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Wandering and Belonging in Mary Shelley's Writings: *Frankenstein* and *Maurice, or The Fisher's Cot*

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Abstract

This essay discusses Mary Shelley's recently discovered novel, *Maurice, or The Fisher's Cot* written in 1820. The novel had been overlooked as a story written merely to entertain a child, because Shelley presented the story to a daughter of her friend. The story is a typical fair foundling story, in which the eponymous character Maurice, stolen from his wealthy parents, wanders around to be found by his father. A significant part of the story is comprised of narrations between Maurice and a traveler --- the traveler turns out to be Maurice's real father searching for his son. Contrary to a negative father-son bond in *Frankenstein*, there is a positive one in *Maurice*; however, the two stories have a motif in common. That is a wandering person who seeks three things: a position in society, identity, and family. Family, in these novels, represented in the father-son bond without participation from a mother. This motif underlines the importance in the father-son bond by which males must gain a position in society. Despite the critical neglect of the novel, this paper will explain the exploratory importance of *Maurice* that illustrates Shelley's critical insight into the patriarchal succession of authority which rules out women. This issue is made clearer when comparing *Maurice* with *Frankenstein* and by introducing the circumstances of the novel's creation.

Introduction

Mary Shelley's *Maurice, or The Fisher's Cot*[1] was written in 1820 as a gift for her friend's daughter, Laurette. Shelley's journal records that she wrote the story on 10 August 1820. Shelley sent the story to England, to her father William Godwin, who was running a bookshop in London, to publish it as a book in his Juvenile Library. Godwin's letter to Shelley, dated 10 October 1821, refused its publication because the story was too short (Miranda Seymour 592). On the other hand, Seymour points out that Godwin refused to support publication because he had already listed a similar story by a Mrs Caroline Barnard, *The Fisher Boy, or Worth in Humble Life* in the Juvenile Library. The similarity of the title and the setting in both stories "enabled Mary to guess why Godwin had brusquely rejected *Maurice*" (Seymour 331). This explains why *Maurice* was not published. Fortunately, the original manuscript of the novel was given to Laurette, and it was discovered in Italy nearly two hundreds years later in 1997.

In addition to the distance between the author and her father, who had brusquely refused his

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daughter's request, there were strong mother-daughter knots in the background of *Maurice*. Shelley's mother, Mary Wollstonecraft, who had already passed away when the novel was written, educated Mrs Mason, Laurette's mother, during her childhood. In Italy, Mrs Mason invited Wollstonecraft's daughter, Mary Shelley. It is in this context, Shelley presented *Maurice* to Mrs Mason's daughter.

Research interests in Mary Shelley have long been preoccupied with her biographical position between two central males in her life: William Godwin and Percy Shelley, who were her father and husband respectively. After the 1970s, when the feminist movement surged in English literary criticism, Shelley's *Frankenstein: Or the Modern Prometheus*[2] came under scrutiny and came to represent one of the major works of the Romantic period. Although Shelley's first and most famous novel is still the focal point of most studies on her, other works, such as *The Last Man*, have attracted considerable critical attention recently. Feminism has cast most critical perspective on Shelley, but Marxist analysis and the psychoanalytical view also have a standpoint on her work. Marxists read Frankenstein's monster as a symbol of the rage rising from the repressed and neglected working class, while the psychoanalytical standpoint on the relationship between Frankenstein and his creature either the basis of Freudian Oedipal complex or the theory of hysteria explaining a return of repressed feeling. While assessment and revaluation of Shelley's works are now in process, little attention has been given to *Maurice*, which represents the most recent discovery among Shelley's writings. Therefore, this paper focuses on *Maurice*.

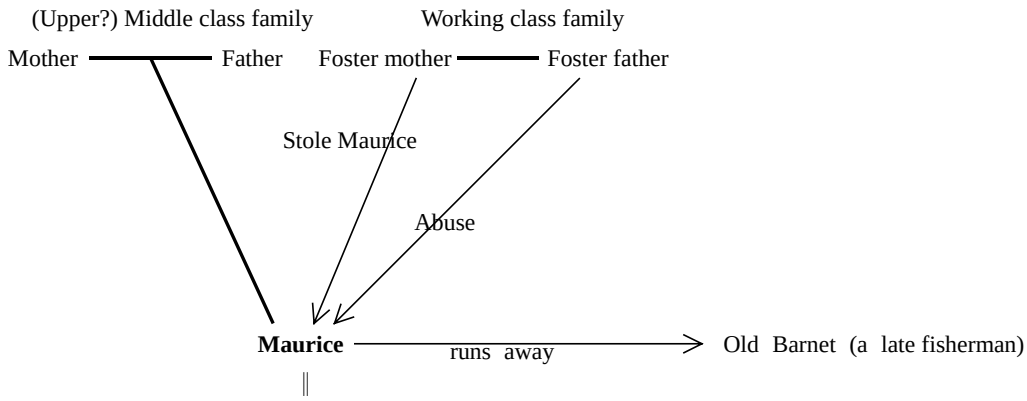
One reason for the critical neglect of *Maurice* since its publication could be that it is short, and, could be that, according to William Brewer, "One cannot place too much weight on this story, written to entertain the young daughter of Shelley's friend, Countess Mountcashell"[3] (219). Contrary to Brewer's opinion, Shelley's purpose in the composition of this novel was not merely to entertain a child but to publish it as a book. Mary Shelley probably expected Godwin to publish the short novel, because in 1820, when Shelley wrote *Maurice*, Mrs Mason's *Stories of Old Daniel* and *Continuation of the Stories of Old Daniel*, were both published from the series published by Godwin called the Juvenile Library.[4] Moreover, Brewer points out that *Maurice* "provides an interesting contrast to much of Shelley's other fiction in which 'nurture' plays a dominant role in the formation of character" (219). Therefore, this essay will compare *Maurice* with *Frankenstein* written a few years before *Maurice*.

