The tension between individualism and social acceptance as a theme of *Frankenstein*.

In *Frankenstein*, Mary Shelley stated, “We are unfashioned creatures, but half made up, if one wiser, better, dearer than ourselves – such a friend ought to be” (Shelley, 1994, p.12). When a person needed friends, what kind of friends he or she would accept? This quote told how a friend was required to be wiser, better, and dearer. That was what the social expected. People absolutely should be able to open the heart and accept these kinds of friend. Mary Shelley was a novelist who once needed a social acceptance (Miller, 2000, p. vii). She expressed her feeling through one of her novels. The story of *Frankenstein* presented the tension between individualism and social acceptance as a theme by showing power of knowledge, appearance, and responsibility.

Firstly, Mary Shelley expressed how the power of knowledge caused people to avoid the society, even their true wish was the social acceptance. According to *Frankenstein*, Walton stated, “But I have one want which I have never yet been able to satisfy; and the absence of the object of which I now feel as a most severe evil. I have no friend, Margaret: when I am glowing with the enthusiasm of success, there will be none to participate my joy” (Shelley, 1994, p.4). This quote showed how Walton, who had been searching for a secret of magnet, felt. He traveled to the North Pole. This showed how the power of knowledge brought him far away from his homeland and beloved sister. In the similar case, Shelly stated that “Two years passed in his manner, during which I paid no visit to Genava, but was engaged, heart and soul, in the pursuit of some discoveries which I hope to make” (p.29). Victor attended to the university in Ingolstadt, studying natural philosophy and chemistry. The quote above showed how Victor accepted his solitude because of the power of knowledge, the same way with Walton. Human’s desire to know things was unlimited. One of the famous Spanish philosophers, George Santayana (1918) stated that “Nevertheless, the actual limitations of human knowledge are no mere imperfection, much less a disgrace” (p.433). He showed that no limitation could occur between man and education. Considering this, human depended on a knowledge as an extremely necessary factor. Thus, humanity could not be able to refuse searching for it. These were explanations of how human discovered such an unimaginable technology. Moreover, these were reasons that in every development, there was always a sacrifice in some way. Social acceptance was neither an exception nor likely to be compared to knowledge. For this reason, power of knowledge convinced both Walton and Victor to leave their less significant homelands behind.

Furthermore, *Frankenstein* presented the desire of social acceptance of a loner by use the factor of appearance. Shelley (1994) stated “…My more than sister – the beautiful and adored companion of all my occupations and my pleasures. Every one loved Elizabeth” (p.17), this was how Victor viewed Elizabeth when they first met. It showed that because of Elizabeth’s beauty, everyone in Victor’s family loved her. From another part of the novel, Shelley wrote, “He might have spoken, but I did not hear; one hand was stretched out, seemingly to detain me, but I escaped, and rushed downstairs” (p.35). This sentence was the first expression of Victor after the creature turned alive. In contrast to the previous quote, he showed a completely opposite idea. He loved Elizabeth since the first time he had seen her. On the other hand, he did not only ignore a chance to communicate with his creature, but he also escaped. The difference between Elizabeth and the creature was obviously their appearances. There was a quote from The Case of *Frankenstein* In “Facing The Ugly” telling: “All men endeavor to hide themselves, their Ugly Nakedness, from each other… wrapping up the true Motives of their Hearts in the Specious Cloke of Sociableness” (Gigante, 2000, p.568). This quote strongly supported the idea of the relationship between appearance and social acceptance. According to the previous paragraph, human always searched for better things, viewed the world only the side that one wanted to see. In case of the appearance, people only cared for others who looked prettier than themselves. Moreover, they learnt how they think of a person who look worse than themselves. In summary, to become a part of the society, they should put on another identity over their ugliness. Cosmetics and plastic surgeries were the prime examples of this.

Additionally, Shelley showed that the responsibility leaded a person to leave the society and live individually. From the Oxford dictionary (2016), responsibility means the state or fact of having a duty to deal with something or having control over someone. In this case, Victor had to control over his creature because he was the one who created it. According to *Frankenstein*, Shelley (1994) stated “My first resolution was to quit Genava forever; my country, which, when I was happy and beloved was dear to me, now, in my adversity, became hateful” (p.149). This showed clearly the idea of redemption, Shelley wanted the character who lack of responsibility as a creator to face the desperation. A being who gave birth to others such as parent was not an exception. From the foreword in *Frankenstein*, Miller (2000) wrote about Shelley’s father, William Godwin that “…Gave up trying to be mother and father to Mary and her half-sister, and married a widow who clearly favored her own two children” (p.vii). Since she had an experience of being neglected by her father, she might think about his guilt or desires for his redemption. However, instead of expressing her feeling directly to her father, she expressed it through the novel. Reflecting on this, Mary Shelley’s background became obviously inspired the story of *Frankenstein*.

In summary, Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* presented the tension between individualism and social acceptance as a theme by showing power of knowledge, appearance, and responsibility. She wrote of characters searching for an unlimited knowledge throughout the world. They could leave their homelands and beloved people, finally started the life of individual. She also showed an appearance’s role in order to receive the social acceptance by comparing between beautiful and ugly characters. At last, she presented that the responsibility of a family was another factor that could not be ignored. If a person lacked of responsibility, he could discover a solitude life as a redemption. Considering all these points, Shelley showed her ideas as she once had been staying in both situations of individualism and social acceptance through her well-known novel, *Frankenstein*. Is it more appropriate for one’s life to be accepted by the society or stays individually?

References

Gigante, D. (2000). The Case Of “Frankenstein” In *Facing The Ugly*. (p. 565 – 587).

Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Miller, W. J. (2000). Foreword In *Frankenstein*. (p. v – xviii). New York, NY:

Penguin Group.

Oxford University Press. (2016). Definition of responsibility in English. Retrieved from

<http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/responsibility>

Literal and Symbolic Knowledge

Santayana, G. (August 1st, 1918). The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific

Methods In *Literal and Symbolic Knowledge*. (p. 421 – 444). New York, NY:

Science Press.

Shelley, M. W. (1994). *Frankenstein*. New York, NY: Dover Publications.