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INTRODUCTION

Since its publication in 1818, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* stands as a seminal nineteenth-century work in the Gothic fiction genre. Written during a period of significant scientific discovery and political change, the novel reflects contemporary anxieties about the potential dangers of scientific overreach and the moral responsibilities of those who pursue such knowledge. The novel explores the boundaries between life and death, human and monster, and creator and creature, resonating as strongly today as it did in the Romantic era. At the heart of *Frankenstein* lies a profound engagement with the master-slave dialectic, a concept that echoes through the relationship between Victor and his Creature. This dynamics is strikingly reminiscent of the interaction between God and Satan in *Paradise Lost*. Found by Victor's Monster in a leather portmanteau with other volumes, Milton's epic poem represents a precious intertextual reference in Mary Shelley's novel, employed to delve into the complexities of authority, subjugation, and the desire for autonomy. A similar pattern is found in Alasdair Gray's postmodern work *Poor Things,* from the relationship between Godwin and Bella Baxter. This thesis examines how the 'lord-bondsman' debate is developed in the three works. The intricate interplay of power, independence, and identity is analysed by investigating the parallelisms and discrepancies between three couples of characters: Victor and the Creature, God and Satan, and Godwin and Bella. By employing a comparative literary examination and drawing on textual evidence from the three books, the research is structured as follows: the first chapter provides a general overview of Romanticism as a literary movement, depicting its tendencies and main artists, among whom Mary Shelley's name emerges. This section illustrates the main influences in the composition of her gothic novel, *Frankenstein,* whose central topics are examined, giving a richer understanding of the book. The second chapter introduces Milton's epic poem as an intertextual source in Mrs. Shelley's narrative. After an overview of the life of the author and seventeenth-century context, *Paradise Lost* is described in its central themes. Subsequently, thematic parallels are drawn between Mary Shelley's and Milton's works, focusing on how the two creators, Victor and God, relate to their creatures, the Monster and Satan. Emphasizing the lord-bondsman dynamics, the comparison between the two sets of characters elucidates both similarities and distinctions in their power distribution. The Creature and Lucifer initially find themselves in a submitted position to their makers and are examined in their choices to rebel against authoritarian force, leading the narrative to a catastrophic unravelling of order. At the moment when the two beings acquire strength and awareness of their goals, their submissive position is reversed. They become masterful figures able to challenge their makers' power, disrupting their control and altering the dynamics of their relationships. The third chapter investigates the presence of the lord-bondsman dialectic in the twentieth-century novel *Poor Things*. An overview of its Scottish author, Alasdair Gray, is initially provided. Consequently, his book, acclaimed as homage to the Frankenstein plot, is analysed in its main themes and characteristics as a postmodern text, presenting a unique reimagining of the power dynamics in a modern context. Investigating the relationship between Bella and his creator Godwin Baxter, this chapter illustrates the continuities and transformations of such dichotomy in comparison to the relationship between Victor and his Creature. This confrontation serves as a lens through which broader themes of agency, responsibility, and identity are explored within Gray's narrative. Moreover, this section emphasizes its broader socio-political and cultural implications. Interwoven with the characters' development and the story's progression, issues of imperialism, class inequality, and gender dynamics are addressed, offering a critical examination of their impact on the plot. A brief conclusion draws all the results achieved together and attempts to situate *Poor Things* within the lineage of Mary Shelley's novel and Milton's poem, demonstrating how the legacy of these classic works continues to resonate and evolve in modern storytelling. The enduring significance of power dynamics in literature is highlighted in its relevance to contemporary discussions about authority, identity, and resistance. The parallelisms between Victor and the Monster, God and Satan, and Godwin and Bella Baxter, underscore the timeless nature of control structures and their adaptability to different cultural and historical contexts.

CHAPTER I

Frankenstein; Or The Modern Prometheus

Frankenstein; or The Modern Prometheus is a timeless story and one of the most debated and studied works of English Literature. Written by Mary Shelley and first published in 1818, the novel continues to captivate readers with its profound exploration of science, morality, and the consequences of unchecked ambition. "Frankenstein can indeed claim the status of a classic, so profoundly resonant with contemporary readers are its far-reaching philosophical, ethical, scientific, and psychological implications".[1] As readers navigate its pages, *Frankenstein* delves into questions, becoming a poignant meditation on the very essence of what it means to be human. The aim of such chapter is to showcase its content and impact on readers, examining its main features, such as its artistic genre, the reasons behind its writing, the captivating title, and its crucial themes. Exploring such a haunting tale rises moral and ethical dilemmas surrounding scientific progress and the boundaries of human knowledge. Through the character of Victor Frankenstein and his act of creation, Mary Shelley examines the implications of hubris and the pursuit of knowledge without regard for the consequences. The investigation of the human condition, morality, and the dangers of playing with forces beyond our control make *Frankenstein* a cornerstone of Gothic literature and science fiction.

I.1 Gothicism: An Introduction

Originating in the 18th century, Gothic literature stands as one of the most enduring and influential genres in literary history, being "more than a collection of ghost story devices".[2] Prospered between 1764 and 1820, Gothicism found in Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) and Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820) the markers of its delineation.[3] The Gothic genre emerged as a highly favoured and influential literary form, characterized by its emphasis on the irrational, the sublime, and the unknown over reason, as a reaction to the rationalism of the

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[1] M. Vanon Alliata, "Adaptations, Rewritings and Receptions", in M.Shelley, *Frankenstein*, 1818-2018, M. Parrino, A. Scarsella, M. Vanon Alliata (eds.), Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2020, pp. 76-83, p. 76.

[2] R. D. Hume, "Gothic versus Romantic: A Revaluation of the Gothic Novel", *PMLA,* vol. 84, no. 2 (1969), 282-290, p. 282.

[3] Ibid.

Enlightenment.[4] The primary objective of Gothic novels was to provoke intense fear by utilizing elements of mystery and a range of horrifying scenarios. While some of these novels are now primarily seen as relics of their own times, the finest among them pioneered the exploration of the irrational and unsettling desires and fears lurking beneath the composed facade of the rational human psyche.[5] Various categories of Gothicism emerged and they were typically classified into three main types. The Sentimental Gothic referred to novels that employed ghosts and eerie castle settings to enhance sentimental or domestic narratives, such as Clara Reeve's *The Old English Baron* (1778). The Terror-Gothic represented the closest approximation to the quintessential Gothic novel and Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) stood as an example. The Historical-Gothic illustrated how the Gothic ambiance was incorporated into a historical backdrop, as in Sophia Lee's *The Recess* (1783). Despite the dawn of the Romantic era in the early 19th century,[6] the Gothic genre persisted and underwent rapid evolution by integrating fresh features and structures.

> "That Gothicism is closely related to Romanticism is perfectly clear, but it is easier to state the fact than to prove it tidily and convincingly. There is a persistent suspicion that Gothicism is a poor and probably illegitimate relation of Romanticism, and a consequent tendency to treat it that way. There are those, indeed, who would like to deny the relationship altogether".[7]

As marked by Hume, despite the difficulty of proving the relationship between Gothicism and Romanticism, the correlation between the two literary movements is crucial. Being able to "uncover invisible relations that seem to stand outside the realm of realism",[8] Gothicism has had a huge influence on Romantics due to "the growing interest in spiritualism and parapsychological phenomena [...] which eventuated in the foundation of the Society for

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[4] The Age of Enlightenment, known also as the Age of Reason, refers to a period in the 18th century characterized by a confidence in the universal and consistent power of human reason to address critical issues and establish fundamental principles in society. Enlightenment thinkers believed that the application of this reason was steadily eradicating ignorance, bias, and primitive behaviour, such as superstition and prejudice, from society. (M.H. Abrams and G.G. Harpham, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 10th edition, Boston: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning, 2012, p. 106)

[5] Ibid., p. 151.

[6] Some scholars place the inception of Romanticism in 1789 with the onset of the French Revolution, or in 1798 with the publication of William Wordsworth's and Samuel Taylor Coleridge's Lyrical Ballads. The Romantic period is commonly considered to have concluded around either 1830 or 1832, coinciding with the death of Sir Walter Scott and the passing of the Reform Bill, signifying the onset of the Victorian era with its distinct political concerns. (Ibid., p. 283)

[7] Hume, *op. cit.*, p. 282.

[8] A. Smith and W. Hughes, *The Victorian Gothic, An Edinburgh Companion*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014, p. 22.

Psychical Research (1880)".[9] Focusing on mysterious and supernatural occurrences, Gothicism held significant importance during Romanticism, mirroring the social tastes and anxieties of the nineteenth century.[10] As stated by Hogle, Gothicism's enduring influence and potency undoubtedly arise from its ability to confront and veil fundamental human desires, dilemmas, and anxieties, spanning from deeply personal and psychological realms to broader social and cultural landscapes, across centuries of Western history beginning in the eighteenth century.[11] Being a subject of considerable debate and scholarly inquiry, the study of Gothicism and Romanticism provides insight into the enduring fascination of key texts and critical perspectives. Considering both early Gothic novels and those developed during Romanticism, tracing their main characteristics is crucial to understanding the evolution of Gothicism and its growth during the Romantic era. "Staggering, limping, lurching form, akin to the monsters it so frequently describes",[12] Gothic fiction mirrors the darker aspects of the human condition, challenging readers to confront the complexities of their inner worlds. Focusing on interior mental processes,[13] Gothicism delves deeply into the characters' minds, exploring their thoughts, emotions, and mental states. Another defining characteristic of Gothic literature is the gloomy atmosphere, the pervasive sense of danger and unease in which castles exude a supernatural aura of confinement, cloisters evoke feelings of claustrophobia, rooms feel increasingly cramped, and expansive vistas seem overwhelming.[14] By enveloping readers in eerie settings filled with foreboding, mystery, and supernatural elements, Gothic novels create an immersive experience that mirrors the inner turmoil, fears, and desires of characters. Such an interplay between setting and psychology allows "to manifest unresolved crimes or conflicts that can no longer be successfully buried from view".[15] Being another essential ingredient of Gothicism, the supernatural appears to be an effective method for shifting the narrative away from the mundane aspects of everyday life.[16] By incorporating supernatural elements into the narrative, such as ghosts, demons, curses, magic, and other paranormal phenomena, Gothic writers heighten the novel's sense of mystery and horror.

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[9] M. Vanon Alliata, *Haunted Minds, Studies in the Gothic and Fantastic Imagination*, Verona: Ombre Corte, 2017, pp. 14-15.

[10] Ibid., pp. 14-15.

[11] J.H. Hogle, *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 4.

[12] D. Punter, *The Literature of Terror: a History of Gothic Fictions from 1765 to the Present Day*, Harlow: Pearson Education, 1996, p. 8.

[13] Hume, *op. cit.*, p. 283.

[14] G. E. Haggerty, *Gothic Fiction/Gothic Form*, University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 1989, p. 20.

[15] J. E. Hogle, "Introduction: The Gothic in Western Europe", in J.E. Hogle (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp. 1-10, p. 2.

[16] Hume, *op. cit.*, p. 284.

> "Once you know that a novel is of the Gothic kind … you can predict its contents with unnerving certainty. [...] You know about the trembling of the heroine and the impetuosity of her lover. You know about the tyrannical older man with the piercing glance who is going to imprison and try to rape or murder them".[17]

Suggesting the often-followed predictable patterns and tropes in Gothic storytelling, Sedgwick highlights another important feature of Gothicism, the narrative entanglements. Evoking suspense and fascination through their narrative devices, Gothic novels mark the allure behind their "appalling situations".[18] Another relevant characteristic is the innovative manner of attracting readers. Emerging in an age of Sensibility,[19] Gothicism places a high value on the expression and portrayal of heightened emotions, often romanticizing or idealizing them. As stressed by Hume, the primary aim of Gothic novelists was to evoke strong emotional reactions in the reader, prioritizing the over moral or intellectual stimulation.[20] In their pursuit of inducing powerful emotional responses in readers, these writers laid the groundwork for the authors who emerged in Romanticism. Shifting from the early Gothic novels to the late Gothic narratives written during the Romantic era, a distinction between "terror" and "horror" must be made.[21] 'Terror' is a moment in which, as noted by Punter, an individual begins to perceive themselves as subject to forces that fundamentally evade their comprehension.[22] In novels of Terror, like Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) and Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), characters confront situations or phenomena that evoke terror, exploring the "unusual and uncharted psychological territories".[23] 'Terror' opens the mind to the possibility of encountering experiences that transcend the ordinary, prompting individuals to contemplate the profound mysteries of existence and their place within the cosmos. On the contrary, 'horror' depicts the horrifying and unsettling, deriving its significant impact on readers from upsetting events like homicide, torment, and rape.[24] In novels of Horror, like Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820) and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), readers become deeply engaged in a narrative when events, even if disturbing or repulsive, are psychologically believable and consistent within the context of the story. As stressed by Mrs. Radcliffe, 'terror' and 'horror' represent distinct experiences, with terror serving to broaden the spirit and invigorate the senses to an elevated state of awareness, while horror constricts, numbs, and almost extinguishes them.[25]

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[17] E. Sedgwick, *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions*, London: Methuen, 1986, p. 9.

[18] Hume, *op. cit.*, p. 283.

[19] The Age of Sensibility highlighted the rise of fresh cultural perspectives, literary theories, and poetic forms among writers starting from the 1740s and beyond. Its main doctrine centered around a personal, inner faculty of emotional consciousness. (P. Childs & R. Fowler, *The Routledge Dictionary of Literary Terms*, New York: Taylor & Francis Group, 2006, pp. 214-215)

[20] Hume, *op. cit.*, p. 284.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Punter, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

[23] A. Day, *Romanticism*, London: Routledge, 1996, p. 50.

Whereas in Terror-Gothic narratives there is a clear distinction between good and evil characters, "sharply discriminated as heroes or villains",[26] in the Horror-Gothic stories, "we enter the realm of the morally ambiguous".[27] The Horror-Gothic characters are depicted as individuals with extraordinary abilities or intellects, whose circumstances unfortunately lead them down a path of moral corruption. Such a shift in representing characters in a more psychologically nuanced and morally complex form marks the triumph of Romanticism as a prominent literary movement. Through the transformation from "the Gothic villain into the Romantic villain-hero",[28] it is possible to delineate the boundaries that delimit Gothic literature and its gradual adaptation to Romantic conventions. Embraced and developed by prominent Romantic writers, the Gothic genre, with its iconic villainous figures, served as a powerful symbol for expressing the darkest anxieties and profound existential inquiries of the burgeoning Romantic movement.[29]

I.2 Romanticism

Having "a historical centre of gravity which falls somewhere around the 1790-1830 period",[30] Romanticism shaped the historical and cultural landscape of the time. Influenced by the tumultuous backdrop of the American and French Revolutions, as well as the upheaval of the Napoleonic Wars, the Romantic period was marked by a profound change in artistic sensibilities.

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[24] Day, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

[25] Hume, *op. cit.*, pp. 283-284.

[26] Abrams and Harpham, *op. cit.*, p. 254.

[27] Hume, *op. cit.*, p. 285.

[28] P.L. Thorslev, "Wordsworth's 'Borderers' and the Romantic Villain-Hero", *The Johns Hopkins University Press*, vol. 5, no. 2 (1966), 84-103, p. 88.

[29] Ibid.

[30] N. Frye, "The Drunken Boat: The Revolutionary Element in Romanticism", in N. Frye (ed.), *The Selected Papers from the English Institute*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1963, pp. 1-25, p. 1.

> "The momentous historical shift from the view that the making of a work of art is a supremely purposeful activity to the view that its coming-into-being is, basically, a spontaneous process independent of intention, precept, or even consciousness, was the natural concomitant of an organic aesthetics".[31]

Contrasting the rigid tendencies of the Enlightenment of the previous century, Romantic writers reconsidered the significance of art as a more spontaneous act of creation, emphasizing its organic, free-flowing qualities rather than strict rules or intentions from the artist.[32]

However, the literary landscape of the Romantic movement is intricately layered, and two pivotal factors played a significant role in its growth. One influential event stemmed from the philosophical ideas espoused by French writers like Rousseau. Arguing that the decline of society originated from its advancement, subsequently leading to disparities and fostering jealousy and moral decline, his solutions had a profound impact during Romanticism.[33] Rousseau advocated a renowned 'back to nature' approach, spreading the idea of "an 'innocent' society in the 'natural' state and of 'primitive' man".[34] Another influencing factor was the German literary movement called *Sturm und Drang*[35] that, drawing inspiration from Rousseau's idealistic philosophy, exalted the importance of the individual, rejected the rationalism of the Enlightenment, rebelled against the reliance on ancient classical standards in literature, and championed a return to the natural world.[36] Influenced by such relevant phenomena, Romanticism permeated Europe, "progressing in England, France, and Germany",[37] taking dissimilar forms and shapes depending on the country in which it spread.

I.2.1 English Romanticism

In England, the term 'romantic' initially surfaced in the 17th century, carrying extravagance, fictionality, and unreality connotations. However, by the conclusion of the 18th century, its significance had evolved, becoming associated with emotions and a special "appeal to the imagination and feelings".[38] Such connotations became prominent because of a fundamental shift in how people valued things. Such a change did not just impact the way people wrote, but it also completely influenced how they saw themselves and the world around them.

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[31] M.H. Abrams, *The Mirror and The Lamp*, London: Oxford University Press, 1971, p. 187.

[32] Abrams, *op. cit.*, p. 187.

[33] J.E. Smith, "Rousseau, Romanticism and the Philosophy of Existence", *Yale University Press*, no. 13 (1954), 52-61, p. 53.

[34] L.R. Furst, *Romanticism*, London: Methuen & Co Ltd, 1969, p. 31.

[35] The "Sturm und Drang" ('storm and stress') movement refers to an artistic current that reached its climax in Germany in the 18th century. Counting figures like Goethe and Schiller, it focused on "original genius, independence from rules, and the feeling heart". (Abrams, *op. cit.*, p. 90)

[36] R. Pascal, "The 'Sturm und Drang' Movement", *The Modern Language Review*, vol. 47, no. 2 (1952), 129-151, p. 137.

[37] L.R. Furst, "Romanticism in Historical Perspective", *Comparative Literature Studies*, vol. 5, no. 2 (1968), 115-143, p. 119.

Focusing on literature, two primary phases of the period of British literary output classified as Romanticism must be delineated: pre-Romanticism and Romanticism. The first phase, pre-Romanticism, is marked by increasing opposition to Neoclassicism,[39] and the emergence of the pre-Romantic style, anticipating the main features of Romanticism.[40] Pre-Romantic poets like James Thomson (1700-1748), William Cowper (1731-1800), and William Blake (1757- 1827) sought solace in imagination and seclusion, expressing themselves through whimsical creations, picturesque scenes, and tender emotions.[41] The beginning of Romanticism is generally seen as symbolically marked by the publication of three main works, respectively Wordsworth's *Preface to Lyrical Ballads*, Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*, and P.B. Shelley's *Defense of Poetry*.[42] These three works share common features, such as the connotation given to poetry and the relevance given to imagination, but "each is recognizably the expression of an individual approach".[43] A romantic manifesto "written to justify on universal grounds an 'experiment' in poetic language",[44] Wordsworth's *Preface to Lyrical Ballads* (1800) advocated for Romantic poetry to depict authentic experiences, real individuals, and genuine landscapes, rejecting the Arcadias of the past.[45] Beginning with everyday language and shared surroundings, poetry evolved into a means of conveying "feelings and notions in simple and unelaborated expressions",[46] thereby mitigating the looming sense of homogenization posed by the influence of *Industrialization*.[47] Such a conception of poetry is also shared by Coleridge and P.B. Shelley, whose Romantic manifestos testify to the variety and dynamicity of English movement.[48]

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[38] Furst, *Romanticism*, cit., p. 12.

[39] The Neoclassical Period in England, which followed the Restoration of 1660, adhered to a strong traditionalism, emphasizing respect for classical literature and adhering to established and strict literary rules. They viewed literature primarily as an art form, requiring meticulous craftsmanship and attention to detail, often drawing inspiration from classical texts. (Abrams and Harpham, *op. cit.*, pp. 236-237)

[40] Furst, *Romanticism*, cit., p. 36.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Ibid., p. 45.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Abrams, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

[45] Ibid., p. 22.

[46] P.M. Zall, *Literary Criticism of William Wordsworth*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966, p. 18.

[47] The Industrial Revolution (1760-1830) reshaped the economic and social landscape of England. Its progression was facilitated by a succession of technological advancements that revolutionized and enhanced productivity. The mass production and the proliferation of urban centres gave way to a more standardized consumer culture and social structure. (J. De Vries, "The Industrial Revolution and the Industrious Revolution", *The Journal of Economic History*, vol. 54, no. 2 (1994), 249-270, p. 257)

Among the main common features employed by Romantic poets there are the usage of poetic genre, creative imagination, introspection, and a new vision of beauty. First of all, "poetry has traditionally been regarded as the most 'Romantic' of the genres in which people wrote".[49] During Romanticism, the poetic genre was considered the most suitable form to express the emotions and thoughts of a poet, who had to combine his perceptions with aspects of the external world. Concerning the figure of the artist, the poet was increasingly perceived as possessing unique creative faculties, akin to a divinely inspired prophet. "The program of Romanticism [...] demands something more than a natural man to carry it through".[50] Viewed as a prophet, the Romantic poet was steadfast in his belief that his purpose was to impart truth to humanity, as he regarded poetry as a conduit for conveying the deepest truths of human experience.

In terms of literary form, Romanticism witnessed a departure from the structured and formal styles of the past. Elevated poetic forms like the "heroic couplet"[51] were replaced and poetry developed a more colloquial form. Conversation poems like Coleridge's *This Lime-TreeBower, My Prison* (1797), and *Frost at Midnight* (1798) were not expressed in formal language, but instead, they were associated with the simple and everyday style proper of a folk song.[52]

The notion of creative imagination serves as a more dependable indicator of Romanticism compared to any other element.[53] "Frequently purgatorial, redemptive in direction but destructive of the social self",[54] the freedom of imagination aimed at discovering paradises within the individual, becoming evident in the realm of self-awareness. Celebrating the liberation of the imagination, albeit often with hesitation, the Romantic poets unabashedly expressed their passions and rebellions, delving into subconscious emotional realms. Serving as a vital tool for articulating emotional encounters that eluded rational explanation, such a spontaneous "emotional susceptibility"[55] led not only to innate creativity but also to a renewed fascination with childhood experiences. Considered “the child of imagination”,[56] poetry was the perfect instrument with which to elevate the most innate, natural, and spontaneous thoughts of poets who had to blend simplicity with evocative imagery as children would.[57]

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[48] Furst, *Romanticism*, cit., p. 45.

[49] S. Ruston, *Romanticism*, London: Continuum, 2007, p. 59.

[50] H. Bloom, *English Romantic Poetry*, New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 2004, p. 9.

[51] Considered the primary poetic form across various genres in English literature, the heroic couplet is a form of poetry that consists of iambic pentameter lines rhyming in pairs. It was first introduced by Geoffrey Chaucer and some poets, including Alexander Pope, used it almost to the exclusion of other meters. (Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, cit., p. 158)

[52] Ruston, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

[53] Furst, *Romanticism*, cit., p. 38.

[54] Bloom, *English Romantic Poetry*, cit., p. 4.

