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ABSTRACT

Abjection in Shelley's Frankenstein

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This paper analyzes Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* through Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection. The main argument is that Victor Frankenstein and his creature experience and reflect abjection, which Kristeva defines as the breakdown of meanings when humans encounter fear or phobias. These fears and phobias are a response to what is avoided or not acceptable in the symbolic order (language, law, rules). Moreover, Victor's first encounter with abject can be seen in his early childhood when he is separated from his mother. I will show that these fears can be seen in Victor's phobia of the corpses of Clerval, Elizabeth and his mother as well as the creature's self-loathing. First, the corpse elicits abjection through evoking the mortality of human beings. Upon beholding the corpses of his family, Victor suffers delirium, visual hallucinations, nightmares and fever all of which represent the corpse as the "utmost of abjection" (Kristeva 4). Second, the creature experiences abjection which can be seen in his thorough awareness of his deformity and defilement. The creature tries in vain to be accepted in the symbolic order. However, he realizes that he is the abject or the source of fear from which humans flee.