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"What Makes a Monster and What Makes a Man? Creator vs. Creature in Mary Shelley's *Frankentstein*"

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Abstract: Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein,* published in 1818, was born out of the author's suffering and rejection from society. Her character, the Creature, represented these feelings and served as an example that humanity can be found anywhere. The aim of this paper is to analyse Mary Shelley as the Creature of her own life, Victor Frankenstein's hubris and ensuing downfall, and the Creature's pure desires and pain. These three topics will be studied thanks to a close reading of the novel and several academic papers to support these ideas. The paper also aims to point out prejudices and how they affect their victims, destroying even the kindest soul. Humanity had often been linked to beauty and charisma, but Mary Shelley tried to get readers to understand this characteristic could be found in anyone. Victor, believing himself to be superior, ruined himself and those around him, while the Creature, banished by all who encountered him, strived to maintain his hope and, in the end, repented for his crimes. Mary Shelley is now seen by many as a figure of change in literature and society thanks to *Frankenstein*, and the debate pertaining to the morality of its characters remains important up to this day.

Keywords: *Frankenstein*, Shelley, Creature, Monster, Humanity, Hubris.

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What Makes a Monster and What Makes a Man? Creator vs. Creature in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*

0. Introduction

> When I looked around I saw and heard of none like me. Was I, then, a monster, a blot upon the earth, from which all men fled and whom all men disowned?
>
> *Frankenstein*, Mary Shelley

Ever since the publication of *Frankenstein* in 1818, there has not been much doubt about who the true monster of the story is. It is often that scholars remind readers that Frankenstein is not the monster, but the doctor; however, when looking at the novel closely, one may be able to see that there is not much truth to that statement. After all, what makes a monster and what makes a man? Is the Creature—as he shall be referred to in this paper in order to differentiate him from the idea of the monster—the villain of the story, or is he another victim to the acts of his creator? It is Victor who mistreats his own offspring, and it is the Creature who helps those in need as if it were something natural to him from the moment he is born until the moment when he is repeatedly abused by the rest of humankind.

Mary Shelley, through the use of heart wrenching internal and external dialogue, offered the reader insight into what her characters were feeling, showing us how the Creature wished to be loved and treated with care, and how Victor Frankenstein deprived his creation of those very two things from his "birth", finding disgust in his appearance and thus refusing to believe that he could be anything but a monster. While the reader, at least during the nineteenth century, might have agreed with Victor Frankenstein's beliefs as a rule, Mary Shelley's description of the Creature's humanity changed that perception of monstrosity. The Creature's deformed physique would have produced aversion, but the author's writing helped people realise that, even if ugly, the Creature had feelings that ran as deep as any of theirs, and that it was the doctor's behaviour the one truly cruel and monster-like. Shelley rejected the idea of the beautiful hero, and instead gave her most beloved character a hideous appearance in order to show that it is not beauty that makes somebody worth loving.

The 18th-century philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who believed that man was inherently good and that there was no natural evil in his heart (28), would have agreed with Mary Shelley's representation of the Creature; it is not until the Creature is rejected over and over that he starts to feel resentment and hatred towards humankind, aiming to take revenge on his creator by imitating what others have previously done to him. O'Rourke, who has explored the importance of Rousseau in Mary Shelley's novel, affirms that the Creature is the perfect example of the philosopher's theory—the Creature "does not come into existence *tabula rasa*, but begins to show a Rousseauean inner being in his first reaction to light and darkness" (549), that is, the Creature's first experience with the outside world. When reading *Frankenstein*, the reader has to remember that Mary Shelley was an avid reader of Rousseau's writings, and that her own were influenced by those of the Swiss philosopher. The Creature proves from the beginning that he merely wishes to love and learn, but prejudices against him

stop that from happening, hardening his heart to the point of no return. By giving the Creature this much humanity, however, it is easier to see the contrast to Victor's, or lack thereof, as he grows up in a loving family and ends up rejecting and never offering kindness; based on Rousseau's theory, one can say that Victor is not human, for he does not appear to be inherently good, but inherently evil.

Mary Shelley's novel differed from those written during the first half of the 19th century, such as Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) or Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe: A Romance* (1819)—not only those written by women, but those written by any other author, regardless of sex. She submerged herself into the Gothic and dealt with her own traumas—such as the death of her babies and her father's rejection—and, thus, explore the inner parts of the human being and how disregard from society may hurt and change somebody, highlighting the idea that this person should not be the only one to blame. As a woman who had been shunned for her illicit affair with Percy B. Shelley and whose baby had just died, Mary Shelley found herself depressed (Baumann 3–5); she defied writing conventions and made her own way by pouring out her heart onto a piece of paper and demonstrating that, just because of what her life may look like to an outsider, she was as deserving of love as every one of them. Moreover, she had also been rejected as a child; her mother died because of puerperal fever, and her father married a woman who did not love her. Where the Creature was not loved by his paternal figure, Mary Shelley was not loved by her maternal one; she understood the pain of being considered a monster by the one who was supposed to love and care for you, and she used her pain and anger to highlight the unfairness of the situation.

In this paper, the idea that the true monster of the novel is not the Creature, but its creator, Victor Frankenstein, shall be proven through an extensive analysis of Shelley's novel and the use of different academic sources, focusing on the author's own experience with marginalisation, the idea of humanity and the importance of love and compassion. While the novel has been carefully examined under different lenses throughout history, this paper focuses on the morality of its characters and its author and defend the Creature, whose voice has been repeatedly silenced ever since he was created. He has been unfairly referred to as the monster from the moment that the novel was published, and this paper aims to debunk that assumption and remind its readers that, while his appearance may not have been ordinary, his desires were as human as those belonging to those who surrounded him.