[55] Abrams, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

Another distinct trait of Romanticism concerns the emphasis on an individual’s “introspective turmoil”.[58] In their private exploration of joys and sorrows encountered during one’s daily interaction with the human experience,[59] Romantic poets embarked on journeys of self-discovery and introspection, navigating the tumultuous terrain of their own emotions and experiences. Thus, a focus on individuality emerged with the aim of “producing effects upon other men”[60] and exploring the joys, sorrows, and contradictions defining the human condition. Wordsworth himself, in his *Preface to Lyrical Ballads*, marked all exceptional poetry as being born from “the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings”, attributing the origin of a poem to the psyche of the individual poet.[61]

At the heart of Romantic introspection lies a profound connection to nature, serving as both a mirror and a catalyst for the artist’s meditation.[62] Romantic poets rejected the strict conventions of the previous century that considered reason as “the basis for nature’s operation”[63] and nature as a rational and controllable entity, subject to human understanding. On the contrary, Romantic artists portrayed natural phenomena in their raw, untamed forms, depicting the extreme and primitive aspects of nature through human sight.[64] Considered as the force or essence that imbues or even gives rise to the elements of the natural world,[65] nature was conceived through the lens of pantheism wherein divine creative energy is inherent within nature, or even the creative potential of humanity itself.

Related to such contemplation of nature as a source of artistic inspiration, the concept of the *Sublime*[66] emerged. In his essay *A Philosophical Inquiry Into the Origin of our Ideas of the*

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[56] H. Blair, *A Critical Dissertation on the Poems of Ossian, The Son of Fingal*, London: Becket and De Hondt, 1763, p.3.

[57] Furst, *Romanticism*, cit., p. 52.

[58] S. Gurney, “Byron and Shelley”, in H. Bloom (ed.), *English Romantic Poetry*, New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 2004, pp. 289-318, p. 296.

[59] M.B. Holbrook, “Romanticism, introspection, and the roots of experiential consumption: Morris the Epicurean, Consumption, Markets and Culture”, *Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group*, vol. 1, no. 2 (1997), 97-173, p. 114.

[60] Abrams, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

[61] S. Greenblatt and M.H. Abrams, *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, 8th edition, 2nd volume, New York: Norton & Company, 2006, p. 9.

[62] Abrams, *op. cit.*, p. 206.

[63] M. Symes, “Enlightenment, The ‘Natural’ Garden and Brown”, *The Gardens Trust*, vol. 44 (2016), 7-17, p. 7.

[64] D. Perkins, “Sympathy with Nature: Our Romantic Dilemma”, *Harvard Review*, no. 9 (1995), 69-82, p. 73.

[65] J. Raimond and J.R. Watson, *A Handbook to English Romanticism,* London: Macmillan, 1992, p. 185.

[66] A key aspect of Romanticism, the Sublime is a concept “productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling.” (E. Burke, *A Philosophical Inquiry Into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful,* London: Haymarket, 1823, p. 45.)

Sublime and Beautiful (1757-59), Burke associates the sublime with the experience of encountering something vast, awe-inspiring, and often terrifying, eliciting feelings of both admiration and terror in equal measure.[67] Standing in stark contrast to the dehumanizing impacts of the Industrial Revolution and the dominance of reason, nature is reassessed as a reservoir of profound emotions and unadulterated wisdom.

Another relevant key factor in the development of English Romanticism is a new connotation of beauty. "It is not the objective of the world (we should note) but the 'passions' of the artist which are the sources of 'Beauty'".[68] For Romantic intellectuals and artists, beauty transcended mere physical attractiveness and emanated from the subjective experience and emotional depth of the artist. Ceasing to be associated with the canons of symmetry and harmony, beauty was linked to traits like the unusual, the untamed, the exotic, and the supernatural. Concerning the cult of the "exotic subjects",[69] a new fascination for the awe-inspiring landscapes but also the unfamiliar and the remote in customs and societal perspectives emerged.[70] An individual might presume that the further removed an exotic setting is from the reader in both space and time, the less credible it becomes. Instead, as noted by Remak, Romantic readers were often more inclined to believe in the authenticity of unfamiliar locales, events, and characters when they were considerably distant from their era and environment.[71]

In the context of the English Romantic movement in literature, the paradoxical allure of exoticism revealed a nuanced understanding of human perception and imagination. Captivated by the attractiveness of the unfamiliar and the irrational, and transporting readers to distant lands or bygone eras, Romantic writers tapped into a primal longing for adventure, discovery, and escape from the mundane realities of everyday life.[72]

The notion of originality is another prominent factor characterizing Romanticism.

> "Romantic theories of poetry produce an absolute and non-negotiable opposition between writing which is original, new, revolutionary, writing which breaks with the past and appeals to the future, and writing which is conventional, derivative, a copy or simulation of earlier work, writing which has an immediate appeal and an in-built redundancy".[73]

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[67] A. Quinton, "Burke on the Sublime and the Beautiful", *Philosophy*, vol. 36, no. 136 (1961), 71-73, p. 72.

[68] E.P. Thompson, *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1955, p. 19.

[69] R. Rees, "Constable, Turner, and Views of Nature in the Nineteenth Century", *Taylor & Francis Group*, vol. 72, no. 3 (1982), 253-269, p. 254.

[70] H.H.H. Remak, "Exoticism in Romanticism", *Penn State University Press*, vol. 15, no. 1 (1978), 53-65, p. 54.

[71] Ibid., p. 60.

[72] Ibid., p. 56.

[73] A. Bennet, *Romantic Poets and the Culture of Posterity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 3.

In such a distinction between originality and imitation, the latter is preferred since an original work might lead to delayed appreciation, not being immediately comprehended by the audience.[74] Among the ancient artists taken as exemplar sources for imitation, the names of William Shakespeare, Homer, Geoffrey Chaucer, and John Milton appear. However, their acceptance by Romantic poets as literary figures to imitate depends not only on the Romantic writer's personal choice but also on the content or style of the literary work with the temperament of its author within the Romantic framework.[75]

I.2.1.1 Milton During Romanticism

New historicism has been criticized for seemingly separating the Romantic poets from their literary predecessors, whether they are well-known or not.[76] Confining them to a specific historical period, the suggestion of any "appeal to a purely literary antecedent, stylistic affinity, or other transhistorical relationship"[77] could be seen as promoting the formation of a biased literary canon. Romantic writers and consequently nineteenth-century readers developed their fascination with the reception of Donne, Milton, and other seventeenth-century poets.[78] Taking into consideration Milton, "his triple function as politician, scholar, and poet had made him the subject of a number of commentators and biographers".[79] During the Romantic era, in which the reader was encouraged to deal with the artist's "degree of sensibility, passion, and power of expression",[80] Milton's life and his works represented an attractive poetic source. Considered "the prime precursor poet"[81] of Romantics and "the chief spokesman for a version of Christianity that the Romantics sought to establish as a 'new orthodoxy'",[82] Milton was regarded as a symbol of religious and political extremism. As stressed by Low and Harding, his figure embraced all the characteristics of the Romantic idea of the poet, as a divine creator and reshaping the world with his prophetic vision.[83]

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[74] Bennet, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

[75] Abrams, *op. cit.*, p. 241.

[76] L. Low and A.J. Harding, *Milton, the metaphysicals, and romanticism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 2.

[77] Ibid.

[78] Ibid.

[79] Abrams, *op. cit.*, p. 250.

[80] Ibid., p. 108.

[81] H. Bloom, "Coleridge: The Anxiety of Influence", *Diacritics*, vol. 2, no. 1 (1972), 36-41, p. 37.

[82] J. A. Wittreich, *The Romantics on Milton; Formal Essays and Critical Asides*, Cleveland: The Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1970, p. xi.

[83] Low and Harding, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

> "Milton's reception … can be seen to have made more accessible the process of allusion itself. No longer associated only with learned reference to the ancients (and therefore precluding the understanding of less educated readers), allusion depended more and more on the vernacular. Milton's epic provided literary material which was available to readers of vastly differing classes and educational backgrounds : it levelled hierarchical distinctions, both within the itinerary canon and within the readership itself".[84]

Among his oeuvres, Milton's epic poem *Paradise Lost* was the source that most romantic poets chose, "where extraction of the personal element required a more intricate strategy than the simple equation of author with protagonist".[85] Mirroring the common Romantic tastes, *Paradise Lost* blended the main elements of the Romantic plot, such as an awe-inspiring ensemble of characters, a setting that provided ample room for imagination, and extraordinary occurrences.[86] Moreover, following the main Romantic features, Milton's characters, such as Satan and God, opened readers to existential questions on identity and interiority,[87] including the nature of 'the Devil', considered "the hero of *Paradise Lost*",[88] and his complex relationship with God. It is around such a complex Miltonian character that a Romantic school of thought of Milton's criticism, called 'The Satanic School', was founded. Figures like Blake, P.B. Shelley, and Byron, are considered the main members of such a institution in which the problematic portrait of Satan prompted various reflections and interpretations.[89] However, Milton was viewed as the "upholder of liberty"[90] who, through his epic poem and resemblance to Satan's revolutionary temper, not only portrayed the struggle for freedom but also sowed the seeds of future Romantic ideals.

I.2.2 Romantic Writers

The English writers of the Romantic period are commonly categorized into two distinct generations. The first generation of Romantic poets includes names already mentioned like William Blake (1757-1827), William Wordsworth (1770-1850), and Samuel TaylorColeridge

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[84] L. Newlyn, *'Paradise Lost' and the Romantic Reader*, Oxford: Claredon Press, 1993, p. 42.

[85] Abrams, *op. cit.*, p. 250.

[86] J.D. Farmer, "Henry Fuseli, Milton, and English Romanticism", *Bulletin of the Art Institute of Chicago (1973-1982)*, vol. 68, no. 4 (1974), 14-19, p. 16.

[87] Abrams, *op. cit.*, p. 250.

[88] Ibid., p. 252.

[89] J.M. Steadman, "The Idea of Satan as the Hero of *Paradise Lost*, *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society,* vol. 120, no. 4 (1976), 253-294, p. 260.

[90] Low and Harding, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

(1772-1832). Such poets, as promulgated in Wordsworth's *Preface to Lyrical Ballads*, underscored the modesty of life they depicted, accentuating it by employing language that closely mirrored the vernacular of everyday existence. Poetic diction was eschewed in favour of "the real language of men in a state of vivid sensation",[91] emphasizing simplicity and authenticity in the expression of inner and emotional experiences.

Romantic authors of the second generation, such as George Gordon Byron (1788-1824), Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822), and John Keats (1795-1821), preferred using obscurity of language, the intricacy of poetry, and nuanced irony, having always in mind the assimilated tradition of the previous generation.[92] As marked in P.B. Shelley's *Defence of Poetry*, a romantic poet "participates in the eternal, the infinite, and the one".[93] Given the role of penetrating "the eternal Forms"[94] and the secret sides of human life, Romantic poets become not only creators of language and art, but also inventors, and educators, able to shape society and dictate its fundamental rules.[95] However, "What allies Blake and Wordsworth, Shelley and Keats, is their strong mutual conviction that they are reviving the true English tradition of poetry",[96] introducing a new era of creativity and expression. Collaborations had a central function for Romantics, "not only in terms of the ideological solidarity of an exclusive group but as a diffuse and generalized sociability found in all lived experience, including individual perception".[97] A collaboration like the one between Wordsworth and Coleridge for the composition of the *Lyrical Ballads* represented a mutual exchange of ideas, "each taking the other's previous phrasing as a point of departure for complementary elaboration".[98]

Although Romantic conventions saw the artist in isolation, inspired by nature and silence, and away from the chaotic society, the formation of cultural and literary groups profoundly impacted literature.[99] Such aggregations were functional not only to dictate the social impact of cultural notions but also to spread and share communal thoughts and ideologies among the members of the group.[100] The Coteries of Bluestockings is an example of women literary circles whose female artists could meet and discuss together their works and ideas.[101] Another instance of cultural and literary alliance is the Satanic School, in which poets tried to interpret and analyse Milton and his works through their multiple personal lens.[102]

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[91] Zall, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

[92] Abrams, *op. cit.*, p. 126.

[93] J. Shawcross, *Shelley's Literary and Philosophical Criticism*, New York: Oxford, 1909, pp. 123-124.

[94] Abrams, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

[95] Shawcross, *Shelley's Literary and Philosophical Criticism*, cit., pp. 124-125.

[96] Bloom, *English Romantic Poetry*, cit., p. 4.

[97] J.M. Baskin, "Romanticism, Culture, Collaboration: Raymond Williams Beyond The Avant-Garde", *Cultural Critique*, vol. 83 (2013), 108-136, p. 111.

[98] W.A. Ulmer, "Radical Similarity: Wordsworth, Coleridge, and the Dejection Dialogue", *The Johns Hopkins University Press*, vol. 76, no. 1 (2009), 189-213, p. 209.

[99] J.N. Cox, "Keats, Shelley, and the Wealth of the Imagination", *Studies in Romanticism*, vol. 34, no. 3 (1995), 365-400, p. 366.

[100] Ibid.

I.2.2.1 The Satanic School

Identifying themselves as rebels against societal norms and conventions, Romantics felt a sense of kinship with Milton due to his nonconformist stance.[103] Such a tendency gave birth to the so-called Satanic School, whose term was pejoratively employed by Southey to indicate certain Romantic poets whose writings he felt were marked by a spirit of pride and daring blasphemy.[104]As a Romantic myth, Satan in *Paradise Lost*, was shaped by an interplay of specific cultural forces and influences.[105] Emerged during the Age of Reason of the previous century, the diminishing belief in the Devil's existence, transformed Satan into a purely mythical entity, liberating his portrayal for artistic and ideological exploration.[106] From a political point of view, during the French Revolution and the Regency era, the myth of Satan widespread, "functioning as a vehicle of polarized political discourse".[107] Therefore, the fallen archangel was seen in an idealized manner, as a complex, human-like, and even heroic figure.[108]

If neoclassical commentators gave Satan the attribute of an hero in relation to his elevated speeches and eloquent expressions, the members of the Satanic School shifted their attention on Satan as "a moral character".[109] For Romantic critics, Satan emerged as the protagonist due to his relentless quest for freedom, displaying remarkable courage and challenging the established religious beliefs or moral norms.[110] Names like Blake, Byron and P.B. Shelley received "accusation of Satanism",[111] reinterpreting Milton and his character of the Devil according to their own beliefs.[112] If Blake defined the seventeenth-century poet as "his own hero",[113] identifying Satan as a mirror of Milton himself, for P.B. Shelley, the versifier was analysed through satiric lens and the notion of morality. Considered as "the Romantic critic who best epitomizes the Satanist argument",[114] in his *Essay on the Devil and Devils* (1819-1820), P.B. Shelley praised Milton's portrayal of Satan for its grandeur and energy, noting that the Devil transcended the conventional depiction of evil. In his interpretation, Satan was not merely a figure of relentless hatred and cunning, but rather a complex moral being with qualities that surpassed those of God in the poem.[115] Concerning the figure of Byron, he deeply explored the figure of the Miltonian Satan, to the point of shaping the characters of his works through the ideological myth of Milton's fallen angel.[116] In Byron's *Cain* (1821), the poet introduced Lucifer as a familiarized devil, embodied with values of autonomy, defiance, and metaphysical rebellion, shaping Cain's character and actions in profound ways.[117]

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[101] Ruston, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

[102] Ibid.

[103] M. Nicolson, *John Milton: A Reader's Guide to His Poetry*, New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1963, p. 186.

[104] E. Lorraine de Montluzin, "Southey's 'Satanic School' Remarks: An Old Charge for a New Offender", *Keats-Shelley Journal*, vol. 21/22 (1972/1973), 29-33, p. 30.

[105] P.A. Schock, "The 'Satanism' of Cain in Context: Byron's Lucifer and the War against Blasphemy", *Keats-Shelley Journal*, vol. 44 (1995), 182-215, p. 185.

[106] Ibid., p. 185.

[107] P.A. Schock, "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell: Blake's Myth of Satan and Its Cultural Matrix", *ELH*, vol. 60, no. 2 (1993), 441-470, p. 446.

[108] Schock, "The 'Satanism' of Cain in Context: Byron's Lucifer and the War against Blasphemy", cit., p. 186.

[109] Steadman, *op. cit.*, p. 260.

[110] Wittreich, "The 'Satanism' of Blake and Shelley Reconsidered", cit., pp. 819-820.

[111] Steadman, *op. cit.*, p. 259.

[112] Wittreich, "The 'Satanism' of Blake and Shelley Reconsidered", cit., p. 816.

While the Satanic poets rightly criticized the portrayal of Satan, they erred in their interpretation of Milton's depiction of God. Representing the Deity as a tyrant, they conflated the characterizations of the Old Testament God with Milton's Lord in *Paradise Lost,* failing to recognize the seventeenth-century poet's nuanced exploration of divine justice, free will, and the complexities of the human condition.[118] However, Blake's and P.B. Shelley'sperspectives on Milton's Satan emphasized the character's profound wisdom and the humane, moral values embedded in the epic poem, underscoring the complexity and depth of Milton's work.

I.2.2.1 Percy Bysshe Shelley

Shelleyan criticism is considered as "a confusion of tongues"[119] and the appreciation of the poet's personality and works happened gradually. From *Prometheus Unbound* (1820) to the *Defense of Poetry* (1840), it is possible to depict his approach, more as a reformist than as a writer.[120] Having an active position in societal affairs, P.B. Shelley wanted to change society, trying to purify it from the dangers and damaging consequences brought by the Industrial Revolution. Such an engaged attitude in society is explained not just by his innate "nature to love”,[121] but also by the influence of Godwin’s *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793). Exploring the topic of “moral change and [...] elucidation of the correct principles of morality”,[122] Godwin’s work had a huge impact on P.B. Shelley’s vision of society, increasing his sense of duty. The influential effect of reading poetry written in various languages proves his enriched and cultivated knowledge, as he considered authors like Milton, Shakespeare, and Dante as “his constant companions”.[123] As a member of the Satanic School, P.B. Shelley tried to investigate Milton’s motivation behind his writing, identifying *Paradise Lost* as a criticism of theology and historical Christianity.[124] The Romantic poet reached the conclusion that “Satan *in the poem* is morally superior to God *in the poem*”,[125] and such a fact does not make the fallen angel a morally admirable figure. Although the Devil is considered an extraordinary artistic creation, for P.B. Shelley, his lack of moral principles is twisted by dishonourable purposes, and his repulsiveness stems from his atrocious acts against humanity.[126]

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[113] D. Saurat, *Milton: Man and Thinker*, New York: Dial Press, 1925, p. 211.

[114] Wittreich, "The 'Satanism' of Blake and Shelley Reconsidered", cit., p. 824.

[115] Ibid., pp. 824-825.

[116] Schock, "The 'Satanism' of Cain in Context: Byron's Lucifer and the War against Blasphemy", cit., p. 186.

[117] Ibid., p. 182.

[118] Wittreich, "The 'Satanism' of Blake and Shelley Reconsidered", cit., pp. 831-832.

[119] G. Slaughter, "Percy Bysshe Shelley 1822-1922", *The North American Review*, vol. 216, no. 800 (1922), 67-82, p. 68.

[120] Ibid., p. 70.

Following Keats’ suggestion, he started focusing on the career of a poet, giving birth to poems like *Queen Mab* (1813) and *The Revolt of Islam* (1817),[127] but the most influential and emblematic of his oeuvres is *Prometheus Unbound*.[128] A mythic vision rather than a drama of action, the work voices the poet’s aspiration for the renewal of humanity, marking a gradual evolution believed to occur throughout history.[129] Considering P.B. Shelley’s “indebtedness to the Prometheus Bound of Aeschylus”,[130] it is worth mentioning that for Romantic poets it was within the tapestry of universal mythology that lay the concealed wisdom concerning humanity and the passage of time.[131] In an era in which imagination was conceived as “the queen of all faculties”,[132] exploring the genuine significance of myth was regarded as among the loftiest pursuits of the intellect. Using mythological stories to speculate on the individual existence and human behaviour in society, Romantic artists had “the key to the universe”,[133] being able to explore the depths of human emotion and the deepest truths about the universe and human experience. In the case of P.B. Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*, Prometheus, symbolizing humanity, undergoes enduring suffering until he finds the capacity to forgive his most formidable adversary. At this moment, Love triumphs across realms, and the manifestations of thought, along with the earth, moon, and every living being, celebrate the joy of freedom.[134] The first tangible evidence of the composition process of such lyrical drama emerges from a journal entry penned by Mrs. Shelley.[135] Together with William Godwin, Mary Shelley's father, she was considered "Shelley's Pygmalion",[136] influencing the Romantic poet's writing and elaboration of thoughts. From her introduction to the 1831 edition of *Frankenstein*, Mary Shelley provided glimpses into her life, offering insights into her upbringing, her relationship with P.B. Shelley, and the circumstances surrounding the creation of her seminal work. In 1816,

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[121] Slaughter, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

[122] G. Claeys, “The Concept of ‘Political Justice’ in Godwin’s Political Justice: A Reconsideration”, *Political Theory*, vol. 11, no. 4 (1983), 565-584, p. 565.

[123] Slaughter, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

[124] F.L. Jones, “Shelley and Milton”, *Studies in Philology*, vol. 49, no. 3 (1952), 488-519, p. 825.

[125] Wittreich, “The ‘Satanism’ of Blake and Shelley Reconsidered”, cit., p. 827.

[126] Ibid., p. 828.

[127] Slaughter, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

[128] B. Weaver, “Prometheus Bound and Prometheus Unbound”, *PMLA*, vol. 64, no. 1 (1949), 115-133, p. 115.

[129] Slaughter, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

[130] Weaver, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

[131] A.J. Khun, “English Deism and the Development of Romantic Mythological Syncretism”, *PMLA*, vol. 71, no. 5 (1956), 1094-1116, p. 1095.

[132] Furst, *Romanticism*, cit., p. 38.

[133] Khun, *op. cit.*, p. 1096.

P.B. Shelley and Mary, who were not married at that time, were invited to join Byron in his Villa Diodati, on the coast of Lake Léman (Geneva).[137] During the meeting, the guests were involved in a competition that consisted of reading ghost stories out loud and writing an original weird tale for the group.[138] It was on that occasion that ghost stories like Byron's *A Fragment* and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* were written, as a result of the writers' ambitious imagination.[139] Such ghost stories, in which the terror is "located in the mind, becoming part of a state of consciousness",[140] stress the relevance on the power of fiction whose narratives seem to fulfill "the reader's need both to deny and to confront a troubling reality".[141]

I.2.3 Romantic Fiction

Most Romantic poetry was characterized by the same various traits such as the fascination with distant historical periods and faraway places, the curiosity for the fantastical and mysterious, and the focus on personal feelings and experiences. Such characteristics, as stressed by Beers, became prevalent not only in poetry but also in prose.[142] Considering the genre of "fiction"[143] as a synonym for novel, two types of fiction emerged in Romantic literature: the Historical Novel and the Novel of Manners.

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[134] Slaughter, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

[135] L.J. Zillman, *Shelley's Prometheus Unbound: A Variorum Edition*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1959, p. 3.

[136] S.L. Gladden, "Mary Shelley's Editions of 'The Collected Poems of Percy Bysshe Shelley': The Editor as Subject", *Studies in Romanticism*, vol. 44, no. 2 (2005), 181-205, p. 181.

[137] Vanon Alliata, *Haunted Minds, Studies in the Gothic and Fantastic Imagination*, cit., p. 36.

[138] B.R. Pollin, "Philosophical and Literary Sources of Frankenstein", *Comparative Literature*, vol. 17, no. 2 (1965), 97-108, p. 97.

[139] Vanon Alliata, *Haunted Minds, Studies in the Gothic and Fantastic Imagination*, cit., p. 37.

[140] Ibid., p. 15.

[141] A. Williams, *Art of Darkness: A Poetics of Gothic*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995, p. 46.