These two novels similarly focus on a wandering individual who seeks a position in society. The theme of wandering in both novels illustrates that finding a position in society requires an elucidation of the relationship to one's father. Compared to the degree of focus on the father-son relationship, the existence of the mother recedes into the background in both stories. While *Frankenstein* describes a tragic relationship between a father and a son, a highly idealized father-son bond is described in *Maurice*. When compared with *Frankenstein, Maurice* reveals Shelley's critical position about the patriarchal succession of power in England that rules women out of the cycle of the hereditary passing of authority.

Genealogy of the Author and in the Story

Maurice is a typical family romance, a story of a fair foundling, in which the reader can expect, from the beginning, the return of the orphan hero to his royal or wealthy family. The eponymous character Maurice was stolen from his wealthy parents when he was two years old. After the abduction, Maurice was brought up in a poor family. His foster father was a mean and abusive man.[5] The foster father treated Maurice "in so cruel a manner that I dare not relate to you who are his real father" (84), says the foster mother. At the age of about nine, Maurice left the foster father's house "determining never more to see them [his foster parents] till I could earn my own bread" (73). Even though Maurice found a place to work, he usually needed to leave the place shortly because he had "always been weakly and unable to work hard" (64-65). In the end, Maurice was accepted by Old Barnet, a good and lonely fisherman, to assist him around the house as he had lost his wife. After a few months, Old Barnet died, and while Maurice was following his coffin as a mourner, he attracted the attention of his real father, who was travelling around the country to find his stolen son. The traveller-father was struck by Maurice's physical qualities, but was not aware that the handsome lad was his real son. The traveller visited Maurice and then narrated his life. From this story, Maurice realized that the traveller was his real father.

Human relationships in *Maurice* (Figure 1)



* **Henry** changed his name to Maurice out of fear of being discovered by his foster father when he ran away.

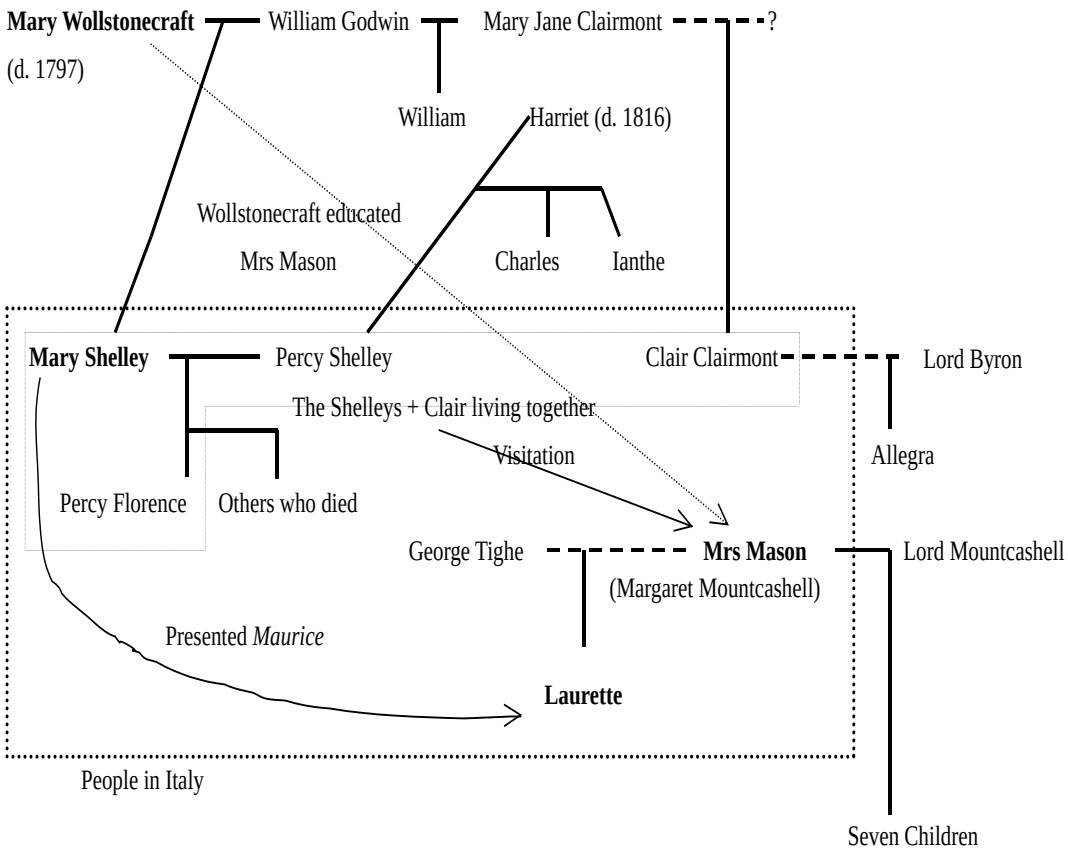
The theme of this story is the "lost child." A topic that was appealing for the Shelleys and Mrs Mason. Mary and Percy Shelley's three children had already died by this time. Percy Shelley had to give up his children with his late and former wife Harriet and left them behind in England. Clair not only gave up her daughter, Allegra, to Byron, the daughter's father, but was also denied visitation. Mrs Mason was an Irish aristocrat, Countess Mountcashell, the wife of the Second Earl of Mountcashell. During her trip to Italy, she fell in love with an Irish poet, George Tighe, and started a

new family in Pisa where the British law could not reach them. Mrs Mason was forced to give up her seven children in Ireland when she separated from her husband.

