Frontiers in Arts, Humanities
& Social Sciences

The Failed Master and the Creature's Resistance in Frankenstein

Jia Yiqun

Shandong Vocational University of Foreign Affairs

Abstract: This study explores the master-slave dialectic in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, arguing the novel's true monstrosity resides in Victor's pathological narcissism and patriarchal power rather than the creature. Victor's projection of repressed trauma and desire onto his creation, coupled with his refusal of recognition, constructs a fragile master-slave dynamic. The creature's self-education and linguistic awakening foster his resistance, with his transcontinental revenge as a claim for subjectivity. The analysis reveals the novel's critique of domination-based mastery and the destructive costs of denied recognition for identity formation.

Keywords: Frankenstein; master-slave dialectic; narcissism; resistance.

1. Introduction

Mary Shelley's Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus (1818)[1] stands as a cornerstone of Gothic literature and a prescient meditation on humanity's relationship with creation, power, and identity. This article examines the central tensions between Victor Frankenstein and his creature, which arise from Victor's psychological projection of his repressed desires and moral failings onto his creation. As creator, Victor assumes unidirectional power over the creature's life and death, determining the legitimacy of his existence. Yet his authority depends on the creature's submission; the act of domination becomes the very means through which Victor secures his self-image as master. The creature's existence elevates Victor from an ordinary scientist to a quasi-divine figure, momentarily satisfying his self-centered drive for recognition and creative omnipotence. However, through self-education, the creature acquires language and self-awareness, transforming himself from an object of control into an agent of resistance. His acts of vengeance, beginning with linguistic confrontation and culminating in the destruction of Victor's loved ones, constitute both retaliation and claiming of subjectivity.

Drawing on psychoanalytic theories, Lacanian critiques of the Symbolic Order, and literary analyses of Gothic and Romantic motifs, this article argues that the novel's monstrosity lies not in the creature, but in the patriarchal systems of power and recognition that render him abject. Victor's compulsive projection which is framed by his narcissistic inability to empathize and his unresolved childhood trauma positions the creature as a shadow double, embodying the guilt, rage, and vulnerability he cannot confront in himself. The master-slave dynamic, rooted in Victor's refusal to name or acknowledge his creation, exposes the fragility of patriarchal authority, which depends

Received: May 1, 2026
Revised: May 13, 2026
Accepted:May 14, 2026
Published: May 15, 2026

upon the recognition it simultaneously denies. Through language and consciousness, the creature turns his linguistic competence into an instrument of defiance and his transcontinental quest for revenge emerge as acts of resistance, challenging the symbolic exclusion that denies him humanity. These analyses reveal Frankenstein as more than a cautionary tale about scientific hubris. While its warning against unrestrained creation persists, the true caution lies in its profound critique of the violence inherent in systems that equate mastery with domination. Beyond this, the novel offers a broader reflection on the human condition as it exposes the fundamental need for recognition as the basis of identity and the destructive consequences that ensue when such recognition is denied.

2. Victor's Pathological Projection and Monstrous Desire

Mary Shelley's Frankenstein has long fascinated scholars for its profound meditation on creation and the nature of monstrosity. Popular readings often identify the eight-foot-tall, yellow-skinned creature as the novel's primary monster. Assembled by Victor Frankenstein from cadaverous fragments and animated through mysterious scientific forces, the creature conforms to conventional imaginations of monstrosity. Its grotesque appearance and violent acts mark it as a symbol of fear and the unknown. Yet readers often overlook another form of monstrosity that haunts the novel. When approached from a psychoanalytic perspective, the true locus of the monstrous is displaced from the creature's body to its creator's psyche. This reorientation subverts the novel's conventional moral framework by revealing that Victor Frankenstein himself embodies the very qualities of obsession and denial that he attributes to his creation. The idea is grounded in Victor's compulsive tendency to externalize his inner turmoil through projection, a psychological mechanism that, as Sigmund Freud defines as "the displacement of a feeling onto an external object" [2]. Victor's designation of the creature as a "daemon" [3], his refusal to acknowledge its humanity, and his violent rejection of its plea for companionship all attest to a profound incapacity to confront his own repressed desires and moral deficiencies.

Modern psychological studies have clarified the psychological mechanisms behind Victor's projection of his inner conflicts onto the creature, focusing on his pathological lack of empathy and repression of desire. In the following analysis, I argue that Victor's projection is not a random act of avoidance but a structured defense mechanism consistent with the diagnostic features of narcissistic personality disorder (NPD). His emotional detachment from the creature stems from a fragile and defensive selfhood. To acknowledge the creature would mean confronting his own disavowed impulses, such as the longing for maternal validation, the fantasy of creative omnipotence, and the anxiety provoked by mortality. By displacing these desires onto the creature, Victor externalizes what he fails to tolerate within himself. The creature thus becomes his shadow self, embodying the aggression, dependency, and unmet needs that Victor represses in his pursuit of idealized autonomy. As the subsequent discussion will show, Victor's childhood traumas and his ambivalent bond with the creature reveal that this mechanism of projection functions both as a symptom of psychological fragmentation and as the driving force of the novel's tragic unfolding.

Giuseppe Giordano's psychoanalytic reading of Frankenstein offers a useful framework for understanding Victor's psychological states. Giordano identifies Victor's affective experiences, linguistic patterns, and defensive behaviors as manifestations of

two interrelated concepts, defense mechanisms and pathological narcissism [4]. As Giordano explains, defense mechanisms are "psychological reactions of the human mind that can be elicited by distressful events or emotional strain" and are "unconscious, involuntary, and likely reversible" [4]. In contrast, pathological narcissism, as articulated through Lisa Kampe's model of grandiose and vulnerable narcissism[5], is a chronic maladaptation of the ego structure characterized by enduring grandiosity, a lack of empathy, and a brittle self-concept requiring constant external reinforcement. Within this framework, Victor's narcissism becomes pathological precisely because his defenses no longer serve situational or moral functions but evolve into an autonomous psychic economy detached from ethical and emotional reciprocity. His pursuit of scientific mastery transforms from an aesthetic or intellectual quest into a compulsive desire to dominate life itself as a means of fortifying the fragile self.

As critics have observed, Frankenstein "challenges the Enlightenment's assumption of human mastery over nature" [6], exposing the psychic cost of this epistemic arrogance. In the wake of industrial capitalism and mechanized production, the human relation to nature, and, by extension, to the self, becomes instrumentalized. Knowledge is redefined as control, and creation as conquest. Within this social and historical backdrop, Victor's narcissism becomes a product of modernity's alienated subjectivity, tinted by the mechanistic ethos of his age. His pathology thus mirrors the larger transformation of the Enlightenment subject into the industrialized self which is estranged from empathy.