1. Perception of Monstrosity in the 19th Century: Mary Shelley as the Creature

When reading *Frankenstein*, one must always keep in mind who the writer of the novel was*:* an unmarried female teenager who had already had two children, one of them dead, and who had left her home to live with a married man who already had a child. In the eyes of her contemporaries, Mary Shelley was as much of a monster as the Creature in her novel. This was a time when everything had to be beautiful—everything that did not fit the standards set by society ought to be shunned, deemed not worthy enough of attention. Even Gothic characters, such as Bram Stoker's Dracula, Oscar Wilde's Dorian Gray or Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's Carmilla, were beautiful—their descriptions always made sure to mention their physique and, even in their villainy, they were still alluring. Shelley, on the other hand, showed humanity in its most natural form; this, she knew, meant solely the inner feelings of her characters, not

their physical loveliness. As Friedman and Kavey state, "the Creature is stigmatized as monstrous before his behaviour actually deserves such an undesirable label" (37); people have decided that the Creature should be a monster because of his appearance without keeping in mind the fact that he has saved others and that everything he longs for is mutual love. The reader notices the Creature through Victor's eyes from the beginning, as he is the first-person narrator of most of the story; before being aware of the situations that have led the Creature to murder William, the reader is repeatedly told that this behaviour is what one should have always expected from him. However, when one is finally given the chance to listen to the Creature's narrative, it can be seen that his feelings run deep and that, contrary to popular belief, he tries to receive love and treat others with kindness and is, nevertheless, abused and abandoned. The Creature's feelings throughout the novel are naturally benevolent. For instance, he tells Victor that he follows a vegetarian diet, for he has realised that he does not need to "destroy the lamb and the kid to glut [his] appetite; acorns and berries afford [him] sufficient nourishment" (Shelley 147), and that "what chiefly struck [him] [upon his creation] was the gentle manners of … people" (109). This innate goodness is also seen by some critics, such as Mellor, who reaffirms that the Creature turns "monstruous" only after being unloved and, even then, he is not truly evil, for he is just revengeful against his own creator (11), or Baldick, who says that "the monster's vengeful declaration of war against human kind arises from a bitter feeling of exclusion from human joys" (41). The Creature cannot be considered a monster, for it is society that has turned him into what he is today. Mary Shelley, in her own position as a "monster", referred to the Creature as a wretch—her descriptions of him never concerned him morally; however, in the version edited by Percy B. Shelley, the Creature is referred to as "the devil" and as "an abortion" (Mellor 15). Mary Shelley felt sympathy towards the Creature—towards society's monster—and saw Victor as the true villain of the story—as the world that had shunned her. Percy Shelley, on the other hand, sympathised with Victor, and saw the Creature as the true representation of evil. Moreover, like the Creature, Mary Shelley is forced into confinement—while Percy Shelley's reputation could have been tarnished, as a man, it was only shame that could have stopped him from taking part in social events; the Creature's solitude, like Mary's, is enforced (Baldick 53). The Creature, who also has no say in his creation, is forced to accept this and the pain that comes with it.

Mary Shelley's parents, Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin, had made sure to provide a thorough education for their daughter. Even though Wollstonecraft died after giving birth, her daughter always admired her and read her fervently, and her father, also a philosopher, provided Mary Shelley with all the books a young woman could not normally access at the time. Mary Shelley, in turn, contended that the Creature was educated as well; she was "careful to point out how education has the power to humanize or dehumanize the subject. The books the Creature reads teach him about sensibility; they allow him to articulate his inclinations toward love and community" (Pon 38). Victor, on the other hand, refuses to accept his professor M. Kempe's advice when he arrives at college, believing his own intellect and ideas to be superior; unlike the Creature, Victor is dehumanised in his unwillingness to learn. Victor's monster—the Creature—, who ought to be cruel, learns about love and beauty through a self-taught education; however, humanity's harshness and abuse forces him to unlearn all of this (38). Mary Shelley, whose intellect made her a powerful woman at the time,

was deemed a monster by society because of her affair with Percy Shelley and, thus, said intellect lost its power, similar to what happened to her mother, whose works William Godwin published after her death. Instead of receiving the praise Godwin had expected, Wollstonecraft was posthumously considered a monster because of the affairs she recorded having; once again, her romantic and sexual history as a woman erased her value and her intellect. An intellect that would have been considered astonishing in a different situation was diminished and, to an extent, ignored, because of the acts of their perpetrators —be it Mary Shelley or the Creature.

The Creature, moreover, is not fully aware of his condition as "monstrous" until he acquires proper language; while he is conscious of his physical deformity, he is not able to understand his nature—in the eyes of others—prior to being able to listen and comprehend his own description and use the necessary words to describe and compare himself to others. Similarly, *Frankenstein* served as a means to express Mary Shelley's concerns; it was language that gave others the power to harm and exclude her, and it was also language that gave her the power to fight against this and reclaim her own being. As a woman, Mary Shelley knew that writing was the way to be heard. While her actions had sunned her, her voice could free her or, at the very least, shine light on the unfairness of the situation. A writer, Mary Shelley was a believer of the power of language, and she took advantage of her talent to fight for respect. Like the Creature, who, through the use of language, manages to make his creator forget about his appearance and, in turn, feel compassion for his pain (Brooks 593), Mary Shelley used her own writing to defend herself and express her deepest grief, thus allowing society to see that she was not a monster, even if she ought to be deemed one because of her romantic endeavours. Shelley found in the Creature a reflection of herself, and demanded the compassion and understanding that even Victor Frankenstein could find within himself after listening to his creation's sorrowful story.