Both the Shelleys and Mrs Mason's new family were rejected by British Society because of their violations of traditional marital bonds. Mrs Mason eloped and separated from her husband, and she was never allowed to return home. The Shelleys' had also eloped and that event resulted in the suicide of Percy's first wife, Harriet. British society had not forgotten these scandals. Clair, who was Mary Shelley's stepsister accompanying the Shelleys to Italy, had an illegitimate daughter with Byron, who in turn, according to rumours, supposedly had an incestuous affair with his half sister. Of course, such dramatic situations inflated an unkind opinion against this group in British society.

Within these circumstances, Mrs Mason was not using either of the names, Mountcashell and Tighe, and liked to be known as Mrs Mason. The name "Mrs Mason" appears in Wollstonecraft's *Original Stories* as a governess. Wollstonecraft is Shelley's mother, and she was actually Mrs Mason's governess while a child. Her ideas strongly influenced Mrs Mason's life. Mrs Mason, as well as Wollstoncraft's daughter Shelley, did not conform to the traditional marriage bond. They both eloped,

Some of the Shelley family relationship in 1820 (Figure 2)



engaged in extramarital relationships, had illegitimate children, and they both wrote as women. As Linda Colley, a historian, points out that this time was when "the boundaries supposedly separating men and women were, in fact, unstable *and becoming more so*" in Britain and "separate sexual spheres were being increasingly prescribed in theory, yet increasingly broken through in practice" [original italics] (250). This was the age when writing was not yet an activity fully allowed for a respectable woman. Colley says that Hannah More, who died in 1833, "had become the first British woman ever to make a fortune with her pen" (274).[6] Such forceful maternal bonds gathered these exiled families in Italy, where *Maurice* was eventually written.

The Relation of Father and Son in the Family Romance

Around the time of the Romantic Movement, the meaning of wandering had changed. Previously, wandering usually related to rogues, later came to imply a person on a quest for an identity.[7] The wandering of the creature in *Frankenstein* and the son in *Maurice* reflects a search for an identity that parallels their quest for family. The protagonist's objective, the family, in these novels does not fit to the general image of modern family with a father, a mother, and a child. Family in both novels heavily focuses on the father-son bond excluding the mother from the community. In *Maurice*, the main character regains his family by discovering his father, but the existence of his mother is apparently obscured by the father-son bond which is in the foreground. A large part of the story is narrated by Maurice and his real father who reveal their past. Maurice's mother has no chance of uttering anything directly in the story and is scarcely mentioned. In *Frankenstein*, Frankenstein's mother dies early in the novel, and Frankenstein's creature has no mother. Thus, their search for identity ends in focusing on the homo-social bond between men: the creator and his creature, the father and his son.

Stories in the Bible mentioned by Maurice also underline the novel's focus on the father-son bond that excludes the mother. Such references to the Bible in the story are: "Maurice said that he had never read any book of that kind except the Bible, and that he had often cried over the distress of Joseph, when he was sold to slavery, and over the sorrow of David, when his son Absalom revolted against him" (75). These stories of Joseph and David, over which Maurice cried, are tragedies describing the disruption of a father-son relationship.

The story of Maurice's real father's life also emphasizes the importance of a son's relationship to his father. When Maurice's real father narrates his own life to his son, he must begin by explaining whose son he is. He begins his story thus: "I am the son of a professor of mathematics at the University of Oxford; my father was not rich but he gave me an excellent education, and . . . . When I was five and twenty my kind father sent me abroad to Asia, Italy and Greece to visit . . ." (77-78). Meanwhile, he fails to mention his own mother throughout the story.

The father-son bond in *Maurice* is confirmed by their physical similarity and how the son fit the

father's image of his son. In *Frankenstein,* the tragedy occurs because the son is not so beautiful as the father originally envisioned, and this fact led Frankenstein to reject his fatherly responsibility for the creature. This is a scene of Frankenstein's creation:

> How can I describe my emotions at this catastrophe, or how delineate the wretch whom with such infinite pains and care I had endeavoured to form? His limbs were in proportion, and I had selected his features as beautiful. Beautiful! --- Great God! [. . .] I had desired it with an ardour that far exceeded moderation; but now that I had finished, the beauty of the dream vanished, and breathless horror and disgust filled my heart. Unable to endure the aspect of the being I had created, I rushed out of the room, and continued a long time traversing my bedchamber, unable to compose my mind to sleep. (58)

The creature claims that Frankenstein has not kept fatherly responsibility, and demands the creation of a female partner. Frankenstein refuses the creature's claim, and this makes the creature wander around without family. One of the most important roles that a modern family was expected to perform in society was the reproduction of a socialized individual. A son was expected to grow up to be a part of the society just like his father. Although the creature-son wishes to live like his father, Frankenstein, who lived in a society of interrelated network of familial ties, the "son's" hope cannot be realized. This is because, in the patriarchal society, a father's approval was essential for individuals to be a part of the community, but in *Frankenstein* the creature-son is completely disowned; therefore, the "son" can have neither a family nor a position in society.