Another critic Jeffrey Berman observes that Frankenstein introduces a "radically modern" [7] variant of narcissism, one rooted in the Industrial Revolution's valorization of technological mastery and individualism. This historically specific form of narcissism is embodied in Victor's personality, whose obsessive pursuit of scientific control reflects the era's emerging ideal of the self as self-sufficient and self-creating. Victor's behavior exemplifies the traits of NPD, through which this "modern" narcissism becomes psychologized. The American Psychiatric Association's introduction of the term narcissistic personality disorder (NPD) in the third edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders in 1980 formally legitimized the illness for the first time. DSM-III, as it is popularly called, defines narcissistic personality disorder in the following way:

a grandiose sense of self-importance or uniqueness; preoccupation with fantasies of unlimited success; exhibitionistic need for constant attention and admiration; characteristic responses to threats of self-esteem; and characteristic disturbances in interpersonal relationships, such as feelings of entitlement, interpersonal exploitativeness, relationships that alternate between the extremes of over-idealization and devaluation, and lack of empathy [8].

Berman points out that "Victor exhibits, in fact, all the characteristics of the narcissistic personality disorder as defined in DSM-III" [7]. Moreover, Victor demonstrates the paradoxical nature of narcissism, where self-love exists with self-hate, and fragile self-esteem results in a sense of entitlement, the expectation of receiving special favors from others without assuming reciprocal responsibilities. He pursues

fantasies of unlimited power and glory with a pleasureless and monomaniacal intensity.

Additionally, Otto Kernberg illuminates Victor's self-abhorrence within narcissistic pathology, observing that narcissistic projection entails "assigning one's own aggressiveness and sense of incompetence to others, making them carriers of self-hatred" [9]. Victor exemplifies this mechanism with striking precision. After animating the creature, the grotesque assemblage of corpses and Victor's act of abandonment are recast in his perception as the creature's ugliness, evil, and aggression. Throughout the narrative, Victor displays an unwavering emotional detachment from the creature. When the creature pleads for a companion, Victor initially consents but later destroys the unfinished mate, rationalizing his action through fear of reproduction. As he imagines:

She also might turn with disgust from him who formed her; her thoughts and sympathies might prove to be distinct and different from those of her supposed mate. She might become ten thousand times more malignant than her mate, and delight, for its own sake, in murder and wretchedness. He had sworn to quit the neighbourhood of man, and hide himself in deserts; but she had not; and she, who in all probability was to become a thinking and reasoning animal, might refuse to comply with a compact made before her creation [10].

Victor's fantasy of the female creature reveals the extremity of his pathological imagination. He envisions not a companion comparable to the original creature, but a being "distinct and different," potentially "ten thousand times more malignant." His justification that she might "turn with disgust" from her mate or "delight, for its own sake, in murder and wretchedness" betrays less a rational fear of reproduction than a profound anxiety about losing control over the reality he has constructed. For Victor, creation is tolerable only so long as it remains an extension of his will. What he truly dreads is not biological proliferation but the rise of an independent consciousness beyond his mastery. From another perspective, Victor's fear also derives from his internalization of bourgeois familial ideology. If the creature were granted a female mate and thus permitted to form a family, he might indeed achieve the completeness of humanity that Victor had once idealized. Yet in the 1831 edition, Shelley portrays the bourgeois family far more negatively, as the site where women are oppressed, silenced, even sacrificed, and racial prejudices are formed [11]. As Kate Ellis argues, the novel's apparently sentimental depictions of domestic affection in fact mask a radical critique of nineteenth-century family ideology. The emotions of domestic life, Ellis observes, function as formalized patterns sustained by rigid gender roles and power domination, where female self-sacrifice, such as Caroline's, is recoded as maternal virtue but in effect constitutes a moral coercion [12]. Because of this rigidification, domestic affection fails to be transmitted to the next generation, leaving figures such as Victor incapable of acting as a qualified father to the creature and Walton unable to derive genuine emotional sustenance from familial bonds, both ultimately condemned to isolation [12]. Victor's terror at the prospect of a female creature thus confirms this failure of emotional transmission. His destruction of the female creature, who might have embodied mutual care and companionship, reproduces the pathological structures of the bourgeois family

he unconsciously inherits. Deprived of authentic domestic affections and incapable of recognizing an other as independent yet relational, Victor repeats the very patterns of domination and emotional deprivation that Shelley exposes as endemic to patriarchal domesticity. His fear of the female creature's autonomy, then, is inseparable from his own internalized model of family as hierarchy and possession, a model that transforms affection into control and creation into annihilation.

Heinz Kohut's theory of narcissistic rage further illuminates Victor's mechanism of projection. Kohut defines narcissistic rage as "a deeply anchored, unrelenting compulsion in the pursuit of revenge" [13] provoked by perceived narcissistic injury. Victor experiences precisely such an injury when the creature, as his supposed reflection, rebels by killing his family:

"That cannot be; but all that I can say will be of little avail… My revenge is of no moment to you; yet, while I allow it to be a vice, I confess that it is the devouring and only passion of my soul. My rage is unspeakable, when I reflect that the murderer, whom I have turned loose upon society, still exists… I devote myself, either in my life or death, to his destruction" [10].

Victor's words expose the intensity of his rage that indicates an all-consuming need to retaliate against the object that has shattered his grandiose self-image. Having fashioned the creature as an instrument of his omnipotent fantasy to "bend life to his will" and command gratitude from his creation, Victor is rendered psychologically intolerant of the creature's emergent autonomy. The murders of William, Henry, and Elizabeth mark not only acts of vengeance on the creature's part but also constitute a direct assault on the fragile architecture of Victor's self-concept, which is predicated on the illusion of unchallenged control over both his creation and, by extension, the boundaries of life itself. By calling the creature "the murderer whom I have turned loose upon society," Victor frames the violence as external and uncontrollable, thereby projecting his own aggression outward and refusing to confront the moral implications of his creative ambition. For the narcissist, any loss of control over an object tied to self-worth constitutes a profound injury [13]. The creature's defiance is thus experienced as a humiliation and a revelation that his creation is neither docile nor divine, but an autonomous being who mirrors his inner chaos. Victor's "unspeakable" rage stems from this unacknowledged truth that he is not the omnipotent creator he imagined himself to be, but a failed god whose hubris has unleashed destruction beyond his control.

In addition, Victor's projection of the creature is profoundly shaped by two repressed desires: his longing for maternal validation, rooted in childhood trauma, and his quest for creative omnipotence as a substitute for maternal love. Ellen Moers describes Frankenstein as a "phantasmagoria of the nursery" [14], reflecting Mary Shelley's own maternal anxieties and her trauma over the death of her mother, Mary Wollstonecraft, in childbirth. This biographical trauma is mirrored within the novel's psychology. Victor's mother, Mme. Frankenstein, dies of scarlet fever after nursing his adopted sister Elizabeth back to health, leaving him with unassimilated grief and latent anger. Victor's response to her death is marked by emotional repression rather than

mourning. He insists that she "died calmly" [3] and that he will "refrain from augmenting [his family's] unhappiness by an appearance of immoderate grief" [10]. As Berman observes, this stoic restraint reveals "the paralysis of genuine affect" [7] that underlies Victor's detachment. His apparent composure thus conceals an unresolved psychic wound that will later resurface through his creative mania.

