers of parental neglect. With this in mind, Frankenstein's account of his own parents becomes tragically ironic:

I was their [...] child, the innocent and helpless creature bestowed on them by heaven, whom to bring up to good, and whose future lot it was in their hands to direct to happiness or misery, according as they fulfilled their duties towards me. With this deep consciousness of what they owed towards the being to which they had given life, added to the active spirit of tenderness that animated both, it may be imagined that while during every hour of my infant life I received a lesson of patience, of charity, and of self-control, I was so guided by a silken cord that all seemed but one train of enjoyment to me (p. 21).

The most glaring difference between the creature and the creator (and indeed all other humans) is their intensely contrasting childhood experiences. Frankenstein heavily credits his parents for his happiness, goodness, patience, charity and self-control, all traits which he abhors his creation for lacking. His refusal to claim accountability for his creature's disposition, as his only parental figure, is baffling. This is especially true when considering that Frankenstein accredits his parents for his virtues to Robert Walton *after* the abandonment of his creature and the subsequent consequences. Frankenstein fleeing from his newly born creature not once, but twice, signals a continuation of what Allen (2008) calls a "firmly established theme of men who abandon their families and loved ones" (p. 51), just as Walton abandons his sister in favor of his expedition.

While speculating about his experiment, Frankenstein does consider the aspect of fatherhood, claiming that "[a] new species would bless me as its creator and source" and that "[n]o father could claim the gratitude of his child so completely as I should deserve theirs" (p. 40). It is unclear whether Frankenstein at this point is determined to fulfill his duties as a father, and have considered his responsibilities past the point of creation, or if he is simply woefully

ignorant in thinking that life is a sufficient gift and that no further action will be required of him. His insistence on being worshipped as a father, however, speaks to a prideful narcissism and a misunderstanding of the concept of parenthood. His creature confronts him with the harsh reality of these unfulfilled obligations upon their first meeting, reminding him that the love and admiration of a child is earned and conditional: “Do your duty towards me, and I will do mine towards you and the rest of mankind” (p. 82 – 83). Nevertheless, the creature does concede to the parental authority that is inherent within their relationship: “I am thy creature, and I will be even mild and docile to my natural lord and king if thou wilt also perform thy part, the which thou owest me” (p. 83). It is during this confrontation that Frankenstein for the first time in the three years that have passed since the outset of his experiment seem to grasp his parental obligations: “For the first time, also, I felt what the duties of a creator towards his creature were” (p. 85). This deference toward his creature does not survive long, as he later re-convinces himself of the creature’s evil, and resolves to abandon and abhor him yet again. Despite the creature’s anger toward his creator, there exists a clear desperation for fatherly love, perhaps believing him to be the only human that can grant him the affection and approval he seeks, as they are intrinsically bound to each other, however unlikely the scenario. Upon first witnessing the fatherly love between the old De Lacey and his daughter Agatha, the creature is utterly overcome with emotion;

I felt sensations of a peculiar and overpowering nature; they were a mixture of pain and pleasure, such as I had never before experienced, either from hunger or cold, warmth or food; and I withdrew from the window unable to bear these emotions (p. 91).

The comparisons to core needs such as food and warmth emphasizes the importance of compassion and connection as elementary needs for survival. This minimal hope of connection to his father, the only human he has managed to converse with as his true self (however unpleasantly), could explain the cat-and-mouse game he plays with Frankenstein after Elizabeth’s murder (p. 178 – 179) as well as his grief over Frankenstein’s death (p. 191). Bernatchez supposes that Frankenstein’s creature maintains a singular motivation guiding his actions throughout the novel; “to form a community” (2009, p. 213). His last frail connection to humanity lost, this is the moment he resolves to take his own life (p. 194). In light of this, the common misconception that the name ‘Frankenstein’ belongs to Frankenstein’s creature is in fact a sort of poetic justice for the familial bonds the creature was denied; as the de-facto son of Frankenstein, he is by birthright entitled to the family name. Birthright and familial

circumstances are further discussed in chapter 4.3.5 as socio-cultural contentions, but Frankenstein's twisted form of fatherhood is, as discussed, deeply significant to the perceived threat toward the traditional nuclear family. The circumstances around the monster's birth are also acutely linked to the creature's sense of cultural and social sense of belonging, and the forming of his identity.

Othering in Frankenstein

As previously discussed, one of the strongest points of Othering within *Frankenstein* is the circumstances around the creature's birth, as well as his resulting exclusion from society and civilization. The creature's lack of upbringing, formal education, permanent residence, employment, or even name (and his utter inability to attain any of these things), creates an unfortunate separation between Frankenstein's creature and human society. These factors create a solid foundation for the Othering of the creature, but is not all that distances him from humankind. As mentioned in chapter 4.2.4, physiognomy was still a widespread practice in the early 19th century (Wright, p. 61), with classical monster literature not receiving its first beautiful monster until perhaps the publication of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* in 1890. Outer appearance as an indicator of goodness or wickedness is not an unfamiliar concept even in present modern times, with popular films such as *Cinderella* (1950), *Star Wars* (1977 – 2015) and *Matilda* (1996) all subscribing to the same outdated message that it is possible to ascertain a person's internal character from their external form. Popular teen films, such as *High School Musical* (2006), are also riddled with examples of the dark-haired, natural beauty heroine and the "fake", superficial, blonde antagonist. Despite these teen films appearing at first to subvert the expectation, this model has become so popular that it can be considered a redefined, yet equally harmful, understanding of physiognomy. Physiognomy is, of course, an unsubstantiated pseudo-science at best, but is quite seriously discussed within the novel, with even the blind man De Lacey considering his judgment of character to be incomplete without the ability to "judge of your countenance" (p. 114). The creature's hideousness is also Frankenstein's primary concern when judging his creation and deeming it evil, claiming that "[n]o mortal could support the horror of that countenance" (p. 44). Even the creature recognizes the root of his rejection to be that of his appearance, using this as justification for why he requires a companion of similar birth and exterior; "man will not associate with me; but one as deformed and horrible as myself would not deny herself to me. My companion must

be of the same species and have the same defects” (p. 122). This line of thinking extends to other characters in *Frankenstein*, Elizabeth unquestioningly being the most prominent example. As an orphan girl she was specially selected to join a prestigious family because Frankenstein’s mother deemed her superior to the rest of the children in the household they were visiting:

She appeared of a different stock. The four others were dark-eyed, hardy little vagrants; this child was thin and very fair. Her hair was the brightest living gold, and despite the poverty of her clothing, seemed to set a crown of distinction on her head. Her brow was clear and ample, her blue eyes cloudless, and her lips and the moulding of her face so expressive of sensibility and sweetness that none could behold her without looking on her as of a distinct species, a being heaven-sent, and bearing a celestial stamp in all her features (p. 21 – 22).

If Elizabeth’s natural beauty can raise her beyond her station and instill love and trust in those who behold her, it is little wonder that the creature’s flawed physique would provoke the opposite reaction. In 1831, Frankenstein’s creature would find a literary descendent in Quasimodo from the French Gothic *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* by Victor Hugo, proving that the negative impact of physiognomic preconceptions continued to be a relevant and sympathetic topic of monster literature. Even so, the unflawed human characters of the novel are not alone in these prejudices, with Frankenstein’s creature himself frequently judging others by their outward appearances, mentioning for example that “[t]he gentle manners and beauty of the cottagers greatly endeared them to [him]” (p. 95) or claiming that the portrait of Frankenstein’s mother “softened and attracted [him]”, comparing her beauty to an “air of divine benignity” (p. 121). Despite the characters of the novel wholeheartedly subscribing to notions of physiognomy, however, Mary Shelley herself seems to be an ardent opponent of the practice. As readers we are frequently being confronted with the flaws and inaccuracies of physiognomy, the novel seemingly rejecting it as nothing more than a self-fulfilling prophecy; the wickedness of Frankenstein’s creature originates not from his ugliness, but from the treatment he receives on the basis of it.

