

Mary shelley's frankenstein: an uncanny sensation

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The Uncanny Frankenstein

Sigmund Freud's *The Uncanny* displays an interesting and intriguing concept of evoking unsettling emotions in characters or readers. A main point that he focuses on in his essay involves repression and repetition of such emotions. These feelings are typically relatable to most and thus are intriguing as an audience to observe characters experiencing parallel instances of uncanny feelings. While I doubt that many people can literally identify with a created being of life, an example of a text that uses Freud's concepts is Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* in that the association between Dr. Frankenstein and the Creature holds an uncanny sensation on the part of Dr. Frankenstein.

Toward the beginning of the novel, Dr. Frankenstein travels to the North Pole by dogsled and is then taken aboard a ship where he recounts his story of bringing the Creature to life (Shelley 4). Dr. Frankenstein displays Freud's concept of repression of the uncanny in that he is weary and full of remorse over the creation of his Creature. Freud describes repression as simply an anxiety that you don't want to remember, which aligns with Dr. Frankenstein wishing that the Creature were not successfully brought to life. Freud goes on to suggest that the said anxiety "can be shown to come from something repressed which recurs" (Freud 13). In other words, the repression is followed by the reoccurrence, or repetition, of bad thoughts concerning the anxiety.

Dr. Frankenstein tries to push bad thoughts about creating the monster out of his mind, but he can't seem to escape the monster's presence. When the monster demands that Frankenstein create a mate for him and the doctor

agrees and then goes back on his word, we see Freud's concept of repetition in action. His repressed and now repeatedly failed attempt at ignoring his regret of bringing life to the Creature exemplifies "uncanny as something which ought to have been kept concealed but which has nevertheless come to light" (Freud 13). Dr. Frankenstein repeatedly fails to completely ignore the repressed anxiety as well as try to completely fix it by providing a mate; thus he remains somewhere in the middle ground, harboring an uncanny sensation.

Freud suggests that humans find the concept of uncanny most prevalent when something inanimate takes on animate qualities, specifically in reference to children and dolls (Freud 9). Dr. Frankenstein experiences a similar sensation of the uncanny when the Creature comes to life. He's not comfortable with the artificial life because it's not really human, however it looks very human. The closeness to reality disturbed him, just as instances such as dolls may disturb people when they too closely resemble a real human. This middle place between human and not human is vast, thus there are infinite possibilities of experiencing Freud's concept of the uncanny in literature and our surrounding world.