Victor's desire for maternal connection is thus displaced onto his scientific project. Freud's theory of sublimation argues that repressed emotional or sexual energies may be redirected into culturally valorized pursuits [15]. Victor's obsession with animating the dead can thus be interpreted as a sublimation of his longing to resurrect his deceased mother. He admits that his fascination with "regeneration" began "immediately following his mother's death" [7] and his dream of embracing Elizabeth, as his mother's chosen successor, only to find himself holding his mother's corpse [3] reveals his unconscious desire to reunite with her and the collapse of maternal desire into a single, uncanny image of death and creation. The creature, in turn, emerges as both the embodiment and the displacement of this maternal longing. Its innocence and helplessness mark it as a symbolic newborn, and its repeated pleas for companionship echo Victor's own unmet need for maternal love. Yet Victor recoils from this mirrored vulnerability. By rejecting the creature, he reproduces the pattern of his own abandonment, converting his desire for union into disgust and fear. Shelley thereby transforms the maternal loss that haunts Victor's psyche into the structural principle of the novel itself. Creation becomes the perverse substitute for nurture, and the maternal body returns as the uncanny center of Victor's ambition.

Victor's inability to act as protector, nurturer, or educator for the creature originates in his own deprivation of maternal validation which is a deficit rooted in the hierarchical affective economy of his childhood home. As Berman observes, Victor's family operates according to a subtle but rigid hierarchy of affection that leaves him feeling perpetually "displaced" [7]. This emotional displacement begins with his mother, Mme. Frankenstein, whose overt favoritism toward Elizabeth establishes a model of conditional love. In the 1818 edition, Elizabeth is described as the family's "most beautiful child" [1], implicitly excluding Victor from the pinnacle of maternal admiration. Crisman notes that the 1831 revision intensifies this dynamic in which Mme. Frankenstein no longer adopts Elizabeth through family arrangement but personally "discovers" her in a peasant's hut, drawn to her because she "attracted my mother far above the rest" [16]. By redefining maternal affection as an act of preference, Elizabeth becomes the chosen child instead of a passive adoptee. Victor, contrarily, as the given child whose claim to maternal love is unremarkable, even expendable. When Mme. Frankenstein sacrifices her life to save Elizabeth, she solidifies this hierarchy and her death becomes a final act of prioritization that leaves Victor with the unspoken sense that his own safety and worth were secondary to Elizabeth's, which becomes a psychic injury that festers beneath his later grandiosity. The birth of his younger brother William compounds this sense of displacement. William is hailed as the family's "darling and our pride," a title Ernest explicitly invokes to remind Victor of his brother's privileged position [16]. Once regarded by his parents as a "gift from Heaven" to whom they owed "duties of adoration" [16], Victor is now dethroned. Even the spatial arrangement of portraits within the Frankenstein household encodes that the last remnants of Victor's

childhood are nearly shattered as William's portrait hangs "apparently alone" beneath Mme. Frankenstein's, visually designating him as "the sole inheritor of the mother's legacy" [17].

The rivalry extends into aesthetic and affective registers. William's "sweet laughing blue eyes" [3] replicate the same feature for which Walton later praises Victor, calling them "fine and lovely eyes" [10], suggesting that William functions as Victor's idealized double or the superior version who commands the mother's full love. Victor's jealousy, repressed under his claims of having "a perfect family" [1], resurfaces in his creation of the creature, whom Nelson calls his "Doppelgänger, his alter ego, his objectified id" [18]. This projection reaches its climax in William's encounter with the creature. The child's outburst "Monster! Ugly wretch! … You are an ogre! Hideous monster!" [10] echoes Victor's own dehumanizing language toward his creation, demonstrating how familial patterns of exclusion are reproduced across generations. When the creature kills William, it symbolically vents the aggression Victor has long suppressed. As Crisman argues, William's invocation of paternal authority "I will tell my papa … my papa would punish you" [10] reawakens Victor's "single-child possessiveness," exposing how thoroughly William has usurped Victor's role as the center of parental devotion [17].

Victor's subsequent refusal to accept responsibility for William's death, allowing Justine Moritz to be executed instead, reveals the culmination of this defensive projection. Victor's faith in the creature's guilt "blurs the line between certainty and religious hope," reflecting his psychological need for an external scapegoat who can bear the burden of his own murderous impulses [17]. In this way, Victor's repression of sibling jealousy becomes the hidden motor of his moral collapse. His failure to nurture the creature is not simply ethical or emotional but structural. He cannot give what he never received, namely, a stable sense of belonging unconditioned by rivalry or maternal scarcity. The creature thus emerges as the embodied return of Victor's own neglected self, forcing him to confront the monstrosity of his jealousy and rage, even as he spends the rest of his life fleeing from that mirrored truth.

Victor's desire for creative omnipotence is inextricably bound to the maternal loss he endured in childhood or a void that shapes his scientific ambition as a form of psychological compensation. George Levine observes that Frankenstein "displaces God and woman from the acts of conception and birth" [19], a narrative choice that enables Victor to usurp the traditionally maternal role of life-giver. This usurpation is not merely an act of scientific hubris but a narcissistic attempt to overcome the powerlessness he felt as a child when his mother died. For Victor, creating life without a mother is a way to rewrite the trauma of his own childhood where he once stood helpless in the face of maternal loss, he now seeks to position himself as a figure capable of generating life and avoiding the vulnerability of dependence.

Victor's own language frames this ambition as a divine endeavor. He describes his creation's animation as a "torrent of light into our dark world" [3], casting himself not just as a scientist but as a transcendental creator who can bypass the limitations of human reproduction and the fragility of maternal care that failed him. Victor's horrified rejection of the creature, fleeing his laboratory and abandoning the being he formed, for instance, reveals a deeper inability to accept imperfection. In his creation, he sees the

failure of his own attempt to master maternal loss, and in himself, he confronts the same powerlessness he sought to escape. As William Crisman argues, Victor's relationship to the creature is rooted in their status as "feuding halves of a single personality" [17], meaning the creature's ugliness symbolizes his creator's own monstrosity and a monstrosity tied to Victor's repressed rage and grief over his mother's death. When the creature discovers Victor's journal and learns of its "accursed origin" [3], it confronts Victor with a question that echoes the unspoken longing of Victor's own childhood: "Why did you form a monster so hideous that even you turned from me in disgust?" [10]. This plea is not merely a demand for an explanation of its existence but a cry for the maternal love the creature instinctually craves, also a love Victor is fundamentally unable to provide, as he himself never received consistent maternal validation.

The creature's idealization of the De Lacey household, a poor but loving family it observes from afar, further mirrors Victor's repressed desires, while also highlighting the universality of the need for maternal connection. For the creature, the De Laceys represent a fantasy of maternal care. Agatha and Felix's devotion to their blind father, and their mutual support, stand in stark contrast to the abandonment it suffered at Victor's hands. The De Lacey family is motherless, yet their cohesion still offers the creature a vision of the emotional security it associates with maternal love and one Victor similarly clung to as a child, even as his mother's favoritism eroded it. When the De Laceys violently reject the creature, this hope is shattered, mirroring the loss Victor experienced when his mother died. The creature's despair "I was like a wild beast that had broken the toils, destroying the objects that obstructed me" [10] echoes Victor's own repressed rage over maternal abandonment, revealing how both characters are haunted by the absence of a nurturing mother figure.