2. Victor Frankenstein's Hubris[1] and Disregard for Morality

From the beginning of the novel, Victor has a desire to outdo humanity—"curiosity. Earnest research to learn the hidden laws of nature, gladness akin to rapture. As they were unfolded to me, are among the earliest sensations I can remember" (Shelley 28)—, ignoring the rules given by nature and wishing to equate himself with God. While fabricating the Creature—and even before that, when the idea was fleeting and unachievable—, Victor's desire to create life is not selfless. He, in an egotistical manner, desires to be admired. According to Rousseau, man is naturally born good, and it is only a bad treatment that turns him into a cruel and power-hungry being (28). Victor, who grows up surrounded by love, and whose first memories are of his mother's caresses and his father's eyes (25), turns out to be assertive nonetheless, thus debunking Rousseau's belief or, more accordingly, proving that his humanity was never truly pure. Friedman and Kavey acknowledge this by stating that "despite all that has occurred in his benighted life, Victor beseeches the crew to venture forth on their expedition to locate

[1] From ancient Greek ὕβρις, hubris is the quality of excessive pride, often in relation to arrogance and linked to one's downfall.

and finally document the open polar sea for entirely self-centered reasons" (37). While, for example, Henry Clerval, who grows up surrounded by a less-loving father who does not support his interests, acts only with love and delight, Victor disregards his domestic education in favour of his own pursuits and unnatural desires. Moreover, while Victor sometimes acknowledges the fact that his behaviour is immoral, he believes glory to be much more important and this "egotism … hardens him against the macabre nature of his work" (Hetherington 9). Victor is never oblivious to this; however, when wondering why he may be the first man to fully create life from nothingness even when surrounded by scientific geniuses, he chooses to ignore the fact that none have tried because if would not be morally correct, and instead considers it an honour that only he, because of his passion, should be awarded. Victor, in his desire to be the greatest scientist and the most intelligent human being, lives his life following the *carpe diem*[2] principle. He does not think about the repercussions of his acts or what he is supposed to do once the Creature is fully done; his only thoughts during his self-imposed reclusion are those pertaining to his future fame and present hubris. Victor continuously tunes out his morality, stating that "often did [his] human nature turn with loathing from [his] occupation" (48). Despite this, he chooses to go on—according to Rousseau and, consequently, Mary Shelley, Frankenstein is not naturally good, as man ought to be, because he turns away from the chance to correct his errors and go back to his simple and honest academic life. Friedman and Kavey, who explore Victor's hubris repeatedly, agree that "grandiose projects that aim to eliminate all disease or solve the mystery of life remain inherently problematic and demonstrate the practitioner's hubris" (16). While Victor could have been focusing on his studies and investigating different matters that would have brought forth his intelligence to his professors, he chooses to focus on an isolated investigation, which "[veers] into dangerous territory and can encourage scientists to indulge their egos and desires for personal power rather than to gain knowledge for the greater good" (16). His desire to have a legacy that will outlive him is stronger than his own sense of morality and his concern for what this investigation may do not only to him but to the whole world. In this mad desire, Victor ignores the consequences his acts may bring, as he believes glory to be the greatest prize he could ever receive, and one he shall only receive if he gives life to this Creature.

When his Creature is born, Victor is finally able to observe the situation from an outside perspective and acknowledge the true consequences of his actions, not just as a creator, but as a human being who has been taught to distinguish right from wrong. Instead of delighting in his creation, to which he has dedicated months and for which he has given up most of his academic endeavours, his first feelings and thoughts are those of revulsion. He rushes out of the room, "unable to endure the aspect of the being [he] had created" (Shelley 50) and, later on, once he has wrapped his head around this new reality, he beholds "the wretch—the miserable monster whom [he] had created" (51). Victor, who had considered his Creature the future of humankind, names him as soon as he comes to life, deeming him a "wretch" and a "monster" even before the Creature moves or reacts to his own creator. However, instead of feeling shame, Victor only feels horror and disappointment (52)—he is terrified of that being and disappointed at the fact that he has lost his chance to become a genius among geniuses.

[2] Latin for *seize the day*, used to urge others to live life without thinking about past or future problems.

Victor assumes that his Creature has no humanity because of his appearance—an appearance that Victor himself has crafted—, but believes his own humanity to be obvious still. Nevertheless, not even once does he regret anything that he has done up until that moment, from collecting dead body parts from charnel-houses to assembling them to the point they form a new body full of life. Victor, without giving his Creature a chance to prove his humanity—or lack thereof, in his eyes—, assumes his creation's behaviour must be monstruous because of his disgraceful appearance; moreover, he acknowledges that he had chosen beautiful body parts in order to form his Creature but, the moment he was brought to life, he became ugly and dreadful (50). In his scientific madness, Victor had not been able to properly see the reality of what he was conducting and the magnitude of his acts, and what had been planned to be a beautiful creation turned into a tall and deformed body; this body, although created by him, is impossible to look at. Victor rejects his Creature—his child—because of his own prejudices and, instead of focusing on the fact that this Creature is this way because he chose to make it thus, he blames it on the new being, whom, as Mellor says, is never asked whether he wants to be created and what he wants to do with his life (11). The Creature, who has not been given a chance to act in any way towards his creator, must accept the life that has been given to him and the abuse that he will be subjected to.