The unhappy creature changes the situation. The creature violently makes Frankenstein "family-less" by destroying his family. As a result, the only tie left for Frankenstein is his relationship to the creature. Thus, the creature generates a relationship with his father. The father-son bond is a fundamental element in forming an identity, as in the case of Maurice's father who has to start his explanation of who he is with "I am a son of [. . .]" (77). Frankenstein's creature builds his own identity by making his father's condition similar to that of himself. The bond between Frankenstein and his creature will not be accepted by society because it is formed by making the father like his son, while the patriarchal system needs to reproduce and strengthen itself by moulding its subjects after their fathers. Because Frankenstein and his creature have no other connections but one bound to each other, it is necessary for them to flee from the society where they have no place and seek "the everlasting ice of the north" until one confirms the other's death (171).

Contrary to *Frankenstein's* case, the wandering son in *Maurice* is discovered by his father to grow up just like him. Until Maurice was discovered by his real father, he could not locate himself anywhere in society and simply kept moving from one place to another. He needed to start his wandering because of his foster father's abuse who perceived Maurice as physically weak. This is the same motif as is found in *Frankenstein*: the expulsion of the son who does not suit his father's image of him.

Unlike Frankenstein's creature, Maurice can obtain a temporal familial experience for the sake of his beauty. His physical weakness does not allow him to gain a place in a working sphere that demands muscularity, so he needs to find his place in a house, a feminine working realm. This is established by the scene in which Old Barnet decides to accept Maurice:

> Old Barnet looked up in the boy's face; you know how pretty a lad he is; he was then sickly-looking and that made him a fitter object for compassion: he has the sweetest voice in the world and all that he said seemed to go to the old man's heart. He thought:---I have no child upon earth: my only relation is a brother who disdains a poor old fisherman like me. My dame is dead, and I am alone without anyone to help me if I am sick or to say a cheerful, 'Goodbye, God send you luck!' when I go a fishing. Surely this boy seems sent by heaven to me, and it seems to me that I love him already as if he were my own son. He shall stay with me; I can maintain him as I maintained my poor wife who is gone: he can put my cottage in order, mend my sails and nets, and on windy evenings who knows but he may be able to read the Bible to me as my dame used. (65-66)

Throughout his boyhood, Maurice shows a remarkably feminine character. He seeks the protection of a fatherly figure, and performs a feminine role in the house. Before his real father finds Maurice, the characteristics of socially subjugated persons are concentrated in Maurice as a feminine and working class child.

Until his real father appears, even though Maurice liked Old Barnet's cottage, it was impossible for him to stay there, because Old Barnet had passed away and his brother took over the house. Unaware that he is talking to his real father, Maurice says to the traveller:

> It [the late Old Barnet's cottage] is poor and very old, yet taking it altogether I do not think there is a prettier in all the country round. [. . .] The geraniums were the great favourite of old Barnet's dame, and he loved them for her sake. Mr Gregory Barnet [Old Barnet's brother] says that I must take nothing from the cottage, and that I know very well; but if farmer Benson will take me into his service I will spend two shillings that I have in buying the geraniums, if the man who is coming to live here will be kind enough to sell them. (71-72)

After an unfortunate childhood, Maurice meets his real father to regain his social place. The recovery lets Maurice move upward on the social scale to where his father belongs, and Maurice replicates his father's qualities in himself. When he regains the tie with his father, his status in society totally changes. Maurice, who can hardly afford to buy a geranium from the owner of his beloved cottage, purchases Old Barnet's entire possessions: his cot, his boat and everything: "And what became of the old moss-roofed cottage by the seaside? Why, at Henry's [Maurice][8] request his father bought it, and the boat, and the geraniums, and all that belonged to it from Mr Gregory Barnet" (85). Maurice does not have to wander around begging for protection any more. Moreover, he is in a position of offering protection to the poor.

> [Maurice] would go about among his friends whom he had known when he lived with old Barnet,

> helping and consoling them if they were sick or afflicted, and doing all the good a little boy could do, or by the help of his father making people happy when poverty or misfortune had made them miserable. (86)

When Maurice finds out his real father, he recognizes his real identity, and regains his family and position in society, and he grows up just like his real father. In this way, the reproduction of the social subject is properly completed in *Maurice*.

While the ugliness of Frankenstein's creature made him family-less, Maurice regained his father due to his beauty. The following describes the scene when Maurice who was attending Old Barnet's funeral is first seen by his real father.