In this way, Victor's usurpation of the maternal role and the creature's search for maternal love both stem from a profound loss that neither can fully articulate, let alone heal. Victor's attempt to play God fails because it is rooted in denial as he refuses to acknowledge that his creative ambition is a response to grief, while the creature's search for love fails because it confronts the harsh reality of a world that, like Victor, rejects imperfection.

3. The Master-Slave Relationship in Frankenstein

In Frankenstein, the master-slave dialectic takes shape through the tension between Victor Frankenstein and his creature. Frankenstein explicitly positions himself as the master of life and creation, laying claim to authority over the being he has fabricated while the creature exists as a dispossessed figure who lacks a name, a lineage, and any sense of belonging. According to Lacan, mastery in the Symbolic Order begins with naming. To name is to fix identity within the law of language, to stabilize the subject's place in the social order [20]. To be unnamed is to be unrecognized by the Symbolic Order and a remainder that is not categorized, valued, or even acknowledged as a distinct entity. The creature's lack of a proper name is thus not a trivial detail, but a foundational act of negation by Victor.

Victor never grants the creature a name. Instead, he deploys a litany of dehumanizing epithets: "wretch" [3], "daemon" [3], "monster" [1], and "abortive creation" [1]. These terms do more than describe the creature's appearance; they fix its identity as something outside the bounds of humanity. "Daemon," for instance, evokes

the supernatural and the evil, framing the creature as a threat to the moral and social order, while "abortive" reduces it to a failed experiment or a mistake to be discarded. This linguistic violence represents a "subversion of the masculine voice" in reverse as Victor wields patriarchal language not to define, but to erase [21]. His refusal to name the creature functions as an act of symbolic castration, denying it access to the very system of signification through which subjectivity is conferred.

The creature is acutely aware of this deficit. When he confronts Victor in the Alps, he demands recognition not with a name, but with a claim to identity: "I am thy creature" [10]. This phrase is a desperate bid to assume a position in the Symbolic. If he cannot have a name, he will define himself through his relationship to Victor who serves as his creator-father. Yet even this relational identity is denied because Victor refuses to acknowledge the creature as his offspring, instead dismissing him as a "thing" that "owes me nothing" [10]. The creature's unnamed state thus signifies not merely a lack of designation but an act of symbolic exclusion which constitutes the origin of the creature's desire for inclusion. He longs not for domination or violence but for recognition, for a place within the shared structure of meaning that affirms existence.

Another backbone of the Symbolic Order is lineage, namely, membership in a family, a bloodline, or a community of origin. Lineage functions as a social signifier that connects the subject to a shared past, a system of values, and a network of obligations. To lack lineage, as Lacan suggests, is to drift without the "symbolic heritage" that endows existence with meaning [20]. The creature's absence of lineage is no accident. Victor assembles him from the dismembered bodies of strangers [3], thereby severing any connection to biological or cultural continuity. Having deprived his creation of a natural ancestry, Victor further refuses to assume the role of a symbolic father, a figure who could have inscribed the creature within a structure of kinship and meaning.

From this perspective, Victor's mastery extends beyond language into kinship itself, which, like language, operates as a symbolic system of naming and belonging. By monopolizing the right to confer lineage, Victor preserves his authority as the very source of creation and, by extension, the sole arbiter of annihilation. As John A. Dussinger argues, Frankenstein is a novel of "kinship and guilt" [22], in which paternal bonds serve as instruments of control. Victor inherits from his father, Alphonse Frankenstein, a model of what Robert Veeder terms the "Negative Oedipus": a father who demands obedience but withholds emotional reciprocity [23]. Seeking to invert this dynamic, Victor imagines himself as a "patriarchal creator," a new progenitor who will found an entire species that will "bless me as its creator and source" [3]. To be the "source" of life is to control both the origin and circulation of the name. His project is thus a fantasy of total paternal sovereignty, in which he alone dictates who counts as kin and who is excluded from the symbolic family.

This desire to appropriate Alphonse's authority becomes evident when we contrast their modes of fatherhood. Alphonse, though emotionally distant, never abandons Victor; he remains a figure of stable, if impersonal, presence, sending letters of concern when Victor falls ill and summoning him home after William's death [1]. Victor, by contrast, flees his laboratory at the first sign of disappointment, leaving the creature "stretched on the bed, alive and moving" [3], later admitting that he "did not dare return to the apartment" [3]. This abandonment perverts the paternal function he seeks

to appropriate. Whereas Alphonse's authority rests on presence, Victor's rests on absence which is a selective, punitive withdrawal that transforms creation into desertion. He covets the title of creator-father but refuses the corollary duty of care, exposing the structural contradiction of his usurpation.

Laura P. Claridge's analysis of "parent-child tensions" clarifies why Victor's imitation of fatherhood collapses. Claridge observes that Victor's lifelong search for "communion" with a parent remains unresolved; he yearns for the emotional connection Alphonse never provided [24]. In creating the creature, Victor acts unconsciously to redress a deprivation in his own life. He seeks a being who fulfills two intertwined desires—functioning both as the obedient child his father Alphonse never had and the affirming parent he himself never knew. Yet the creature's demand for recognition "You, my creator, abhor me; what hope can I gather from your fellow-creatures, who owe me nothing?" [10] mirrors Victor's own unfulfilled plea for acknowledgment from his father. To recognize the creature's humanity would be to admit the failure of his own fatherhood and the insufficiency of Alphonse's. Confronted with this repetition, Victor doubles down on denial, reinforcing his power through the same symbolic exclusions that once wounded him.

Thus Victor, who resented Alphonse for demanding obedience without communion, becomes a father who demands even stricter obedience while offering none. His fantasy of being the origin of kinship implodes because kinship, as Lacan reminds us, depends on reciprocal recognition, suggesting that the father's authority is validated only when the child consents to the symbolic bond. By denying the creature's right to belong, Victor undermines the very structure of mastery he seeks to sustain. As Allison B. Kavey notes, Victor's "daddy issues" manifest in his inability to separate "parental authority" from "parental love," reducing creation to an insistence on power [25]. In doing so, he reproduces and intensifies the pathology of paternal dominance. The consequences are catastrophic when Alphonse dies of grief, William is murdered, and Elizabeth is destroyed, leaving Victor utterly alone—a creator without creation, a father without a family, a would-be master undone by his refusal to acknowledge the subjectivity of the other.

Victor's tragedy does not unfold in isolation; it is materially inscribed in the very body of the being he rejects. His failure to recognize the creature's subjectivity is not merely an ethical lapse but a visceral refusal to confront a truth made flesh. The creature is not only his "twisted son" [23] or rebellious slave, but the living, breathing embodiment of his own unacknowledged bodily anxiety. The emptiness of Victor's fractured identities as creator, father or master finds its most concrete expression in the corporeal tension between him and the creature. While Victor's body manifests the disciplined self of patriarchal authority and normative self-control, the creature's body exposes the chaos Victor cannot contain. This chaos, rooted in the unspoken politics of flesh and fear, reframes their conflict as more than a struggle for domination.