Victor's own hubris and refusal to care for his Creature leads to a murderous rage for which he does not accept blame. The Creature's first murder, that of Victor's youngest brother and, indirectly, that of Justine, are to Victor a tragedy he should not be fully blamed for—he does accept the fact that he was the one to set the Creature free, but he "[resolves] to stay silent" (Shelley 71) when Justine is convicted of a murder Victor knows she did not commit. Moreover, when hearing about Justine's suffering, Victor states that "the tortures of the accused did not equal [his]" (79). Justine is about to be hanged, but still Victor believes himself to be the greatest victim of the situation. Victor excuses himself repeatedly, stating that his confession would not help Justine and would only make him a madman (75), even if he could offer proof; he believes himself to be too important to give up on his life. Therefore, he confesses to no one and tries to defend Justine's innocence with no shred of proof. Victor has conflicting feelings from thereon, absolving himself from guilt but, at the same time, acknowledging the fact that the Creature is his own child—"a being whom I myself had formed, and endued with life" (71). His health, which had recovered during Clerval's stay with him in university, worsens once again at his own realisation that he "is fallen [which] is in a sense a discovery that one is a monster, a murderer" (Gilbert 60). If the Creature ought to be, in Victor's eyes, a monster because of his acts, Victor should be a monster just as much, for he was the one to create him and leave him alone to experience the world by himself. It is Victor's desire to create life from dead matter that leads to his downfall; this proves that it is hubris, specifically, which motivates Victor, and not simple pride. Furthermore, when reflecting on the Creature's acts, Victor states that "[his] hatred and revenge burst all bounds of moderation" (Shelley 89). Once again, he does not think that he may have to be held accountable for this destruction. Had the Creature been beautiful and benevolent in Victor's eyes, Victor would have called him "his" and would have believed all of the Creature's actions to be his as well because of their relation. Nonetheless, because of the Creature's appearance and, in unknowing eyes, heartless acts, Victor detaches himself from the being he decided to create,

seemingly forgetting he was the one to give him conscience. Victor does not seem to realise that he has made the Creature "in his own image, thereby making him miserable and so antisocially malevolent" (Baldick 53). Victor does, at times, acknowledge that he has created a "monster," but not once is he regretful (Hetherington 16). The suffering that follows him after his scientific endeavours is not enough to make him realise that he has ventured into a forbidden territory, and he still believes himself to be an incomparable genius. Victor remains obstinate that his Creature is an evil being that has, in a way, no relation to him, and tells him, upon meeting him, that he will not listen to his discourse, as "there is no connection between [them]; [they] are enemies" (Shelley 98). Because of the Creature's form, tragedy has followed him, but Victor does not believe himself to be the cause; instead, he believes himself to be a victim. As Bernatchez states, "Victor has appropriated suffering as a means and justification for the continued infliction of pain on the Creature" (209). Repeatedly throughout Shelley's novel, Victor uses his own suffering to insult and belittle his Creature, sometimes criticising him for things that are not even part of his crimes, but a body that Victor himself provided him with when he gave him life.

As the novel progresses and the Creature's acts become more murderous, Victor's rage grows. He is given the chance to stop violence when the Creature asks for a female companion, with a promise that he will go to where "neither [Victor] nor any other human being shall ever see [the Creature and his companion] again" (Shelley 146). Victor agrees at first, feeling momentarily bad for his Creature and hopeful that he might be able to get rid of it; however, he soon changes his mind. Victor describes himself as "a miserable wretch, haunted by a curse that shut up every avenue of enjoyment" (158), drawing a parallel to his own Creature, who previously described himself as a "miserable, unhappy wretch" (120). This, moreover, further supports Baldick's analysis, as it is apparent that the Creature mirrors some of Victor's thoughts; both father and child feel the same way about themselves and describe themselves with the same words. Victor, who has made the Creature in his likeness, is unaware of this. Victor, while working in creating a female Creature, thinks only of the existing Creature's actions; not even once does he come to think that this "monster" has been man-made (Friedman and Kavey 38). Thus, the Creature's actions are Victor's as well. Victor constantly wishes that "some accident might meanwhile occur to destroy him, and put an end to [his] slavery forever" (Shelley 156). He desperately wishes for the death of his own creation, and even tells the Creature to his face. Furthermore, Victor repeats the term "hideous" throughout his narrative, reminding Walton and the reader of the Creature's physique—before hearing of the Creature's crimes, the reader is already prejudiced, as the Creature has been painted so repulsive that his monstrosity seems obvious. While Victor tries to convince himself of his innocence, the way in which he has referred to the Creature throughout his tale makes it clear that he would have never helped him, as Victor would have always hated him. His resolve to create a female companion quickly falters, and it is mostly for selfish reasons, as he "shuddered to think that future ages might curse [him] as their pest" (171). Victor, after witnessing not only death, but his Creature's despair as well, cannot stop thinking of himself and his legacy. Baldick states that "Victor's transgression is not a punctual disobedience … but rather a continuous career which includes his early researches and his later neglect of the creature" (52); Victor's behaviour is not a consequence of the Creature's actions or requests, as he has

always had madness within him. He has rejected humankind over and over in favour of his own interests, and has played God in this behaviour—Victor has created life from dead matter, not once thinking about the consequences for humanity. Thus, Victor destroys the female Creature, shuttering in the way the Creature's only hope of happiness. Not content enough with this, Victor waits until the Creature can see this extermination, acknowledging that this was the "creature on whose future existence he depended for happiness" (Shelley 171). When doing this, Victor is not keeping in mind the interests of humankind, but his only, as he is only thinking about the negative opinions that might follow this new creation. Victor had attempted to "become the benefactor of his race by turning his back on it" (Baldick 146) but has now decided that his hideous Creature shall have no company for the rest of his days, thus endangering humanity forever. Had Victor's desire to help humanity improve been truly selfless all along, he would not have doubts about providing the Creature with what would be a solution to endless slaughter.