Historical fiction, exemplified by Walter Scott's novels,[144] provided a new vision of historical dynamicity in which "historicity need no longer be invoked to guarantee the text's representation of that referent".[145] Meanwhile, the Novel of Manners, with Jane Austen as its emblematic exponent, mirrored the reality of the upper-class society, engaging readers in issues of inheritance and conventions, often demonstrating the writer's concern in topics beyond the domestic.[146]

Both types of fiction share Gothic elements that, as stated by Thompson, can be not only images of phantoms, monsters, and ancient fortresses, but also the grotesque.[147]

> "The sense of a fantasy that compels us and from which we have difficulty escaping because we only partly want to escape is one of the central elements that links the Gothic to the grotesque".[148]

It is the allure rooted in the fascination with the unknown that draws readers into realms where the boundaries between reality and imagination blur. The 'grotesque'[149] emerging from such stories, with its macabre charm, is able to captivate the public and also unsettle its senses. Through the usage of supernatural and extraordinary events, Gothic elements trigger a psychological response as a reaction to the human mind's effort to understand such unconventional occurrences.[150] As stressed by Ruston, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* is an emblematic example of a psychological thriller, whose narrative, unreliable due to the supernatural and unconventional events exposed in the story, traps readers psychologically.[151]

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[142] H.A. Beers, *A History of English Romanticism in the Nineteenth Century*, New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1901, p. 227.

[143] "In an inclusive sense, fiction is any literary narrative, whether in prose or verse, which is invented instead of being an account of events that actually happened. In a narrower sense, however, fiction denotes only narratives that are written in prose (the novel and short story), and sometimes is used simply as a synonym for the novel." (Abrams and Harpham, *op. cit.*, p. 128)

[144] Barbara Foley, "The Historical Novel", in B. Foley (ed.), *Telling the Truth: The Theory and Practice of Documentary Fiction*, New York: Cornell University Press, 1986, pp. 143-184, p. 148.

[145] Ibid., p. 144.

[146] Ruston, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

[147] Gary Richard Thompson, "Introduction", in G.R. Thompson (ed.), *The Gothic Imagination*, Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1974, pp. 1-10, p. 1.

[148] M.E. Novak, "Gothic Fiction and the Grotesque", *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*, vol. 13, no. 1 (1979), 50-67, p. 53.

[149] "In current uses, the concept of the grotesque has been extended to refer to anything unnatural, strange, absurd, ludicrous, distorted, wildly fantastic, or bizarre." (Abrams and Harpham, *op. cit.*, p. 156)

[150] Ruston, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

[151] Ibid.

I.3 Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley

"Whatever her limitations and in whatever she may have failed, Mary Shelley remains an Individual".[152] Daughter of Mary Wollstonecraft, an active feminist, and William Godwin, a philosopher and political journalist, Mary Shelley (1797-1851) was raised in a cultured environment that considerably influenced her writing. In Italy, within the close-knit community of the P.B. Shelley circle, she retreated following the loss of two children due to the unpredictable nature of a wandering, expatriate existence. Shortly thereafter, her despondency deepened as she experienced marital alienation, and by 1822, she found herself widowed.[153] Following her return to England in 1823, her prolonged period of widowhood was marked by steadfast friendships, extensive communication with editors and publishers, and two journeys across the continent accompanied by her cherished son and his companions from Cambridge.[154] During her chaotic life, she was inspired to write several works based on her perception of the world and society, such as *Matilda* (1819), *Valperga* (1823), and *The Last Man* (1826). However, *Frankenstein* is considered Mary Shelley's extraordinary first novel.[155] Despite her hesitancy to acknowledge herself as the author, her introduction to the 1831 edition of *Frankenstein* represents a significant departure from the anonymity she maintained through various means over an extended period.[156] She describes her novel as her "hideous progeny",[157] likening the act of writing to giving birth. Such a metaphor suggests her anxiety related to women's fear of speaking out in a literary culture that often marginalized their contributions.[158] It is clear that *Frankenstein,* considered as "the story of the experience of writing *Frankenstein*",[159] embodied her identity as authorial self, able to depict her life and thoughts through narrative. Such a novel remains a mirror of her inner world, allowing her to explore and confront her existential questions, fears, and desires through the medium of storytelling.

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[152] R. Glynn Grylls, *Mary Shelley, A Biography*, London: Oxford University Press, 1941, p. xiii.
[153] E. Schor, *The Cambridge Companion to Mary Shelley*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. I.
[154] Ibid.
[155] Pamela Clemit, "*Frankenstein, Matilda*, and the legacies of Godwin and Wollstonecraft", in E. Schor (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Mary Shelley,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. 26-44, p. 26.
[156] P.D. Fleck, "Mary Shelley's Notes to Shelley's Poems and *Frankenstein*", *Studies in Romanticism*, vol. 6, no. 4 (1967), 226-254, p. 240.
[157] M.W. Shelley, *Frankenstein or, The Modern Prometheus*, London: H. Colburn and R. Bentley, 1831.
[158] S. Gilbert and S. Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979, pp. 45-92.
[159] B. Johnson, "My Monster/My Self", *Diacritics*, vol. 12, no. 2 (1992), 2-10, p. 7.

I.3.1 Origins Of *Frankenstein*

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* is considered "one of the most powerful horror stories of Western civilization".[160] It was written on an occasion that saw her, Byron, P.B. Shelley, and Byron's doctor, William Polidori, in competition for writing a thrilling horror story. On the same day, in 1816, Polidori reports to have discussed with Shelley, and subsequently to the whole company, about the possibility of creating life and such conversations must have deeply influenced Mary Shelley.[161] After hearing such discussions, she had a waking nightmare in which she saw "the pale student of unhallowed arts kneeling beside the thing he had put together".[162]

> "Frightful must it be; for supremely frightful would be the effect of any human endeavour to mock the stupendous mechanism of the Creator of the world. His success would terrify the artist; he would rush away from his odious handywork, horror-stricken. He would hope that, left to itself, the slight spark of life which he had communicated would fade; that this thing, which had received such imperfect animation, would subside into dead matter; and he might sleep in the belief that the silence of the grave would quench for ever the transient existence of the hideous corpse which he had looked upon as the cradle of life. He sleeps; but he is awakened; he opens his eyes; behold the horrid thing stands at his bedside, opening his curtains, and looking on him with yellow, watery, but speculative eyes."[163]

Through such a scene, Mary Shelley explains the reasons behind the content of *Frankenstein,* whose topics of birth, pregnancy, and parenting, are directly connected to the artist's life. Eighteen months before the meeting and the dream, she had lost her first baby and her fear of not being able to conceive children obsessed her.[164] Her dream of a resurrected infant underscored the powerful longing that fuelled the illusion of overcoming mortality.[165] Related to the thought of generating life after death, Mary Shelley was influenced by the scientific theory of Galvanism.[166] As stated by Rauch, in 1814, she also participated in some lectures about the exposure of the power of electricity that must have fascinated her to the point of reading extensively about such a topic.[167] The theory of Galvanism becomes functional to her composition of *Frankenstein* in relation to its plot, in which an ambitious scientist attempts to generate life by animating warped bodies.

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[160] Mellor, "Making a 'monster': an introduction to *Frankenstein*", in E. Schor (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Mary Shelley,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. 9-25, p. 9.

[161] J.W. Polidori, *The Diary of John William Polidori*, London: Elkin Mathews, 1911, p. 123.

[162] M.W. Shelley, *Frankenstein or, The Modern Prometheus,* London: H. Colburn and R. Bentley, 1831, p. x.

[163] Ibid.

[164] E. Moers, *Literary Women*, New York: Doubleday, 1976, pp. 91-99.

[165] J. O' Rourke, " 'Nothing More Unnatural': Mary Shelley's Revision of Rousseau", *ELH*, vol. 56, no. 3 (1989), 543-569, p. 556.

[166] First formulated by Aldini and become popular in the nineteenth century, such a process consisted of introducing electricity into dead or living bodies (A. Rauch, "The Monstrous Body of Knowledge in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*", *Studies in Romanticism*, vol. 34, no. 2 (1995), 227-253, pp. 241-242).

[167] Ibid., p. 242.

An influential figure that is worth mentioning for the composition of her gothic novel is the French author Rousseau, whose ideas contributed to shaping the ideology behind *Frankenstein*. An interpretation of the monster's narrative through a Rousseauian lens might suggest that the creature, in its original form, embodies the concept of natural innocence akin to humanity's primitive state.[168] Apart from Rousseau's ideas, according to which such a human primitive and natural state is ruined by society and its will to gain power, the treatment of his influence on Mary Shelley also includes several other aspects. Along with his figure as a political activist, the French philosopher is used as a precious source also in relation to his private life as a father. One year before the composition of her *Frankenstein* and also while writing it, the female artist read *Confessions* (1782), an autobiographical book of Rousseau's life, through which she acknowledged his abandonment of his five children.[169] Questioning herself what his children could have become without the presence of their father, Mary Shelley chose such a topic of abandonment as a central subject in her novel. Another reference to Rousseau's life is his native town that, as for Frankenstein himself, is in Italy, more precisely, Geneva, in which the novel's main events center.[170]

It is widely debated that, in *Frankenstein,* Mary Shelley expresses criticism against her husband P.B. Shelley.[171] Both talking about father-son relationships in their works, she disagreed with his husband's vision of certain themes, such as parenting and self-creation. Considering his obsession for such topics as the cause of the decline of their marriage, the female artist decided to explore such issues not only to express her anger for the deterioration of her marital relationship but also to show her husband his mistakes to be repaired.[172] Subsequently, P.B. Shelley responded to Mary Shelley's Gothic novel in his *Prometheus Unbound* and *The Cenci*, stressing the importance of sonship as a topic unrecognized by scholars.[173]

However, "Frankenstein has more in common with Godwin's and Wollstonecraft's fictions of historical and cultural reappraisal than has been allowed".[174] Inspired by her father's motif of pursuit, employed to challenge traditional moral standards, and by her mother's stories of women's societal subjugation across various social classes, Mary Shelley shaped her horror gothic novel. Focusing on the influence played by her father, William Godwin, she had been reading her father's works since she was very young.[175] Through his writings, the female artist shaped her thoughts on morality, rational improvement, and political issues. Considered a "disturber of the status quo",[176] Godwin was seen as a rebellious figure from the publication of his work, *Memoirs* (1798), through which he not only applied Wollstonecraft's advocacy for women's rights to the political sphere, but also portrayed her as a catalyst for transformative social upheaval. Gaining popularity among supporters of revolutionary ideologies, in his other work, *An Enquiry concerning Political Justice* (1793), on philosophical anarchism, he asserted that individuals possess the capacity to free themselves from the flawed beliefs upon which government rests through reason and discernment.[177]

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[168] P.A. Cantor, *Creature and Creator: Myth-Making and English Romanticism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984, p. 120.

[169] Rourke, *op. cit.*, p. 545.

[170] Clemit, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

[171] Rourke, *op. cit.*, p. 544.

[172] W. Veeder, "The Negative Oedipus: Father, *Frankenstein*, and the Shelleys", *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 12, no. 2 (1986), 365-390, pp. 366-367.

[173] Ibid. p. 367.

[174] Clemit, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

Another factor worth mentioning in the writing of *Frankenstein* is the historical background. Considered as "an allegory of the French Revolution",[178] Mary Shelley's novel reflects the attempt to replicate humanity and the subsequent feelings of disillusionment and fear persisted until the year 1815, ending with the Battle of Waterloo.[179] In a century like the nineteenth, in which literature reflected and responded to the tumultuous aftermath of the French Revolution, the concept of monstrosity resurfaced as a symbolic representation of the apprehension stemming from a perceived lack of order in the environment.[180] As a result, the female artist decided to give voice to a monster as a creature who can communicate and shape his thoughts through speech.[181] Through the narrative, Mary Shelley delves into themes, such as isolation, alienation, and the search for belonging, that resonate with the broader anxieties of post-revolutionary society. The monster's struggles mirror the conflicts of individuals grappling with the profound changes and uncertainties of their time.[182] Therefore, the Romantic female author crafts her narrative against the backdrop of societal upheaval, presenting the monster as a complex and speaking embodiment of such anxieties.

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[175] Clemit, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

[176] E.W. Said, *Representations of the Intellectual: The 1993 Reith Lectures*, London: Vintage, 1994, p. x.

[177] Clemit, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

[178] R. Paulson, "Gothic Fiction and the French Revolution", *ELH*, vol. 48, no. 3 (1981), 532-554, p. 545.

[179] R. Paulson, *Representations of Revolutions, 1789-1820*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983, p. 239.

[180] M. Tropp, "In Frankenstein's Shadow: Myth, Monstrosity, and Nineteenth-Century Writing by Chris Baldick", *Studies in Romanticism*, vol. 29, no. 3 (1990), 505-507, p. 505.

[181] C. Baldick, *In Frankenstein's Shadow: Myth, Monstrosity, and Nineteenth-Century Writing*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987, p. 45.

[182] Ibid., p. 57.

I.4. Frankenstein, Or the Modern Prometheus

"With *Frankenstein* Shelley began to think independently and with the confidence that characterizes all of her projects".[183] At the age of eighteen, the female author was challenging societal norms and literary conventions, exploring profound philosophical questions about the nature of humanity, the pursuit of knowledge, and the responsibility of creation. After writing *Frankenstein*, in which she questioned the ethical significance of numerous concepts that were dear to her father and her husband, she entrusted the 1818 manuscript of her horror story to P.B. Shelley for editing.[184] Her husband's editorial changes often enhanced the novel by rectifying spelling errors, employing more accurate technical language, and enhancing the coherence of the narrative. The instances where he misinterpreted his wife's intentions were several, leading to alterations that distorted her original ideas.[185] He was also charged with the writing of a Preface to her wife's story in which he inaccurately characterized the primary focus of the novel as "the exhibition of the amiableness of domestic affection, and the excellence of universal virtue".[186] On the contrary, Mary Shelley's horror story mainly focused on parental abandonment, analysing "Victor Frankenstein's total failure as a parent".[187]

In the edition of 1831, after having experienced several losses, implying the death of Percy and three of her four children, Mary Shelley changed *Frankenstein* into a different text.[188] Introducing the element of Destiny as an influential factor in her story, the female author emphasized a more fatalistic viewpoint. Victor's agency and capacity for moral choice were diminished, as if predetermined forces beyond his control dictate his actions.[189] Her vision of nature changed as well. She shifted its initial perception as nurturing, kind, and akin to a motherly figure to a more mechanistic perspective, portraying the "godless nature"[190] as a powerful and unstoppable force driven by unconscious and amoral mechanisms.

The version of *Frankenstein* under analysis is the first one, of the year 1818, containing a dedication to her father, P.B. Shelley's Preface and an epigraph from Milton's *Paradise Lost*.

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[183] Jane Blumberg, "*Frankenstein* and the 'Good Cause' ", in *Mary Shelley's Early Novels,* Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1993, pp. 30-56, p. 30.

[184] Mellor, "Making a 'monster': an introduction to *Frankenstein*", cit., p. 14.

[185] Ibid., p. 16.

[186] M. Shelley, *Frankenstein*, London: Penguin English Library, 2012, p. II.

[187] Mellor, "Making a 'monster': an introduction to *Frankenstein*", cit., p. 10.

[188] Ibid., p. 16.

[189] Ibid.

[190] P. Sherwin, "Frankenstein: Creation as Catastrophe", *PMLA*, vol. 96, no. 5 (1981), 883-903, p. 890.

The choice of such edition is linked to its unique insight into Mary Shelley's original intentions and influences, including personal dedications and literary references.

I.4.1. A Layered Narrative Structure

Frankenstein unfolds through a series of letters penned by sea-captain Robert Walton to his sister, Margaret Walton Saville, whose correspondence encompasses a period of exactly nine months, symbolically paralleling the gestation period of the gothic story itself.[191] Walton's mission is interrupted by his encounter with Victor Frankenstein, a man weakened by the cold and with a mysterious story to tell, whose narrative is arranged into three volumes. Frankenstein starts the narration of his life and of how, as an ambitious scientist, he gave life to a Monster by animating some parts of corpses and warped bodies. Walton's ambition to conquer nature, explore uncharted territories, and carve a passage through the Arctic ice to China mirrors Frankenstein's audacious endeavour to seize the secret of life from the natural world.[192] However, surprisingly ugly and deformed, Frankenstein's Creature is rejected by his creator and subsequently escapes, wandering alone and looking for his right place in the world. During his personal narration of the adventures lived out in the unknown, the Monster attempts to learn about society and humans, but without success due to his disgusting aspect. Through the usage of three male narrators, Mary Shelley meticulously examines the grandiose and monstrous Romantic aspirations harboured by Frankenstein, Walton, and the Creature.[193] In the sequence of nested narratives, each of the three first-person storytellers unquestioningly accepts the tale they hear. Instead of presenting fresh viewpoints, readers encounter a succession of stories that reinforce each other, characterized by a uniformity of voice that obscures rather than accentuates the differences between the storytellers.[194]

> "The distinct separation of narratives and the emphasis by both the Doctor and the Creature upon the need for various social relationships suggests that *Frankenstein* is concerned with a fragmenting society in which communication remains incomplete. Just as truly communicative union is difficult to attain in many of the novel's narrated incidents, so is it ultimately lacking among the three narrators".[195]

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[191] Mellor,"Making a 'monster': an introduction to *Frankenstein*", cit., p. 12.

[192] Ibid., p. 13.

[193] Richard J. Dunn, "Narrative Distance in Frankenstein", in *Studies in the Novel*, 6, 1974, pp. 408-417, p. 409.

[194] B. Newman, "Narratives of Seduction and the Seductions of Narrative: The Frame Structure of Frankenstein", *ELH*, vol. 53, no. 1 (1986), 141-163, p. 147.

[195] Dunn, *op. cit.*, p. 416.

Commenting on a society where communication between individuals is not fully achieved, the novel highlights the challenges inherent in forming genuine relationships in a world marked by isolation and alienation. If Walton certainly craves companionship in his adventures at sea and Victor longs for familial bonds, friendships, and a spouse, the Creature desperately seeks someone with whom to conversate and learn about his existence.[196] As they recount each other's tales, the three narrators in *Frankenstein* still maintain a sense of unfamiliarity towards one another, remaining only partially acquainted. While Walton acknowledges his empathy for both Victor and the Creature, and the Creature eventually expresses his affection for Victor, there is never a moment of genuine dialogue that could foster friendship and serve as a foundation for a hopeful societal commentary.[197]

Related to the social aspect, the three first-person narrators employ rhetorical strategies linked to various working-class identities to compel their listeners to perceive them from their own perspectives.[198] Whereas Walton attributes his intense curiosity to his lack of formal education and Frankenstein initiates his narration by evoking a social identity strongly linked to prestige, heritage, and national allegiance, the Monster is deprived of a sense of identity, presenting a narrative marked by disorientation.[199] Such a "Chinese box of stories-within-stories"[200] could also be interpreted as a protective measure, constructing layers of barriers that conceal Mary Shelley's original voice.[201] By adopting a complex narrative structure, she could subvert expectations and evade direct criticism of her own ideas or experiences, navigating societal expectations and biases regarding women's intellectual capabilities.

I.4.2 An Intricate Plot And Several Themes

Frankenstein is often considered the origin of science fiction due to its exploration of the potential outcomes of a scientific venture spiralling out of control.[202] In the first-person narration of Victor's life, the scientist recalls an incident that increased his passion for alchemy when he was younger, intensifying his determination to uncover the mysteries of nature.[203] A bolt of lightning during a thunderstorm becomes a source of inspiration for his ambitious reanimation plan. Another relevant episode influencing Frankenstein's scientific project is his mother's death. The young Victor would like to bring his mother's life back to life, combining "phantasmal body parts and buried wishes".[204] To complete his plan, his alchemical convictions, vehemently denounced by Frankenstein's university professors, are also merged with notions of modern rationalist science, inundating Victor with new reflections on restoring life.[205] Such thoughts increased his belief in humanity's potential to achieve wonders and extraordinary feats, providing him access to the appropriate source of power.[206] After isolating himself from society to perform his ambitious experiment, he gives life to a Monster by animating some parts of corpses and warped bodies.

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[196] Dunn, *op. cit.*, p. 146.

[197] Ibid.

[198] C. Benford, " 'Listen to my tale': Multilevel Structure, Narrative Sense Making, and the Inassimilable in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*", *Narrative*, vol. 18, no. 3 (2010), 324-346, p. 328.

[199] Ibid.

[200] Newman, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

[201] Mellor, "Making a 'monster': an introduction to *Frankenstein*", cit., pp. 13-14.

[202] David Soyka, "Frankenstein and the Miltonic Creation of Evil", in *Extrapolation*, 33, 1992, pp. 166-177, p. 166.

[203] Sherwin, *op. cit.*, p. 884.

It is peculiar to notice Frankenstein's first reaction to the Creature's stirring, almost orgasmic, which prompts the scientist to finally recognize the monstrosity standing before him: "Oh! no mortal could support the horror of that countenance".[207] Surprisingly hideous and deformed, Victor's nameless Monster is rejected by his creator and subsequently escapes. Crucial to his story is the finding of a leather portmanteau, containing a volume of Plutarch's *Lives*, *the Sorrows of Werter*, and Milton's *Paradise Lost*. The three books allow the Creature to gain insight into language, human emotions, and the complexities of society, shaping his understanding of the world and his own identity.[208]

Telling his story about venturing into unknown territory, the Fiend offers a thorough depiction of his transformation, describing the process of acquiring language and the aftermath of his transition from his initial state to what is considered civilized society.[209] The encounter with the De Lacey family marks his initial hope for acceptance into a community, ultimately ending in rejection due to his "uncannily fearful"[210] frame. The more Victor's Creation approaches society, the more he is turned into an evil being, proving acts of civilization as "sources of anguish”.[211] Frankenstein’s Monster becomes the protagonist of a torture scenario, in which he is physically assaulted and attacked by other humans, terrified by his repellent aspect. When he attempts to communicate, engage with society, seek acknowledgment, and break free from the confines of his own existence, the Creature is rejected and beaten back into his body.[212] After he fails to be accepted by such a violent society, Victor’s Monster is driven to isolation and self-hatred. Unable to reconcile his own desires for connection with the reality of his social ostracism, the Fiend’s self-esteem diminishes, and he begins to view himself through the lens of society's prejudices. Such miserable condition suffered by the Creature, as marked by Brooks, is the consequence of his inadequacy to join the signifying chain and language and gain significance as a transcendental being.[213] Since it is through language that the Creature can identify himself in the world around him, the lack of education that he experiences represents his condemnation to a life of isolation and loneliness. In a desperate situation, he becomes a murderer, committing several crimes as a confirmation of the monstrosity attributed to him.[214] Among the first victims of his cruelty there are William, Victor’s young brother, and Justine, a servant in the Frankenstein family and wrongly accused of the child’s murder. To win his forced isolation, the Creatures threatens his creator to create a female counterpart for him, specifying the main traits she needs to possess to completely match his behaviors and fill his solitude. Despite not being happy, but at least “harmless, and free”,[215] the Monster believes that their shared experiences of rejection and isolation will create a bond between them. Victor’s act of creating the female body, only to later destroy it upon grappling with the complexities of sexuality, desire, and reproduction, implies that he views the female form as vastly more daunting and threatening than the male physique of his initial creation.[216] For Frankenstein, making a new and female creation would not only mean to risk in creating a possibly worse and more independent being, but also to give the feminine companion “reproductive powers”, enabling her to perpetuate their monstrous species.[217] Seeing the creation of a female creature as a figure whose “uninhibited female sexual experience threatens the foundation of patriarchal power",[218] Victor prefers destroying such a threatening being, violently mutilating her body.

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[204] Sherwin, *op. cit.*, p. 885.

[205] C.P. Toumey, "The Moral Character of Mad Scientists: A Cultural Critique of Science", *Science, Technology, & Human Values,* vol. 17, no. 4 (1992), 411-437, p. 424.