Through multiple layers of interwoven narratives—those of Victor Frankenstein, the creature, and the Arctic explorer Walton, readers witness Victor's progressive descent, basically first tempted by the abject, then consumed by it, and finally rendered indistinguishable from the monster he has created. Victor's body, ostensibly coded as the paragon of patriarchal rationality and self-mastery, betrays a profound instability.

During his labors, he is described as "pale as the moon," his hands "trembling with eagerness" [3] as he animates the creature. This bodily fragility signals more than physical exhaustion; it reveals the fissure within Victor's corporeal ego. His flesh becomes the battleground between the obedient son bound by filial duty and the godlike creator driven by a transgressive desire to take over Alphonse's paternal authority. Victor's masculine ideal of "rational, controlled selfhood" [24] is shattered under the strain of his uncontainable ambition. Panagiota Petkou further observes that, for patriarchal subjects like Victor, the body is a "site of ideological struggle," where conformity to normative masculinity collides with the eruption of repressed desires [26]. In this light, Victor's pallor and trembling cease to be incidental details; they become somatic symptoms of psychic division. His body performs control even as it betrays disintegration. The trembling hands that bring the creature to life thus also externalize his own internal disorder, projecting onto the creature's body the very instability he cannot endure within himself.

The creature's body, on the contrary, externalizes the psychic split that fractures Victor himself. Victor constructs him as "of gigantic stature," claiming to have "selected his features as beautiful," only to find that they "formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes, that seemed almost of the same colour as the dun-white sockets in which they were set" [3]. His "gigantic stature" literalizes Victor's unconscious yearning for the patriarchal power he lacks, the sheer size symbolizing the authority Alphonse wields over him; meanwhile, the creature's "deformed" features materialize Victor's self-loathing. The revulsion Victor feels at the creature's "dun-white sockets" registers as a displaced hatred for his own failure to embody the "perfect" paternal ideal [25].

This reading gains further depth when the creature's physicality is situated within what Panagiota Petkou calls the "politics of dirt" in patriarchal discourse [26]. The creature's assemblage of "corpse parts, filth, and unregulated physicality" renders him abject not simply because of his grotesque appearance, but because he embodies the repressed materiality of patriarchal culture, its anxieties about birth, decay, and the unruly dimensions of female corporeality [26]. In this sense, the creature's abjection stems from his contamination of symbolic purity. He exposes the bodily mess that patriarchal order must deny to sustain itself.

For Victor, then, the creature's body becomes doubly threatening. It is not simply ugly but polluting, indicating the material processes that he must disavow to maintain the illusion of clean and rational masculinity. His horror before the creature is thus a revulsion at the return of what his own body represses. The "dirt" he ascribes to his creation is the residue of his own unacknowledged ambition and vulnerability, the very aspects of self he attempts, futilely, to excise from his image of mastery.

As Julia Kristeva observes, abjection emerges when the subject confronts "a border that has been porous, a limit that has been crossed" [27]. For Victor, the creature's body embodies precisely this transgression: it is at once his own fabrication and an autonomous force that defies his control — dual qualities that render the creature a primal site of abjection. Jen-yi Hsu, in her study of the Gothic sublime, contends that Victor's reliance on abjection to manage the creature is intertwined with the "gendered politics of the gothic sublime" [28]. Within this tradition, the sublime typically

reinforces patriarchal authority by framing nature or monstrosity as a terrifying yet ultimately containable force that elevates the male subject's rational mastery through contrast. Victor seeks to cast the creature's body in this mold, yet the creature's refusal to remain a passive spectacle and his turn to vengeance reveal that the sublime is not a stable aesthetic category but a patriarchal fantasy of control. Victor's choice to manage his bodily anxiety through the abjection of the creature is not arbitrary. Kristeva explains that the Symbolic Order enforces boundaries that distinguish the "clean and proper" body from what is "illegitimate" or "unruly" [27]. Within this framework, Alphonse Frankenstein functions as the agent of patriarchal discipline, subtly training Victor to conflate bodily regulation with moral and paternal virtue. His admonitions that neglected correspondence implies that "other duties are equally neglected" [1], and later, that Victor must uphold his "duty to the survivors" amid grief [1] and instill in his son a belief that physical composure and emotional restraint are integral to moral rectitude. This moral pedagogy finds a corporeal manifestation in Victor's self-description: "my person had become emaciated with confinement" [1]. His physical deterioration exposes the internalized violence of this paternal ethic, where bodily weakness signifies moral and filial failure. When Victor's own body fails to meet the ideal of self-mastery that defines patriarchal virtue, he displaces the burden of impurity onto his creation. In projecting his sense of bodily failure onto the creature, Victor preserves the illusion of his own "clean" subjectivity at the expense of another's humanity. As Petkou argues, this act of displacement constitutes a "violent erasure" of the creature's subjectivity [26], transforming him into the external repository of the abject or the physical embodiment of all that Victor refuses to acknowledge within itself.

However, the creature ultimately reclaims his non-normative body as a site of survival and resistance. His beast-like existence in the forests, feeding on berries and roots gathered from the woods and wandering barefoot through snow constitutes more than mere adaptation to deprivation; it is a deliberate repudiation of the civilized bodily norms that Victor seeks to impose upon him. Whereas Victor equates cleanliness, clothing, and measured consumption with moral virtue, the creature embraces the very dirt his creator abhors, transforming it from a mark of degeneracy into a source of resilience. In this light, abjection functions as a "negotiated, not fixed, power dynamic" [26]. The creature refuses the role of the abject victim and instead weaponizes his abjection against the structures that would define and contain him. His gigantic stature which is initially construed by Victor as a sign of deformity becomes a means of endurance and protection. It shields him from predators, enables him to traverse hostile landscapes, and, in the novel's final scenes, allows him to survive the Arctic cold that leaves Victor weak and trembling. The same bodily excess that Victor sought to deny becomes the very source of the creature's strength. Thus, the creature's rejection of normative bodily standards exposes the fallacy of Victor's ideals. The civilized control he so desperately clings to which manifested in his obsession with purity and restraint proves not to be a marker of superiority but of fragility. The creature's unapologetic embrace of his own corporeality forces into view the truth Victor cannot bear to confront that vitality and adaptability belong not to the civilized body, but to the abject one that defies its containment.

Victor's fundamental error lies in his misperception of his relationship with the

creature. He aspires to occupy the position of a "clean" master which is untainted by dependence or obligation, but this very desire exposes his misunderstanding of the structure of mastery itself. Within the master-slave dialectic, for a master to exist, there must be a slave who recognizes that mastery, and for that recognition to endure, the master must in turn fulfill a minimal obligation to the slave [20]. The creature's plea in the Alps reveals his precise awareness of this rule and his attempt to use it against Victor:

"I am thy creature, and I will be even mild and docile to my natural lord and king, if thou wilt also perform thy part, the which thou owest me. Oh, Frankenstein, be not equitable to every other, and trample upon me alone, to whom thy justice, and even thy clemency and affection, is most due" [10].