> It was evidently the funeral of a poor person; the coffin was carried by some peasants, and four mourners followed. Three of these, although serious, looked careless and indifferent; the fourth was a boy of about thirteen years of age [. . .] Something in this boy's appearance attracted the traveller's attention . . . the traveller thought that he had seldom seen so beautiful a youth. (60)

Then, the traveller says: "This poor boy can be nothing to me, yet I am much pleased with his appearance and manner" (61). The traveller is interested in the boy and starts to inquire about him. Therefore, it is Maurice's beauty that eventually brings him to his real father. The ugliness of Frankenstein's creature causes his expulsion, while Maurice's beauty unites him with his father. Not knowing Maurice is his real son, the father says to Maurice: "If I never find my darling boy you shall be a son to me" (84). Before any recognition of the father-son bond, Henry's father considers that Maurice can substitute for his real son.

With respect to the reproduction of individual, the similarity of Maurice to his father must be underlined. Throughout the novel, the resemblance of the two characters is strongly emphasized. Obviously, their common characteristic is their beauty, and due to their beauty, people love them. The citation from *Maurice* (65-66) above supports the fact that Maurice's beauty made Old Barnet love him "as if he were my own son" (65). Before his abduction, Maurice's beauty was the source of his parent's delight. His real father says, "Soon after our marriage we had a little boy of whom we were dotingly fond. All our joy was in watching this little creature, who was as beautiful and good as it was possible to be" (78-79).

Maurice's real father had a similar attraction to many people. This is the description of when he appears in the town as an unknown traveller.

> The traveller was a man about forty-five years of age; he was remarkably erect in his person; alert and even graceful in his walk; his hair was black and curly, although a little fallen from his temples; he was handsome, but somewhat sun-burnt, and when he smiled he looked so good-tempered and kind that you could not see him without loving him. (59-60)

Maurice's beauty attracted his father's attention just as his real father had attracted the attention of many people himself. In the public eye, the father and the son possess an identical quality, beauty,

that brings about an affectionate feeling towards them.

The father-traveller comes to the town as a stranger just as Maurice did beforehand. When the traveller asks a woman, "Does he [Maurice] belong to this town?" she replies "He does not; nor do I know from whence he comes. [. . .] The neighbours says [sic] he is a good boy, but I know nothing about him" (61). When Old Barnet first meets Maurice, he says, "you do not belong to these parts, and it is not well to see a boy of your age wandering about the country alone" (64). It is the traveller's identity as well as Maurice's that become clear to the reader as the story goes on.

The discovery of an identity in this story is the recovering of the father-son relationship. In both novels, after the father and the son recognize their relationship, the main focus of the novel moves from a wandering of the son to a mutual and an extreme attachment between the father and the son. The quest for an identity ends with the discovery of the father-son bond that eventually regains them (or deprives them in the case of *Frankenstein*) their family. The moment of recognition is properly remembered by Maurice as the time when he understood where he *belongs*. "He would sit and reflect on [. . .] how on that very rock he had first discovered that he belonged to good, kind parents" (88). In this novel, a place to belong to in society, whether it means just a place to live or more symbolically a place in a hierarchal order, is not confirmed until his father is known. It is necessary to know whose son he is, in order to know his identity and have a place in society.[9] Therefore, being disowned, Frankenstein's creature cannot possess any place in society nor any name. The father-son bond confirms the continuation of society by passing on traditions from a father to his son, and this succession is what is absent in *Frankenstein*.

Concerning the literary genre of the fair foundling, Barbara Estrin's comments are worth noting. Although her researches focused on the foundling stories of the Renaissance period, the essence of fair foundling stories should remain in the middle-class family romance of the early nineteenth century via the eighteenth century gothic novels, an aristocratic version of a family romance. A characteristic of the fair foundling story is a recovery of a lost son which endorses the continuity of a family. Such a story gives us a feeling that, after the confusion of wandering, something good, lost in the past, is regained. "The mere naming of genealogies establishes a sense of well-being; knowing a background is equivalent to having a future. [. . .] The return of the real child surrounds the restoration of what was with the aura of rebirth" (Estrin 14-17). These sort of narratives have a power to confirm in the reader that the traditional authority is better than a present chaos, and that it is better to keep to the old values that have been passed on from the father to his son for a long time.

In a fair foundling story, "Children are their parents made small. They have no separate identity; the connection through duplication predetermines their existence" (Estrin 20). Thus, in *Maurice*, the father and the son are a part of each other's identity. By recovering their familial bond, their identities become complete. The father regains his future, and the son retrieves his past, and thus the steadfast continuance of the patriarchal system is saved and continued. The aura of rebirth is present in the

father's discovery of the son in *Maurice*, but it is different from a common birth scene because the birth of identity is performed only by males: the father and the son, without the mother's participation. In *Maurice*, the father and the son perform the scene of rebirth by keeping away the mother so that the patriarchal succession of authority can be placed in the foreground. In *Frankenstein*, the scene of creation is not filled with the aura of rebirth but that of death by completely excluding women from the labour.[10]

Reproduction of Class Distinctions

Estrin suggests another motif in the foundling story. That is the binary opposition in the good of art and the good of nature.