[206] Norma Rowen, "The Making of Frankenstein's Monster: Post-Golem, Pre-Robot", in N. Ruddick (ed.), *State of the Fantastic: Studies in the Theory and Practice of Fantastic Literature and Film,* Westport: Greenwood, 1992, pp. 169-177, p. 173.

[207] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, cit., p. 51.

[208] M.A. Goldberg, "Moral and Myth in Mrs. Shelley's *Frankenstein*", *Keats-Shelley Journal*, vol. 8, no. 1 (1959), 27-38, p. 27.

[209] David Marshall, "Frankenstein, or Rousseau's Monster: Sympathy and Speculative Eyes", in *The Surprising Effects of Sympathy: Marivaux, Diderot, Rousseau, and Mary Shelley,* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988, pp. 178-227, p. 184.

[210] Sherwin, *op. cit.*, p. 886.

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[211] J. Bernatchez, “Monstrosity, Suffering, Subjectivity, and Sympathetic Community in Frankenstein and ‘The structure of Torture’ ”, *Science Fiction Studies*, vol. 36, no. 2 (2009), 205-216, p. 206.

[212] Ibid., p. 211.

[213] P. Brooks, *Body Work: Objects of Desire in Modern Narrative*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993, p. 219.

[214] Bernatchez, *op. cit.*, p. 213.

[215] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, cit., p. 146.

[216] A.K. Mellor, *Mary Shelley: Her life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters*, New York & London: Routledge, 1988, p. 120.

[217] Ibid.

After the scientist rejects his duty as a god-like figure to the Monster by declining to create a companion for him, the roles master and slave, and torturer and victim reverse. The Creature is initially in a state of submission to his creator since he has been crafted by him despite not being provided with the necessary quantity of knowledge to cope with his life alone. Paradoxically, after knowing about Victor's refusal of gifting him with a female figure, it empowers itself to the point of threatening his maker: "It is well. I go; but remember, I shall be with you on your wedding-night".[219] As a reaction for the suffering endured because of his creator, the Monster decides to inflict him maximum psychological and emotional harm.

Despite his intimidatory warning, Frankenstein does not take seriously his Creature's statement which doomed his friend Clerval and his wife Elizabeth to a cruel destiny. Elizabeth's death, seen as an "antieroic act designed to teach his creator what [the Monster] suffers",[220] becomes highly significant. The fact that Victor is aware of the potential danger posed by the Fiend but does not prevent him from harming his beloved woman stresses Frankenstein's apprehension for his first wedding night that, with his wife's death, will never be consumed.[221] Consequently, Victor's despair deepens, and he becomes more determined to destroy the creature he created. While his persistent desire to control the Monster until his demise increases, the Creature falls short of inducing complete psychological dependence in him. Despite his intelligence and cunning, the Monster's inability to fully comprehend the complexities of human emotions and relationships undermines his efforts to manipulate Victor completely.[222] Their final confrontation happens in the Arctic, where both Frankenstein and the Creature meet their respective ends. In such a situation, Walton, the Arctic explorer, serves as the narrator of the last part of the novel, grappling with the moral implications of the scientist's story. Despite being deathbed, Frankenstein remains loyal to his own promise of vengeance against the Monster, saying:

> "I feel myself justified in desiring the death of my adversary. During these last days I have been occupied in examining my past conduct; nor do I find it blamable".[223]

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[218] Mellor, *Mary Shelley: Her life, Her Fiction, Her Monster,* cit., p. 120.
[219] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, cit., p. 173.
[220] Sherwin, *op. cit.*, p. 889.
[221] Mellor, *Mary Shelley: Her life, Her Fiction, Her Monster,* cit., p. 102.
[222] Harry Keyishian, "Vindictiveness and the Search for Glory in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*", in *The American Journal of Psychoanalysis,* 49, 1989, pp. 201-210, p. 208.
[223] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, cit., p. 224.

On the contrary, the Creature suffers for the subsequent loss of his maker, not only recognizing his own submitted position of a slave but also justifying his acts of revenge and violence, saying "Evil thenceforth became my good".[224] After his master's death, the Monster, whose identity was associated with Victor's existence, lost his own subjectivity, immolating himself for the sake of society: "thou didst seek my extinction, that I might not cause greater wretchedness".[225] Consumed by grief and remorse, the Fiend vows to end his own life and disappears into the wilderness, leaving behind a haunting tale of ambition and its consequences.

I.4.2.1 Unchecked Ambition

Recalling the image of "Dr. Faustus",[226] Victor is driven by an insatiable thirst for knowledge and power that leads him to venture into realms beyond the conventional boundaries of human understanding. Through his presumption of creating a living being from lifeless materials,[227] a relevant theme emerges, concerning the consequences of human ambition and "drive's excess".[228] Having pilfered nature's sacred essence of existence, Frankenstein envisions a world where a 'fresh breed' thrives solely to worship his "godlike mastery".[229] As stated by Mellor, his endeavour to circumvent natural evolutionary processes and fabricate a distinct species echoes a satirical reflection of traditional creationist beliefs. By rejecting the notion of divine intervention in generating life, Victor asserts the potential for an individual to serve as the progenitor of an entirely new species.[230]

As visible in Dr. Faustus' story, "human creativity appears to be dangerous in *Frankenstein*, because it is unpredictable and uncontrollable in its results".[231] Such thirst for knowledge is the cause of Victor's isolation and consequent damnation.[232] To accomplish his plan, he not only spends the majority of time away from human touch, in "charnel houses",[233] or in dissenting rooms, but also becomes ill: "Every night I was oppressed by a slow fever, and I became nervous to a most painful degree".[234] As consequence of his inability to educate his Monster, Frankenstein experiences several losses and ultimately attempts to persuade Walton to follow a different path: "You seek for knowledge and wisdom, as I once did; and I ardently hope that the gratification of your wishes may not be a serpent to sting you, as mine has been".[235] Talking about ambition, Walton is another character who embarks on fulfilling the cherished dream of his youth, endeavoring to find a route through the icy expanse toward the inviting warmth of the Pole.[236] Like Victor, he is a victim of his own obsession, paying the consequences for such a hubris. Due to his experience at sea where he is distant from the societal community, he is reduced to transferring his thoughts onto paper, lamenting the inadequacy of such a medium in conveying his deepest emotions.[237] Being in an isolate setting, Walton truly craves the companionship of someone who could understand him, whose eyes would mirror his own, offering a silent yet profound exchange of empathy. It is in the encounter with Frankenstein that he finds his inaugural friend, a fellow seeker who has shared analogous aspirations of pioneering exploration and discovery akin to those of Prometheus.[238] Mentioned by Mary Shelley as subtitle of *Frankenstein*, namely *The Modern Prometheus*, the Promethean character is a figure from Greek mythology, known for defying the gods by stealing fire and giving it to humanity, thereby granting them knowledge and enlightenment.[239] By delving into the theme of the imperative of responsible creation inherent in what is considered a quintessential myth of the Romantic era, *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* dismantles the conventional narrative of Prometheus as a masculine symbol of patriarchal authority and justice.[240]

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[224] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, cit., p. 227.

[225] Ibid., p. 230.

[226] In the realm of Romanticism, Dr. Faustus is considered a significant modern myth. In the tale of Goethe's Faust, Faust strikes a deal with the Devil to gain knowledge beyond the scope of conventional scientific methods, and such a description aligns with Frankenstein's attitude toward creation. (T. Ziolkowski, "Science, Frankenstein, and Myth", *The Sewanee Review,* vol. 89, no. 1 (1981), 34-56, p. 51.)

[227] Mellor, *Mary Shelley: Her life, Her Fiction, Her Monster,* cit., p. 38.

[228] Sherwin, *op. cit.*, p. 884.

[229] Fred Botting, "Frankenstein and the Language of Monstrosity", in *Making Monstrous: Frankenstein, Criticism, Theory,* Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991, pp. 51-57, p. 54.

[230] Mellor, *Mary Shelley: Her life, Her Fiction, Her Monster,* cit., p. 101.

[231] Paul Cantor, "The Nightmare of Romantic Idealism", in M. Shelley, *Frankenstein*, London: Penguin English Library, 2012, pp. 231-269, p. 238.

[232] Goldberg, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

> "Frankenstein, her Prometheus, while sharing the impious and agonised qualities that exerted such fascination on the Romantics, is Promethean first and foremost as a maker of man, an aspect of the legend that has tended to be obscured in emphasis on the prima Promethean act of stealing fire from heaven".[241]

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[233] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, cit., p. 48.
[234] Ibid., p. 49.
[235] Ibid., p. 21.
[236] Sherwin, *op. cit.*, p. 884.
[237] P. Brooks, "Godlike Science/Unhallowed Arts: Language and Monstrosity in Frankenstein", *New Literary History*, vol. 9, no. 3 (1978), 591-605, p. 603.
[238] Ibid.
[239] Mellor, *Mary Shelley: Her life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters*, cit., p. 71.
[240] H. Hustis, "Responsible Creativity and the 'Modernity' of Mary Shelley's Prometheus", *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900,* vol. 43, no. 4 (2003), 845-858, p. 845.
[241] C. Small, *Ariel like a Harpy: Shelley, Mary and Frankenkestein*, London: Victor Gollancz, 1972, p. 48.

Rather than in the act of defying divine authority, Victor's Promethean essence primarily lies in his role as a creator of life. Such shift in emphasis highlights the novel's exploration of the ethical and existential implications of playing god, seizing the divine prerogatives reserved for God within the Judeo-Christian tradition.[242]

At the conclusion of the narrative, having listened to Frankenstein' tale and seen the consequences of his ambitious pursuit, Walton steers his vessel back toward home. Aware of his "cowardise" and "indecision" towards his ambitious mission at sea, the narrator prefers abandoning his initial pursuit, remaining "ignorant" and "disappointed" but learning from Victor's tragic events.[243]

I.4.2.2 Societal Alienation

Contrasting Victor and Walton's intentional solitude, the Monster is "entrapped and isolated in his own body" due to society's cruelty.[244] After being rejected by his maker and escaping from his laboratory, he embarks on a journey of self-discovery, failing in his attempts at social community.[245] At the beginning of his venture in the unknown, the Creature experiences a profound connection with nature. He finds comfort in the beauty and tranquillity of the wilderness, where he can be himself without fear of judgment or persecution. It is through the reception of "additional ideas" and the distinction of his senses that he changes his conception of the world and starts perceiving "objects in their right forms".[246] After learning how to survive in the natural world, the Fiend experiences his first contact with human beings, witnessing the antagonist nature of society.[247] His grotesque appearance and lack of social skills cause widespread fear and rejection from the people he encounters, leading him to become bitter and vengeful. A pivotal moment in *Frankenstein* is represented by the Creature's encounter with the De Laceys family. Driven by a desperate longing for connection and societal acceptance, he observes the family from a distance and becomes enamoured with their kindness and affection towards one another. For the lonely Being, they become a source of education since, from their conversations, he learns about the "division of property, of immense wealth, and squalid poverty of rank, descent, and noble blood".[248] The De Laceys have a significant humanizing influence on the Monster, but his growth is abruptly halted when Frederick De Lacey witnesses the Creature showing reverence to his blind father.[249] Shocked by such a sight, the young man reacts in a monstrous manner, perpetuating the cycle of "horror and consternation"[250] that the Fiend faces in society. As Bejamin stresses, the dynamic relationship between self and other defines how humans perceive and interact with the world, shaping their individual experiences and connections with the broader world around them.[251] The downfall of Victor's Monster stems from his irresistible allure toward civilized society, yet his efforts to integrate into social circles only result in his profound misery.[252] The more society is violent against him, the more he is encouraged to dominate and destroy. As a consequence of the aggressive reaction of the De Laceys family to his repellent frame, the Creature decides to burn their cottage, showing how he is subjected to brutality by society.[253] Being completely "ostracized",[254] he can only accept his societal isolation, fuelling his desire to share his miserable existence with another "deformed and horrible"[255] being like him. Consequently, when Frankenstein refuses to create a companion for him, the scientist shatters the Monster's last hope for finding acceptance and undermines any chance of him finding inner peace or satisfaction.[256] Bearing no responsibility for the deformity of his physical appearance, the Creature is forced to accept the alienation caused by his body, "doomed to see himself as others see him".[257] Mary Shelley's conclusion of *Frankenstein* echoes such a sense of solitude and isolation stressing that the Monster remains ensnared in the inexplicable, constrained to remain alone in an hostile place and contemplate his miserable life.[258] Trapped in a perpetual state of abandonment, uncertainty, and loneliness, "for his, no escape, save death, is possible".[259]

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[242] Mellor, *Mary Shelley: Her life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters*, cit., p. 77.
[243] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, cit., p. 222.
[244] Bernatchez, *op. cit.*, p. 208.
[245] Ibid., p. 205.
[246] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, cit., p. 102.
[247] Bernatchez, *op. cit.*, p. 20

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[248] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, cit., p. 119.

[249] Jean Hall, "*Frankenstein*: The Horrifying Otherness of Family", in *Essays in Literature*, 17, 1990, pp. 179-189, p. 179.

[250] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, cit., p. 135.

[251] J. Benjamin, *The Bonds of Love: Psychoanalysis, Feminism and the Problem of Domination*, New York: Pantheon, 1988, p. 193.

[252] Cantor, "The Nightmare of Romantic Idealism", cit., p. 253.

[253] D. Cottom, "Frankenstein and the Monster of Representation", *SubStance*, vol. 9, no. 3 (1980), 60-71, p. 67.

[254] K. Montwieler, "Embodiment, Agency, and Alienation in *Frankenstein* and *Ourika*", *CEA Critic*, vol. 73, no. 3 (2011), 69-88, p. 74.

[255] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, cit., p. 144.

[256] Cantor, "The Nightmare of Romantic Idealism", cit., p. 261.

[257] Ibid., p. 262.

[258] Mellor, *Mary Shelley: Her life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters*, cit., p. 140.

[259] Ibid., p. 51.

I.4.2.3 Female Role

Mary Shelley's story can be viewed as a "birth myth"[260] that challenges traditional notions of biological maternity since it portrays the creation of life without the involvement of a biological mother.[261] Contrasting Darwin's theory on the advancement of the species that can only occur through the fusion of male and female sexuality, Victor challenges the laws of nature, having a child alone and usurping "the natural mode of human reproduction".[262] Such vision of the marginalized female role is possibly inspired by *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), written by Mary Shelley's mother, which illustrated the outcomes stemming from a societal framework where gender is constructed to prioritize men over women. In Frankenstein's 19th-century Geneva, societal norms dictated a strict separation of gender roles: men were confined to the public domain while women were confined to the private, domestic realm.[263] If male figures in Frankenstein's society are predominantly engaged in occupations outside the household, such as pursuing careers in science, engaging in commerce, or embarking on exploratory endeavours, women are primarily restricted to domestic duties and treated as objects. For instance, Elizabeth is not allowed to travel with Victor and is considered a "promised gift" as his future wife and "possession of [his] own".[264] The "woman's helpless alienation in a male society"[265] is also experienced by Walton's sister who is confined home, exploring the world only through her brother's tales and letters. Such division of the private and the domestic sphere has a relevant effect on characters' feelings.[266] Concerning the two male ambitious characters, both Walton and Frankenstein channel their emotional energy not towards empathetic connections or familial bonds, but rather towards self-centred ambitions of surpassing the limits of nature and conquering death. Not only do they shift their desires away from typical romantic pursuits, but they also immerse themselves in a distinct mode of thought characterized by scientific inquiry.[267] Due to the inherent conflict between his work and his capacity for love, Victor lacks empathy towards the creature he is bringing to life, neglecting his parental responsibility towards the being. On the contrary, women are depicted as empathic figures, exhibiting compassion, understanding, and emotional depth. When Justine is accused of murdering the young William, Elizabeth, completely certain of her innocence, shows her generosity and empathy for her dear servant, "on whom the public indignation was turned with renewed violence, charging her with the blackest ingratitude".[268] Considering her status of a servant and a female figure, Justine's inability to proclaim her innocence in the face of murder accusations serves as compelling evidence of her marginalized role in a masculine society.[269] Analysing both Elizabeth and Justine's inadequacy to save their lives, *Frankenstein* "raises feminine powerlessness to the status of myth",[270] underscoring a pervasive societal narrative of women's vulnerability and marginalization. Another crucial aspect worth mentioning is the fact that "all the women [...] are sexually repressed, even sexless".[271] Caroline Beaufort, Victor's mother, is described as a devoted and faithful wife, and Elizabeth's affection to her fiancé Victor mirrors that of siblings. As well, Safie, a young lady of Turkish descent who flees from her oppressive father's household and seeks refuge with the De Laceys, allows only chaste expressions of affection to her lover.[272] Concerning the fate of female figures in Mary Shelley's novel, they are all doomed to experience tragic outcomes.[273] Justine is wrongly executed for a crime she did not commit, and Elizabeth falls victim to the monster's violence. Additionally, the female monster, created through negotiations between Victor and his Creation, is brutally destroyed. Such a character emerges as an intriguing figure, particularly because of the profound silence that surrounds her. She remains voiceless, denied not only the opportunity to speak but also to exist fully, lacking a name or a distinct form.[274]

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[260] Moers, *op. cit.,* p. 98.

[261] Mellor, "Making a 'monster': an introduction to *Frankenstein*", cit., p. 10.

[262] Mellor, *Mary Shelley: Her life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters*, cit., p. 115.

[263] Ibid., p. 115.

[264] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, cit., p. 27.

[265] Gilber and Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic*, cit., p. 246.

[266] Mellor, *Mary Shelley: Her life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters*, cit., p. 116.

[267] Ibid., p. 110.

However, throughout much of the novel, Mary Shelley employs a predominantly male narrative voice, while her female characters often occupy peripheral roles. As stressed by Hodges, such narrative choice reinforces the traditional dichotomy between masculinity and femininity, speech and silence, which complicates the position of a female author.[275] When language is conventionally linked with masculinity, a woman may feel compelled to suppress her own identity to find a voice. By adopting a male perspective, Mary Shelley gains a unique opportunity to disrupt the established order from within, becoming a disruptive force that challenges the stability of the dominant male narrative.

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[268] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, cit., p. 78.

[269] Cottom, "Frankenstein and the Monster of Representation", cit., p. 67.

[270] M. Poovey, "My Hideous Progeny: Mary Shelley and the Feminization of Romanticism", *PMLA*, vol. 95, no. 3 (1980), 332-347, p. 346.

[271] Mellor, *Mary Shelley: Her life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters*, cit., p. 120.

[272] Ibid., p. 121.

[273] E. Hawley, "The Bride and Her Afterlife: Female Frankenstein Monsters on Page and Screen", *Literature/Film Quarterly*, vol. 43, no. 3 (2015), 218-231, p. 219.

[274] Hawley, *op. cit.*, p. 219.

[275] D. Hodges, "Frankenstein and the Feminine Subversion of the Novel", *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature,* vol. 2, no. 2 (1983), 155-164, p. 157.

I.4.2.3.1 Motherhood

As stressed by Homans, "Frankenstein's own history is full of the deaths of mothers".[276] Victor's mother was found by his father when she was a destitute orphan. Similarly, Elizabeth, who later becomes Frankenstein's fiancée, was discovered in poverty and orphaned by her parents. Tragically, Elizabeth contracts scarlet fever, leading to her adoptive mother's demise while caring for her. Furthermore, Justine, who had taken on the role of a foster mother to Victor's younger brother William, faces wrongful execution for his murder.[277] The only death that significantly shapes the trajectory of *Frankenstein* is the decease of Victor's mother, Caroline Beaufort, considerably affecting Victor and his existence.[278] Obsessed with making a creature from reanimating dead bodies, the scientist's creation of a being can be interpreted as a replacement for maternal love.[279] Frankenstein's experience of an horrific dream, after having created his Monster, proves such a subconscious quest for motherhood.

> "I thought I saw Elizabeth, in the bloom of health, walking in the streets of Ingolstadt. Delighted and surprised, I embraced her, but as I imprinted the first kiss on her lips, they became livid with the hue of death; her features appeared to change, and I thought that I held the corpse of my dead mother in my arms; a shroud enveloped her form, and I saw the grave-worms crawling in the folds of the flannel".[280]

As a symbolic contrast, Elizabeth embodies the image of Victor's deceased mother in his dream, representing a merging of roles as cousin, sister, and bride. Through embracing Elizabeth in this context, Frankenstein seeks to grasp onto the maternal presence he yearns for, symbolizing his desire to possess and replace the maternal figure he has lost.[281] Therefore, a precarious cycle of desire and fear connects his wife and the Creature to the mother figure, serving as the focal point of such a dynamic trio.[282]

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[276] M. Homans, *Bearing the Word: Language and the Female Experience in Nineteenth-Century Women's Writing,* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986, p. 100.

[277] Homans, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

[278] Sherwin, *op. cit.*, p. 884.

[279] Homans, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

[280] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, cit., p. 51.

[281] Sherwin, *op. cit.*, p. 887.

[282] Ibid.

I.4.2.4 Nature: The Sublime And Science

In *Frankenstein*, the topic of nature is intricately woven into the narrative, particularly in its connection to scientific exploration and the sublime. In his attempt to "penetrate the recesses of nature, and show how she works in her hiding places",[283] therefore creating life from non-life, Frankenstein can be accused of a "primal sin against nature",[284] bypassing traditional methods of reproduction. Such scientific pretension, depicting the "Enlightenment celebration of science",[285] emphasizes how nature was conceived by modernity, namely as the unique element that could be rearranged in experimental sessions.[286] Since nature is not respected and there is little moral responsibility towards the implications of the research, the objective approach of science leads to the creation of monsters.[287] Victor's disregard for the ethical and moral implications of his research, as well as his failure to respect the natural boundaries of life and death, results in the birth of a creature that "overturns the power of science".[288] Consequently to the violation of natural laws, nature is not as static, lifeless matter as Frankenstein mistakenly perceives it, but dynamic, vibrant, and far from inert.[289] Although he arrogantly believes he can intrude upon nature without consequences, it resists his actions and retaliates against his endeavours, demonstrating its power to thwart his ambitions and seek retribution. One of the first effects that nature has on the ambitious scientist is the denial of his mental and physical health.[290] After completing his experiment, Victor suffers a severe fit that leaves him incapacitated for an extended period. Such an incident signals the beginning of a prolonged period of illness characterized by "nervous fever".[291] Throughout the story, he is plagued by anxiety, delirium, moments of distraction, and episodes of madness. When he resolves to defy nature once more by creating a female companion, he faces further punishment as it retaliates against his blasphemy:

> "The eternal twinkling of the stars weighed upon me, and how I listened to every blast of wind, as if it were a dull ugly siroc on its way to consume me".[292]

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[283] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, cit., p. 41.
[284] Sherwin, *op. cit.*, p. 883.
[285] Mellor, "Making a "monster": an introduction to *Frankenstein*", cit., p. 9.
[286] Ibid., p. 19.
[287] Mellor, *Mary Shelley: Her life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters*, cit., p. 94.
[288] Cottom, *op. cit.*, p. 64.
[289] Mellor, *Mary Shelley: Her life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters*, cit., p. 122.
[290] Ibid.
[291] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, cit., p. 55.
[292] Ibid., p. 149.

Nature relentlessly pursues Frankenstein using the very electricity he has illicitly appropriated: lightning crackles, thunder roars, and rain storms fiercely in Victor's vicinity.[293] Another punishment that nature inflicts on the mad scientist is preventing him from creating a normal being, since "his unnatural method of reproduction produces an unnatural being".[294] His Monster destroys what the scientist loves the most, shattering his dreams of progeny. Therefore, nature's wrath is unforgiving: those who dare desecrate her sanctuaries face utter annihilation.[295]

Considering nature as a source of sublime and seen her great interest in the country and landscapes,[296] Mary Shelley uses recurrent natural phenomena symbolically, amplifying the moments of terror and suspense during the most chilling events in the narrative. From storms to mountains, darkness and obscurity envelop landscapes, while a palpable malevolent energy lurks just beneath the surface, contributing to an atmosphere of disorientation.