This appeal is not an act of weakness but a contractual reminder that authority is always contingent upon recognition and reciprocity. On the surface, the creature assumes the posture of the submissive subject, offering obedience to his "natural lord and king." Yet his declaration simultaneously destabilizes the very hierarchy it affirms. By insisting that Victor "perform [his] part," the creature exposes the dependency that underlies Victor's supposed autonomy. Besides, the creature's demand for "justice" and "affection" articulates the abject's impossible desire for inclusion within the Symbolic Order that has expelled it. The creature occupies a liminal position. His body originates in Victor's creative labor, yet his existence must be repudiated for Victor to maintain coherence as master.

Later, Victor's reply "Begone! I will not hear you. There can be no community between you and me; we are enemies. Begone, or let us try our strength in a fight, in which one must fall." [10] is therefore not only a repudiation but a strategic error that undoes the very basis of his claimed authority. By refusing the creature's offer of conditional recognition, Victor attempts to abolish the dependence that makes him appear master; yet, as both Hegelian and Lacanian accounts remind us, mastery is parasitic upon the Other's acknowledgement. Samira Sasani and Abolfazl Ahangari show that Shelley's narrative stages precisely this inversion. The master becomes a "slavish being dependent on the slave" [29], meaning that his very identity is produced and sustained through the recognition of the one he seeks to dominate. In other words, Victor's attempt to annihilate the creature would, in effect, annihilate the only subject-position that could confirm his lordship; it is a performative contradiction or a structural self-negation. The master who destroys the slave forfeits the dialectical movement that would yield genuine recognition and thus precipitates his own diminution. Thus the Alps scene stages a decisive paradox that Victor's resort to violence is meant to secure his mastery, but by eliminating his creature-other he would also eliminate the very mechanism by which that mastery is legible.

4. The Creature's Revolt through Language and Space

In Mary Shelley's fictional universe, paternal authority is not merely a moral or social structure but an epistemological blindness or a refusal to recognize the self in otherness. The collapse of family, marriage, and inheritance throughout Frankenstein functions as both a symptom and a metaphor of this blindness. Each broken bond, such

as Alphonse's failure of empathy, Victor's abandonment of his creation, the deaths of Elizabeth and William, marks a stage in the disintegration of a paternal order that mistakes domination for stability. In Shelley's critique, patriarchy privileges control over recognition, thereby rendering itself sterile, self-cannibalizing, and incapable of regeneration. The breakdown of the master-slave dialectic between Victor and the creature is therefore inseparable from the collapse of the paternal symbolic order itself as both founder upon the same delusion that mastery can exist without mutual acknowledgment.

As previously discussed, for Victor Frankenstein, the act of creation is less a scientific endeavor than an existential quest, or even a desperate attempt to restore a fractured sense of self. His scientific ambition masks a profound ontological insecurity as he is unable to perceive himself as a coherent, integrated being, Victor seeks wholeness through the fabrication of another. His failure to acknowledge the creature as a separate being with its own interiority forecloses the very recognition he unconsciously craves. By contrast, the creature begins in a state of total symbolic absence without name, history, or lineage and can define himself only in relation to Victor, initially as his subordinate. Deprived of acknowledgment, he turns to reading, including Paradise Lost, Plutarch's Lives, and The Sorrows of Werter, as a means of constructing a self-image. Through these texts, he internalizes a language of moral agency and resistance, gradually transforming from the passive slave into a self-conscious subject. His rebellion thus arises not from innate malice but from an emergent awareness of injustice, exposing the underlying logic of repression that sustains Victor's identity as "master" and revealing its illusory nature.

Although Victor is the creator, the creature does not acquire language from him. According to the patriarchal logic of creation, the act of the "father" naming and teaching the "son" is crucial in establishing order, power, and subjectivity. The creator, in turn, should endow the created being with language, thereby enabling its entry into the Symbolic Order. Yet Shelley deliberately disrupts this patriarchal script. Victor completes only the flesh-making aspect of creation, remaining entirely absent from the realm of language and education. The creature is thus left unnamed and unsymbolized, excluded from the sphere of language and denied access to the social and linguistic matrix in which identity and subjectivity are constituted. Deprived of a name, he remains outside the Symbolic Order that confers recognition and legitimacy; consequently, he cannot articulate his loneliness, grievance, or confusion about the moral codes that govern human society, such as why his appearance alone provokes rejection. Through this omission, Shelley exposes the hollowness of patriarchal creation. Victor arrogates the divine power to generate life but refuses the paternal function of naming and acknowledging that life within language. The creature's later acquisition of language therefore constitutes not mere education but an act of linguistic resistance or a reclamation of the symbolic power his creator denied him. By learning to read and interpret, he transforms from an object of creation into a potential subject of cognition, capable of self-reflection and ethical judgment. Yet this very process of linguistic awakening also inaugurates his suffering. Once he develops a subjective awareness of what he deserves, he simultaneously recognizes what he has been deprived of.

Through overhearing the De Laceys, he observes the circulation of meaning,

imitates their voices and gestures, and ultimately achieves self-awareness through reading three canonical works: Paradise Lost, Plutarch's Lives, and Goethe's The Sorrows of Young Werther. Shelley's choice of these texts is far from accidental. They provide not only a framework for the creature's moral and intellectual awakening but also encode a critique of the Enlightenment and Christian traditions that defined the boundaries of humanity. As he reads, the creature moves from passive observation to interpretive self-fashioning, using these works to articulate his exclusion and to construct a resistant subjectivity.

When the creature first encounters Paradise Lost, he does more than absorb imagery and diction; he internalizes a moral grammar that allows him to name his injury and articulate a rhetoric of justice. Milton's text proves decisive. The creature's oscillation between Adam and Satan "I ought to be thy Adam; but I am rather the fallen angel" [10] is not mere allusion but an act of hermeneutic appropriation. By invoking Adam, he asserts Victor's paternal obligation to provide care and recognition; by invoking Satan, he constructs a rhetoric of insurgent autonomy when that obligation is denied. As Lauren Shohet observes, Shelley portrays this reading not as "passive imitation" but as a creative hermeneutic through which the creature "reads himself into Milton's figures" [30], performing a double movement of petition and revolt.

Two interrelated mechanisms explain why Milton's text functions so powerfully for the creature. First, Paradise Lost offers a meditation on his own situation as he wonders if he is Adam or the fallen angel and later demands that his creator make him an Eve. Besides, Adam embodies dependent innocence and the desire for recognition, while Satan represents defiant agency and revolt against illegitimate authority. The creature's identification with both is thus strategic rather than an undecided inconstancy between the desire for inclusion and the assertion of selfhood.