As forewarned by the Creature, Victor's destruction of his female creation leads to more death. Henry Clerval's death marks, for Victor, the end of the ignorance he might have relished before—his only desire now being to kill the Creature. This death is followed by Elizabeth's and, consequently, Victor's father's, which reinforces this aspiration. Victor has nothing to lose anymore, so his only purpose is to destroy what he so carefully created. Victor wishes for "the cursed and hellish monster [to] drink deep of agony; let him feel the despair that now torments me" (Shelley 209). Nevertheless, the Creature, who has already narrated his tale of woe, has clearly known despair longer than Victor. However, because of being considered a "monster," his despair is not valid in the eyes of his creator, who believes it was deserved. As the novel is a first-person narrative, it is only Victor's moral compass that we see (Baldick 28), which stops us from fully understanding the abuse the Creature was truly subjected to, as Victor, in his support, may be downplaying it. Victor goes as far as considering himself benevolent, in a way, for he admits that "[he] created a rational creature, and was bound towards him, to assure, as far as was in [his] power, his happiness and well-being" (Shelley 224). He acknowledges the fact that he has not granted him a companion but believes his actions before that to be correct and excusable—from his point of view, he has not abandoned the Creature. Victor is convinced that his behaviour after seeing the Creature for the first time was normal, and that he was a good creator up to the destruction of the female Creature.

When Victor's account of the story ends and Walton's narrative starts again, Victor admits that "during these last days [he has] been occupied in examining [his] past conduct; nor [does he] find it blameable" (224). He, as in the beginning of the novel, says that he could not be seen as an equal to those who surrounded him, as his work had made him better. Victor is aware that he has done something that should not be possible, and relishes the fact. His hubris is still evident even as he is dying; he has surpassed the expectations of man and, for that reason, he cannot feel guilty about what his acts have led to. Friedman and Kavey pose a question regarding this: "must the extraordinarily human characteristics of ambition and desire derail the angels of our better natures and thus endanger our ability to be human?" (206). Has Victor, in his constant struggle to surpass those who surround him, lost what made him a real man? According to Rousseau, Victor, as a man, should learn from his mistakes, but he goes

as far as monologuing on why Walton[3] and his crew should continue their journey, even if they might endanger their lives. As he awaits a likely death, Victor is still unable to accept that some things, such as the creation of life from dead matter, shall not be done, and he remains comfortable with his decisions until his last breath. Victor, who has a last attempt to redeem himself by accepting blame, prides himself on his creation and hates the said creation in equal parts because of the acts from which he unlinks himself.

3. The Creature's Desire for Love and His Despair once Abandoned

The first words from the Creature enable readers to know that he is aware of the hatred that humanity has for him—"I expected this reception [Victor's scorn] …. All men hate the wretched; how, then, must I be hated, who am miserable beyond all living things!" (97). Before even knowing what he has suffered, Victor admits he feels compassion towards him because of his delicate and heart-wrenching language. Baldick attributes this to the fact that "the [Creature]'s most convincingly human characteristic is of course his power of speech" (46) and that his visibility "means nothing and his eloquence means everything for his identity" (46). It is not the Creature's appearance that dictates who he is as a being, but his ability to eloquently express his desires and fears. Upon meeting Victor, the Creature refuses to hurt him, stating that he is "[his] creature, and [he] will be even mild and docile to [his] natural lord and king" (Shelley 98). The Creature is willing to act like a son to the man who created him, and believes Victor to be his God. Knowing nothing but abuse, the Creature's God is now a "negligent creator whose conduct towards his creation is callously unjust" (Baldick 44). Nevertheless, the Creature keeps asking for "goodness and compassion" (Shelley 98) and covers his creator's eyes so that he will only listen to his tale without thinking about his hideousness and, thus, evincing prejudice.

Abandoned by his creator, the Creature is a lost child, a being with no knowledge of the world, its languages, and its customs. Victor leaves the room the moment he sees his creation, and thus begins a life of solitude for the Creature. The Creature's natural instincts tell him to flee and seek refuge. His first encounter with darkness, as aforementioned, is negative. Darkness—often associated with evil—troubles the Creature and, finding himself desolate, he believed himself to be a "poor, helpless, miserable wretch; [he knew], and [could] distinguish, nothing; but feeling pain invade [him] on all sides, [he] sat down and wept" (101–2). His subconscious tells him to seek light, which is, in contrast, associated with purity and goodness. Unaware of his own appearance and what it may cause, the Creature seeks warmth and care at a village, but he is beaten, and must flee again; he "is stigmatized as monstruous before his behaviour actually deserves such an undesirable label" (Friedman and Kavey 37). He is not aware of society's prejudices, and is "rejected from potential fellowship and treated as a transgressor, long before any malevolent action on his part" (Bernatchez 206). The Creature, who has harmed no one in his short life, is deemed a monster from his birth, and it is these prejudices what leads to his future rage. He does not understand why he is met with hatred and, when he first sees his reflection, he is "unable to believe that it was indeed [him] …; and