Frankenstein’s creature notably also takes part in his own Othering. He distances himself thoroughly from human society by referring to himself as a separate species, never once describing his existence as a human one. At times he even shows understanding for his exclusion, somewhat forgiving humankind’s crimes against him by defending them as

understandable, saying, for example, of the cottagers that he observes: “If such lovely creatures were miserable, it was less strange that I, an imperfect and solitary being, should be wretched” (p. 93). At one point he also likens himself to “a wild beast that had broken the toils” (p. 115). This internalized Othering is doubtlessly a result of his forced seclusion and a rationalization of humanity’s violence and hatred toward him; having been repeatedly told by every person he meets, in words or in action, that he is worthless and different, acceptance and internalization of that message is a natural psychological result. Bernatchez (2009) claims this self-Othering to be a part of the physical and mental torture the creature is subjected to, the torture serving as an interrogation in which human society demands a confession of monstrosity from the creature itself (p. 207). In internalizing the message, however, Frankenstein’s creature distances himself further from humanity, vowing to no longer sympathize with humans, as they are not his kind, and do not sympathize with him. This is the moment the creature becomes truly dangerous, as he is no longer bound by human virtues or law. If he is not of the same species, the crimes he commits against humanity can be rationalized as no worse than that of a man hunting a deer, as opposed to symbolic fratricide. In rejecting the creature, humankind has created its own monster and adversary. *Frankenstein* is ultimately not a story about the monstrous Other, but of the monstrous *self*.

4.3.4 Ethical awareness

Morality in Frankenstein

While *Dracula* attempted to draw a more definite line between the ethical and unethical, the morality in *Frankenstein* is a more intricate subject of debate. The novel is not written in a lecturing tone, but seems instead to give rise to philosophical questions for self-reflection. There are morals to be drawn from *Frankenstein*, but it is not always entirely clear what these morals ought to be. It can, for example, be difficult to distinguish where exactly Frankenstein acted immorally; it might have been in the creation of the creature itself, in his immediate rejection of the creature, or in his attitudes toward him after their first confrontation. Even prior to the creature’s birth, Frankenstein’s acquisition of dead bodies to aid in his experiment is ethically questionable at best, especially when taking into account that Frankenstein would have no legal way to access these bodies (Seed, 2005, p. 457). It is also unclear whether Frankenstein ought to have created a second creature, or if he was ‘right’ in refusing the request. *Frankenstein* is a tragic tale made up of a plethora of choices made by both

Frankenstein himself and his creature, and though the outcome of these choices is one of tragedy, it is a difficult task to discern exactly which choices led to the misery, death and destruction that was the end result. The hypothetical discussions possible to draw from *Frankenstein* lay a solid foundation for further ethical reflection; what if Frankenstein had not abandoned his creature? What if he had created the second creature? What if his creature had introduced himself to the cottagers more gradually, or sought sympathy from Frankenstein prior to the murder of William? What if Frankenstein had warned his family of the threat his creature posed?

P. B. Shelley's written preface to *Frankenstein* (1817) reveals that he saw the novel as a cautionary tale of human nature, and that he treated the work more seriously than just a piece of fiction for amusement's sake. What Mary Shelley's own feelings pertaining to her novel was we can mostly just speculate, but Anne Mellor makes a compelling argument that her frequent pregnancies, the loss of her infant daughter, and anxieties around childbirth (the creation of life) contributed greatly to the nightmares that would later inspire *Frankenstein*:

[The dream] gives form shape to her deepest fears. What if my child is born deformed, a freak, a moron, a "hideous" thing? Could I still love it, or would I be horrified and wish it were dead again? What will happen if I can't love my child? Am I capable of raising a healthy, normal child? Will my child die (as my first baby did)? [...] Could it kill *me* (as I killed my mother, Mary Wollstonecraft)? (1989, p. 41).

After three seasons of active labor (approximately nine months), Frankenstein succeeds in giving life, and is immediately after haunted by similarly anxious 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 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 (p. 43 – 44).

This dream is, from a literary standpoint, a clear foreshadowing of things to come; the murder of Elizabeth on their wedding night – a death which Frankenstein blames himself for on account of having given life to the man who kills her. Seen as a parallel to Mary Shelley's own anxieties, however, this dream becomes a little more; symbolizing Frankenstein's anxieties around fatherhood and the future. This dream, although treated as a mere footnote in

the novel, reveals a lot about Frankenstein's motivations and the apprehension that drove him to abandon his responsibilities. The story of *Frankenstein* can thus be seen as a cautionary tale against letting anxieties and unchecked emotion guide your actions. Frankenstein himself introduces his story as a cautionary tale to Robert Walton;

I do not know that the relation of my disasters will be useful to you; yet, when I reflect that you are pursuing the same course, exposing yourself to the same dangers which have rendered me what I am, I imagine that you may deduce an apt moral from my tale, one that may direct you if you succeed in your undertaking and console you in case of failure (p. 17 – 18).

This due warning may at first appear as a lesson not to let pride and ambition lead you blindly into tragedy and several quotes from Frankenstein after having finished reciting his story seem to confirm this; “[t]his thought, which supported me in the commencement of my career, now serves only to plunge me lower in the dust. [...] [L]ike the archangel who aspired to omnipotence, I am chained in eternal hell” (p. 184). Again, on his deathbed, he implores Walton to heed his warning: “Seek happiness in tranquility and avoid ambition, even if it be only the apparently innocent one of distinguishing yourself in science and discoveries” (p. 190). This potential moral of pride and ambition is muddled however when Walton's crew entreat him to turn the ship around and head for safety, and Frankenstein reprimands them for their lack of bravery. At the thought of giving up and returning, Frankenstein becomes agitated, his speech paralleling much of his own experiences with scientific advancement:

You were hereafter to be hailed as the benefactors of your species, your names adored as belonging to brave men who encountered death for honour and the benefit of mankind. And now, behold, with the first imagination of danger [...] you shrink away and are content to be handed down as men who had not strength enough to endure cold and peril (p. 187).

Frankenstein's moral could then be interpreted not to be to avoid scientific undertaking, however ethically dubious, or even to pause and reflect upon the cost and consequences of your achievements, but to not turn back and flee once the mission becomes frightening, such as he fled from his creature when Frankenstein became fearful of what he had created. Ultimately, Frankenstein's moral position still remains unclear at the end of the novel, with Allen (2008) claiming that “Victor dies still morally confused about his own responsibilities”

(p. 74), and if one were to extract a meaningful moral from *Frankenstein*, it would likely not align perfectly with Frankenstein's own intension or moral insight. Higgins (2008) believes *Frankenstein* to be "a text about interpretation and misinterpretation" that challenges the reader quite intentionally, but the moral lesson of which also struggles under the modern perspective: "We never have to deal with the Creature's monstrousness, moral or physical, and in his eloquent account of sufferings, we forget that he is a child murderer" (p. 87). Our detachment from Frankenstein's creature might in this way morally blind us in much the same way that Frankenstein's close proximity to it blinds him.

Frankenstein is fraught with ethical dilemmas regarding one's role in the misery of others. Potentially one of the most discussed of these dilemmas revolves around the hypothetical creation of the second creature, the intended companion to Frankenstein's firstborn. Frankenstein is immediately disgusted with the idea: "Shall I create another like yourself, whose joint wickedness might desolate the world?" (p. 123). Despite eventually softening to the creature's pleas, Frankenstein is not wrong to consider the potential consequences of such an action. Having no way to ascertain the second creature's disposition toward virtue or vice, the risk of a second creation is not insignificant. One could argue, on the other hand, that this is the inherent risk with all children – parents rarely, if ever, expect to see their children grow up to cause misery, crime or death. Allen (2008) argues that while these scenarios are indeed *possible*, Frankenstein's worries are not anchored in anything but wild speculation, and that Frankenstein wrongfully treats these speculations "as if they were a solid foundation upon which to calculate his ethical responsibility" (p. 64). As we will never know the outcome of a second child of Frankenstein, it is impossible to conclude which decision causes the least amount of harm, and people have wildly varying opinions on the matter. This is exactly the reason it makes for such interesting ethical debate – there can never be a *right* answer. There is also a point to be made about the ethicality of such an asexual birth, regardless of result, with this most likely being the cause of Frankenstein's later reconsideration; his hesitation to repeat his blasphemous sin. The termination of the commenced second creature is not without its own moral contention, however. Likening Frankenstein's labors to that of pregnancy (he even retreats to a remote location so he may give life in secret, unbeknownst to society, as was a common custom with 19th century pregnancies out of wedlock), his violent destruction of the second creature (p. 145) reads as a parable of abortion. Many, especially during the 19th century, would consider this a more grievous sin than the scientific actualization of life. In addition, this decision marks Frankenstein's discarding of his chance to rid himself of his

monster, suggesting an attached masochism which Cottom calls a “failure to sustain the moral lesson that he tried to develop from his experiences” (1980, p. 68).