Second, according to Eric B. Song, the creature's engagement with the French translation of Paradise Lost which he speculates to be Anne-Marie Du Bocage's Le Paradis terrestre shapes his moral and intellectual development along three interrelated dimensions: the construction of self-perception, the longing for companionship, and the formation of a logic of resistance. This process unfolds through a distinctly translated encounter with Milton's text. The translation mediates Miltonic ideas through the idiom of Enlightenment rationality and sentimental humanism, producing what Song calls a "fiction of translation" [31] in which canonical discourse is refashioned by an abjected subject to articulate his own condition. Initially trapped in a state of sensory chaos, the creature possesses no coherent understanding of his own existence. Du Bocage's adaptation of Milton, however, provides him with a referential identity template through the concretization of Adam's awakening. For instance, in Le Paradis terrestre, Du Bocage adds the image of Adam gazing at the sky upon awakening and moving his numb limbs, which is a detail absent from Milton's Book 8. This vivid corporealization of consciousness allows the creature to identify his own first moments of animation with Adam's genesis, enabling the emergence of self-awareness through analogy [31]. A second and more radical dimension of influence arises from Du Bocage's revision of gender and reason. Whereas Milton emphasizes Eve's grace and obedience, Du Bocage attributes to her the faculty of "reason" (raison), presenting her rebellion as the expression of a rationally repressed intellect rather than a lapse into sin. Through this

interpretive shift, the creature internalizes an alternative moral logic that privileges equality and rational reciprocity over patriarchal hierarchy. Du Bocage's Eve thus becomes the creature's first model of resistant subjectivity [31]. Like Eve, he refuses to remain in a position of subordination and demands the right to participate as an equal in the moral order of creation. Equally significant is the translation's humanistic reframing of redemption. Du Bocage downplays Milton's eschatological vision or the prophecy of the Son of God's coming in the final books, and instead centers redemption on conjugal love. By reinterpreting marriage as the locus of divine consolation, Du Bocage converts theological redemption into ethical companionship [31]. When Victor later destroys the female companion, the creature's subsequent rage is not the reaction of a spurned outcast but a rational protest against the abrogation of a natural right. The translation has taught him that companionship and reason constitute the proper means of moral regeneration and insights that invert Victor's own reliance on visual and hierarchical judgments.

From Plutarch's Lives, the creature derives what he calls "high thoughts" [10]. The biographical accounts of virtuous legislators and founders of republics introduce him to civic virtue and moral law. Through Plutarch, he learns the principles of justice, community, and public responsibility that stand in stark contrast to Victor's solipsistic pursuit of private glory. This contrast reinforces the creature's ethical development as he recognizes the possibility of moral order while perceiving its denial in his own condition.

Additionally, Goethe's The Sorrows of Young Werther deepens the creature's emotional education. As Britannica notes, the novel dramatizes "the fatal effects of a predilection for absolutes," embodying the Romantic idealism that leads to self-destruction. The creature confesses that he "wept" for Werther's extinction, "without precisely understanding it" [10]. His sympathy here signifies an emergent capacity for affective identification, even before rational comprehension. In this sense, Werther's sentimental excess becomes a site where the creature learns to feel humanly before he can think humanly, suggesting that emotion precedes cognition in the genesis of moral subjectivity. The creature reflects on his reading:

"As I read, however, I applied much personally to my own feelings and condition. I found myself similar, yet at the same time strangely unlike the beings concerning whom I read, and to whose conversation I was a listener. I sympathized with, and partly understood them, but I was unformed in mind; I was dependent on none, and related to none. 'The path of my departure was free;' and there was none to lament my annihilation. My person was hideous, and my stature gigantic: what did this mean? Who was I? What was I? Whence did I come? What was my destination?" [10]

This lament reveals that reading transforms his alienation into inquiry; fiction becomes the mirror in which he both recognizes and estranges himself. Immersed in these narratives, the creature begins to articulate a claims-making self or a subject who seeks ethical recognition and symbolic inclusion. Yet, unable to locate his origin or destiny within human history, he turns resistance into the only viable mode of self-definition. The tragedy, however, lies in the fact that his enlightenment is a solitary

one and his entire process of intellectual formation depends upon reading without dialogic correction or communal guidance. As a result, the same act that grants him language and moral vision also produces epistemological distortion. Reading thus becomes both the means of his self-creation and the mechanism of his downfall.

The dark underside of the creature's self-education emerges most clearly through his encounter with Constantin-François de Volney's The Ruins of Empire. This text provides him with a philosophy of universal equality and historical progress, yet he receives it without the interpretive frameworks necessary to recognize its critical, rather than prescriptive, nature. Isolated from dialogue and interactions with other human beings, the creature internalizes Volney's Enlightenment idealism as literal truth, mistaking philosophical critique for social reality. His isolation is clearly reflected in his statement:

"I admired virtue and good feelings, and loved the gentle manners and amiable qualities of my cottagers; but I was shut out from intercourse with them, except through means which I obtained by stealth" [10].

When he later attempts to practice virtue and benevolence by appealing to the blind De Lacey, only to be violently expelled by the family upon their return, his idealized understanding of human equality proves tragically mistaken. Unable to comprehend why the egalitarian precepts of The Ruins of Empire do not apply in practice, the creature attributes the failure not to social prejudice but to the original sin of his own deformity. This cognitive dissonance between Enlightenment ideal and embodied abjection marks the first fissure in his moral reasoning and inaugurates the resentment that will fuel his revolt.

A second danger of his self-taught enlightenment lies in his inability to distinguish between the mimetic and the real. The creature refers to Paradise Lost and The Sorrows of Young Werther as "histories" [10], not as works of fiction. In so doing, he mistakes literary paradigms for empirical laws of the world. When the realities of human behavior fail to correspond to the moral or emotional logic of these texts, he does not question his interpretation but instead condemns the world itself for deviating from its supposed rules. His conflation of textual order with ontological truth thus transforms frustration into metaphysical grievance. Rather than engaging in self-reflection, the creature adopts vengeance as the only rational response to a world that betrays the moral order he has internalized from literature. In this reversal, the very faculty of constructiveness that once defined his intellectual awakening is alienated into destructiveness, marking the collapse of his Enlightenment-inspired idealism into violent resistance.

The final collapse of the creature's cognition occurs when he discovers Victor's laboratory notes in the pocket of the discarded clothing. The notebook, filled with descriptions of the minutiae of anatomy, the dissecting room and the slaughter-house, exposes the obscene materiality of his own creation. Through these pages, he learns that his existence is not divinely ordained but assembled from "the unhallowed damps of the grave" [3]. This revelation reverses what he learns from Paradise Lost. He is not Adam, nor even Satan, but an abject artifact of human transgression. His subsequent cry

"Cursed creator! Why did you form a monster so hideous that even you turned from me in disgust?" [10] articulates the moment when Enlightenment knowledge turns upon itself. The very text that should ground his self-knowledge instead produces an ontological crisis as he recognizes that he is neither a child of nature nor a creature of divine purpose, but the byproduct of a desecrated science. Enlightenment's promise of illumination thus ends in nihilistic revelation; his education, once imagined as a passage into humanity, becomes the pathway to self-loathing and mutual destruction. This outcome is far from arbitrary. As previously discussed, the creature's education takes place in absolute isolation, without a mentor to delineate the boundary between text and reality, without peers to mediate cognitive error, and without any genuine interaction with human society. Such dialogue-free self-instruction plants, from the outset, the seed of distortion within his constructive impulse. What begins as a pursuit of enlightenment inevitably turns inward, breeding misrecognition and eventual despair.