> Despite the differences between formulaic and analogus foundlings, all lost-child plots present two philosophically opposed goods: the good of art (what man invents) and the good of nature (what god, or some higher power, molds). . . . *[the good of] Nature* is represented by the temporary desperation and ultimate exaltation of the biological parents who at first lose and then get back the missing child. The reunion provides the happy ending, the joy of familial continuity replacing the transforming adventure of adoption. [. . .] The theme reflects an aristocratic longing. Because the conclusion predicates that the biological parents are superior to the adoptive ones, *the foundling formula suggests that "nature" is better than "nurture."* . . . The good of art appears in the adoptive sections where the supremacy of inheritance is superseded by the idealization of the replacement. Thus, the aristocratic court is supplemented by the simple country, the proud king by a modest peasant. During this "diaspora," the lost child absorbs values that his biological parents could never teach him. Principally, the adoptive sections represent a belief that individual differences -- even those of race (Moses' rescue by the Egyptian princess) or spieces (Romulus and Remus's rearing by wolves) -- can be overcome. (13-15)[11]

It is difficult to apply Estrin's Renaissance definitions of nature and art to *Maurice*, which is nineteenth-century fiction. This is because, in the fair foundling story in general, the *natural* parents live an upper-class *artificial* life, and the foster parents, who represent the good of art, dwell in the *natural* circumstances in the Romantic sense. When Estrin's theory is modified to a simpler model to apply it to *Maurice*, the good of nature means the goodness of the natural parents, and the good of art the goodness of the foster parents. In the former case, the son's return to his good natural parents equals his happiness and a happy ending. In the latter case, the son gains a virtue which is absent from his natural parent's community in the adoptive experience, and this suggests a possibility of nullifying the existing class distinctions in society.

The emphasis in *Maurice* is completely on the good of nature, whilst the good of art is almost denied. Even though Maurice's wandering seems to narrate the transgression of the boundary between his born and the lower class, his journey actually illustrates the firmness of the boundary and

the impossibility of crossing over it. First of all, Maurice had to start wandering, because he could not work as hard as his foster father. The foster father complains about the fact that "he [the foster father] was obliged to maintain him [Maurice] by the sweat of his brow when he would never be able to do the like for him when he was old" (83). The foster father is cruel because Maurice is not like him and he never can be because of his physical weakness. Maurice is aware of this fact and says, "Unfortunately I am a delicate boy and unable to work as he [the foster father] would have me and have often been confined to my bed with fevers" (73).

Maurice cannot fit the foster father's image of his son, because he is born not for work, at least not for physical labour, any more than his real father. Though Maurice spent eleven years in a working class household, he never got accustomed to working as hard as his foster father does. In contrast, it takes less than a day for him to become as his real father. Maurice at first was very happy to support Old Barnet's fishery, as his neighbour noticed, "Maurice has lived with old Barnet in his cottage. [. . .] They lived several months in this manner [Maurice supporting Barnet's fishing] very happily" (66). Before he manages to recognize that the traveller is his real father, Maurice says to the traveller, "I loved old Barnet and liked my life here with him" (72). Maurice, it seems, wanted to become a fisherman, if he was strong enough for the business. "I am not strong enough to manage the boat and go out to sea, and so it [Old Barnet's Cottage] is let to some fisherman" (72). As soon as Maurice meets his father, his opinion about fishing changes significantly:

> In the fine evenings they [Maurice and his father] would sail out to sea in the old fishing boat; they did not fish, for they did not like to give pain to, and destroy animals, but they would observe the dancing waves, and the rocky shores; and if they stayed out long after sunset they saw the stars came out one by one till the whole sky was covered with them. (86-87)

In an instance, Maurice starts hating fishing just as his real father.

What *Maurice* suggests is the impossibility of nullifying the existing class distinction and the exclusiveness of the patriarchal ruling system which never allows the lower class people to move upward. The strength of the paternal system is maintained by allowing people to succeed in authority only through the father-son bond. It was believed that a father should bestow his possessions to no one but his son. This stabilizes society, because, within such a system, those who were born to receive wealth and power keep possessing them, while those born without remain powerless. In a more favorable way than *Frankenstein, Maurice* illustrates the exclusive paternal system in which a son is supposed to follow his father, and through this process, the reproduction of the individual as well as that of the society and its system continue.

Maurice also illustrates the fact that a subject of the ruling class is fully conscious of the exclusivity of the system. In the novel, when the wealthy father is looking for his lost son among the poor, he feels he has to disguise himself in a mean appearance. This is the scene where his real father tells Maurice about his search, "So every year I spent two months in Devonshire going over the whole

country looking for him [his son]. I dress myself meanly that I may enter the cottages with greater freedom and make enquiries of the country people in a familiar manner" (80). He fears that he might not be welcomed by the cottagers, and his manners might not be familiar to them unless he disguises meanly. This reflects *his* consciousness that he does not think the country people to have the freedom of visiting his property, and that he feels the manners of the lower class unfamiliar. We are told that the appearance and manner, which are indices of one's class, are innate qualities. When the father saw Maurice first, he was "much pleased with his appearance and manner" (61). Maurice's father is certainly aware and conscious of his class distinction from the lower order.

As Maurice's beauty and manner indicated his rank, the ugliness of Frankenstein's creature convinced Frankenstein that the creature should not be his son, part of his family, or a member of the human family. A flash of lightning shows Frankenstein his creature's "gigantic stature, and the deformity of its aspect, more hideous than belongs to humanity" (72). The word "belong" in the quotation is important. In *Maurice*, Maurice's father uses the word when asking a woman whether "he [Maurice] belongs to this town" (61). The woman answers "No, he does not." The first time Old Barnet meets Maurice, he says to Maurice, "you do not belong to these parts" (64). Surely, Maurice does not belong to the working class people. The recognition of the father-son bond lets Maurice to discover "that he belonged to good, kind parents" (88). Thus, in both novels, one's place in society is firmly predetermined. It is not changeable.