> "The storm appeared to approach rapidly; and, on landing, I ascended a low hill, that I might observe its progress. It advanced; the heavens were clouded, and I soon felt the rain coming slowly in large drops, but its violence quickly increased".[297]

In such a scene where Victor embarks on his journey towards Geneva only to encounter the Creature, the storm escalates in intensity. Mirroring the impending arrival of the Monster, the tempest grows fiercer, creating a palpable sense of foreboding. Proper of Gothic novels, as seen through such episode, nature emerges as a wellspring of sublime, a hostile force, untamed and menacing, instilling awe and wonder in those who contemplate its grandeur and majesty.[298] Taking into consideration the mountains, stand tall and rugged, they present an intimidating and inaccessible terrain. As stressed by Botting, the Creature's trajectory consistently leads towards their peaks, venturing into the desolate landscapes where human existence is imperiled, even extinguished.[299] Always the Fiend comes face to face with his maker atop a mountain near Mont Blanc, solidifying the connection with icy heights and rugged summits.

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[293] Mellor, *Mary Shelley: Her life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters*, cit., p. 123.

[294] Ibid., pp. 123-124.

[295] Ibid., p. 124.

[296] B. Phillips, "Frankenstein and Mary Shelley's 'Wet Ungenial Summer'", *AEDEAN*, vol. 28, no. 2 (2006), 59-68, p. 64.

[297] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, cit., p. 69.

[298] F. Botting, *Gothic*, London and New York: Routledge, 2014, p. 4.

[299] Phillips, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

> “The desert mountains and dreary glaciers are my refuge. I have wandered here many days; the caves of ice, which I only do not fear, are a dwelling to me, and the only one which man does not grudge”.[300]

Embodying the essence of the desolate landscape where he roams, Victor’s Monster is provided by nature with a sense of belonging and acceptance that he cannot find among humans. The depiction of Frankenstein’s ascent to the mountain is described as captivating in its beauty, but as it unfolds, it is transformed into something awe-inspiring and sublime.

> “Ruined castles hanging on the precipices of piny mountains; [...] cottages every here and there peeping forth from among the trees, formed a scene of singular beauty. But it was augmented and rendered sublime by the mighty Alps, whose white and shining pyramids and domes towered above all, as belonging to another earth, the habitations of another race of beings”.[301]

Victor’s journey to the summit involves not just a physical ascent but also an emotional one, highlighting a peculiar “sense of beauty”.[302] Mirroring Burke’s notion of sublime and echoing his thoughts concerning the necessity of obscurity to generate terror,[303] Mary Shelley utilizes the elements of awe and fear to create a sense of mystery and dread. Since natural settings like forests, glaciers, and moors loom with darkness, their depths impenetrable and mysterious, nature appears as a formidable force, untamed and foreboding.[304]

I.4.3 Modern Prometheus: A Meaningful Title

‘The Modern Prometheus’ is the subtitle that Mary Shelley gives to her horror story. Her association of Victor with Prometheus draws from both facets of the ancient myth: Ovid’s *Prometheus plasticator*, the shaper of mankind and *Prometheus pyrphoros,* the bearer of fire.[305] In the version familiar to the female writer from her reading of Ovid’s Metamorphoses in 1815, Prometheus sculpts humanity from clay, embodying the creative act of giving life. Conversely, in the more renowned rendition, Prometheus defies the oppressive rule of Jupiter by bestowing fire upon humanity, an act of rebellion that leads to his torment, with vultures pecking at his regenerating liver until he yields his prophetic knowledge of Jupiter’s downfall.[306] Through

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[300] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, cit., p. 98.
[301] Ibid., p. 92.
[302] Quinton, *op. cit.*, p. 72.
[303] Burke, *op. cit.*, p. 76.
[304] Botting, *Gothic*, cit., p. 4.
[305] Mellor, *Mary Shelley: Her life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters*, cit., p. 71.
[306] Ibid.

Victor, Mary Shelley weaves together the dual aspects of such a mythological figure, portraying him as both a creator and a challenger of divine authority, shaping humanity and defying the constraints of established power structures. Victor is both a creator of man, as *Prometheus plasticator* is, and a thief of god's fire, as *Prometheus pyrphoros*.[307] Like Prometheus, he takes on the role of a creator by ambitiously seeking to fashion life from inanimate matter. In his pursuit of scientific knowledge and glory, he ventures into forbidden territory, defying natural laws and usurping "God's divine prerogatives".[308] Like Prometheus through his "defiance of the Gods",[309] Frankenstein arrogantly seeks to transcend the limits of mortality and nature, ultimately unleashing forces beyond his control and challenging the very fabric of human existence. His ambition is blinding to the point of admitting that "[he] seemed to have lost all soul or sensation but for this one pursuit".[310] Such a statement encapsulates the extent of Victor's obsession, revealing how his ambition consumes him entirely, to the detriment of all else. Whereas Prometheus's endeavours undoubtedly bring certain advantages to humanity, Frankenstein's reanimation project brings to the creation of a being "who has the capacity to do great good or great evil".[311] Possessing both the capacity for benevolence and malevolence and influenced by individuals' reaction at his sight, the Creature causes harm. As a matter of fact, the Monster's actions reflect the consequences of Frankenstein's hubris and the failure to consider the moral implications of his creation.[312] Like Prometheus, Mary Shelley's scientist must endure the punishment of his "alienating labor",[313] also at an "extreme personal cost".[314] He becomes "restless and nervous",[315] forced to experience the deaths of his beloved harmed by his Creation. Like Prometheus, the crime for which he is punished turns to be also against society.[316] Stealing fire to Gods, Prometheus gives humans the instrument of power and advancement, but also a key to human ambition and presumption. Alike, Frankenstein, through his "misguided pride",[317] mistakes knowledge as superior to human feelings, pursuing a selfish aim focused only on self-glory and not on the behalf of social community.[318] In both characters' stories, Prometheus and Victor's transgressive actions can only show society the negative consequences of attempting to overreach God's divine power.[319] A characteristic that distinguishes the two figures is the fact that Victor is a 'modern' Prometheus. What makes him a different alter ego of the mythological figure is his lack of a superior entity: "he is a Prometheus without a Jove".[320] According to Levine and Knoepflmacher, the originality of Mary Shelley's novel relies in its secular aspect, since the whole plot lacks the presence of God.[321] Consequently, the novel's storyline adheres to the conventions of what contemporary audiences recognize as science fiction, a genre that meticulously charts a sequence of plausible outcomes stemming from an initially improbable premise, devoid of fantastical intercession.[322] A key element both in the Promethean myth and in *Frankenstein* is fire. In Mary Shelley's novel, the discovery of fire represents a crucial phase in the Creature's education:

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[307] Blumberg, op. cit., p. 44.

[308] Mellor, *Mary Shelley: Her life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters*, cit., p. 77.

[309] I.H. Buchen, "Frankenstein and the Alchemy of Creation and Evolution", *The Wordsworth Circle*, vol. 8, no. 2 (1997), 103-112, p. 107.

[310] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, cit., p. 47.

[311] Mellor, *Mary Shelley: Her life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters*, cit., p. 78.

[312] Ibid.

[313] Sherwin, *op. cit.*, p. 890.

[314] Blumberg, op. cit., p. 44.

[315] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, cit., p. 169.

[316] Goldberg, *op. cit.,* p. 33.

[317] Ibid.

> "One day, when I was oppressed by cold, I found a fire which had been left by some wandering beggars, and was overcome with delight at the warmth I experienced from it. In my joy I thrust my hand into the live embers, but quickly drew it out again with a cry of pain. How strange, I thought, that the same cause should produce such opposite effects".[323]

Through such an episode in which fire stresses the ambiguous trait of knowledge, the Monster, rather than Frankenstein, stands as Prometheus.[324] In contrast to Victor, yet akin to Prometheus, the Fiend employs his wisdom benevolently, gathering firewood for the De Lacey family; it is also with fire that he ravages their cottage and eventually meets his own demise.[325] Nevertheless, just as fire has dual potential in its ability to both benefit and harm, the Creature's final use of knowledge has a destructive aspect. Finally, the subtitle used by Mary Shelley marks a quintessential characteristic of *Frankenstein* as a "myth of myth".[326] Seeking to cultivate a mythic awareness characterized by unity and completeness, readily juxtaposed with the lackluster mindset of modernity, Mary Shelley incorporates elements of myth within her narrative, serving as a legend itself, with layers of symbolic meaning and universal themes akin to classical myths.

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[318] Goldberg, *op. cit.,* p. 33.

[319] Mellor, *Mary Shelley: Her life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters*, cit., p. 77.

[320] Baldick, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

[321] G. Levine and U.C. Knoepflmacher, *The Endurance of Frankenstein,* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979, pp. 6-7.

[322] Baldick, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

[323] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, cit., p. 103.

[324] Baldick, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

[325] Ibid.

[326] Ibid., p. 1.

I.4.3.1 Shelley's Reception Of Prometheus

Mary Shelley was influenced to shape the figure of her modern Prometheus by her husband P.B. Shelley, who harboured a desire to craft an epic response to Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound* since revisiting the play in 1816. Despite not commencing the writing process until September 1818, following the publication of *Frankenstein*, P.B. Shelley's intention to create *Prometheus Unbound* demonstrates a thematic alignment with Mary Shelley's exploration of Prometheus in her own work.[327] In Aeschylus' myth, Prometheus embodies the archetype of the cunning individual who initially aids a rising tyrant, only to realize that his actions sow the seeds of distrust inherent in the unlawful acquisition of political power. Despite his assistance to the tyrant's ascent, Prometheus finds that his contributions are quickly forgotten, and any gratitude evaporates at the first sign of disagreement. The dispute revolves around the future of humanity. Rather than being appreciated for his political support, Prometheus faces severe punishment for his dissenting views.[328] Despite his reference to the Greek myth, P.B. Shelley repudiated a slavish compliance to the traditional Prometheus legend.[329] He envisioned Prometheus as "the highest perfection of moral and intellectual nature, impelled by the purest and the truest motives to the best and noblest ends".[330] His Prometheus is not merely a figure who defies the gods out of defiance or disobedience but is rather a symbol of enlightenment, love, and wisdom prevailing over the oppression of malevolence.[331] In the play, readers encounter a protagonist who, despite his imperfections, confronts his inner turmoil swiftly and concludes the narrative with a sense of victory and profound happiness.[332]

In the Preface to his revisitation of the Greek myth, P.B. Shelley clearly provides insight into his intentions and artistic vision for the play. Stating the ambiguity and complexity of the Prometheus myth, he proceeds:

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[327] Mellor, *Mary Shelley: Her life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters*, cit., p. 72.

[328] D. Grene, "Prometheus Bound", *Classical Philology*, vol. 35, no. 1 (1940), 22-38, p. 28.

[329] W. Cude, "Mary Shelley's Modern Prometheus: A Study in the Ethics of Scientific Creativity", *Dalhousie Review*, vol. 52, no. 2 (1972), 212-225, p. 212.

[330] P.B. Shelley, *Prometheus Unbound*, London: C and J Ollier Vere Street Bond, 1820, p. ix.

[331] Cude, *op. cit.*, p. 212.

[332] J.R. Hurt, "*Prometheus Unbound* and Aeschylean Dramaturgy", *Keats-Shelley Journal*, vol. 15 (1966), 43-48, p. 43.

> “The Prometheus Unbound of Aeschylus supposed the reconciliation of Jupiter with his victim as the price of the disclosure of the danger threatened to his empire by the consummation of his marriage with Thetis [...] But, in truth, I was averse from a catastrophe so feeble as that of reconciling the Champion with the Oppressor of mankind”.[333]

P.B. Shelley critiques Aeschylus’ interpretation of the Prometheus myth, particularly the resolution depicted in *Prometheus Bound*. Aeschylus presents a scenario where Prometheus, the champion of humanity, reconciles with Zeus (Jupiter), the oppressor, in exchange for divulging information that could threaten Zeus’s rule. Such a reconciliation is brokered to prevent Zeus from facing potential danger resulting from his marriage to Thetis.[334] P.B. Shelley rejects the notion of reconciling the champion (Prometheus) with the oppressor (Zeus) as an inadequate solution to the fundamental conflict between freedom and tyranny. To Shelley, such a resolution lacks the depth and transformative power required to address the injustices perpetuated by oppressive systems.[335] The figure of Jupiter, both in Aeschylus and in P.B. Shelley, appears as a ruler whose authority is absolute and unyielding, intolerant of any challenge to his will, mirroring the aspect that “to be Omnipotent but friendless is to reign”.[336] In *Prometheus Unbound*, P.B. Shelley explores themes of freedom, wisdom, and the triumph of the human spirit against tyranny.[337] Always in his Preface to his drama, he writes: “the only imaginary being resembling in any degree Prometheus, is Satan”.[338] Both figures rebel against oppressive forces, embodying the spirit of defiance and resistance against tyranny, striving for freedom and autonomy.[339]

Mr. and Mrs. Shelley had a great knowledge not only of Aeschylus’ *Prometheus Bound*, but also of Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, therefore, their works can only mirror the huge influence exercised by “the Miltonic and Promethean motif”[340] on their masterpieces. Especially for Mary Shelley, Milton’s seventeenth-century epic poem played a crucial role, becoming in *Frankenstein* a precious source of knowledge for Victor’s Creature and for readers’ interpretation of associations and meanings related to the gothic story.

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[333] P.B. Shelley, *op. cit.*, pp. vii-viii.

[334] Weaver, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

[335] Ibid., p. 122.

[336] P.B. Shelley, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

[337] Weaver, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

[338] P.B. Shelley, *op. cit.*, p. viii.

[339] Weaver, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

[340] Goldberg, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

CHAPTER II

Paradise Lost In *Frankenstein* And The Master-Slave Dialectic In Both Works

When Mary Shelley constructs her richly intertextual narrative, *Frankenstein*, in 1818, "she can rely on her readers' acceptance of Milton as an honorary classic".[1] The public was well acquainted with Milton and his epic poem on creation, ambition, and the fall of humanity. Assuming her readers' familiarity with *Paradise Lost*, Mary Shelley weaves references and parallels into her narrative, enriching the layers of meaning within the text. The choice of examining such a volume, among the three found in the portmanteau, is related to the utmost significance that the epic poem exerts throughout the novel.[2] *Paradise Lost* serves as a foundational text for understanding the themes and motifs explored in Mary Shelley's novel, particularly as far as the master-slave dynamics is concerned. In this chapter, Milton's epic poem is introduced, referring to its narrative structure, characters, and main themes. A major focus is put on the relationship between Milton's God and Satan as foreshadowing the lord-bondsman relationship in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* between Victor and his Creation, and the complex interplay of power, responsibility, and rebellion.

II.1 A Matter Of Intertextuality

Intertextuality, "a permutation of texts" in which "several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and neutralize one another",[3] serves as a powerful tool for literary analysis and interpretation. Considering it as "a text's emergence from the 'social context' but also its continued existence within society and history",[4] each text is imbued with the influences ofits surroundings, drawing from a vast reservoir of shared knowledge, language, and discourse. A significant aspect of intertextuality is its ability to achieve "the very plural of meaning".[5] Being inherently multifaceted and constantly shifting in its meanings, an intertext is not fixed in its interpretation but is a "play of signifiers",[6]open to a wide range of meanings that can coexist and interact with each other. An intertextual reference is also crafted from various discussions and derived from pre-existing significance. Focusing on such an aspect, *Frankenstein* is a rich tapestry woven from various literary, scientific, and philosophical threads, open to a myriad of meanings and interpretations. Considering the main features of Intertextuality and the plot of Mary Shelley's novel, *Frankenstein* itself "is assembled from dead fragments to make a living whole".[7] As well as Victor crafts the Creature from various dead body parts, Mrs. Shelley constructs a narrative that is a composite of various literary influences. Among the numerous intertextual references incorporated by Mary Shelley in her gothic novel, Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, the Greek myth of Prometheus, and Milton's *Paradise Lost* are the most relevant. In particular, Milton's epic poem serves as a focal point for analysis, being a story on "the origins of things"[8] that explores themes of creation, rebellion, and the fall of man, deeply resonating with the narrative of *Frankenstein*. Such an intertextual reference is employed by the female author to situate her novel within a broader intellectual tradition and engage with the literary and philosophical debates of her time.[9] Milton's epic poem enriches the novel's thematic depth and invites readers to consider the enduring relevance of Milton's work in the context of Mary Shelley's exploration of human nature and morality.

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[1] L. Newlyn, *Paradise Lost, and the Romantic Reader,* Oxford: Oxford Press University*,* 2001, p. 41.

[2] T.S. Ping, "*Frankenstein*, *Paradise Lost*, and 'The Majesty of Goodness' ", *College Literature*, vol. 16, no. 3 (1989), 255-260, p. 255.

[3] J. Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1980, p. 36.

[4] G. Allen, *Intertextuality*, London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2000, p. 36.

[5] R. Barthes, *Image - Music - Text*, London: Fontana Press, 1977, p. 159.

[6] Allen, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

II.2 *Paradise Lost*, A Both Rejected And Reclaimed Work

Milton's epic poem stands as one of the most influential works in the canon of English literature.[10] Due to its author's blindness, the work was composed during the years 1658-1663 through dictation, relying on the assistance of any available scribe.[11] The poem emerged in two separate editions, each distinct from the other, respectively the first in 1667 and the second in the year of his death, 1674.[12] The initial 1667 edition comprised ten books, evoking its dramatic origins akin to a two-part tragedy unfolding across ten acts. However, in the year of Milton's passing, a revised rendition surfaced, expanding to twelve books.[13] The latter revision, which emerged as the definitive standard, demanded minimal adjustments, primarily dividing two longer books and incorporating some conventional lines.[14] At the publisher's request, Milton provided also a preface, including prose summaries for each book of *Paradise Lost*, as well as an explanation for his choice of blank verse over rhyme.[15] Such additions were placed before the poem, serving to offer readers context and insight into the poet's creative decisions. As a reaction to the first publication of his work, the public questioned the absence of rhyme in the poem.[16] The poet, in response, justified his use of blank verse, explaining how it allowed for the recovery of ancient liberty in heroic poetry, liberating it from the constraints of modern rhyming schemes.[17] Figures like Thomas Tomkins (Episcopal licenser), Sir John Hobart (Parliamentarian), and John Beale (country minister and corresponding Fellow of the Royal Society) are worth mentioning in their reactions to Milton's epic. Their criticism not only reflected on the literary merits of the epic but also intertwined with contemporary societal concerns, linked to the historical events of the English Restoration.[18] One of the earliest notable responses to such an epic was John Dryden's stage adaptation titled *The State of Innocence* (1671).[19] Seeking and obtaining Milton's approval, Dryden opted to translate the poem into rhymed verse, disregarding its author's commentary on the constraints of rhyming in the original work. Being a royalist, Dryden utilized his adaptation to subtly critique the poet's political stance but, differently from his intentions, he "made Milton's epic a classic—and instantly old-fashioned".[20]

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[7] Baldick, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

[8] M. Kilgour, *Milton and the Metamorphosis of Ovid*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012, p. xi.

[9] Ping, *op. cit.*, pp. 255-256.

[10] S. Orgel and J. Goldberg, "Introduction", in J. Milton (ed.), *Paradise Lost*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, p. vii.

[11] A.H. Gilbert, "On the Composition of *Paradise Lost*: A Study of the Ordering and Insertion of Material" Rev. of B.A. Wright, *The Review of English Studies*, vol. 1, no. 3 (1950), 268-270, p. 268.

[12] Orgel and Goldberg, *op. cit.*, p. xiv.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid.

However, despite its hostile environment, *Paradise Lost* received widespread acclaim upon its publication, with even the poet's adversaries acknowledging its brilliance as a literary masterpiece.[21] In the late seventeenth century, Milton's work attained the status of a classic, marking a significant milestone as "the normative English epic".[22] Two decades later, its prominence was further solidified through a series of influential articles penned by Joseph Addison in *The Spectator*, a popular daily newspaper.[23] Despite such an elevated status, *Paradise Lost* faced intervention in 1732 when Richard Bentley, one of England's earliest textual critics, released an 'emended' edition. He contended that Milton, being blind, had relied on an inept scribe, resulting in numerous errors in wording and logic within the published version.[24] Bentley's revisions, deemed unwarranted and lacking sensitivity, were met with widespread mockery and criticism to the point of being declared false also by Samuel Johnson.[25] Despite his conservative worldview, Johnson praised the epic scale and majestic language of *Paradise Lost*, recognizing it as a literary masterpiece.[26]

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[15] Orgel and Goldberg, *op. cit.*, p. xiv.

[16] N. Von Maltzahn, "The First Reception of Paradise Lost (1667)", *The Review of English Studies,* vol. 47, no. 188 (1996), 479-499, p. 479.

[17] Ibid., pp. 479-480.

[18] Ibid., pp. 480.

[19] G.B. Churchill, "The Relation of Dryden's *State of Innocence* to Milton's *Paradise Lost* and Wycherley's *Plain Dealer*: An Inquiry into Dates", *Modern Philology*, vol. 4, no. 2 (1906), 381-388, p. 381.

[20] Orgel and Goldberg, *op. cit.*, p. xxvii.

[21] H.W. Peck, "The Theme of Paradise Lost", *PMLA*, vol. 29, no. 2 (1914), 256-269, p. 260.

[22] Orgel and Goldberg, *op. cit.*, p. xiv.

[23] Ibid., p. xxviii.

During the transition from the late eighteenth to the early nineteenth centuries, a renewed poetic interest in Milton's epic poem emerged. His influence extended significantly to the Romantic poets, who found inspiration not only in his literary style but also in his political convictions.[27] As stressed by P.B. Shelley himself, "the sacred Milton was, let it ever be remembered, a Republican and a bold enquirer into morals and religion".[28] Reflecting the admiration for the seventeenth-century poet, P.B. Shelley marked his significance as a figure who not only contributed to literature but also engaged with pressing political and philosophical issues of his society.

II.2 A Difficult Historical Context

As highlighted by Hollander and Kermode, the trajectory of an illustrious poetic journey invariably emerges within a historical framework, even as we unravel the impact of influential dynamics at play within it.[29] Considering his career as a writer, Milton weaved together both external background influences and internal motivating forces.[30] Influenced by the historical event of the *Restoration*,[31] his worldview, beliefs, and literary works, reflected his engagement with the political, social, and religious debates of his time.

> "Milton not only witnessed all these widespread and radical changes, but he lived to see the new order of things itself reversed [...] It would be singular indeed if he himself had remained exempt from change".[32]

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[24] R.E. Bourdette, " 'To Milton lending sense': Richard Bentley and *Paradise Lost*", *Milton Quarterly*, vol. 14, no. 2 (1980), 37-49, p. 41.

[25] Ibid., p. 41.

[26] Orgel and Goldberg, *op. cit.*, pp. xxx-xxxi.

[27] E.E. Stoll, "Milton A Romantic", *The Review of English Studies*, vol. 8, no. 32 (1932), 425-436, p. 425.

[28] P.B. Shelley, *op. cit.*, p. xii.

[29] J. Hollander and F. Kermode, *The Literature of Renaissance England*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1973, p. 705.

[30] Hollander and Kermode, *op. cit.*, p. 706.

[31] The Restoration period derives its name from the reinstatement of the Stuart dynasty, marked by the return of Charles II to the English throne in 1660 following the conclusion of the Commonwealth era. It is defined as spanning from this event until the year 1700. (Abrams and Harpham, *op. cit.*, p. 282)

[32] James Bass Mullinger, "Introduction", in J. Milton, *Paradise Lost,* London: George Bell And Sons, 1897, pp. xi-xii.