[3] The first narrator of the story, to whom Victor Frankenstein is narrating his life before arriving to Walton's ship. Walton, moreover, is narrating the story to his sister through the use of letters.

when [he] became fully convinced that [he] was in reality the monster that [he was], [he] was filled with the bitterest sensations of despondence and mortification" (Shelley 113). The Creature is deeply affected by his condition, feeling an indescribable agony "that these reflections inflicted upon [him]: [he] tried to dispel them, but sorrow only increased with knowledge" (119). After witnessing beauty around him and being mistreated when others first lay eyes on him, he is set to believe that his appearance makes him worthy of such violent treatment. However, he is still good at heart and, at his first impression of love when seeing the De Laceys, he "felt sensations of a peculiar and overpowering nature; … a mixture of pain and pleasure, such as [he] had never before experienced …; and [he] withdrew from the window, unable to bear these emotions" (107). These feelings overwhelm him, for he has never felt anything as passionate or true. He becomes attached to them, enchanted by the way they take care of each other. He is, moreover, used to taking food from them during the night, but "when [he] found that in doing this [he] inflicted pain on the cottagers, [he] abstained" (110). This is the first time the Creature shows love and compassion, thus proving that his natural way of acting is benevolent, enforcing Rousseau's beliefs[4] (O'Rourke 550). The Creature goes as far as helping them gather wood during the night so they will endure less hardships; he has chosen to give up easily accessible food in place of helping the De Laceys, because his heart tells him to be good at all times. The Creature, without knowing that kindness is a favorable quality in society, partakes in kind acts out of a natural desire to make others happy. He realises that he must learn language if he ever hopes to gain the love of others (Brooks 592). The Creature imagines them to be disgusted by his appearance, but that "by [his] gentle demeanour and conciliating words, [he] should first win their favour, and afterwards their love" (Shelley 114). Moreover, the first time he witnesses the use of language, it is used to express love. It is, therefore, easy to see why the Creature would believe language to be necessary in order to be on the receiving end of it. All of the Creature's actions are motivated by his desire to have companionship and be understood; nevertheless, he never goes out during the day, "fearful of meeting with the same treatment [he] had formerly endured" (117). In his account of the story, "representations of civilization are recorded as sources of anguish" (Bernatchez 206). What started out as a tale of happiness and hope has now turned into a tale of sorrow, caused completely by the Creature's experiences with civilisation. The Creature, whose views on society were all originally positive, has changed after being victim to its abuse, and his tale slowly turns more vicious and dark as it progresses.

After this, the Creature maintains, nevertheless, pure feelings in his heart. Unlike his creator, "[his] spirits were elevated by the enchanting appearance of nature; the past was blotted from [his] memory, the present was tranquil, and the future gilded by bright rays of hope, and anticipations of joy" (Shelley 114). While Victor viewed nature as something dark which could not help him, the Creature finds beauty and calmness in the world that surrounds him. The creator is attracted to darkness, whilst the creation is attracted to colour and light. The Creature knows that others consider him a monster, but his heart is light, and his desires are as simple and innocent as those of a child—love, family, and companionship. He is deeply

[4] Man is born naturally benevolent, and there is no evil in his heart. O'Rourke is only supporting Rousseau's ideas, not stating his own.

compassionate, weeping with Safie "over the hapless fate of [Native American] inhabitants" (118). The Creature also wonders at "how one man could go forth to murder his fellow, or even why there were laws and governments; but when [he] heard details of vice and bloodshed, [his] wonder ceased, and [he] turned away with disgust and loathing" (118–19). These emotions demonstrate that the Creature cannot be considered a true monster, as his feelings after birth are of an innocent and romantic nature. As the Creature begins to hope he might find love in the DeLaceys, he has an awakening and remembers how his appearance made others feel. Feeling now an insurmountable amount of pain, the Creature thinks of his creator with hatred; asking him, "why did you form a monster so hideous that even *you* turned from me in disgust? … I am solitary and abhorred" (130). He, however, knows he is good, as he "required kindness and sympathy; but [he] did not believe [himself] unworthy of it" (132). The Creature, who has seen others be treated with love after they show kindness, believes that he, who has also helped humankind, is as deserving as other human beings. In turn, he receives abuse, and this hardens his heart; nevertheless, he is still benevolent towards the DeLaceys, acknowledging that "[he] could have torn [Felix] limb from limb …. By [his] heart sunk within [him] as with bitter sickness, and [he] refrained" (135). This situation turns the Creature's previous feelings about nature into something negative, wishing "to tear up the trees, spread havoc and destruction around [him], and then to have sat down and enjoyed the ruin" (136). He has only felt solicitude and love until that moment, but these have been destroyed by humankind, who has hurt him until he has lost his sense of self. Naomi Hetherington argues that once "the world cannot sustain his feelings, the evil within him reasserts itself, destroying his hope for solace with the thirst for revenge" (35). The Creature had attempted to fight others' opinions about him because of his deep desire for love, but, in the end, he "possesses no independent standard by which to judge himself, and is therefore self-alienated. He is forced to accept the opinion of the only humans he has ever known—that he is hideously ugly and so inferior it is impossible to associate with him" (26). This, nevertheless, does not come naturally to him, as he admits that his thoughts of murder and pain "vanished and a gush of tears somewhat soothed [him]" (Shelley 138) when he thought of the DeLaceys, who, even after hurting him, represented to him the goodness of the world. The Creature, unlike the monster everyone thinks he is, yearns for his feelings of love to be reciprocated, and suffers deeply when he is scorned at. While society assumes he is unfeeling, the Creature's suffering is as profound as anybody else's.