As previously touched upon in chapter 4.3.2, *Frankenstein* is a prime literary example of the nature / nurture discourse of whether evil is born or created. Drawing further on this, the novel also tackles philosophical ethics and morality, and how these concepts are instilled within a person. In similarity with *Dracula*, we cannot claim amorality of Frankenstein’s creature – although self-taught, both he and Frankenstein are socialized into a similar understanding of ethics, Frankenstein by his parents and the creature by the cottagers he observes. *Frankenstein* often credits upbringing and parental figures (primary socialization) with the development of moral character. Frankenstein’s parents are presented as exemplary role models to instill kindness, gentleness and virtue (although this account may be a heavily glorified version of the truth on account of Frankenstein’s love for his parents and the early loss of his mother), but where the creature has no parental figures to look to, his first lessons in ethics come from observing the De Lacey family to which he grows attached. Surprisingly, his first conscious act of morality is unprovoked by external factors; his own innate empathy toward the family and the new understanding that his actions hold consequences for others leads him to sacrifice his own wants for the good of the others:

I had been accustomed, during the night, to steal a part of their store for my own consumption, but when I found that in doing this I inflicted pain on the cottagers, I abstained and satisfied myself with berries, nuts, and roots which I gathered from a neighbouring wood (p. 94).

The creature having never received reprimands or ethical guidance, this act of kindness seems to prove an intrinsic penchant for morality, if not generally present in humankind, at least in the creature himself. To no benefit or credit of his own, the creature also decides to ease the family’s workload by taking on chores himself (p. 94). This unformed innocence proves inherent again in his reactions to Volney’s *Ruins of Empires*, which Felix uses to instruct his fiancée Safie (p. 100 – 101). Upon getting a hold of the three books *Paradise Lost*, Plutarch’s *Lives* and *The Sorrows of Werter*, the creature’s understanding of ethics grows; “I learned, from the views of social life which it developed, to admire their virtues and to deprecate the vices of mankind” (p. 108). The creature uses these texts as vital lessons in his developing sense of morality; “I felt the greatest ardour for virtue rise within me, and abhorrence for vice, as far as I understood the signification of those terms” (p. 109). Despite his penchant for good,

and his motivated study of ethics, it is also in these lessons that the creature learns of his social monstrosity; having no relations, no riches, or any other mark of respected society (p. 101). His socialization therefore also creates the foundation for resentment and anger that leads to his eventual immoral crimes. Nevertheless, after his first murder he puts the responsibility of his future actions back on his creator: “On you it rests, whether I quit forever the neighbourhood of man and lead a harmless life, or become the scourge of your fellow creatures and the author of your own speedy ruin” (p. 84). Although all adult humans, barring those suffering from extensive mental illness, should be held accountable for their own moral or immoral actions, the effects of proper socialization and external moral guidance in the development of socially functioning individuals cannot be denied as a factor of importance. There is a case to be made for Frankenstein being at the very least partially responsible for his creature’s actions.

The subjectivity of truth in Frankenstein

It is important to remember, while reading *Frankenstein*, that although the novel presents three distinct perspectives (those of Frankenstein, the creature and Robert Walton), the entirety of the novel is told through an outside perspective (Robert Walton’s), while dictated and narrated almost exclusively by Frankenstein. His creature must rely on others (especially Frankenstein) to accurately relay his words, actions and attitudes. Identically to *Dracula*, then, we cannot ascertain the credibility of the narrative, especially considering the fact that Frankenstein recites this story from memory while in a maddened state. Mr. Walton’s narrative becomes slightly more plausible as Frankenstein himself goes over his writing and corrects any mistakes he notices (p. 183), but the creature is never afforded this opportunity to dispute Frankenstein’s story. In light of this, it is surprising that Frankenstein’s creature comes off as sympathetic as he does. Perhaps this is a manifestation of Frankenstein’s guilty conscience recognizing his own cruelty, or even an alteration made by Mr. Walton after his own meeting with the monster. As discussed in chapter 4.1, these literary narratives are by no account objective and neutral retellings. As the reader of this fantastical tale intended for Walton’s sister, there is no actual knowing which parts of *Frankenstein* are factual (within the universe of the novel) and which are fabricated by its narrators. One could wonder how different such a retelling would be from the creature’s perspective, or whether a truly objective account could even be made possible. The narrative style of *Frankenstein* becomes a sort of game of Telephone, where Walton

recites Frankenstein reciting the monster, the truth potentially becoming increasingly distorted with each new link. In this way, *Frankenstein* exposes the subjectivity of truth not just within the confines of the novel, but also as a flaw of human perception. Allen (2008) explains this “complex blurring of narrative boundaries” as the convoluted result of unreliable narrators “whose concerns are for self-vindication rather than accuracy or objectivity” (p. 36).

Scientific discovery in Frankenstein

Frankenstein poses a question that seems increasingly relevant to our modern understanding of science; where to draw the line between benefit and harm in scientific advancements. Identically to Mr. Walton, Frankenstein dreams of scientific discovery, with little or no moral forethought into the realization of such a discovery. While Frankenstein does profess a dream of turning man impervious to disease and death (p. 27), with an intention of “pour[ing] a torrent of light into our dark world” (p. 40), there seems to be no regard for the potential negative consequences of a discovery on that scale. Often his ambitions seem to be ramblings of a mad man drunk on pride and hypothetical renown; “[s]o much has been done, exclaimed the soul of Frankenstein – more, far more, will I achieve” (p. 34). This short-sightedness seems like a complete lack of the critical thinking and ethical awareness that should be essential to such an undertaking. The importance of these core value skills, and the detrimental consequences of their absence, ought to form a key source of reflection within a classroom setting. Not until the experiment is completed does Frankenstein offer thought to the ramifications of his discovery, vowing to keep the particulars of his success a secret, lest others be tempted to repeat his actions. Frankenstein’s solitude and resulting mania likely contributes to this blind passion, he himself admitting that the creation of his creature was the result of “a fit of enthusiastic madness” (p. 189). Cottom (1980) describes the science in *Frankenstein* as a representation of desire, rather than knowledge (p. 65), which would explain the intense passion and later abhorrence that Frankenstein experiences when engaging with his scientific instruments. Frankenstein’s experimentations become a representation of himself and his own moral conscience. Science, and technology, is today under pressure of many ethical dilemmas, where one must weigh the benefits of science against the potential for harm. Frankenstein’s pride entirely disregards these limitations and therefore violently breaks several core principles of scientific research. Had Frankenstein cast aside his pride and reconsidered, perhaps engaging in hypothetical discourse on the topic with fellow scientists, professors or

students, the preparations, preventative measures and consequences of his experiment may have become clearer to him, either preventing his detrimental success, or guiding him to take further considerations in the continuation of the project.

4.3.5 Democracy and participation

The importance of social participation in Frankenstein

The importance of social participation is already discussed in chapter 4.3.3, but Frankenstein's asocial attitudes to other peoples or cultures also creates difficulties in his social and democratic participation. Proper socialization (as discussed in chapter 4.3.4) and integration into society (4.3.3) are crucial aspects of a functioning democracy, and although Frankenstein has all the social and cultural capital that his creature is being denied (distinguished birth, name, property, education, etc.), his social integration can be deemed severely lacking. Despite the more cosmopolitan lifestyle of his parents, Frankenstein continues to seclude himself, seeming almost to believe other people to be beneath him and his attentions. Apart from his earliest childhood friends, who were inevitably socialized into a similar habitus as Frankenstein himself, he is disinterested in forming other attachments. He is also never seen as engaging in social or political discourse, and feels as symbolically cut off from society as his creature is physically. Bernatchez (2009) claims that the creature's forced separation from society and its resulting lashing out, exemplifies "the idea that virtue is a capacity that must be exercised in conjunction with others and is stifled in isolation" (p. 208). Both Frankenstein and his creature's detachments from society shape their unfortunate fates, proving how important social participation and inclusion is to our mental psyches as human beings. The consequences of their actions (death, fear, misery, abandonment of home) also pose legitimate threats to outside society as casualties of their inconsideration. While *Dracula* revealed the dangers of group think and lack of individualism, *Frankenstein* exposes the other side of the extreme, presenting instead the dangers of radical individualism.