There is another example of the exclusivity of middle class identity. When Maurice's real father talks about his experience abroad, his recognition about what he is *not* is clearly expressed:

> When I was five and twenty my kind father sent me abroad [. . .] I passed five years in this happy manner, dwelling among foreign nations, often in desert places where the people do not live by sowing and reaping corn and taking care of farms, as *they* do here, but depend upon hunting for their livelihood. (my emphasis, 78)

The father defines the difference between England and other countries in terms of the style of earning a living. England depends on agriculture and the others on hunting. This statement is not unbiased, because in a preceding page the father and the son assert that hunting is not desirable but cruel. "They [Maurice and his real father] then continued sitting on the rock talking [. . .] of the beauty of the little birds, and the cruelty of those who kill them" (74). The father implies that there are less civilized and cruel nations outside England, and that life in England is quite different.

The father's consciousness about who he is, is still clearly expressed in the disturbing *they* in the indented quotation above. Why should it not be *we*? In his mind, farming for a living is what *they*, the lower class people and not what *he* does as part of civilized culture. The father's idea of farming is totally different from what Maurice has experienced in his wandering days among the working classes. Maurice was requested to work harder than he could physically manage. He was almost dying because he could not work so hard as he needed to support his living. On the contrary, his real

father's idea about farming is that it should be no more than exercise. Surprisingly, Maurice agrees with his real father immediately after meeting him. They talk of "the sweet life it would be to take care of a nice farm, not working too hard, but sufficient to become healthy and strong through exercise" (74). Maurice and his father were not born in the classes where they had to work to live, and thus, naturally, Maurice was not able to fit in with the life of the lower classes. This is what is implied in the odd appearance of the word "they" above.

After meeting his real father, Maurice grows up to be like him. Maurice visits Old Barnet's house in a mean disguise as his real father did. During holidays, the father and the son visit the place together, and then "Henry [Maurice] put on a coarse country dress, and his father clothed himself as he used when he travelled about the country to seek for his child" (86). Maurice attends Eton college and goes abroad as did his father. Brewer points out Maurice's unwavering character: "In Shelley's recently rediscovered story, *Maurice, or the Fisher's Cot* (written August 1820), the title character seems impervious to the forces of environmental conditioning" (219). Maurice was not able to accustom himself to the foster parent's way of living, because he was not born that way and was never able to change.

Stories from Exiles

The surrounding atmosphere of *Frankenstein* is entirely different from that of *Maurice*. Near the North Pole, a dying Frankenstein confesses his life story to Walton, an English adventurer. His story expresses the misery of family-less individuals and their fate. Walton then encloses Frankenstein's confession in his letters addressed to his beloved family in England. While *Maurice* is the story of an affectionate father-son bond recovering a family in England, *Frankenstein* is the story of a tragic father-son bond destroying a family mostly outside of England. Maurice's father describes the division of familial ties as a characteristic of the life outside of England. He explains to Maurice that people abroad

> depend upon hunting for their livelihood, leaving their native villages for months together in search of game, and living a wild life among the woods and mountains, while their wives and daughters remain at home spinning their own clothes, sitting in the open air, where the winters are so mild that they have neither frost or snow. (78)

The binary oppositions made by the two stories are: Maurice/ Frankenstein's creature, beauty/ ugly, England/ non-England, a place of family/ not a place of family. From this perspective, England is the symbol of the home as a place for family and human ties.

Speaking biographically, it is ironical that *Maurice* was created among people exiled from England and wanting a warmth of home. Mrs Mason was not allowed to visit her country ever again or to see her children for the rest of her life. The Shelleys, too, were not a welcome couple in England. As if forming an alliance against the stern and exclusive pater-familias in England, the mother-daughter

knot bound these exiled families in Italy.

Losing her mother at her birth, Mary Shelley wished for a strong relationship with her father, but the father-daughter relationship had weakened since her elopement with Percy. In a letter to her friend, Amelia Curran, from Leghorn dated 20 June 1820, Shelley writes: "From Papa I have not heard a very long time" (*Letters* 150). Around 1820, after experiencing the death of her child, William, who was named after her father, Shelley wanted Godwin's sympathy the most; however, Godwin was in financial difficulty and near the edge of eviction.[12] During this period, "When Godwin wrote to her daughter, he thought not of her loss, but of her husband's broken promises and the money" (Seymour 234). This made Godwin's relationship to Percy Shelley awfully rough, and on 7th August, Percy Shelley wrote to Godwin that "he had received Mary's permission to intercept any letters which might contain upsetting news" (Seymour 244). No wonder that during this period Mary "expressed concern and puzzlement at the paucity of letters from her father" (Seymour 244). It was surely a hard time for Mary Shelley who recorded in her Journal on the 4th of August in 1819 that "We [Percy and Mary Shelley] have now lived five years together; and if all the events of the five years were blotted out, I might be happy" (*Journal* 122).[13] Far away in Italy, Shelley would bitterly observe that Godwin was "dotingly fond" (*Maurice* 78) of his first son, William, just as the father in *Maurice* is of his son. She would have been envious of such a father-son bond in England and felt an intense exclusion. The image of hostile father figures such as William Godwin, Lord Mountcashell (Mrs Mason's husband), and Lord Byron (who never allowed Clair to see her daughter), loomed large while Shelley was writing *Maurice*. This resulted in her harsh criticism against a patriarchal society that runs thought the novel.