Since engaged in the political and intellectual debates of his time, Milton was not merely a passive observer but an active participant in shaping the discourse of the era. His writings, such as his political pamphlets and epic poems, reflected his engagement with the pressing issues of his day and his commitment to advocating for his beliefs. Upholding his family's Protestant faith was not merely a casual adherence, but a dedicated commitment that thrived amidst the stormy seas of doctrinal debates that characterized his life after university.[33] Remaining at Cambridge for a span of seven years, Milton's education relied on the conventional approach of disputation, emphasizing rhetoric and debate and heavily intertwined with academic philosophy.[34] He pursued and obtained both his Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts degrees, and, despite his Puritan beliefs, he did not object to affirming his adherence to the Anglican faith.[35] His ability to navigate the tensions between the Puritan principles and the realities of Anglican society reflected his broader commitment to advancing his political and religious ideals through strategic engagement. His entrance into the realm of politics began with his engagement in discussions regarding episcopacy, which referred to the growingly strict governance of the Church by its hierarchy of bishops and archbishops.[36] In the early 1640s, in a series of pamphlets concerning church reform, Milton tackled the concept of ecclesiastical liberty, advocating for the elimination of episcopacy.[37] Despite such an anti-episcopal approach, he believed that they played a part in advancing a movement he perceived as aligned with the pursuit of genuine freedom.[38] He viewed church reform as a means to promote liberty, suggesting that ecclesiastic autonomy entailed the liberty for individuals to worship according to their own preferences, without the imposition of hierarchical control by bishops.[39] With the fervour reminiscent of a prophet, Milton delivered bold condemnations, solemn admonitions, and impassioned pleas, commanding attention and respect through the force of his conviction. Shortly after Charles I was ultimately defeated in battle and the longstanding divisions among the Parliamentary factions reached a climax, Milton published his *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* (1649). Reflecting his earlier perspectives on monarchy and democratic governance, he focused on the idea that regardless of whether a ruler is a King, Tyrant, or

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[33] Mullinger, *op. cit.*, p. xi.

[34] Orgel and Goldberg, *op. cit.*, p. viii.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid., p. x.

[37] F. Lovett, "Milton's Case for a Free Commonwealth", American Journal of Political Science, vol. 43, no. 9 (2005), 466-478, p. 471.

[38] Evert Mordecai Clark, "Introduction", in J. Milton, *The Ready and Easy Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth,* New Haven, Yale University Press, 1915, p. xvi.

[39] Lovett, *op. cit.*, p. 471.

Emperor, they are all subject to the authority of justice. Therefore, if they veer towards tyranny, they can be lawfully removed and punished.[40] In essence, he aimed to dismantle a key ideological barrier that hindered support for Charles' trial and execution – the notion that kings are untouchable by human law. On the contrary, concerning his position regarding the Cromwellian Protectorate, his role was "a focus of controversy among critics and historians".[41] Reading his *Second Defense of the English People* (1654), it is visible Milton's political position during the establishment of the Protectorate amid the uncertainty following the removal of the Rump Parliament and the contentious dissolution of the Nominated Assembly.[42] Being nominated by the Commonwealth as Secretary for Foreign Languages to the Council State, he chose to highlight Cromwell's successes in the realm of intellect and spirituality.[43] Added to the praise of the politician's military achievements, the seventeenth-century poet also admonished the political figure. Milton's admonition was secular and revolved around the notion of liberty, emphasizing that a tyrant who violates the liberty of their subjects will inevitably lose their own liberty and endure enslavement.[44] The tyrant who strips individuals of their freedom ultimately becomes enslaved himself, as he cannot escape the constant fear that his oppressive rule will lead to widespread resentment and rebellion.[45] The blending of the republican argument against tyranny with the portrayal of Cromwell as a divine instrument complicated, determining Milton's stance amidst the divisions between pro- and anti-Cromwellian factions.[46] After the early and praised period of the Protectorate, he scarcely made any further references to Cromwell.[47] By the time Milton embraced his openly republican position in *The Ready and Easy Way* (1660), the era of the politician's Protectorate had become a distant past.[48] The restoration of a Stuart monarch posed a significant threat to Milton, as he faced the risk of prosecution by the royal authorities. His involvement as a propagandist for the Commonwealth and his formal role within its government made him vulnerable to legal actions.[49] In late 1660, for unspecified reasons, Milton was detained and incarcerated briefly, likely around November. By December, he received a complete pardon, alleviating any concerns of facing personal repercussions.[50] It was in the twilight of his life that he found the opportunity to realize his fullest potential. Although he experienced complete blindness, which occurred between 1651 and 1652, Milton managed to dictate *Paradise Lost*, complete it by 1665, and proceed to work on *Paradise Regained*.[51] Milton's significant poems represent the pinnacle achievement of a lifetime dedicated to scholarship, alongside the rigorous engagement in intellectual, ethical, and political discourse.[52] *Paradise Lost* stands as a testament to Milton's unwavering commitment to his craft, completing amidst the backdrop of political upheaval and historical adversity.

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[40] Lovett, *op. cit.*, p. 471.

[41] G. Togashi, "Contextualizing Milton's 'Second Defence of the English People': Cromwell and the English Republic, 1649-1654", *Milton Quarterly*, vol. 45, no. 4 (2011), 217-244, p. 217.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Ibid., p. 218.

[44] Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

[45] Togashi, *op. cit.*, p. 228.

[46] Ibid.

[47] T. Gregory, "Milton and Cromwell: Another Look at the Evidence", *Journal of British Studies*, vol. 54, no. 1 (2015), 44-62, p. 44.

[48] Ibid., p. 46.

[49] Hollander and Kermode, *op. cit.*, p. 708.

II.3 An Epic

The first edition of *Paradise Lost* is notable for its omission of typical genre identifiers. Instead of labelling the work with a specific genre, the title page simply described it as *A Poem Written in Ten Books*.[53] Whether guided by Milton's intention or driven by political necessity, the vague designation and notably absent introductory prefaces or commendatory poems compelled the poem to assert its own significance to the discerning reader. It was only in the proem to Book VIII, of the first edition of 1667, that he officially asserted the epic status of his poem.[54] He argued that his elevated theme, respectively man's defiance and the ensuing tragic outcomes, was "Not less but more Heroic then the wrauth/ Of stern ACHILLES" (VII, 14- 15).[55] The comparison with the Greek hero suggests that Milton viewed the epic scope of his work not merely in terms of grandeur and action but also in the profound exploration of human agency, choice, and consequences. In the second edition of *Paradise Lost* (1674), despite its unassuming octavo format, he strategically positioned his poem to assert its epic and heroic status unmistakably from the beginning.[56] The title page boldly declared a work consisting of twelve books, leaving no doubt about the ambitious scope and literary stature of Milton's work. In *The Verse*, his note preceding Book I, he not only delved into the rhyme-blank verse debate but also clearly outlined the genre expectations for his poem, placing it within the esteemed literary company.[57] "The measure is English heroic verse without rhyme, as that of Homer in Greek, and of Virgil in Latin" (The Verse, 1-2).[58] In defining such terms, Milton dismissed rhyme as a product of a less refined era and lacking in genuine musical beauty to discerning ears. Focusing on the concluding statement of *The Verse*, as emphasized by Zwicker, rhyme represented an aesthetic embodiment of republican ideals and culture, associated not only with the decline of Stuart culture but also with Stuart's tyranny.[59] Milton's declaration rendered his work as "an example set [...] of ancient liberty recovered to heroic poem from the troublesome and modern bondage of rhyming" (The Verse, 18-20), respectively a masterpiece liberated from the constraints of modern rhyming practices.

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[50] Hollander and Kermode, *op. cit.*, p. 708.

[51] Ibid., p. 709.

[52] Ibid.

[53] B.K. Lewalski, "*Paradise Lost* and the Contest over the Modern Heroic Poem", *Milton Quarterly*, vol. 43, no. 3 (2009), 153-165, p. 153.

[54] Ibid., p. 156.

[55] J. Milton, *Paradise Lost, 1667*, Global Language Resources, Inc., 2001, p. 160.

[56] Lewalski, *op. cit.*, p. 161.

"The first English poet to introduce extended personal meditations into the impersonal epic genre",[60] Milton revolutionized the scope and depth of epic poetry. His departure from the traditional epic conventions, which often focused solely on grand historical or mythological narratives, marked a pivotal moment in the genre's development. In *Paradise Lost*, his "I" skilfully intertwines personal experiences with the broader framework of epic poetry, creating a seamless fusion of individual narrative and universal themes.[61] "The basic framework of *Paradise Lost* is epic, and it can accommodate Satan under the same terms of genre".[62] Considering the work as "the chronicle of the deeds of the hero",[63] Milton's Satan exhibits qualities traditionally associated with epic heroes, such as determination, ambition, and leadership. His "craving for dominion and hunger for glory" allow the alignment of God's opponent with the heroes of Homeric epics, accompanied by desires for power and recognition.[64] Considered as one of the main key points of epic poems, the invocation to the Muse by the poet is a significant aspect that marks the beginning of the narrative journey.[65] To sight inspiration for his greatest poetic work, transcending orthodox religious boundaries, Milton must call upon a muse distinct from the Third Person of the Trinity.[66] Urania, his muse and the Muse of Astronomy, becomes an embodiment emerging from the chaotic depths of the poet's own imagination.[67] Milton desires a muse capable of connecting the versifier with all epochs of the past, including the realms beyond temporal constraints, thereby granting him the perspective of eternity as well.[68] Added to such invocation of a "voice divine",[69] the opening of an epic typically consists of the commencement of the story in *medias res*.[70] In *Paradise Lost*, Book I opens with a physical descent, symbolizing and foreshadowing the broader concept of the Fall of Man. Such downfall involves Satan's literal plummet from heaven to the depths of hell, illustrating his fall from grace and ultimate damnation.[71] By beginning in medias res with the Devil's descent, Milton captivates the audience's attention from the very start, laying the groundwork for his unfolding epic journey. Related to the numerous battles that enrich the traditional epic's narrative, *Paradise Lost* "consists of an old Greek subject, the Titanomachia, or the Battle of the Gods and Titans, intertwined with or followed by, the story of the Fall in Genesis".[72] The poem portrays grandiose clashes, occurring both in the celestial realm during Satan's uprising and on Earth during humanity's downfall. Such epic confrontations stand as symbolic elements of the genre, symbolizing the eternal conflict between forces of "death and life, evil and good, sin and repentance, condemnation and redemption".[73] Considering the supernatural elements of divine intervention present in the epic, such as gods, goddesses, demigods, and mythical creatures, *Paradise Lost* shows an interplay between divine benevolence, associated with creation and goodness, and divine malevolence, linked with destruction and evil.[74] Crucial roles are assumed by Satan, God, angels, and fallen angels in driving forward the unfolding events, challenging the moral fabric of the story. Through lofty language and grandeur, Milton elevates such divine and infernal figures to mythic proportions, imbuing them with symbolic significance that transcends mere characters in a tale.[75] Mirroring the elevated style proper of epics, Milton employs majestic language and intricate narrative structure to "justify the ways of God to men" (I, 26).

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[57] Lewalski, *op. cit.*, p. 157.

[58] J. Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, p. 2. All quotations are taken from the edition of *Paradise Lost* (Oxford, 2008).

[59] Steven Zwicker, "Lines of Authority: Politics and Literary Culture in the Restoration", in K. Sharpe and S. Zwicker, *Politics of Discourse: The Literature and History of Seventeenth-Century England*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987, p. 249.

[60] G.C. Schricker, "Epic Innovator: Milton's Persona in *Paradise Lost*", *CEA Critic*, vol. 46, no. 3/4 (1984), 38-47, p. 38.

[61] Ibid., p. 39.

[62] D.C. Feeney, "Epic Hero and Epic Fable", *Comparative Literature*, vol. 38, no. 2 (1986), 137-158, p. 156.

[63] R. Scholes and R. Kellogg, *The Nature of Narrative*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1966, p. 209.

[64] Steadman, *op. cit.*, p. 254.

[65] Feeney, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

[66] J.I. Cope, "Milton's Muse in *Paradise Lost*", *Modern Philology*, vol. 55, no. 1 (1957), 6-10, p. 6.

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[67] M. Lifson, "The Mediating Muse of *Paradise Lost*: Guide to Spiritual Transformation", *Notre Dame English Journal*, vol. 13, no. 2 (1981), 45-60, p. 50.

[68] Ibid., p. 49.

[69] Ibid., p. 51.

[70] Feeney, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

[71] Hollander and Kermode, *op. cit.*, p. 758.

[72] G. Murray, *The Classical Tradition in Poetry*, London: Milford, 1927, p. 8.

[73] A.H. Gilbert, "The Problem of Evil in *Paradise Lost*", *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, vol. 22, no. 2 (1923), 175-194, p. 175.

[74] M. Bryson, " 'That far be from thee': Divine Evil and Justification in *Paradise Lost*", *Milton Quarterly*, vol. 36, no. 2 (2002), 87-105, p. 91.

[75] Hollander and Kermode, *op. cit.*, p. 759.

Through the employment of similes, metaphors, and catalogues, the seventeenth-century poet exhibits a scholarly quality, characterized by distinctive imagery and a language that is truly elevated.[76] As stated by Lewis, Milton's style resembles the grandeur of organ music, allowing readers to be guided by his masterful composition.[77] Through such a comparison, his epic is described as a deeply enriching and transformative experience.

II.3.1 Structure and Plot

Milton's poem seems to embody the essence of existence itself, offering a timeless exploration of humanity's place in the cosmos.[78] Being rooted in biblical themes, the poet's work speaks to universal truths that resonate with readers across generations. Considering the 1674 edition of *Paradise Lost*, the poem is composed of twelve books, each of them preceded by prologues, delving into the cosmic conflict between God and Satan.[79] Such preludes, signposts marking the logical steps taken in the development of the poem, guide through both the narrative progression and the logical framework of Milton's argument.[80] In addressing any subject, particularly matters of religious significance, the poet's claim to authority reaches its pinnacle when he invokes a Muse. The invocation not only strengthens his ethical arguments but also asserts divine guidance as the ultimate source of legitimacy.[81]

"A great deal and nothing happens in book 1 of *Paradise Lost*".[82] Compared to the other books in the poem, the first appears static and lacks action. Emerging from the fiery depths of Hell, Satan and his fallen comrades gather into a formidable assembly, evoking the grandeur of epic poetry's greatest armies. Despite their past defeat in the War in Heaven against a superior force, the fallen angels opt for dialogue over further futile attempts at rebellion. To facilitate their discussions, they construct a council chamber within Pandaemonium, the infernal capital.[83] In the devilish council that commences Book II, Milton paints a vivid tableau of political intrigue and moral ambiguity.[84] In such an assembly in which Satan embodies dual roles as both a monarch and a parliamentarian,[85] each fallen angel represents a distinct facet of humanity's darker impulses, from pride and envy to cunning and deceit.[86] After manipulating his fellows with promises of glory and redemption, the Devil embarks on a journey to search for the truth about a prophecy or tradition in Heaven regarding the creation of another world and a new kind of creature. Book III primarily revolves around the Son's incarnation and its profound repercussions for humanity.[87] God's initial address underscores the notion that, without divine intervention, humanity would face a fate akin to that of the celestial beings who fell from grace due to their rebellion. The Lord's grace promises to bring enlightenment and freedom to those who embrace it, while those who reject it would remain in darkness, mirroring the fate of Satan and his followers.[88] In such a framework, the role of the Son is redemptive, providing spiritual comfort and liberation from the turmoil reminiscent of Lucifer's disruptive influence. "Satan's undisguised voice is not heard until immediately after Book III concludes".[89] Emphasizing the contrast between the divine grace bestowed upon humanity and the Daemon's rebellious nature, Milton creates a sense of anticipation and suspense surrounding the character. In Book IV, the Devil's soliloquy both begins and ends with the poignant realization that the grace intended to liberate humanity from the burdensome shackles of memory will forever elude him. Apart from admitting to himself that the driving forces behind his rebellion were rooted in "pride and worse ambition" (IV, 40), in Book IV, Satan makes his encounter with mankind and earthly Paradise.[90] After observing Adam and Eve in their innocent bliss, he launches his initial attack on Eve, infecting her dreams with a craving for forbidden knowledge, thereby planting the seeds of temptation within her consciousness.[91] Subsequently, Book V provides readers with a distinct approach to describing him, one that diverges sharply from Milton's methods employed in the previous books.[92] Here, the poet's depiction of God's opponent takes on a more abstract tone, characterized by echoes of theological discourse and abandoning its epic grandeur and allegorical richness.[93] In this book, in which Eve shares with Adam her troubling dream, the Lord sends Raphael to admonish Adam about obedience, his free will, and the presence of his nearby enemy, detailing Satan's rebellion in Heaven and his subsequent fall.[94] In both Book V and Book VI, the narrative unfolds the harrowing tale of the angels' revolt, serving Adam and Eve a cautionary tale illustrating the dire consequences of disobedience.[95] It is in Book VI that the Daemon endeavours to emulate God's power by attempting to become a creator himself, crafting an instrument of destruction rather than creation: the cannon.[96] "Book VII was planned as a choric song in the tragedy, requiring perhaps a hundred lines".[97] Implying a certain level of musicality and rhythm in his composition, Milton may have intended for such a section of the poem to be particularly lyrical and evocative. Raphael recounts to Adam how, following the expulsion of Satan and his followers from Heaven, the Lord declared His intention to create a new world and its inhabitants, sending His Son to complete the task in six days, celebrated by the heavenly host with hymns upon His return to heaven.[98] In Book VIII, Adam questions Raphael about celestial motions but receives ambiguous answers, prompting the angel to encourage him to focus on more meaningful pursuits. The Man recounts his experiences since his creation, including his placement in Paradise, his conversation with God about companionship, his marriage with Eve, and his subsequent dialogue with the angel before Raphael departs.[99] In Book IX, Satan clandestinely infiltrates Paradise, shrouded in mist, and assumes the form of a "mere serpent in appearance" (IX, 413). Through a skilfully crafted speech, he cunningly convinces Eve to defy the divine mandate, thereby setting in motion the tragic events of disobedience.[100] The tempted Woman eventually eats the fruit and then offers it to Adam, who, out of love for her, also partakes, leading to their realization of their nakedness, discord, and mutual blame.[101] The act of disobedience by Adam and Eve, driven by temptation and love, sets the stage for the dramatic events that unfold in Book X. The Man's soliloquy on death, "the longest simple speech" in the epic poem, serves as a moment of introspection and repentance, as he acknowledges his role in the fall and contemplates the path to redemption.[102] Satan, boasting of his triumph, is met with scorn from his fellow demons and ultimately deceived by a mirage of the Forbidden Tree, leading to their transformation into serpents.[103] In Book XI, the Son of God presents the repentant prayers of Adam and Eve to the Lord, who accepts them but decrees their expulsion from Paradise.[104] Through such an episode, Adam can confront the harsh reality that spiritual purity and sanctity do not necessarily ensure material rewards or earthly safety.[105] Ultimately, Book XII involves dialogue between Michael and the Man and a summary of biblical and future events including the coming of the promised Seed of the Woman, who will undergo incarnation, death, resurrection, and ascension.[106] Adam finds solace and reassurance in such revelations, and together with the archangel, they descend from the hill to awaken Eve. With gentle dreams soothing her mind, Michael leads the two humans out of Paradise, while the fiery sword and the Cherubim guard the entrance, marking their departure from Eden.[107]

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[76] J. Broadbent, *Paradise Lost, Introduction*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972, p. 6.

[77] C.S. Lewis, *A Preface to Paradise Lost*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954, p. 41.

[78] F. Kermode, *The Living Milton*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1960, p. 86.

[79] Hollander and Kermode, *op. cit.*, p. 758.

[80] J.S. Diekhoff, "The Function of the Prologues in Paradise Lost", *PMLA*, vol. 57, no. 3 (1942), 697-704, p. 701.

[81] Ibid.

[82] D. Quint, "Milton's Book of Numbers: Book 1 of *Paradise Lost* and Its Catalogue", *International Journal of the Classical Tradition*, vol. 13, no. 4 (2007), 528-549, p. 528.

[83] Ibid.

[84] J.S. Baumlin, "Epic and Allegory in 'Paradise Lost', Book II", *College Literature*, vol. 14, no. 2 (1987), 167-177, p. 169.

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[85] Steadman, *op. cit.*, p. 269.
[86] Ibid., pp. 168-169.
[87] S. Wigler, "The Poet and Satan Before the Light: A Suggestion about Book III and the Opening of Book IV of *Paradise Lost*", *Milton Quarterly*, vol. 12, no. 2 (1978), 59-64, p. 59.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Steadman, *op. cit.*, p. 270.
[91] Ibid.
[92] S.P. Revard, "Milton's Critique of Heroic Warfare in *Paradise Lost* V and VI", *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, vol. 7, no. 1 (1967), 119-139, p. 122.
[93] Revard, "Milton's Critique of Heroic Warfare in *Paradise Lost* V and VI", cit., p. 123.

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[94] Milton, *Paradise Lost,* cit., p. 115.

[95] Steadman, *op. cit.*, p. 270.

[96] Revard, "Milton's Critique of Heroic Warfare in *Paradise Lost* V and VI", cit., p. 135.

[97] A.Gilbert, "Form and Matter in *Paradise Lost*, Book III", *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, vol. 60, no. 4 (1961), 651-663, p. 653.

[98] Milton, *Paradise Lost,* cit., p. 168.

[99] Ibid., p. 187.

[100] Steadman, *op. cit.*, p. 271.

[101] S.P. Revard, "The Heroic Context of Book IX of *Paradise Lost*", *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, vol. 87, no. 3 (1988), 329-341, p. 334.

[102] K. Svendsen, "Adam's Soliloquy in Book X of *Paradise Lost*", *College English*, vol. 10, no. 7 (1949), 366-370, p. 366.

II.3.2 General Observations

If in the first edition of *Paradise Lost* Satan and his scheme commanded significant attention, in the 1674 edition the Daemon dominates the first portion of the epic poem, whereas Man the second half.[108] God's opponent is depicted as consistently active, a character who initiates much of the action within the narrative, while Adam assumes a predominantly passive role, influenced by external forces and unable to take a decisive stand himself.[109] The poem primarily functions as a narrative, recounting the Fall of Man, with the progression of action leading towards the climax of the Fall, which holds the greatest emotional impact.[110] Set in three main locations, respectively Heaven, Hell, and Earth, Milton's poem is organized in a structured pattern, starting from the triumph over evil to the fulfilment of the divine plan.[111] Acknowledging the complexity and vastness of his subject matter, Milton faced the challenge of choosing a narrator for his *Paradise Lost* who could effectively convey the events in line with established epic conventions.[112] The narrator of the poem can be discerned through direct statements made to the reader, whether through didactic moral judgments or introductory remarks at the beginning of certain books.[113] The opening lines of Book I of *Paradise Lost* immediately set the narrative perspective and direction, with the poet recounting the story of "MAN's first disobedience" (I, 1) and "loss of Eden" (I, 4). Inspired by divine intervention, the speaker aims to serve as a guide, asserting and defending the concept of Eternal Providence, the guiding force behind human destiny.[114] It is through the invocation in Book III that the narrator is aligned with the figure of a blind man whose longing for vision is emphasized by his plea for the Holy Spirit to illuminate the darkness within him.[115] "Standing on earth" (VII, 23) therefore singing with a "mortal voice" (VII, 24), and speaking of his "evil days through fallen, and evil tongues" (VII, 25-26), the storyteller in *Paradise Lost* has been associated with Milton himself. Speaking "in the role of author",[116] the narrative voice shares his perspectives and insights drawn from personal experiences within his writing.[117] The poet expresses himself by weaving his own encounters, thoughts, and understandings into the narrative, showing how rare it was for an epic narrator to infuse his poem with a remarkable level of personal detail.[118] Apart from the teller spiritually inspired by his Muse, a relevant voice is also given to other characters such as God, Adam, Raphael, and Michael. Among them, the figure of Satan emerges, representing a more complex individual whose soliloquies reveal his mental struggles and interior thoughts.[119]

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[103] Milton, *Paradise Lost,* cit., p. 240.
[104] Ibid., p. 273.
[105] G. Miller, "Archetype and History: Narrative Technique in *Paradise Lost*, Books XI and XII", *Modern Language Studies*, vol. 10, no. 3 (1980), 12-21, p. 15.
[106] Ibid.
[107] Milton, *Paradise Lost,* cit., p. 299.
[108] W.H. Marshall, "Paradise Lost: Felix Culpa and the Problem of Structure", *Modern Language Notes*, vol. 76, no. 1 (1961), 15-20, pp. 17-18.
[109] Ibid., p. 19.
[110] Ibid.
[111] J.T. Shawcross, "The Balanced Structure of *Paradise Lost", Studies in Philology*, vol. 62, no. 5 (1965), 696-718, pp. 701-709.