Socio-cultural criticism in Frankenstein

The horrifying thing about *Frankenstein* is not its depiction of the menacing Other, but its portrayal of humankind and the evil within. In chapter 2.1.3 I've explained that the classical monster of monster literature is a natural Other, because it is defined as monstrous by its

inhuman qualities, by what we are *not*. The terrifying aspect of Frankenstein's creature, then, is that when confronted with its monstrosity and monstrous acts, it confronts us back by holding up the symbolic mirror and showing that we are the same. Frankenstein's creature becomes monstrous because *humankind* is. Chapter 4.3.4 examines how goodness (and evil) are taught behaviors, making the creature's actions a natural extension of our own morality. The creature's violence can be seen as a direct result of the violence exerted toward him, the murders of Clerval and Elizabeth directly following the abortion of his companion creature. In this sense *Frankenstein* becomes a cautionary example of Newton's Third Law: "For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction". Even the literary examples the creature learns from contain examples of barbarous humanity, a point not lost to him: "Was man, indeed, at once so powerful, so virtuous and magnificent, yet so vicious and base?" (p. 101). From the monster's perspective, it is indeed humanity and its crimes that are monstrous, with his own actions simply retaliating against humankind's cruelty. The novel also introduces several primarily kindhearted characters, and it is perhaps these humans that best represent the innate monstrosity of man, because they are entirely unaware of their own wrongdoings and harmful prejudices. When Felix De Lacey attacks the creature (p. 114) or when the unknown man fires a gun and grievously wounds him (p. 119), they do so out of fear of the Other, instinctively treating him as a threat. In acting on these prejudices they are incapable of seeing the unjustness or the harm caused by their own false preconceptions. The measures we attempt to justify on the basis of protecting our own kind easily outreach virtue or lawfulness, and the blind ignorance of the harm caused creates monsters of otherwise good persons. Even the blind man De Lacey, who moments before seems certain of his ideological belief that no man should be turned from society, abandons these principles by not defending the creature once Felix becomes irrationally violent toward him. *Frankenstein* exposes these harmful prejudices by presenting the other side of the story. The reader, being aware of the creature's harmlessness and good intentions, recoils at the brutality that seems so easily provoked in men. More terrifying still is William's rejection of the creature. In the creature's words: "an idea seized me that this little creature was unprejudiced and had lived too short a time to have imbibed a horror of deformity" (p. 120). When William defies this expectation, he also proves just how early we are indoctrinated into hatred of the Other. The culmination of this prejudiced hatred results in a line of questioning from the monster that leaves us fumbling for an appropriate answer:

Was there no injustice in this? Am I to be thought the only criminal, when all humankind sinned against me? Why do you not hate Felix, who drove his friend from his door with contumely? Why do you not execrate the rustic who sought to destroy the saviour of his child? Nay, these are virtuous and immaculate beings! I, the miserable and the abandoned, am an abortion, to be spurned at, and kicked, and trampled on. Even now my blood boils at the recollection of this injustice (p. 194).

Moving away from human nature, there are also many criticisms directed toward the structure of modern society, especially around the notion of birthright. Frankenstein and his creature are afforded starkly different opportunities in life, not primarily due to their physiognomic differences, but because of their birth and familial connections. Frankenstein descending from a prestigious family has the privilege of growing up in considerable comfort and riches, ease of travel, free choice of education, and respect from his peers. In time he would have inherited titles and property, passing these privileges on to his own offspring. Frankenstein's creature, on the other hand, is born an orphan without a penny to his name, or indeed, a name at all. As previously discussed, this is potentially his main source of Othering, something he himself recognizes (p. 101). These circumstances are purely accidental, and yet deemed immensely important to society, furthering a long continuation of social inequality. Frankenstein's creature resents the privileges he has been denied, but does so on the basis of his familial ties to Frankenstein – he ought to have received these things from his symbolic father. The problem nevertheless extends farther into societal structures; he should never have needed to rely on his parental figures or the circumstances around his birth, to be properly provided for and given equal footing in society. The novel surreptitiously appears to support a more egalitarian form of society that would afford everyone equal opportunity. On a personal level, Frankenstein's strong familial bonds are still under scrutiny, his intense attachment to his family members hindering him from empathizing with people outside of his own inner social circle. This is not a unique problem to Victor alone, as the other Frankensteins are surprisingly quick to turn on Justine during her trial. This conviction of guilt is not present during Victor's trial, despite a similar burden of evidence falling on him. Cottom (1980) considers this discrepancy as proof of Justine's social inferiority (p. 67), despite Elizabeth's claims that servitude in their country "does not include the idea of ignorance and a sacrifice of the dignity of a human being" (p. 50).

In this way, there is also an apparent criticism directed toward the justice system in *Frankenstein*. Throughout the novel we read about three separate instances where the law fails

to maintain justice; the trial of Safie's father (and subsequently that of the De Lacey family), the trial of Justine, and the trial of Frankenstein. Although merely a footnote in the creature's story, the trial of Safie's father introduces the creature to the injustices ingrained in the modern justice system; "[t]he injustice of his sentence was very flagrant; all Paris was indignant; and it was judged that his religion and wealth rather than the crime alleged against him had been the cause of his condemnation" (p. 103), and it is this very flaw of prejudice and premature judgement that teaches him how to later frame Justine for William's murder. These trials expose a blind rage and passionate need for revenge that runs parallel with Frankenstein's own;

Liberty [...] had been a useless gift to me, had I not [...] awakened to revenge. [...] I was possessed by a maddening rage when I thought of [the creature], and desired and ardently prayed that I might have him within my grasp to wreak a great and signal revenge on his cursed head (p. 173).

Similarly, Frankenstein also confesses that "while I allow [my revenge] to be a vice, I confess that it is the devouring and only passion of my soul" (p. 175). On his deathbed, Frankenstein seems to understand that his rage leaves him incapable of objectively recognizing true justice: "I dare not ask you to do what I think right, for I may still be misled by passion" (p. 190). After the sentencing of Justine, despite her innocence, Elizabeth is thoroughly disturbed by the similar hateful prejudice in her jury; "now misery has come home, and men appear to me as monsters thirsting for each other's blood. [...] [W]hen falsehood can look so like the truth, who can assure themselves of certain happiness?" (p. 77). Bernatchez (2009) claims that the guilt of Justine's sentencing "is shared by the judges and the Creature who has orchestrated the events" (p. 214). In other words, the judges become equally, if not more, responsible in the monstrous and unjust acts which leads to the sentencing of an innocent girl, simply by participating in and assuring her fate. Although Frankenstein's trial is not quite as brutal, and he was never sentenced, his treatment during the proceedings speak to the same hasty pre-judgment. Even prior to his trial, the people around him speak to him with loathing and disgust, having already convinced themselves of his guilt (p. 155). Had there not been irrefutable proof that Frankenstein could not have committed the crime he was accused of, there is a not insignificant chance that he as well could have been sentenced to death, despite his actual innocence. These three trials reveal a detrimental flaw to the justice system and capital punishment, as well as the dangers of harmful prejudices, where perceived wickedness outweighs the importance of objective truth.

The alternative presented comes in the form of the creature's plea to Frankenstein in creating a companion; relocation and reformation: "I was benevolent and good; misery made me a fiend. Make me happy, and I shall again be virtuous" (p. 83). Frankenstein's father shows a similar sentiment in his letter to his son, following William's murder:

Come, Victor; not brooding thoughts of vengeance against the assassin, but with feelings of peace and gentleness that will heal, instead of festering, the wounds of our minds. Enter the house of mourning, my friend, but with kindness and affection for those who love you, and not with hatred for your enemies (p. 57).