This loneliness leads the Creature to look for Victor, as it is "from [him] only could [he] hope for succour, although towards [him] [the Creature] felt no sentiment but that of hatred" (139). Abhorred by all who have seen him, it is his creator who might find it in him to offer him any kind of consolation. During his journey, in a constant display of human emotions, the Creature revives with nature, and "allowed [himself] to be borne away by them, and, forgetting [his] solitude and deformity, dared to be happy" (Shelley 140–41). His first encounter with William reinforces his hope; the Creature believes that, because of his young age, William will have no prejudices, and thus the Creature will be able to take him and "educate him as [his] companion and friend, [so he] should not be so desolate in this peopled earth" (142). In an attempt to cover William's cries, however, the Creature kills the child; it is also important to note that this is homicide, and that this victim is a child that the Creature "had hoped to adopt

as his own" (Mellor 11). He had not hoped to commit murder, as it is not in his nature. This action makes the Creature realise that humans may never be his equals, as he will always be stronger and different. Thus begins his search for a female Creature companion, who will be equal to him in every physical aspect, and therefore will be able to love him as he desires.

The Creature, who has seen humans share their love ever since he was born, yearns for a companion with whom to share his life and his benevolent emotions, and believes that, once he is not alone anymore, he shall be happy for the rest of this days. The Creature desires to be human, even if his appearance will not allow it. It is here where the Creature showcases "what Rousseau sees as the key attributes of civilised man, but without even our partially satisfactory means of fulfilling them" (Hetherington 26). The Creature tells Victor, "I am malicious because I am miserable. Am I not shunned and hated by all mankind? You, my creator, would tear me to pieces, and triumph" (Shelley 145). The Creature does not ask for much, as "if any being felt emotions of benevolence towards [him], [he] should return them an hundred and an hundredfold; for that one creature's sake [he] would make peace with the whole kind" (146). Unlike Victor, the Creature does not want to be praised by many, simply loved by one. Moreover, as aforementioned, the Creature, who had first seen love as means to share love, now uses language to ask for love from his creator. Unlike Victor, the Creature does not want to be known, as he wants to live away from the world with one mere companion who might accompany him forever. If the Creature acquires such companion, he shall be violent no longer, "for [he] shall meet with sympathy" (147); it is only because of the hardships he has endured that he has dark feelings in his heart. He is, nonetheless, not proud of this, as "[his] vices are the children of a forced solitude that [he abhors]" (148). As a being who has repeatedly shown that he is naturally benevolent and that he loves light and all good things in the world, his sudden desolation and violence are unnatural to him. Thus, his request for sympathy "constitutes a plea for life" (Bernatchez 213). This is the end of the Creature's narrative; when returning to Victor's recount of events, the Creature seems to become monstruous once again, as Victor refuses to believe the Creature is capable of having good feelings. As most of the novel is narrated by Victor, the reader is led to believe that the Creature is truly a monster, and it is only his own tale that can help understand that he is as human as those around him, or even more, when analysing his compassion and hope. The Creature, repeatedly shunned, maintains hope that he shall, someday, find a companion, and thus tries to be benevolent until this is completed. When his companion is destroyed, the Creature, "with a howl of devilish despair and revenge, [withdraws]" (Shelley 171). What Victor sees as "devilish" despair and revenge is, in reality, the deepest pain the Creature has ever experienced, for it was only hope that was keeping him benevolent and, in a way, happy, until that moment. Now that he knows he shall always be alone, the Creature gives way to revenge. If his creator does not allow him companionship, why should Victor have it? The Creature now has nothing to lose, and proclaims that he is "fearless, and therefore powerful" (173). His murderous streak could have been stopped had he been given just one companion, one being with whom to share his life. In the same way that Victor mirrored himself when making the Creature (Baldick 53) the Creature is now making sure that Victor is exactly like him. Victor, however, could escape this and rejoin humankind at any moment, as he was not forced to stay away; the Creature could not, and he is now making sure his enforced solitude is shared by

his creator. Moreover, the Creature makes sure only to hurt innocent victims, which may turn him into more of a monster to an outsider, but, after all, what he is doing is "providing an illustration of the arbitrary injustice of the human society which condemns him on sight" (53). The death of his victims is even more sorrowful because of their innocence, in the same way that his abuse was always unfairly perpetrated from the day he was born.

The Creature, after a long hunt in which Victor's only desire is to kill him, shows himself once his creator is dead. While Victor's last words indicate a lack of guilt, the Creature cannot help but ask for forgiveness at the feet of his creator's dead body. The Creature weeps and, after Walton's threats, tells him:

> That is also my victim! … In his murder my crimes are consummated; the miserable series of my being is wound to its close! Oh, Frankenstein! Generous and self-devoted being! What does it avail that I now ask thee to pardon me? I, who irretrievably destroyed thee by destroying all thou lovedst. … Do you think I was then dead to agony and remorse? … A frightful selfishness hurried me on, while my heart was poisoned with remorse. … My heart was fashioned to be susceptible of love and sympathy; and when wrenched by misery to vice and hatred, it did not endure the violence of the change, without torture such as you cannot even imagine. (Shelley 226)