The creature's revenge and self-destruction unfold across an expansive geography, traversing continental Europe and extending to the Arctic in the novel's final scenes. Rooted in Mary Shelley's critique of nineteenth-century displacement following the Napoleonic Wars, this transnational trajectory transforms the creature's vengeance into a geographically inscribed form of resistance. According to Katrina O'Loughlin, the creature is "exiled from every form of human community", and his northward movement mirrors a progressive alienation from the "civil, familial heart of the Mediterranean" toward the "unknown sea of the Arctic" [32], a symbolic space of absolute abandonment. The creature's revenge traverses borders precisely because his exclusion is itself borderless. Each site of violence maps a distinct stage in his resistance. In Geneva, he murders William to attack Victor's familial bonds which serve as the very ties he himself lacks; on the Orkney Islands, he destroys Victor's attempt to create a mate, sabotaging the only possible restitution for his own abandonment; in Ireland, he kills Clerval, erasing Victor's last connection to human sympathy. The final pursuit in the Arctic, the "last frontier of early nineteenth-century scientific ambition" [32], stages the creature's confrontation with a space where his otherness is no longer subject to human judgment. The Arctic thus becomes both terminus and refuge, or the only environment where his hybrid, abjected body can exist outside the moral geography of civilization.

This cross-continental trajectory functions as spatial resistance. By moving across nations, the creature refuses to accept any system of belonging that defines humanity through exclusion. His final vow to "consume to ashes" his own body in the Arctic [10] constitutes an ultimate act of rebellion, denying Victor, and by extension humanity, the authority to define his existence or legacy. O'Loughlin links this incessant movement to the "massed displacement across Britain and Europe after Waterloo," when the continent was "riven by twenty-three years of war" [32]. The early nineteenth century, marked by demobilized soldiers, political exiles, and the ecological migration following 1816's "Year Without a Summer," generated a culture of "restless physical movement" [32]. The creature's wide geography mirrors this historical moment as his journey conforms to the era's logic that mobility equals survival. For an abjected subject denied social integration, continuous movement becomes both literal and symbolic resistance. His revenge is therefore not only against Victor but against a society that renders displacement invisible.

References

[1] Shelley, Mary. Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus. 1818 text. 1992. Ed. Marilyn Butler. London: Penguin Classics, 1992.

[2] Freud, Sigmund. "On Narcissism: An Introduction." The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud. Vol. 14. Trans. James Strachey. London: Hogarth Press, 1957. 67-102.

[3] Shelley, Mary. Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus. 1818 text. 1992. Ed. Marilyn Butler. London: Penguin Classics, 1992.

[4] Giordano, Giuseppe. "Defense Mechanisms in Victor Frankenstein's Personality: An Investigation of Pathological Narcissism." Journal for Research Scholars and Professionals of English Language Teaching 7.35 (2023): 1-6.

[5] Kampe, Lisa et al. "It's Not That Great Anymore: The Central Role of Defense Mechanisms in Grandiose and Vulnerable Narcissism," Front. Psychiatry, vol. 12, 2021, pp. 1-14.

[6] Hansen, Mascha. "Acorns and berries afford me sufficient nourishment: An Ecocritical Reading of the Monstrous in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein and Patrick Ness's A Monster Calls." Palgrave Communications 5.1 (2019): 1-7.

[7] Berman, Jeffrey. Narcissism and the Novel. New York: New York University Press, 1990.

[8] American Psychiatric Association. Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. 3rd ed., Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association, 1980.

[9] Kernberg, Otto F. Borderline Conditions and Pathological Narcissism. New York: J. Aronson, 1975.

[10] Shelley, Mary. Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus. 1818 text. 1992. Ed. Marilyn Butler. London: Penguin Classics, 1992.

[11] Mellor, Anne K. "Making a 'Monster.'" The Cambridge Companion to Mary Shelley. Ed. Esther Schor. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. 9-25.

[12] Ellis, Kate. "Monsters in the Garden: Mary Shelley and the Bourgeois Family." The Endurance of Frankenstein: Essays on Mary Shelley's Novel. Ed. George Levine and U. C. Knoepflmacher. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979. 123-142.

[13] Kohut, Heinz. The Analysis of the Self: A Systematic Approach to the Psychoanalytic Treatment of Narcissistic Personality Disorders. New York: International Universities Press, 1971.

[14] Moers, Ellen. "Female Gothic." The Endurance of Frankenstein: Essays on Mary Shelley's Novel. Ed. George Levine and U.C. Knoepflmacher. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979. 77-87.

[15] Freud, Sigmund. "Female Sexuality." The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud. Vol. XXI. Trans. James Strachey. London: Hogarth Press, 1961. 221-244.

[16] Shelley, Mary. Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus. 1831 ed. Ed. James Rieger. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982.

[17] Crisman, William. "'Now Misery Has Come Home': Sibling Rivalry in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein." Studies in Romanticism 36.1 (1997): 27-41.

[18] Nelson, Lowry Jr. "Night Thoughts on the Gothic Novel." The Yale Review 52.2 (1963): 236-257.

[19] Levine, George. The Endurance of Frankenstein: Essays on Mary Shelley's Novel. Co-ed. Ulrich Knoepflmacher. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979.

[20] Lacan, Jacques. Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English. Trans. Bruce Fink. New York: W. W. Norton, 2006.

[21] Davis, Lennard J. "The Subversion of the Masculine Voice." PMLA 102.3 (1987): 308-319.

[22] Dussinger, John A. "Kinship and Guilt in Mary Shelley's 'Frankenstein'." Studies in Romanticism 15.2 (1976): 227-244.

[23] Veeder, William. "The Negative Oedipus: Father, Frankenstein, and the Shelleys." PMLA 95.1 (1980): 151-165.

[24] Claridge, Laura P. "Parent-Child Tensions in Frankenstein: The Search for Communion." Studies in the Novel 17.1 (1985): 14-26.

[25] Kavey, Allison B. "Daddy Issues: Parental Consent and Scientific Responsibility in Shelley's Frankenstein." Literature and Medicine 36.2 (2018): 495-519.
[26] Petkou, Panagiota. "Getting Dirty with the Body: Abjection in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein." Gramma: Journal of Theory and Criticism 11 (2003): 31-38.
[27] Kristeva, Julia. Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection. Trans. Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia UP, 1982.
[28] Hsu, Jen-yi. "Gothic Sublime, Negative Transcendence, and the Politics of Abjection: Woman Writer and Her Monster in Frankenstein." Taiwan Journal of English Literature 1.1 (2003): 1-16.
[29] Sasani, Samira, and Abolfazl Ahangari. "A Quest for Recognition: Hegelian and Lacanian Master-Slave Dialectic in Shelley's Frankenstein." Philologia 25.1 (2018): 108-119.
[30] Shohet, Lauren. "Reading Milton in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein." Milton Studies 60.1-2 (2018): 157-182.
[31] Song, Eric B. "Frankenstein, Paradise Lost, and the Fiction of Translation." Modern Philology 119.4 (2022): 513-534.
[32] O'Loughlin, Katrina. "The Pathless Seas: Configuring Displacement in British Romanticism." Ler História 78 (2021): 85-107.