In criminology, the discourse of punishment versus reformation is highly applicable and relevant to discussions surrounding the Norwegian prison and reform systems. The novel proposes not to let anger, hatred and a drive for vengeance guide our actions, focusing not on cathartic punishment, but on betterment and reformation that will benefit society and align closer to our strong-held values of human rights and human dignity. It is worth note that it is only when the creature is treated as a monster, that he becomes himself monstrous, and that with reformation he might again have become harmless, or even beneficial, to society and humankind.

4.4 Summary

As observed through these literary analyses, both *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* exemplify many themes that resonate directly with the core curriculum values. Although most monster literature embodies similar themes, these two novels were chosen for their recognizability and status. As the next chapter will demonstrate, this cultural fame makes *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* especially apt for certain teaching strategies and in-depth classroom exploration. Chapter 5 will expand upon the connection between monster literature and the Norwegian curricula that I have exemplified through these literary analyses, to explore how one can utilize this connection in a practical classroom setting.

5. Implementing 19th Century Monster Literature in The Norwegian ESL Classroom

In this chapter I will discuss the didactic benefits of using the literature theorized and analyzed in chapters 2 and 4, for the aspects of English teaching and LK20 as explored in chapter 3. The importance and relevance of teaching literature (and monster literature) in the LK20 curriculum have previously been explored in chapters 3.3 and 3.4. This chapter aims to elaborate on these points by exemplifying potential practical use and didactic classroom approaches and implementations. As with previous theoretical chapters, this chapter will focus primarily on the upper secondary level. Firstly, this chapter will explore relevant theory pertaining to the teaching of monster literature in general, before exploring the use of specifically *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* in a classroom setting. Lastly, this chapter will provide practical suggestions for classroom implementations in order to showcase how this theory might manifest in an actualized educational setting.

5.1 Teaching monster literature

In chapters 2 and 3, I have discussed monster theory's general relevance to LK20 and the core values of education. In chapter 4 I have exemplified this link by analysing relevant themes and topics within the novels and how they correspond to these core values. While all genres of literature could be used to form classroom discussions around the cultural Other, and of self-identity, it is my opinion that monster literature is particularly potent for this use. While other literary genres may present culture and identity as themes, the literary monster works to obscure the definitions and categorizations we use to construct ideas of culture and identity in the first place. As problematized in chapter 2, monster literature defies dichotomic definitions such as 'human' or 'monster', 'good' or 'evil', 'self' or 'Other', and breaks these categories down, blurring the borders between them until the arbitrary nature of them is exposed. Such an intricate representation of core educational values and themes helps to create an ideal starting point for self-reflection, critical thought and classroom discussion. These themes are, in monster literature, so complex that Bissonette (2010) warns that a prevalent challenge in teaching the literary monster is in fact pupils' tendencies to create a false dichotomy between 'human' and 'monster' to simplify discussion and analysis (p. 108). Although a core strength

of the literary monster in classroom analysis is that it engages the pupils by appealing to their emotional responses, Bissonette (2010) firmly states that “the ideal isn’t to find the proper moral stance or to move from sympathy to condemnation, but to engage both” (p. 109) and that “[n]either the [emotional response or critical thought] precedes the other, temporally or in importance”, because “[t]hey coexist in tension” (p. 111). The teacher’s role in guiding the pupil’s literary interpretations should then be to supply questions for reflection and further critical thought, to balance and challenge the pupil’s natural emotional responses to the text. While these reactionary empathies create a solid basis for discussion and analysis, the pupil must also be challenged on their critical and logical approach to the literary work, and how they might work to reconcile these potentially conflicting thoughts. For instance, Frankenstein and Frankenstein’s creature cannot and should not be attempted categorized dichotomously as ‘monster’ and ‘victim’ respectively, when further analysis should clarify that they both inhabit traits representative of both categories.

Browning (2013) proposes that there are especially two practical uses for monster literature in the classroom: to “(1) use monsters to empower students by raising their socio-political awareness, and (2) utilize a classroom praxis that fosters counter-hegemonic knowledge” (p. 42), a key word here being *awareness*. The literary monster, as mentioned in chapter 2, is an embodiment of socio-cultural or political discord, aiming to *warn* against or *expose* flaws or weaknesses within society. In using literary fiction, we can in this way explore contentious, controversial, challenging or frightening aspects of the real world, without having to engage directly with our immediate reality. In this way, monster literature creates a safe space for contemplation and ethical growth, while subtly avoiding the harsher realities of the world. In a similar manner, monster literature also questions and challenges harmful prejudices such as stereotyping, homophobia, sexism and racism, by positing the monster as a physical representation of these Othered deviances. As Browning (2013) puts it, “[t]o deconstruct the monstrous bodies in which such ideals about deviance and alterity flourish is, essentially, to expose them, and thus to unseat them from the power relations they inhabit” (p. 44). Thus, the literary monster becomes an ideal platform to navigate social, cultural or political difference in such a way as to foster a sort of meta-awareness that will enable the pupils to become better critical thinkers as well as social, cultural and democratic participants. This is not to say that other forms of literature cannot or does not explore similar themes, but the strength of monster literature specifically is its incessant questioning, and insistent demands for answer. *Frankenstein* is for example not the only literary work to portray asexual reproduction –

Disney's famously beloved animated *Frozen* (2013) shows a similar conception in its character Olaf. While Olaf's origins are however glossed over without exploring the deeper implications of this creation of life from inanimate matter, *Frankenstein* actively attempts to hold its readers responsible: *Does my birth make me monstrous? Why does it make me monstrous?* In many ways this inconsistent moral philosophy exemplifies how we are prone to argue monstrousness in people we already perceive to be monstrous for other reasons, as is often the case with sexist, racist or homophobic claims. Such argumentation aims to support a stance already taken, while monster literature exposes this faulty logic by prying into the *real* reason why we are so eager to label the Other as *monster*. In fact, Wisley (2013) supposes that the Gothic monster can be defined as "the return of what we are trying to hide from ourselves" (p. 7), suggesting that it is not the Otherness that is considered monstrous, but the similarity. During a time in their lives when adolescents are extensively forming their identities and perceptions about the world, upper secondary school might be a prime time to introduce these more challenging ideas and provocative questions about identity, culture and the society they are attempting to find their place in.

A key strength of specifically 19th century Gothic monster literature is its vast, ever-expanding vault of adaptations – not only limited to my chosen works of *Dracula* and *Frankenstein*, but also including classic works such as Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890), Victor Hugo's *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* (1831), Robert Louis' *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) or even Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847). These works of fiction have transcended the pages of their original novels and live on as ever-adapting fictions within our collective cultural imagination. As a teacher, one is unlikely to ever encounter a student who has never heard of the famous *Dracula* or *Frankenstein*'s creature. This pre-knowledge of the substance matter without ever having opened the book is a testament to our fierce fascination with the literary monster, but additionally, and perhaps more importantly, this interest has inspired a plethora of literary adaptations into new novels, films, TV-series, picture books, graphic novels, videogames, and more. As such, it is very likely that the pupil has actively interacted with the literary monster in some form, despite not having engaged the source material. In drawing out the pupils' pre-knowledge about these literary monsters through pre-reading exercises and discussions, we can intrigue and help motivate our pupils by offering literary works they already have formed relationships with. In addition, this array of multi-modal text adaptations offers a unique opportunity for the pupil to engage in self-chosen reading or pupil-led examination of various adaptational work. Working with *Dracula* today does not

necessarily involve for the entire class to read the entirety of the original novel cover to cover, as this would require an immense amount of time and dedication (with the novel consisting of 365 pages of advanced and old-fashioned English language) and would more than likely elicit a few disinterested groans from the class. The pupils are already likely aware of the stories, and will be able to grasp central ideas and themes while studying excerpts and adaptational work, and how these ideas are presented differently throughout the different literary versions. Finally, while pupils may be less motivated to engage in an old 19th century text, they are much more likely to actively engage and show interest in current adaptations, with adaptations for both *Frankenstein* and *Dracula* still being made. These literary monsters are so current, in fact, that the latest additions are still in production today (El-Mahmoud, 2021).