Concerning the narrative devices employed in the epic poem, one of the most relevant is the contrast. By juxtaposing good and evil, light and darkness, and order and chaos, Milton weaves a rich tapestry of allegory that enhances the overarching themes of the work.[120] The stark interplay between Heaven and Hell symbolizes the profound dichotomy between God and Satan, representing absolute opposites in the poem. Allegorical is also the title of Milton's epic poem, *Paradise Lost*, referring to the loss of a paradise, in this case, that characters experienced after disobeying the Lord and falling into sin.[121] The first Fall is Satan's Fall, resulting from his defiance in refusing to worship the Son of God and from his subsequent leadership of the angelic rebellion. The second one is Eve's Fall, in which she becomes a victim of the Daemon's manipulation, succumbing to temptation and disobeying the divine commandment.[122] The third one concerns Adam whose fall, in contrast to Eve's situation, does not result from deception by an external force but stems from his gradual erosion of reverence for God's commands, driven predominantly by his growing prioritization of a self-centred affection for Eve.[123] Therefore, *Paradise Lost*, as stressed by its title, emphasizes the central theme of the loss of paradise, both in a literal and metaphorical sense, depicting the moral conflict faced by characters, chronicling their initial downfalls and holding out hope for eventual triumphs.[124] Among the complex themes in Milton's poem, the contrasts between obedience and disobedience, sin and innocence, and fate and free will are relevant. Starting with the first opposition, it hinges on the concept of individual responsibility, granting characters the dignity of personal agency and accountability.[125] Adam and Eve's decision to eat from the Tree of Knowledge showcases their exercise of submissiveness and the subsequent accountability for their actions. Despite being warned by God, they choose to prioritize their own desires over obedience, ultimately facing the outcomes of their disobedience.[126] Added to Lucifer's transgression, the episodes of Eve's noncompliance, and subsequently Adam's insubordination, open the debate over the theme of the Fall.[127] Milton's portrayal of the original sin, termed itself as "disobedience" (I, 1), intricately weaves together its aftermath into what seems like causal factors, including undisciplined curiosity, excessive ambition, unrestrained will, or insatiable desires.[128] This narrative framework echoes the theological concept of *felix culpa*, "which balances the Redemption against the Fall", suggesting that despite the grave consequences of the transgression, there is an underlying sense of divine providence or fortunate fall.[129] Out of the two humans' disobedience emerges the opportunity for redemption and a deeper understanding of humanity's relationship with God. Contemplating the multifaceted nature of individual experience, Milton suggests that within the complexities of life, a paradoxical exchange exists where good is acquired at the cost of bad, and knowledge is gained through the forfeiture of Eden's boundless bliss.[130] As for the contrast between evil and good, Milton's poem resonates as a hymn of faith and hope, rooted in a belief system that acknowledges the reality of sin and suffering without succumbing to a distorted faith that denies their existence.[131] Despite portraying such hardships, the poem maintains a sense of optimism and trust in divine providence, not ignoring the reality of evil but instead emphasizing the possibility of redemption and the triumph of good over adversity. The revelation that the rebel angels "by their own suggestion fell,/ Self-tempted, self-depraved" (III, 129-130) sheds light on the poem's stance. It suggests that the ultimate responsibility for the fall lies with the individual's choices, emphasizing the themes of free will and moral accountability.[132] Through the analysis of the dichotomy between good and evil, God and Satan, it is possible to stress another opposition, the one of master and slave. The Lord represents the ultimate authority and sovereignty, while Lucifer, in his rebellion, becomes the defiant servant who seeks to overthrow his master.[133] Such dynamics underscores themes of power, submission, and rebellion, highlighting the complex interplay between divine will and individual autonomy.

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[112] T. Wilson, "The Narrator of *Paradise Lost*: Divine Inspiration and Human Knowledge", *The Sewanee Review*, vol. 79, no. 3 (1971), 349-359, p. 349.

[113] Ibid., p. 350.

[114] Ibid., p. 351.

[115] Ibid., p. 351.

[116] A. Ferry, *Milton's Epic Voice,* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983, p. 21.

[117] Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 358.

[118] N. Smith, Rev. of *The Cambridge Companion to Paradise Lost*, *Milton Quarterly,* vol. 49, no. 3 (2005), 194-200, p. 194.

[119] B.G. Lumpkin, "Fate in *Paradise Lost*", *Studies in Philology*, vol. 44, no. 1 (1947), 56-68, p. 65.

[120] Ferry, *op. cit.*, pp. 166-167.

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[121] D.V. Urban, "The Falls of Satan, Eve, and Adam in John Milton's *Paradise Lost*: A Study in Insincerity", *Christianity and Literature*, vol. 67, no. 1 (2017), 89-112, p. 90.

[122] Urban, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

[123] Ibid., p. 103.

[124] J.H. Hanford, "Milton and the Return to Humanism", *Studies in Philology*, vol. 16, no. 2 (1919), 126-147, p. 145.

[125] D.K. McColley, "Free Will and Obedience in the Separation Scene of Paradise Lost", *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, vol. 12, no. 1 (1972), 103-120, pp. 103-104.

[126] McColley, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

[127] E.M.W. Tillyard, *Studies in Milton*, London: Chatto & Windus, 1951, p. 9.

[128] M. Bell, "The Fallacy of the Fall in Paradise Lost", *PMLA*, vol. 68, no. 4 (1953), 863-883, p. 864.

[129] Ibid., p. 865.

II.4 **The Master-Slave Dialectic In *Frankenstein* and *Paradise Lost***

In *Frankenstein*, Mary Shelley "works perceptively and innovatively within the logic of the master and slave dynamics, showing how their fates are bound up with one another, and the way in which the depravity of the one corrupts the virtue of the other".[134] As the Creature grapples with his newfound existence, he becomes increasingly aware of his subordinate position to his creator. However, rather than passively accepting his role as a submitted being, the Monster seeks to assert his agency and autonomy, challenging Victor's authority and demanding recognition and companionship. Such power dynamics, where the deeds of a 'master' influence the actions of a 'slave' and vice versa, echo the patterns of lord-bondsman debate emerging in Milton's *Paradise Lost* through the relationship between God and Satan.

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[130] Bell, *op. cit.*, p. 865.

[131] Gilbert, *op. cit.*, pp. 176-177.

[132] Ibid., p. 177.

[133] Orgel and Goldberg, *op. cit.*, p. vii.

[134] A.M.S.J. Coffee, "Frankenstein and Slave Narrative: Race, Revulsion and Radical Revolution", in M. Paradiso-Michau (ed.), *Creolizing Frankenstein*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019, pp. 1-24, p. 2.

Just as the Creature challenges Frankenstein's authority in Mary Shelley's novel, in Milton's poem the Daemon challenges the dominion of the Lord, striving for recognition and independence.[135] Before delving into the intricate analysis of how the alignment between the master-slave dialectic in both stories is feasible, it is imperative first to elucidate the modus operandi of the lord-bondsman relationship itself. Such analysis entails a thorough examination of its underlying motivations, mechanisms, and the consequential outcomes that ensue from its operation. By understanding the workings of the dialectic, it is possible to lay a solid foundation upon which to explore the nuanced interplay between power dynamics, agency, and moral culpability within the contexts of both Mary Shelley's and Milton's narratives.

II.4 Lordship-Bondage Relation

The first philosopher to explore the master-slave dialectic is Hegel in his *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807).[136] His theory stresses on the fact that humans' self-consciousness becomes meaningful when it is acknowledged by another.[137] Hypothesizing a meeting between two beings, the German philosopher investigates their encounter and the process of both losing and rediscovering themselves within the presence of the other. In such dual experience of otherness, each individual discovers themselves as something distinct from the other, while also recognizing aspects of themselves mirrored in the other's presence, rather than seeing the other as merely separate entities.[138] In the process in which the two beings "recognize themselves as mutually recognizing one another",[139] their relationship initially appears marked by conflict and domination, proving the two parties through a "life-and-death combat".[140] In such a clash, commonly perceived as an opposition between good and evil,[141] each self-aware individual strives for the demise of the other, and in doing so, is obliged to risk their own life, a necessity to demonstrate their own autonomy. The initial experience of the process tends to highlight the inequality between the two: one individual finds themselves solely in the position of being recognized, while the other is relegated to the role of solely recognizing the other.[142] The former assumes the role of the dominant figure, termed ‘the lord’, while the other becomes the subordinate, known as ‘the bondsman’. Their fundamental contrast lies in how they relate to their desires and the external world of objects that could fulfil those wishes.[143] “The truth of the independent consciousness is accordingly the servile consciousness”.[144] Initially, the servile consciousness seems to exist externally, separate from its dependence on a master figure. Subsequently, the nature of servitude eventually transforms into its opposite, since the servile consciousness becomes self-aware and evolves into genuine independence.[145] Such a transformation, where the submitted figure reveals its autonomy, arises from the fact that “consciousness first defines knowledge (and itself) as pure sense-certainty”.[146] The bondsman’s understanding of the world and themselves is initially limited to direct sensory experiences, relying solely on what they can perceive through their senses to understand reality. As consciousness progresses, its comprehension of genuine knowledge expands, transcending the limited sensorial perspective and leading to a deeper understanding of both existence and its own nature.[147] As stressed by Foucault, knowledge is the capacity to articulate information about objects, whether they are physical artifacts or abstract concepts, through the framework of language shaped by specific discursive practices.[148] Therefore, emerging as a powerful tool for communication and shaping the self-perception of individuals,[149] language becomes instrumental in such progression, serving as a bridge between sensory experience and abstract thought.[150] Viewing language as a quintessential element of civilization in the evolution of identity and self-awareness, it is possible to understand culture as a catalyst for promoting human consciousness.[151] In the context of the bondsman’s journey towards self-awareness and independence, the servant’s understanding of reality expands through language and civilization, enabling them to articulate thoughts and concepts beyond immediate perception. The conception of language also intersects with the notion of power, as the bondsman harnesses linguistic capabilities and knowledge to redefine their identity, challenge the hegemony of the master, and liberate from subjugation.[152] Considering such factors enabling an individual to affirm their self-assurance, the submitted figure attempts to gain Mastery by reversing the power dynamics, undermining the master's unwavering belief in their own superiority.[153] The rebellion of the submitted being represents a pivotal moment in the lord-bondsman dialectic, as it challenges the established dominance relations and asserts the servant's agency and autonomy. At its core, the bondsman's battle for acknowledgment holds the sole opportunity for breaking free from social oppression and moving towards mutual recognition.[154] In the end, such an individual, embodying both mastery and servitude, transcends the master-slave dichotomy, evolving into a more singular and integrated being.[155] On the contrary, the figure of the master remains entrenched within the confines of domination, unable to surpass the binary opposition between ruler and ruled.[156]

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[135] Orgel and Goldberg, *op. cit.*, p. vi.

[136] Mariana Teixeira, "Masters, Slaves, and Us", in I. Boldyrev and S. Stein (ed.), *Interpreting Hegel's PHENOMENOLOGY OF SPIRIT*, New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2002, pp. 74-96, p. 75.

[137] G.W.F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, transl. M. Inwood, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018, p. 178.

[138] Ibid., p. 179.

[139] Ibid., p. 184.

[140] Ibid., p. 187.

[141] B. Ashcroft, *Key Concepts in Post-Colonian Studies*, London: Routledge, 1998, p. 134.

[142] Hegel, *op. cit.*, p. 185.

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[143] Teixeira, *op. cit.,* p. 77.

[144] Hegel, *op. cit.*, p. 193.

[145] Ibid.

[146] U. Kistner and P. Van Hauten, *Violence, Slavery and Freedom between Hegel and Fanon*, Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2020, p. 27.

[147] Ibid., p. 28.

[148] M. Foucault, *L’Archéologie du savoir*, Paris: Gallimard, 1969, p. 238.

[149] J. Lacan, *The seminar of Jacques Lacan: Freud's papers on technique,* transl. J. Forrester and ed. J. Alain-Miller, New York: Norton, 1988, p. 80.

[150] J.C. Guédon, “Michel Foucault: the Knowledge of Power and the Power of Knowledge”, *Bulletin of the History of Medicine,* vol. 51, no. 2 (1977), 245-277, p. 262.

[151] E. Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1985, p. 39.

Over time, the lord-bondsman dichotomy inspired critics of gender and racial oppression to develop their own narratives of struggle for acknowledgment. The initial contrast between lord and bondsman progressed into a portrayal of conflict between oppressor and oppressed, capitalist and worker, and torturer and tortured.[157] In the light of what has been discussed regarding such dichotomic relations, *Frankenstein* can be seen as a narrative that delves into the complexities of power dynamics and identity. Through the characters of Victor and his Creation, the novel explores themes of creator and created, master and subordinate, highlighting the consequences of unchecked ambition and the quest for dominance.[158] Mary Shelley's intertextual reference to Milton's *Paradise Lost* within the novel underscores such exploration in the relationship between God and Satan,[159] further enriching the examination of power and authority in *Frankenstein*.

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[152] A. Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit Assembled by Raymond Queneau*, transl. J.H. Nichols, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980, p. 231.

[153] Hegel, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

[154] Teixeira, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

[155] Kojève, *op. cit.,* p. 231.

[156] Allan Lloyd Smith, " 'This Thing of Darkness': Racial Discourse in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*", in *Gothic Studies, Volume 6, Issue 2*, Edimburgh: Edimburh University Press, 2004, pp. 208-222, p. 216.

[157] Teixeira, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

[158] Coffee, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

[159] T.L. Martin, "On the Margin of God: Deconstruction and the Language of Satan in *Paradise Lost*", *Milton Quarterly*, vol. 29, no. 2 (1995), 41-47, p. 45.

II.4.1 Frankenstein And His Monster

In *Frankenstein*, the master-slave dialectic emerges as a complex and pervasive theme that underpins the interactions between its central characters, Frankenstein and his Creature.[160] Examining the dynamic of domination and submission between two entities, it is possible to initially identify Victor as the master and his Creature as the slave. Delving into the main traits and actions of both characters is functional to shedding light on how they embody aspects of both lord and bondsman figures within the context of the novel. Frankenstein is an ambitious scientist who arrogantly appropriates the power of nature to create life, akin to stealing the divine spark of existence, in his quest to bring forth a living being.[161] His "presumptuous deed"[162] reflects a desire for mastery over the natural world, indicating a sense of superiority and control. Additionally, by assuming the role of creator, Victor positions himself as a dominant force, exerting power also over life and death, therefore challenging the divine order. His transgression trespasses upon the sacred, prompting a divine retribution that unleashes a monstrous entity upon the world.[163] Considering a "class-centred reading" of the lord-bondsman dialectic, the scientist plays an authoritative role also in terms of his social position.[164] Coming from an aristocratic family, which affords him access to education, wealth, and resources not available to the majority of people in society, Frankenstein is placed at the top of the hierarchical structure, holding power and control over those beneath him. The being he brings to life in the novel first emphasizes and then complicates the power dynamic between creator and creation, challenging his authority and autonomy.[165] In the first stage, the Creature embodies the archetype of the subordinate, both physically and psychologically. Mirroring the traits of African slaves, having "lustrous black" hair and "straight black lips",[166] his otherness is evoked, reinforcing his social status as a black servant. As stated by Sawyer, the physical abhorrence depicted in Frankenstein's Monster reflects societal fears and prejudices prevalent during the time the novel was written, particularly regarding race, physical deformities, and interracial marriages.[167] Rejected by his maker and master due to his physical ugliness, the Creature experiences profound loneliness and despair. His position as a submitted being is initially related to the inability to speak. When he is given life, he can only “mutter some inarticulate sounds”,[168] unable to express himself and resembling a baby just learning to speak. Due to his uncaring creator’s neglect, the Monster is left devoid of language, knowledge, and education, rendering him vulnerable to manipulation, social alienation, and dependence on others for guidance.[169] Moreover, being denied a name and verbally insulted as “vile insect”, “abhorred monster”, and “wretched devil”,[170] he internalizes such degrading labels, further solidifying his sense of inferiority and reinforcing his figure of submission. Ultimately, taking into consideration the act of creation itself and the function that the Creature’s creation means for Victor, he represents just a tool in the hands of his maker who gives him life driven by the conviction that his Monster would herald him as his master.[171] Throughout *Frankenstein*, the Being attempts to learn language, first through his connection with nature, and then observing the cottagers and their interactions, understanding the power of language in conveying emotions and connecting with the others.[172] As argued by Garrett, considering such primitive approach to verbal communication, his eloquence may appear unexpected and remarkable, challenging preconceived notions about intelligence and communication capabilities.[173] From the cottagers’ lectures, the books in the portmanteau and his observation of humans’ behaviours, Victor’s Creation begins to acquire knowledge, shaping his own identity and creating his personal vision of the world. On the one hand, his acquisition and improvement of such self-awareness appears negative: once exposed to civilization, he undergoes a series of traumatic experiences that exacerbate his feelings of isolation and rejection.[174] In parallel to Rousseau’s critique of civilization, the Monster’s exposure to society highlights the dark underbelly of human progress, as he witnesses firsthand the hypocrisy, cruelty, and moral decay that lurk beneath the veneer of civilization. On the other hand, the gaining of knowledge and confidence allows him to raise agency and consciousness, conferring him an “untenable position as a subject”.[175] Possessing intelligence and a deeper understanding of the world through his personal growth, the Monster accumulates a degree of power, which in turn challenges the authority of his creator, occupying the opposite extreme of the bondage relationship.[176]

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[160] Coffee, *op. cit.*, p. 2.
[161] Cantor, "The Nightmare of Romantic Idealism", cit., p. 232.
[162] Sherwin, *op. cit.*, p. 883.
[163] Ted Peters, "Playing God with Frankenstein", in *Theology and Science*, London: Routledge, 2018, pp. 145- 150, p. 145.
[164] Teixeira, op. cit., p. 81.
[165] John Robbins, " 'It Lives!': Frankenstein, Presumption, and the Staging of Romantic Science", in *European Romantic View*, London: Routledge, 2017, pp. 185-201, p. 193.
[166] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, cit., p. 50.
[167] R. Sawyer, "Mary Shelley and Shakespeare: Monstrous Creations", *South Atlantic Review*, vol. 72, no. 2 (2007), 15-31, p. 22.

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[168] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, cit., p. 51.
[169] Mellor, *Mary Shelley: Her life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters*, cit., p. 140.
[170] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, cit., p. 97.
[171] Goldberg, *op. cit.*, p. 30.
[172] Sawyer, *op. cit.*, p. 24.
[173] P.K. Garrett, *Gothic Reflections: Narrative Force in Nineteenth-Century Fiction,* New York: Cornell University Press, 2003, p. 85.
[174] Bernatchez, *op. cit.*, pp. 206-207.
[175] D. Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre*, Oxford: Peter Lang, 2016, p. 150.

> "Slave, I before reasoned with you, but you have proved yourself unworthy of my condescension. Remember that I have power. [...] you are my creator, but I am your master – obey!".[177]

Confronting Frankenstein in the mountains near Geneva, the Creature is enraged by Victor's refusal to create a companion for him and by the continued rejection and hostility he faces from society. In such confrontation, the scientist becomes dependent on his Monster who wants not only to fulfil his personal basic needs but also to be recognized by his maker as an independent being, part of a community and with his parent close to him. Frankenstein responds to the Monster by expressing his defiance and refusal to comply with his demands: the scientist asserts his own agency and rejects "to do an act of wickedness",[178] emphasizing the folly of the Creature's attempt to assert dominance over him. The confrontation ultimately ends with both Victor and his Being refusing to yield to each other's demands. Despite the Monster's threats and pleas, Frankenstein remains steadfast in his refusal to create a companion for him, whereas the Creature is left embittered and vengeful, lamenting the rejection and loneliness he continues to face. Once he has attained his own autonomy and consciousness, in his final confrontation with his maker, the Monster is able to beckon him with chilling resolve: "Come on, my enemy; we have yet to wrestle for our lives".[179] Confronting Victor on equal footing, the Creature reverses the master-slave dynamics, showing his transformation from a subservient creation to a self-aware being who challenges his creator.

Victor's reaction to the reversal of roles is characterized by shock, fear, and ultimately, realization of the consequences of his actions. He acknowledges that his Being, once submitted, has now become his opponent, challenging his authority and asserting his own agency, sometimes unjustifiable for his excessive actions.[180] "Desiring the death of [his] adversary" [181] as the only resolution to their conflict, the scientist strives to maintain his dominance and control over his Creation until his own demise. As Frankenstein nears his decease, the profound gravity of the conflict with his Creature is underscored:

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[176] Smith, "'This Thing of Darkness': Racial Discourse in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*", cit., p. 216.
[177] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, cit., p. 172.
[178] Ibid.
[179] Ibid., pp. 211-212.
[180] Smith, "'This Thing of Darkness': Racial Discourse in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*", cit., p. 218.
[181] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, cit., p. 223.

> "Farewell Walton! Seek happiness in tranquility, and avoid ambition, even if it be only the apparently innocent one of distinguishing yourself in science and discoveries. Yet why do I say this? I myself have been blasted in these hopes, yet another may succeed".[182]

Despite acknowledging his own failings, Victor recognizes the possibility that others may succeed where he failed, leaving the conflict with his Being opened. Influenced by exhaustion, illness, and the emotional toll of his experiences, the maker is brought to death, consumed by his obsessive pursuit of his Creation. After his creator's decease, the Monster struggles to recognize the possibility of living an independent life, as his sense of self is deeply intertwined with his relationship to his master. Considering Hegel's concept of mutual recognition, Victor's Creation is left adrift, unable to fully comprehend his own existence without the acknowledgment and validation he should receive from Frankenstein. Considering that in Hegel's life-and-death combat the pursuit of mutual recognition remains incomplete as both beings initially sought to affirm their own certainty not only within themselves but also in the other,[183] with Victor's death, the Monster experiences an existential void. The absence of validation from his creator leaves him forever grappling with his own identity and place inthe world, devoid of the affirmation he so desperately sought. Therefore, as a result of such a dichotomy between the two characters, both master and slave are implicated and degraded to an equal extent by the corrupting influence of their relationship.[184] Victor's unchecked ambition and irresponsibility lead to his downfall, while the Creature's experiences of rejection and personal growth drive him to commit acts of violence. In the tragic culmination of their intertwined fates and in their mutual conflict for mastery and recognition, "it is only in death that the disordered associations of life can be completely harmonized".[185] Becoming the ultimate equalizer, demise brings an end to their tumultuous relationship and seems to provide a semblance of closure to their fight.