The Creature, now more alone than ever, as his own father is dead, feels a deep regret, and the darkness that had previously covered his heart dissipates. He asks for forgiveness and states the reasoning behind his acts—he only ever wanted love, but received hatred and scorn. His previous hope has fully disappeared, and he states that "once [he] falsely hoped to meet with beings who, pardoning [his] outward form, would love [him] for the excellent qualities which [he] was capable of unfolding. But now crime has degraded [him] beneath the meanest animal" (228). The Creature, who always hated himself because of his appearance, now hates himself because of his acts, but these acts have happened because of the abuse he suffered for something for which he was not to blame. He admits to not believing that he is "the same creature whose thoughts were once filled with sublime and transcendent visions of the beauty and the majesty of goodness" (228); his pain has eaten him alive, turning him into what humankind always expected him to be. However, his actions have only mirrored those which he was the victim of. The Creature wonders, "[is he] to be thought the only criminal, when all human kind sinned against [him]?" (228). He has seen his existence as "a miscarriage of justice, and his career of crime is really a prolonged protest against this anomaly" (Baldick 53). The Creature, "the miserable and the abandoned, [is] an abortion, to be spurned at, and kicked, and trampled on" (Shelley 228); and "[his] agony was still superior to [Victor's]; for the bitter sting of remorse will not cease to rankle in [his] wounds until death shall close them for ever" (230). The Creature's destiny has always been to be hated, with a suffering that is not comprehended by any character, which led to the murders that he now regrets. Even after his death, the Creature cannot find peace in the fact that Victor ever regretted what he put his

child through, as he knows that his creator hated him until the end of his days. The Creature now welcomes death, but will not rush it, for he believes himself to be worthy of pain, as he tells Walton that "[Walton's] abhorrence cannot equal that with which [the Creature regards himself]" (229). Regretful of his acts, and bearing a sorrow that weighs him down, the Creature wonders, "where can I find rest but in death?" (229). He abandons humankind in the same way humankind had once abandoned him, and sets off to endure pain until his body decides it is time for him to die. In his last display of benevolence, he inflicts revenge upon himself, making sure that he is not left without punishment for his crimes. His humanity, which had apparently disappeared at one point, comes back to him, even if he does not acknowledge it; after all this pain, he has remained human in his heart, not allowing the rest of the world to dictate how much of a monster he should be.

4. Conclusion

This paper has explored the conditions of humanity and how they apply to Victor Frankenstein and his Creature, aiming to debunk the myth that the Creature is the monster of the story. Moreover, Mary Shelley's condition as the "monster" of society has also been studied, thus highlighting her empathy towards the Creature. Mary Shelley, deemed a monster by society because of her illicit behaviour at the young age of nineteen, wrote a novel that has been considered a landmark ever since its publication, and gave voice to those who were often silenced. She criticised prejudices and its effects, and urged others to rethink their actions. Rejecting the moral reading of ugliness becoming immoral and beauty becoming moral, she created a character so hideous that no one could look at him without feeling disgust, but whose feelings were always of a good nature until pain turned his heart sour. In the same way that Victor mirrored himself on his Creature, giving him his worse qualities, Mary Shelley gave her Creature her own feelings of despair and hope. As a woman in the 19th century whose voice was constantly silenced, she found a way to express her rage and her discontent at society through her writing, which this paper shows.

Moreover, Victor's behaviour as the true monster of this story has also been analysed. Following Rousseau's theories, which Mary Shelley embraced, Victor shows that he is not really a man, since he should be naturally good, and even more so when looking at his upbringing. This paper has proved how Victor is ambitious and proud, and how his own hubris leads to not only his downfall, but that of all that surround him. In his desire to be the best and equal God, Victor forgets others and abuses his own child, allowing later on the murder of many others. He does not repent for his acts, and still believes himself to be incomparable to other human beings, as he is, in his eyes, superior. He places the blame on others and prides himself on being the only person who can save humankind, without acknowledging that he was the one to doom it to destruction.

Contrarily, the Creature shows humane qualities in his behaviour at all times—from his desire to love and be loved to his deep guilt about what his rage led him to do. Abused from the moment he was born, the Creature perseveres and maintains hope that he shall one day not be alone, and helps others when possible. Even after discovering that others consider him a monster and believing their opinion, he does not behave like one, for his behaviour is naturally good. He is a benevolent being who does not initially understand violence until it is

inflicted upon him enough times for his heart to harden. Nevertheless, unlike his creator, the Creature does feel guilt and asks for forgiveness; he even postpones his death, which he wishes for, so he can suffer and avenge his own crimes. His actions, which happened only because of society's abuse on him, have not turned him into what society believed him to be.

To conclude, Mary Shelley's novel changed society, even if slowly. She renewed Gothic narratives and unlinked beauty from the idea of the hero, showing to others that righteousness had nothing to do with appearances, but what one was truly like morally. Rousseau's theories, popular at the time, were put to practice in her novel, highlighting how goodness is not only innate, but a characteristic that has nothing to do with one's appearance. However, this debate shall not end yet, as popular culture and Hollywood have eradicated the Creature's humanity to benefit their own ideals;[5] this proves that prejudices are still present in society, and that Shelley's novel was only the first of the many steps taken to destroy them. The Creature's humanity, nonetheless, shall persist to those who decide to read the novel, analyse the meaning behind the author's words and allow themselves to question what really makes a monster, and what makes a man.

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[5] The most obvious example is the erasure of the Creature's speech from all forms of visual media.

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