5.2 *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* in the classroom

The ways in which we learn language skills and broaden our linguistic vocabularies through the use of literature has already been discussed in chapters 3.3 and 3.4. This chapter will focus on what pupils can learn from monster literature specifically, with a particular emphasis on critical literacy, critical thinking and the shaping of one's identity and culture. Following the literary analyses of chapter 4, this chapter will also be structured after the LK20 core curriculum values, to showcase how critical readings of both *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* (as my chosen examples of 19th century monster literature) can help pupils better learn, understand and integrate these values. Teaching critical literacy means showing pupils how they can extract deeper meaning from texts regarding social or economic justice, equality, cultural issues, etc. Critical literacy is a crucial skill to be able to navigate the world and to develop as a socially conscious and independently thinking individual. In this way, critical literacy becomes a tool to help pupils build agency, and awareness about their own agency, in the world. Getting pupils engaged with the texts is therefore not only a way to increase motivation, but also an opportunity for the pupils to derive important information, and to critically sort and make meaning of this information, from text.

Human dignity

According to Hickman (2007), classic literary monsters in the classroom can be explored as a “representation of the human psyche” (p. 48). As previously examined, the literary monster is created to *warn* about or *expose* social, cultural or political issues within a community, and consistent with this line of thinking, Hickman encourages pupils to explore “what psychological truths the monster reveals about human beings or human culture, and whether their monster embodies a scientific or political idea” (p. 48). Because of this abstract level of monster symbology, a classroom examination of the novels should focus not only on the socio-cultural problems that the text plainly presents, but also which underlying issues the monster represents. To this effect we may for example be able to use *Dracula*’s group think and dehumanization process to explore our own biases and prejudices toward other groups. One way in which to demonstrate this point could be to use *Dracula* in an examination of the psychology of soldiers at war, or political debate, where the different sides often demonize each other and prevent constructive, objective cooperation. In an increasingly polarized political environment, using *Dracula* to explore this type of demonizing and consultation with like-minded individuals only (so called echo chambers), could prove especially potent. In addition, the novel’s representation of Lucy and Mina as human while also simultaneously becoming monstrous through a corrupting influence (as discussed in chapter 4.2.2), may prompt useful discussion about why they are increasingly demonized for ‘switching sides’.

Frankenstein takes a different approach to the subject of humanity and dehumanization. While both Frankenstein’s creature and Stoker’s vampires can be said to be both human *and* monster, *Dracula*’s vampires become monstrous over time, while Frankenstein’s creature was born monstrous through no fault of his own. As the doubtlessly more sympathetic monster upon an initial reading, Frankenstein’s monster could be used as a critical literacy tool to explore, for example, refugees or minority groups – people who are consistently marginalized or judged based on superficial traits and an insufficient understanding of their culture, religion, etc. Linking Frankenstein’s monster to refugees, who similarly hold no place in society, no wealth, no distinguished birth and no documented name, and who are often similarly shunned for their situation, lack of means, and unfortunate birth alone, may trigger a larger discussion about society’s treatment of those who do not fit into societal structures.

In examining the fictional monster, Nail (2009) found that when introducing monsters to the classroom, “[i]t was easy for [his] students to defy typical behavior when the monster they

envisioned was anonymous, no matter how human they seemed to have been at one point” (p. 53). Through a form of meta-Othering, the pupils seemed unable to sympathize with or form attachments to anonymous monsters such as ‘a vampire’ or ‘a zombie’. However, when presented with their humanity and de-anonymized in literature, it became more difficult for his pupils to securely detach and distance themselves from the existence of the monster. This is the reason Lucy and Mina become more sympathetic than Dracula’s companion vampires; because the audience is made familiar with these characters before their transformation into the monstrous. Similarly with Frankenstein’s creature, the audience only develops a sense of sympathy for the monster when presented with his humanity and propensity for kindness prior to his immoral criminal acts. A valuable discussion then, when pairing the literary monsters of these novels with at risk/vulnerable societal or cultural groups, is whether or not these monstrous acts could have been prevented through proper support, help and guidance, and if they are potentially the result of desperation and necessity rather than malice or a propensity toward crime.

Identity and cultural diversity

Difference can be seen as “a comparative term that uses dominant communities as the norm; the reference point for judging others” (Alford, 2021, p. 3), however this definition fails to take into account the various differences on the individual level despite both or all parties belonging to the same dominant group. Difference can also account for variations in interests, opinion, ways of thinking and relating to others, ideas, standpoints, preferences and communication styles. Because of the immediate connotation to differences between communities or peoples (often between dominant and marginalized groups), however, *difference* is easily seen as a negative trait that poses challenges rather than opportunity. Similarly to how the literary monster is *difference* personified (discussed in chapter 2), and all the more frightening for it, difference between social and cultural groups may initially appear intimidating. This aversion to difference, and preference for the familiar, is a hardwired condition from birth (Mahajan & Wynn, 2012), creating a natural ‘us’ versus ‘them’ mentality. In exploring differences through literature, however, we can broaden our definition of what is familiar and safe via exposure and representation, as well as awareness. Through sympathizing with the monster (as we do in *Frankenstein*) we can disarm this type of difference.

As discussed in chapter 4.2.3, *Dracula*'s problematic representation of cultural and national minority groups could be used to instigate discussion about cultural sensitivity, cultural relativity, and the harm of stereotyping and prejudice. Not only is Count Dracula's foreign nationality an important part of what makes his British immigration so terrifying, but he himself brings up topics of xenophobia and aversion to strangers (p. 21 – 22). While both *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* presents a very multi-national cast, both novels seem to vilify the Eastern cultures only, with for example Swiss, Dutch and American individuals being well-integrated protagonists, and characters such as Count Dracula or Safi's father being demonized or presented unfavorably. In a classroom setting these representations of foreign cultures could prompt an examination into the portrayal of minorities in media, or as written by authors outside of the minority culture they are attempting to portray. Additionally, the novels' similar portrayal of women as objects to marry and bear children, while being protected as the weaker sex, could spur discussion around gender equality, feminism and women's agency around the world. Interestingly enough, Stoker's portrayal of women seems vastly more progressive than that of Shelley, and *Dracula*'s representation of female agency, motivation and competence (chapters 4.2.3 and 4.2.5) seems a stark contrast to *Frankenstein*'s representation of its female characters, especially those of Elizabeth and Safi, who seemingly exist only to please and obey the men in their lives. While this status of women seems to belong to the 19th century, this opinion of women and lack of female agency is still very much a reality in large parts of the world, and something that may well be worth examining in the classroom.

While both *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* are good classroom novels for the exploration of social and cultural minority groups, the texts are also good sources for exploring the pupils' own identities and cultures. Bean & Moni (2003) problematize the lives of modern youth, as they navigate through large spaces such as airports, shopping malls or perhaps most of all; the internet. The ever-expanding, broadening, globalized world is becoming overwhelming and difficult to navigate for the typical pupil, as "[t]hese fluid spaces are disorienting, disrupting a fixed sense of place, and this spills over into teens' interior worlds" (p. 640). Bean & Moni pose that this lack of a "stable future" and "constant change" (p. 641) in the lives of modern youth is a problem that young adult literature helps pupils tackle, by exploring themes and social issues with which they identify, but I contend that this is equally true of monster literature, where themes such as identity, culture, Otherness, sexism, racism, homophobia, inequality and social criticism, are equally represented. In addition, monster literature has the added benefit of exploring these difficult topics at a distance, the advantage of which I have

discussed in chapter 5.1. Especially my chosen novels' focus on sexuality (*Dracula's* homoeroticism and overt sexuality as discussed in chapter 4.2.3, and *Frankenstein's* asexuality as discussed in chapter 4.3.3) could be tied to youth's increasingly fluid sense of sexuality and gender.