From this standpoint, the beauty/ ugly opposition of the two novels offers an interesting perspective. In the essay explaining the ugliness of Frankenstein's creature, Denise Gigante concludes that ugliness resists theorization and thus signifies aesthetic impossibility, which is unrepresentable and unnamable. Unrepresentability means that ugliness is beyond the control of language, the symbolic order, and the patriarchal system. Miharu Abe points out that *Frankenstein* employs one of the Greek myth motifs: a father's fear of being replaced by his son such as described in the stories of Uranus, Cronus, Zeus and Oedipus (Abe 7). When Edmund Burke's aesthetic theory on beauty and sublime is taken into consideration, "beauty" suggests controllability which is defined as a feminine characteristic. The ugliness of Frankenstein's monster reflects the creator's fear of uncontrollability in his creature. At least beauty can be theorized, while, as Gigante explains, ugliness escapes any explanation. Thus, Maurice is a beautiful and obedient character who can be safely included into the patriarchal system, while the ugliness of Frankenstein's creature rises sufficient fear in people to make him an exile. Viewing it from the novel's criticism on the exclusivity of the patriarchal system in England, the opposition of the atmosphere in the two novels is two sides of the same coin.[14]

Patriarchal fathers in England fear and expel individuals whom they cannot control. Therefore, the

Shelleys, who committed adultery and eloped, and Mrs Mason, who had an extramarital relationship, were not acceptable. In *Maurice*, Shelley's comment on the exclusive patriarchal system in England is dramatized in an exceedingly favorable disguise. Although, the story seems like an innocent little story for a child, we should not dismiss it as such, because Shelley's criticism on the patriarchal system in England becomes evident when the circumstance of its creation are considered and compared with her most famous fiction, *Frankenstein*.

Conclusion

Although not enough attention has been paid to *Maurice*, this essay explained the importance that this little novel possesses in the study of Shelley and her works. Learning from her mother's life, who died before complating the fictionalization of her radical feminist views as *The Wrongs of Woman: or, Maria*, Shelley chose a subtler way to state her stance about the patriarchal system in England. Unlike Wollstonecraft's novels such as *Maria*, no rebellious wife or daughter appears in *Maurice* and *Frankenstein*. The highly idyllic father-son bond described in *Maurice* highlights a deliberate authorial intention excluding the mother from the story, and this expresses the author's profound disapproval of her contemporary situation of women in British society. When the context of *Maurice*'s creation is considered and at the same time, when the novel is compared to *Frankenstein*, Shelley's obscured message becomes clear. Reading *Maurice* from this perspective gives us clues on how to associate this novel to Shelley's other fictions. The research on *Maurice*, which has long been ignored, and this paper help further develop of the understanding on Shelley as well as feminism in literature.

Notes

1. Further citations appear in the text as *Maurice*.
2. Further citations appear in the text as *Frankenstein*.
3. Countess Mountcashell is Mrs Mason's real name. see Figure 2 below.
4. These stories of Mrs Mason were published under the name of M. J. Moor.
5. Maurice's real father is never given a name, and we have two fathers in *Maurice*: his real father and the foster father. This fact makes this essay complicated. Thus, hereafter, although such an expression is never used in the story, I refer to Maurice's real father as "his real father," and foster father as "the foster father" in this essay. In the story, the foster father does not know that he is a foster father, because his wife had stolen Maurice while he was away and presented Maurice to him as his real son. Shelley also did not give a name to the title character's father in her previous novel, *Mathilda* (1819).
6. Poovey's book (chapter I) is also useful to look at in terms of this issue of women and writing around the period.
7. Concerning this, see Ogino (9).
8. Henry is Maurice's real name. Henry changed his name to Maurice after he had fled from his foster father,

because he feared being discovered by the foster father. This is one of the reasons for the delayed recognition of father and son in the story.

9. Of course, a woman needs to know her father just same. In this essay, however, I particularly focus on the father-son relationship; therefore, I omit the 'his/her' expression to avoid complication.
10. Concerning the development of the patriarchal myths that exclude women from the birth scene, see Abe (13-14). She explains that women, whose participation is as important for the reproduction of individuals as men, were deliberately excluded from the creation myths to create a monopoly of authority by men in patriarchal society.
11. In the citation, the important parts to understand the good of nature are italicized, and the parts regarding the good of art are underlined.
12. Shelley truly needed her father's sympathy, because her relationship with her husband, Percy Shelley, had completely deteriorated in this period. Seymour suggests "It is possible and even probable that [Percy] Shelley, in the autumn of 1820, was contemplating leaving his wife and child for his sister-in-low" (255). Percy Shelley also had an illegitimate daughter, Elena Adelaide, with an unknown woman during this period.
13. Concerning Shelley's Journal, Seymour says that its entries are "always terse in periods of unease or unhappiness," (254) and thus it does not tell much about the things in this period.
14. *Frankenstein*, much lengthier than *Maurice*, offers a description of the creature's mind in the first person narrative. This makes the reader's moral judgement of the novel more complicated. In this essay, among the multi-layered meanings of *Frankenstein*, the motives of the wandering individual and the father-son bond are focused in order to make a comparison between *Maurice* and *Frankenstein*.

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