Ethical awareness

Although fictional (and therefore non-threatening to pupils), novels have a way of mirroring real life issues, and can, if paired with comparable real-life injustices, be motivated to get involved and enact real change. Simmons (2012) states that “[b]y raising awareness and advocating for change, such projects encourage students to assess their world and take action against the social problems they observe” (p. 24). By applying critical literacy to fictional texts, pupils will be able to develop a “critical-oriented mindset [...] through conscientization and problematization” (p. 24). An underlying problem becomes pupils' desensitization to violence and injustice, coupled with a sense of helplessness and lack of agency that could render them apathetic to real life issues. By re-sensitizing them through engaging with literature, and then revealing parallels between the fictional and the real world, it is possible to motivate pupils into a more active role in society and their community. Simmons advocates for the use of social projects in the classroom in order to show that “students can use their passion, skills, and knowledge, as well as the resources of the classroom, to create change” (p. 28). Finding ways that the pupil can help influence the world in ways that matter to them is crucial to maintain motivation and engagement for social change. To accomplish this, one might for instance look at the divergent sexualities (and the vilification of sexuality) explicit in *Dracula* and relate this to the international treatment of LGBTQ+. Many activist groups, including Amnesty, offer information, campaigns, individual cases of human rights violations, and even learning resources for the classroom. This is not unique to LGBTQ+ groups, but also other marginalized groups and human rights violations. These invaluable resources can help engage pupils in real-life issues inspired by the fictional monsters of 19th century monster literature. *Frankenstein* also has the potential to create interdisciplinary connections toward the ethical application of science and the dangers of radical individualism. Both *Frankenstein* and *Dracula* can draw interdisciplinary lines to the social sciences as well, for example with their exploration of the criminal justice system (as previously discussed in chapter 4.3.5), or their presentations of travel and migration.

Democracy and participation

Bean & Moni (2003) states that by teaching critical literacy in the classroom, the “texts themselves become manipulable, transparent constructions that can be accepted or rejected, and in which multiple meanings are explored” and that “literature becomes a representation of one world-view that may be questioned and for which alternatives may be provided” (p. 646). This way of reading literature attaches a sense of ownership to the text through which the pupil can explore their agency and independent interpretations. By teaching critical literature, then, we encourage the pupils not to read the novel at face value, but to engage with it on a deeper, more meaningful level, and to extract meaning that can be applied to their own lives. One way of accomplishing this is by introducing discussion prompts that alter the novel to become more applicable; for example, by mind exercises which shifts the story from the 19th century to a modern time period. One may also take one of the several hypotheticals discussed in chapters 4.2.4 and 4.3.4, and use this as the foundation for classroom debate. Instead of leaving the decision of whether to create a second creature up to Frankenstein alone, the pupils might be asked to debate which decision they would democratically and collectively make. Similarly, both novels and their representations of monstrosity and criminality lend themselves to classroom mock trials, a different sort of debate that would also bring in social science studies in an interdisciplinary group project. In a court of law, could Frankenstein potentially have been convicted of his creature’s crimes, or of the initial creation? Could the protagonist group of *Dracula* be prosecuted for their crimes (breaking and entering, theft, destruction of property, murder) against Count Dracula? Such experiments lead the class to develop critical debate skills, and to consider multiple sides of the story in a way that is engaging and active.

A stark difference between my two chosen novels, is their protagonists’ varied reliance on other people. *Dracula*’s protagonists quickly form a group and act together to ensure their goals, while Frankenstein, despite having friends whom he can rely on (and who are eager to help), turns to isolation (perhaps radicalization) and succumbs to madness. Not everyone in the protagonist group of *Dracula* actually engages in democratic discussion either. Van Helsing, being the most experienced with vampire kind, takes the lead in every decision the group makes, and the women are shut out from discussion altogether. If working with both novels, this stark difference could result in an interesting comparison analysis of democracy and agency in *Dracula* and *Frankenstein*. Used independently of each other, both novels still have many examples of governance, cooperation and agency that could portend to an

interesting examination and discussion about democracy, other forms of government, and individualism.

5.3 Classroom implementations

Now that I have discussed the relevance and benefit of 19th century monster literature in the upper secondary classroom, I hope to give some practical suggestions for classroom implementation of my two chosen works; *Dracula* and *Frankenstein*. It is important to remember that while suggestions may be made, it is impossible to form an adequate teaching strategy without taking into account the specific composition of pupils within the class. A competent teacher will therefore always adjust their methodology and teaching plan to best suit the needs of the intended class, taking into consideration the class' chosen line of study, cultural backgrounds, ages, and other relevant factors. Ideally, one would be able to make such considerations on an individual level as well.

A class composite of newly arrived pupils, or with a high percentage of cultural minorities, will have different experiences with literature and language that a teacher should be conscious of. These differences are often presented as challenges, but their varied backgrounds and translingual language skills can be utilized as great assets if lessons are adequately adjusted to their needs. Pupils of more diverse cultural backgrounds are also given an opportunity through literature to relate and express their own experiences and perspectives through different cultural texts.

A class composite of pupils studying vocational subjects will also benefit from varying teaching methods and a teacher utilizing their special knowledge and skill sets. In working with *Dracula* or *Frankenstein*, for example, media-savvy pupils may be asked to create a photography series or a film poster relating to a scene or theme from the novel. Other pupils studying vocational subjects may benefit from a similar hands-on, practical approach to interacting with literature, tailored to their specific needs or interests. In addition, English classes in upper secondary school include elective English subjects. Working with literature in these electives will likely have a shifted focus or intended learning outcome. With this need for finer adjustment in mind, these are some generalized suggestions for working with *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* in the upper secondary ESL classroom.

The following list of exercises composes didactic samples necessary in order to anchor my previous chapters in the pedagogic. It is important to note that the following suggestions are only a mere handful out of the endless possibilities for how to work with monster literature in the classroom, and although this chapter only focuses on a few possible approaches, they in no way form a definite blueprint. An extensive list of useful exercises would prove far too lengthy for the confines of this chapter, and I have therefore chosen to select only a small number of examples in order to concretize how the previously discussed 19th century monster literature may look from a classroom perspective.

Pre-reading exercises

Pre-reading exercises primarily serve to trigger interest and engagement in the pupils prior to presenting the actual text. As the main reading and post-reading exercises are more significant in terms of learning outcomes and meaningful discussion, it is recommended to limit pre-reading exercises to one or two brief activities that will sufficiently engage pupils without using up too much precious time (Munden & Sandhaug, 2017, p. 293). Many common pre-reading activities focus on the mystery of the chosen text; giving pupils a small part (a headline, a first paragraph, a picture, etc.) and allowing them to form theories about what the text is about. When working with *Dracula* or *Frankenstein* these strategies are made impossible due to the characters' instant recognizability. Instead, the below suggestions attempt to utilize this cultural infamy instead of problematizing it.

- **Invite pupils to share their pre-knowledge or pre-judgements of the novel.**
- **Discuss the concept of monstrosity** – what is a monster? How could you define monstrosity?
- **Create a word cloud with your pupils** and discuss the results.
- **Have your pupils write two or three thoughts they have about the novel on a post-it note.**
- **Have your pupils write down three ‘I want to know...’ sentences.** While both *Dracula* and *Frankenstein*'s monster are famous literary characters, pupils' knowledge about them are often an incomplete picture created by various cultural references. Making them aware of what they can learn about an already well-known text could trigger an inquisitive engagement with the novel.

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- **Have your pupils write down two or three things they think they know about the novel.** This exercise should be reviewed during post-reading discussion or exercises.

To further illustrate with the use of one example, without suggesting that this pre-reading exercise is superior or even necessary, let us take a closer look at one of these listed suggestions; discussing the concept of monstrosity in the classroom. Pupils are not likely unfamiliar with the words *monster* or *monstrous*, but reflecting on the different ways in which one can define these terms helps raise awareness around our labeling of the Other. This was a task given to us as teaching students during our second year of higher education. The students' answers varied greatly, revealing an uncertainty around what actually constitutes a monster. When questioned on our answers, we were forced to reevaluate and reconstruct our initial judgements. Doing this as a brief pre-reading exercise helps the pupils develop a critical mindset that would allow them to avoid dichotomous thinking and rash judgements which could hinder deeper analyses of the texts. This pre-reading exercise primes pupils to be aware of the complexities of monster literature and how intricate and intrinsically biased our understanding of the Other truly is. This type of discussion encapsulates all four of my chosen core values; *Human Dignity* (can we justifiably deny the monster human rights on the basis of their inhumanity?), *Identity and Cultural Diversity* (how do we judge that which is different?), *Critical Thinking and Ethical Awareness* (is my definition of monstrosity a result of implicit bias?) and *Democracy and Participation* (is there a place for the monster in our pluralistic, democratic society? To what degree must we be open to the ideas and participation of the monstrous Other?)

Reading exercises

Below is a list of suggestions for how to work actively with the text itself. As previously mentioned, one must consider the educational value of reading the entirety of the novel (either *Dracula* or *Frankenstein*). There is certainly nothing wrong in exposing pupils to lengthier and more advanced texts, and such reading experiences may be beneficial as well (Hoff, 2013, p. 33), but this requires a great deal of time in comparison to working with shorter excerpts or easier-to-read texts. The teacher's chosen approach should reflect on the intended learning outcomes of the exercise.

- **Have your pupils explore self-chosen adaptational texts in extensive reading exercises.** Works such as *Teen Frankenstein* (2016) by Chandler Baker, *Man Made Boy* (2013) by Jon Skovron or *Dracula: The Graphic Novel* (2012) appeal to young readers better than the original novels. Having different pupils read and present different variations of the same story could potentially create an interesting classroom discussion about the different portrayals and what this means for the texts.
- **Class discussions mid-reading** centered around particular scenes or themes from the novel.
- **Work with text excerpts in reading pairs.** Give different pupil pairs different text excerpts to analyze and later present.
- **Reading one or a few longer excerpt of the novel.** This is an alternative to presenting the pupils with the entire novel. Having them focus in on a particular scene or a series of connected scenes makes it possible to narrow down and put into focus the intended learning outcomes for the exercise.
- **Give the pupils the entire novel to read, while discussing events of the novel in class.** I would recommend giving the pupils ample time to read in class, and to limit the number of pages they are required to read between each lesson.

Again, to further illustrate, I will expand upon one of my listed examples; working with text excerpts in reading pairs. When working with *Dracula*, one might for example give different reading pairs different scenes of characters interacting with Count Dracula. The reading pair analyzing the sophisticated noble interacting with Jonathan Harker on business matters and the value of proper education (p. 20 – 26) may form a different opinion from those analyzing the rape of Mina (p. 271 – 278) or Dracula’s possessiveness of Jonathan (p. 36 – 40). These varied interpretations of Dracula when no one reading pair has been given the full picture, may reveal interesting discourse into the vampire’s nature. When working with *Frankenstein* we might do something similar with Frankenstein’s creature, presenting him as innocent and ethical to some reading pairs (for example by having them read the creature’s infant days (p. 86 – 89) or his amicability toward the De Lacey family (p. 93 – 97)) and more unsympathetic to other reading pairs (for example by having them read William’s murder (p. 120 – 122) or the murder of Elizabeth (p. 170 – 173)). Depending on the educational aims of the lesson, one can choose thematic excerpts that underline or illustrate different sides of the topic one wishes to examine. By bringing the pupils together in plenary discussion and presentation of the texts, they may be made increasingly aware of the complexities of the monster’s representation or

the themes which they are examining. This exercise particularly targets the core values of *Identity and Cultural Diversity* in that the pupils must reflect on the complexity of a character's identity and how it is expressed in different ways through different situations, and *Critical Thinking and Ethical Awareness* in that they must critically explore a character's various sides and challenge their own pre-judgements based on first impressions. In my chosen novels this exercise might be further amplified by the fact that different interactions are written from differing perspectives; the narrative may change based on who is telling the story. This point is discussed much more thoroughly in my literary analysis of the texts (chapters 4.1, 4.2.3 and 4.3.4).

Post-reading exercises

Post-reading exercises are a way to reflect and draw meaning from the text just read. While teaching guidance can prove beneficial, it is vitally important that the teacher's pre-knowledge or interpretation does not interfere with the pupils' own exploration and critical thinking (Hoff, 2013, p. 34). Ideally such post-reading exercises should be pupil-lead in order to avoid passive regurgitation rather than active participation in the lesson.

- **Create a film poster / scene / photo / drawing / etc.** This allows pupils to examine a particular scene and what the significance of this scene is. Why have they chosen the scene that they have? Have they made any significant alterations and why?
- **Engage in theoretical hypotheticals.** What if Dracula survived at the end of the novel? What if Frankenstein had created a second creature? Although upper secondary pupils are rarely afforded the same creative writing exercises as younger pupils, theoretical classroom discussions can make a pupil think about how the novel's themes and implications reach farther than the text on the pages.
- **Explore the same scene in an adaptation or dramatic reading.** How does the scene change from the original? What does this mean for the story and how it's presented?
- **Encourage analytical presentations, texts, or classroom discussions based around self-chosen, open-ended topics.** Pupils should be encouraged to avoid dichotomous fallacies, but should be free to explore the topics from the novel that have intrigued them.
- **Review the pre-reading exercises.** How have the pupils' perceptions of the novel changed after working with the text?

For my final illustrated example, let's take a look at creating a film poster / scene / photo / drawing / etc. for a post-reading exercise. This exercise would be especially suited for artistic vocational studies, such as media or drama pupils, as it would allow them to engage further with the material and exercise their specific, work-related skill set, connected to their chosen line of education. As stated in the previous chapter (5.2), this form of creative alteration or interpretation of the source text allows the pupils to claim ownership of the material and engage with the novel on a deeper level. In the pupils presenting their finished work, this also allows for further discussion and examination of the text; why has the pupil chosen that particular scene / character? How have they interpreted and adapted the scene? What potential changes or alterations have they made, and why? If conducive of the lesson plan, it is also possible to task the pupils with creative briefs asking them to link a theme or scene from the novel with a current political, social or cultural issue in the real world, allowing them to explore how the themes and issues presented in *Dracula* or *Frankenstein* correlates with their own lives, or the real world. Done in this way, it is possible for the teacher to connect this exercise to any of my chosen core curriculum values, depending on which type of brief the pupils receive.

Although literary literacy, socio-political and cultural awareness, and critical thinking are important skills for the pupil to learn, these are not skills which the teacher can single-handedly pass on to passive learners. Such skills must be developed over time through active engagement and practice. Olusegun (2015) mentions that "teachers cannot simply transmit knowledge to students" and that "students need to actively construct knowledge in their own minds" (p. 66). As such, all teaching of literature should ideally be primarily pupil-led and actively engaging. To foster a will to participate in the classroom, a pupil must first be motivated and confident in their contributions, meaning that the literature teacher's fundamental role is to nurture an interest in the text. Avoiding boring, unmotivating, repetitive tasks and other ways of working with literature that creates in the pupil a belief that the lesson is not relevant or applicable to their own lives or identities, is therefore of utmost importance.

6. Concluding remarks

My thesis has attempted to answer what the didactic benefits of using 19th century monster literature to promote the LK20 core values are. By posing this as my overarching research question and thesis aim, I have perhaps arrogantly and prematurely presumed that there are in fact didactic benefits to the exploration of 19th century monster literature in the classroom. Throughout my thesis, I still believe, however, that I have shown that there are indeed benefits of such an implementation. In order to answer my thesis aim, I have extracted four primary LK20 core values for in-depth exploration; *Human dignity, Identity and cultural diversity, Critical thinking and ethical awareness*, and *Democracy and participation*. Through a brief analysis of LK20, these were the core values deemed to have the most relevance to the 19th century monster literature genre. The following literary analyses of *Dracula* (1897) and *Frankenstein* (1818) worked to demonstrate monster literature's relevance to LK20, thus answering my secondary research question; how 19th century monster literature is relevant to the LK20 core values. These novels were chosen for their particular notoriety amongst other works of 19th century monster literature, but many literary works within the genre could have proven equally relevant and produced similar results. My other secondary research question, how we can use 19th century monster literature to promote the LK20 core values, was explored through a final didactic analysis of monster literature, and the possible practical implementations of *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* in the Norwegian ESL classroom, with a particular focus on the teaching of *literary literacy, critical thinking* and *critical literacy*. This section was equally structured after my four chosen core values of the LK20 curriculum. In structuring the majority of my thesis after these core values, I hope to have highlighted the relevance between them and 19th century monster literature. This thesis has primarily relied on literary analysis of two novels; *Dracula* (1897) by Bram Stoker and *Frankenstein* (1818) by Mary Shelley, both analyses attempting to exemplify the texts' relevance to LK20's core values. By exemplifying in this way, and subsequently discussing the didactic use and potential practical implementations of reading exercises (of which I explored a small sample size), I hope to have showcased the didactic benefits of using and implementing 19th century monster literature to promote the LK20 core values.

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