II.4.2 God and Satan

In *Paradise Lost*, the dynamic between God and Satan is profoundly complex, depicted as a tumultuous master-slave relationship whose intricate portrayal mirrors an eternal struggle for power, autonomy, and ultimate sovereignty.[186] Whereas the Lord exudes an aura of absolute authority, akin to a master commanding unwavering obedience from His subjects, Lucifer's relentless pursuit of independence cast him in the role of the rebellious slave, challenging the established order and seeking to break free from divine control. In Milton's poem, in which "superordination and subordination are necessarily interdependent",[187] it is essential to highlight the intricate interplay between the roles of the two characters. Milton's unique portrayal of God, which diverges from traditional Christian and religious representations, underscores the poet's personal interpretation of the Creator's figure.[188] In *Paradise Lost* the Lord embodies qualities of justice, mercy, and wisdom, also exhibiting elements of "a narrow, skeptical, anti-Christian" figure.[189] Starting with his examination, He is described as a Sovereign, embodying absolute authority and divine supremacy over all creation.

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[182] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, cit., p. 224.
[183] Hegel, *op. cit.*, p. 187.
[184] Coffee, *op. cit.*, p. 14.
[185] Garrett, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

"Immutable, immortal, infinite,
Eternal king: thee author of all being,
Fountain of light, thyself invisible
Amidst the glorious brightness where thou sit'st
Throned inaccessible". (III, 373-377)

In such a majestic portrait, Milton underscores the Lord's role as the source of enlightenment, truth, and spiritual illumination, emphasizing the incomprehensible nature of the divine. Depicted as the ultimate architect and artist, whose mere words bring forth the cosmos into existence, God demonstrates mastery as Creator and Sustainer of the universe.[190] Even in the face of rebellion and chaos, His sovereignty remains unchallenged, reaffirming His unmatched power. His authority is emphasized by the manner in which characters address Him: "Him the almighty power" (I, 44), "almighty Father" (III, 56), "eternal eye" (V, 711), "eternal king omnipotent" (VI, 227). Such titles, reinforcing the conception of God as an absolute ruler, affirm His supreme agency, depicting Him as the ultimate unquestionable sovereign. Considering Milton's historical background and the common association of earthly rulers with divine authority, His portrayal as an absolute leader who demands unquestioning obedience and punishes disobedience can be seen as a reflection of the oppressive tactics employed by tyrannical rulers.[191] Just as tyrants impose laws, suppress dissent and punish rebellion to maintain their grip on power, God in the poem wields His authority in a manner that inflicts His "imposed moral schema" and instils subjugation among His subjects.[192] Milton vividly portrays the absolutism of the Lord's "tyranny of heaven" (I, 124), challenging the traditional notions of divine benevolence. The poet's employment of a precise political language, such as "the throne and monarchy of God" (I, 44), "all-ruling heaven" (I, 212), and "absolute decree" (XI, 311), reinforces the imagery of the Deity as an undisputed Master of the cosmos. Another aspect of power is related to the element of the throne, symbol of divine sovereignty; God is often portrayed as the one to whom Satan "shook his throne" (I, 105), "who reigns/ Monarch in heaven, till then as one secure/ Sat on his throne" (I, 637-638). His submitted creatures, both humans and angels, are endowed with the freedom to choose their paths and the capacity to adhere to righteousness: their obedience leads to sustained or heightened happiness, while their disobedience inevitably leads to misery.[193] The idea that obedience leads to freedom suggests that true liberty is not found in unrestrained autonomy but in submission to God's higher authority.[194] Among the Lord's creatures who must submit to His will, Satan stands as an emblematic figure. Before his Fall, he is one the highest-ranking angels in Heaven, second only to God Himself. "Subjected to his service angels wings" (IX, 155), Lucifer, like all angels, finds himself in a position of subjugation to the Lord's will. Despite wielding considerable influence in the celestial realm, his exalted position subsequently becomes a double-edged sword, fuelling his hubris and fostering ambitions of divine ascent. The prevailing interpretation of the Devil's fall suggests that his overwhelming pride and ambition drove him to aspire to match or exceed the power of the Almighty.[195] He is also "stirred up with envy and revenge" (I, 35) in recalling the Father's directive for the angels to worship the Son with the same reverence afforded to God Himself. Complaining for "new laws [...] imposed" (V, 679), Satan gathers his legions and vehemently contests the Lord's decree, especially the notion that the Son has now monopolized all authority, leaving them overshadowed under the guise of the anointed King.[196] The Devil objects that he and his angels were "ordained to govern, not to serve" (V, 802). Therefore, Satan's uprising that precipitates the fall can be seen as rooted in the pursuit of freedom and opposition to the spectre of God's tyranny.[197] As a consequence of his rebellion, Lucifer forfeits his esteemed position in heaven and falls, "encumbered with ruin" (VI, 874), a fate shared with other "fellows of his crime" (I, 606). After such an episode, he and his followers find themselves imprisoned in Hell. It is there that Satan decides to establish his reign and throne, refusing to accept defeat and instead rallying his fellow fallen angels with fiery rhetoric and promises of eventual vengeance against God.

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[186] L.R. Walum, "The Art of Domination: An Analysis of Power in *Paradise Lost*", *Social Forces*, vol. 53, no. 4 (1975), 573-580, p. 575.
[187] Ibid.
[188] Webber, *op. cit.*, p. 526.
[189] L. Isitt, Rev. of *The Tyranny of Heaven: Milton's Rejection of God as King*, *Religion and Literature*, vol. 38, no. 4 (2006), 131-133, p. 133.
[190] J. Webber, "Milton's God", *ELH*, vol. 40, no. 4 (1973), 514-531, p. 522.

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[191] J.S. Bennet, "God, Satan, and King Charles: Milton's Royal Portraits", *PMLA*, vol. 92, no. 3 (1977), 441-457, pp. 443-444.

[192] J.K. Anderson, "The Decentralization of Morality in "Paradise Lost"", *Rocky Mountain Review*, vol. 64, no. 2 (2010), 198-204, p. 200.

[193] J.S. Diekhoff, *Milton's Paradise Lost: A Commentary on the Argument*, New York: Humanities Press, 1958, p. 98.

[194] Walum, *op. cit.*, p. 575.

[195] A. Williams, "The Motivation of Satan's Rebellion in *Paradise Lost*", *Studies in Philology,* vol. 42, no. 2 (1945), 253-268, p. 256.

Referring to Hegel's master-slave dialectic, the Daemon's attitude towards his divine enemy highlights his refusal to accept subjugation and servitude under the Lord's authority. Satan's attempt to establish himself as God culminates in the construction of Pandemonium, described as "city and proud seat/ Of Lucifer" (X, 424-425), serving as the infernal counterpart to the heavenly court. Through his phrase "better to reign in hell, than serve in heaven" (I, 263), he asserts his rejection of servitude under the Lord's authority and emphasizes, instead, his yearning for sovereignty and independence. Elevating Satan to the pinnacle of poetic sublimity, Milton confers him a powerful rhetoric, stressing his unwavering determination to establish himself as a master of his own destiny, even if it means enduring the torments of damnation.[198] Another element underscoring the Devil's mastery is the fact that he surrounds himself with loyal subordinates, "millions of spirits for his fault amerced/ Of heaven" (I, 609-610), who heed his commands and bolster his authority.[199] Becoming "Leader of those armies bright" (I, 272), he commands unwavering loyalty from his followers, further solidifying his authority and dominance in the infernal realm. Additionally, he assumes the role of a creator, giving life to an "incestuous offspring", namely Sin and Death.[200] Besides these two entities which underscore the interconnectedness of evil and the self-destructive nature of sin, a "devilish engine" (IV, 17) is also crafted. Employing deceitful tactics against faithful angels or Eve, Satan utilizes such infernal contrivance to further his nefarious schemes and sow discord among the celestial beings and humanity alike.[201] In his attempt to rebel against God and demonstrate his mastery, Lucifer undermines the Lord's creations, Adam and Eve, disrupting the harmony of the Garden of Eden. His initial attempt to seduce Eve under cover of night is foiled, but his persistence leads to her fall, accomplishing his mission to sow discord among humanity. Despite receiving a “universal shout and high applause” (X, 505) for his supposed triumph, once returned to Hell, Satan faces the consequences of his action. The infernal capital has become a den of serpents, and its once prestigious assembly now consists of slithering creatures. As he himself is transformed into “a monstrous serpent” (X, 514), Lucifer is more preoccupied with marvelling at his own altered state. He realizes that a “greater power/ [...] punished in the shape he sinned” (X, 515-516), apprehending the inevitability of divine justice. Such moment marks the readers’ final encounter with the Devil and his endeavours.[202]

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[196] Urban, *op. cit.*, p. 92.
[197] A. Stein, *Answerable Style: Essays on Paradise Lost,* Chicago: University of Minnesota Press, 1953, p. 3.
[198] Wittreich, *The Romantics on Milton; Formal Essays and Critical Asides,* cit., p. 161.
[199] McColley, *op. cit.*, p. 191.
[200] Steadman, *op. cit.*, p. 266.
[201] Ibid., p. 292.

In such a context, characterized by shifting power dynamics, in *Paradise Lost* the master-slave pattern results in the recognition of God’s supremacy. The figure of the Lord remains impervious and immutable, consolidating His authority rather than diminishing it in the aftermath of Satan’s futile bid for dominion over Him. However, “God’s omnipotence is a given, but it is not a reality until it is tested, and to test it is to fall”.[203] The true understanding and appreciation of the Deity’s sovereignty emerge through experiences of adversity or doubt, where faith is tested and reaffirmed. Therefore, the Lord’s divinity is intertwined with the reverence and devotion of those who worship Him, and with their belief and acknowledgment affirming and sustaining His divine status.[204] Despite Satan’s act of disobedience, His omnipotence is not diminished but rather reaffirmed, as the defiance highlights the unwavering power and authority inherent in His divine nature. Satan can only serve as a foil to underscore the limitless sovereignty of “heaven’s all-powerful king” (II, 851), his rebellion ultimately serving to illuminate the magnitude of God’s omnipotence and the inevitability of His triumph over all opposition.

II.4.3 Miltonic Echoes In Frankenstein

Mary Shelley skilfully weaves elements of Milton’s poem into her own narrative, consciously using such Miltonic parallels to craft her compelling work.[205] Her deliberate incorporation of such elements into *Frankenstein* serves not only as a literary tribute to one of the most influential literary works in the English language, but also as an intertextual dialogue that enriches the understanding of both works. Having an "authoritative role in the novel",[206] *Paradise Lost* is explicitly evoked several times throughout the text, serving as a literary touchstone that deepens the thematic exploration of Mary Shelley's work. In Mary Shelley's story, the presence of an epigraph from the epic poem sets the tone for the novel, establishing a direct connection to the epic poem and its main themes.

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[202] Steadman, *op. cit.*, p. 271.

[203] Orgel and Goldberg, *op. cit.*, p. xvii.

[204] Ibid., p. xvii.

[205] J.B. Lamb, “Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* and Milton’s Monstrous Myth”, *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, vol. 47, no. 3 (1992), 303-319, p. 303.

"Did I request thee, maker, from my clay
To mould me man? Did I solicit thee
From darkness to promote me [...]" (X, 743-745)

Such excerpt sees Adam during a moment of deep introspection and existential questioning. After the fall from grace and expulsion from the Garden of Eden, the Man reflects on his newfound awareness of his own mortality and the consequences of disobedience. He questions God about his role in his own creation, grappling with feelings of betrayal and confusion. By incorporating such epigraph into her novel, Mary Shelley evokes the complex relation between creator and creation, highlighting the tension and conflict that can arise between them, as well as the power dynamics inherent in such relationships.[207] In both narratives, Frankenstein and God play the role of masters toward their creations, whose figures subsequently rebel against their makers, seeking to assert their independence and end their submission. Such defiance arises from a desire for autonomy and a rejection of the unequal power dynamics inherent in their relationships with their creators. The finding of Milton's epic poem in the portmanteau by the Monster becomes a quintessential event to the thematic development of *Frankenstein*. Considered by the Creature as "a true history" and exciting "different and far deeper emotions",[208] *Paradise Lost* prompts him to reflect, on a deeply personal level, on his own identity and purpose, shaping his understanding of his existence more than any other reading.[209] However, through the lens of the lord-bondsman, master-slave, and creator-creation dialectics previously examined, parallels between the central characters in *Frankenstein* and those in *Paradise Lost* are possible.

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[206] Ping, *op. cit.*, p. 255.

[207] R.M. Ryan, "Mary Shelley's Christian Monster", *The Wordsworth Circle*, vol. 19, no. 3 (1988), 150-155, p. 152.

[208] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, cit., p. 129.

[209] Rebecca Baumann, "The Monster's Books" in *Frankenstein 200: The Birth, Life, and Resurrection of Mary Shelley's Monster,* Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2018, 76-81, p. 80.

II.4.3.1 Two Creators-Fathers

An analysis of the master-slave relationship between Frankenstein and his Creature and between God and Satan reveals a striking parallelism between the two figures assuming positions of mastery. The fact that the Creature considers Milton's poem as "a picture of an omnipotent God warring with his creatures", a situation with "similarity to [his]own",[210] highlights a power dynamics where Victor, aligned with the Lord's figure, exerts control over a subordinate character. The ambitious scientist, depicted as his Creature's "natural lord and king",[211] can be associated with the figure of the Miltonian God, the "anointed universal king" (III, 317). In his capacity as the architect of a human being without recourse to the presence of a female figure, Victor assumes a godlike role, endowed with the power of creation and shaping his destiny.[212] However, Frankenstein is a different kind of creator, playing with the fundamental forces of life itself. God creates because He is theologically "heaven's almighty" (V, 766), conferred a superior power since He is the absolute Maker of the universe who can rule such a perfect and immense world.[213] On the contrary, Victor gives life arrogantly defying the laws of nature in pursuit of his own scientific goals.[214] Using "godlike science"[215] to animate the inanimate, Frankenstein ventures into the realm of forbidden knowledge, defying the natural order and wielding power akin to that of a deity. Therefore, in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, readers are provided with an example of modern creation, opposed to the biblical and natural creation in Milton's *Paradise Lost*. The intention behind the act of generating life is depicted differently in the two works. Realizing that "the corruption of death succeed to the blooming cheek of life", Victor describes the moment of inspiration for his creation as "a sudden light", making him "capable of bestowing animation upon lifeless matter" and satisfying "the summit of [his] desires".[216] In Milton's poem, the same moment is evoked through a different imagery, portraying it as a celestial decree or divine utterance, a cosmic proclamation that brings forth life from the void:

"Let there be light, said God, and forthwith light
Ethereal, first of things, quintessence pure,
Sprung from the deep". (VII, 243-245)

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[210] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, cit., p. 129.

[211] Ibid., p. 98.

[212] Cantor, *Creature and Creator: Myth-Making and English Romanticism*, cit., p. 232.

[213] K. R. Lehnhof, "*Paradise Lost* and the Concept of Creation", *South Central Review*, vol. 21, no. 2 (2004), 15- 41, p. 18.

[214] Brooks, "Godlike Science/Unhallowed Arts: Language and Monstrosity in Frankenstein", cit., pp. 599-600.

[215] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, cit., p. 111.

[216] Ibid., p. 45.

The act of creation stands as a pivotal moment in the two narratives. In *Frankenstein*, it represents "the novel's monstrous heart of darkness", serving as a reflection of Victor's own moral, psychological and "own creative self".[217] The creation embodies the scientist's aspirations, fears, and desires, underscoring the monstrous consequences of his wish to transcend the limits of nature through scientific manipulation. Concerning *Paradise Lost*, Watkins highlights that creation "is both [the] substance and structure of [Milton's] epic".[218] The seventeenth-century poet does not merely use the act of formation as a striking metaphor or a display of divine might; instead, he presents it as the fundamental essence of deity itself, the bedrock upon which the entire epic is constructed. Through their deeds of generating life, Frankenstein and God assume roles not only as mere makers but also as fathers to their respective creatures, illustrating contrasting approaches to parenting. The Lord creates His God-like creatures claiming respect from them, but being clement and benevolent, giving them the power of free will as proof of his merciful figure:

"Man shall not quite be lost, but saved who will,
Yet not of will in him, but grace in me
Freely vouchsafed". (III, 173-175)

Compassionate and loving, God extends forgiveness, guidance, and blessings to His creations, even with the foresight that they may still choose to stray and sin. On the contrary, Frankenstein's paternal role is marked by neglect and rejection. His visceral repulsion against the "odious and loathsome"[219] appearance of his Monster highlights his inability to accept responsibility for his actions and his failure to fulfil his parental duties. He distances himself from his Creature in a futile "attempt to deny dependency",[220] neglecting his responsibility and "duties of a creator",[221] consequently provoking his Being's isolation. Moreover, Frankenstein does not protect his Monster from society. He neither educates him morally nor teaches him how to defend himself from humans, awakening his desire to dominate.[222] On the contrary,

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[217] Sherwin, *op. cit.*, p. 892.
[218] W.B.C. Watkins, *An Anatomy of Milton's Verse*, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1955, pp. 44-46.
[219] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, cit., p. 130.
[220] Benjamin, *op. cit.*, p. 52.
[221] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, cit., p. 100.
[222] Cantor, "The Nightmare of Romantic Idealism", cit., p. 253.

God tries to protect His progeny from sin and offer humans the knowledge they need to distrust evil, trying to prevent them from falling.[223]

“He who requires
From us no other service than to keep
This one, this easy charge, of all the trees
In Paradise that bear delicious fruit
So various, not to taste that only Tree
Of Knowledge, planted by the tree of life”. (IV, 419-424)

The Deity reminds Adam and Eve not to eat the Forbidden Fruit from the Tree of Knowledge, “the symbolic bearer of death”,[224] and to obey Him without being fascinated by transgression. One noteworthy aspect is that God refrains from direct intervention in the actions portrayed, and His abstractness is mitigated by intermediary figures who serve as conduits for divine influence.[225] Concerning His relation with Satan, the two characters never confront each other directly, yet their dynamic is imbued with tension and conflict that permeate the narrative. By contrast, Frankenstein assumes a direct and sole role in his creation and subsequent abandonment of his Creature, lacking any figures to mediate or soften the impact of his actions. The two characters are characterized by a complex interplay of identity, reflection, and mutual destruction. As Frankenstein’s ‘doppelgänger’,[226] the Monster represents the darker aspects of his maker’s psyche, reflecting Victor’s ambition, arrogance, and moral ambiguity.[227] Compared to God, whose figure is theologically that of an undefeatable master, eternal and transcendent, Mary Shelley’s scientist is destined to grapple with the consequences of his mortal limitations and flawed humanity. His sad destiny and limited power is highlighted by his words:

“I had desired it with an ardour that far exceeded moderation; but now that I had finished, the beauty of the dream vanished, and breathless horror and disgust filled my heart”.[228]

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[223] B.E. Gross, “Free Love and Free Will in *Paradise Lost*”, *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900,* vol. 7, no. 1 (1967), 95-106, p. 100.

[224] A. Gossman, “The Use of the Tree of Life in *Paradise Lost*”, *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, vol. 65, no. 4 (1966), 680-687, p. 680.

[225] Orgel and Goldberg, *op. cit.*, p. xxiv.

[226] A doppelgänger in literature refers to a character who serves as a double or mirror image of another character, often embodying contrasting or complementary traits and contributing to themes of identity, duality, and psychological depth in the narrative. (W. Gillis, “Doppelganger”, *CEA Critic*, vol. 31, no. 5 (1969), p. 7)

[227] Sherwin, *op. cit.*, p. 890.

[228] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, cit., p. 50.

Confronting the monstrous reality of his Creation, Frankenstein can only realize the tragic outcomes of his ambition, acknowledging the inherent limitations of his mortal power and the overwhelming responsibility that accompanies his role as a creator. On the contrary, in Milton's epic poem, the concluding lines evoke God's eternal and indisputable power:

"The world was all before them, where to choose
Their place of rest, and providence their guide:
They hand in hand with wandering steps and slow,
Through Eden took their solitary way." (XII, 646-649)

Despite the seemingly open-ended nature of Adam and Eve's future, the Lord's foreknowledge and divine guidance ensure that their path is predetermined and directed towards fulfilment of His ultimate plan. Thus, while their journey may appear solitary and uncertain, it is ultimately under the watchful eye and providence of an all-knowing and all-powerful deity.[229]

The portrayals of Victor in *Frankenstein* and God in *Paradise Lost* offer contrasting perspectives on the role of creators and their relationship with their creations. As stated by Tannenbaum, the novel's references to the epic poem serve as ironic commentary, highlighting Frankenstein's shortcomings as a creator when juxtaposed with Milton's portrayal of a more compassionate and accountable divine figure.[230] While Victor's flawed and neglectful approach results in tragedy and chaos, God's benevolent yet hands-off stance allows for the exploration of free will and moral agency within the grand narrative of creation. From Frankenstein's reckless ambition to the Lord's divine governance, the narratives highlight the profound implications of wielding authority over life and the ethical imperatives that accompany such mastery.

II.4.3.2 Two Fallen Creatures

The Creature's discovery of *Paradise Lost* among the books in the portmanteau prompts him to perceive similarities between his own plight and that of Satan. Such connection initiates a profound introspection on the Monster's part, inviting readers to explore the nuanced parallels between his journey and the character of Satan. The Creature's mood in reading such work is one of profound resonance and introspection:

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[229] D. Benet, "Satan, God's Glory and the Fortunate Fall", *Milton Quarterly*, vol. 19, no. 2 (1985), 34-37, p. 35.

[230] L. Tannenbaum, "From Filthy Type to Truth: Miltonic Myth in *Frankenstein*", *Keats-Shelley Journal*, vol. 26 (1997), 101-113, p. 106.

> "I allowed my thoughts, unchecked by reason, to ramble in the fields of Paradise, and dared to fancy amiable and lovely creatures sympathizing with my feelings and cheering my gloom; their angelic countenances breathed smiles of consolation".[231]

Influenced by his reading of the epic poem, the Being shares his "preoccupation with Paradise", highlighting the sanctity of Edenic existence, where love and kinship are the essence of joy and the very foundation of life. In contrast, Frankenstein's creation of the Creature disrupts such Edenic harmony, violating the sacred code of love and kinship inherent in the divine order.[232] For the Monster, the profound solitude and absence of human affection represent a personal hell that starkly contrasts with the Edenic ideals consuming his thoughts.[233] Considering Satan "the fitter emblem of [his] condition",[234] the Creature sees parallels in their shared experience of isolation and rejection. Like the Devil, who rebels against God and is cast out from Heaven, the Monster feels cast aside by his creator and society. Within the constrained framework delineated by Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Satan's fall serves as the backdrop against which the Being's own fall unfolds. As Lucifer, whose "pride/ Had cast him out from heaven" (I, 36-37), Victor's Creature experiences a similar descent, gradually integrating into human society and embracing its culture and language.[235] His attempts to forge connections despite his monstrous appearance reflect a poignant struggle against the detrimental power of knowledge. The more he is surrounded by humans and exposed to their ways, the more he becomes aware of the injustices and cruelties of the world. Such awareness, coupled with the constant rejection and persecution he faces, fuels a growing bitterness and resentment within him, leading him down a path of vengeance and moral degradation.[236]

When comparing himself to Satan, the Monster also stresses that "the bitter gall of envy rose within [him]".[237] The reference to the feeling of envy highlights their shared experience of feeling marginalized and resentful due to their perceived injustices. Lucifer feels envy primarily towards God's power and kingship, as evidenced by the lines: "In heaven, which follows dignity, might draw/ Envy from each inferior" (II, 25-26). Such a feeling leads the devil creature to rebel against his Creator and subsequently plan to ruin His new race. Satan is also afflicted by envy for His affection toward His beloved Son, “seen/ Most glorious; in him all his Father shone” (III, 138-139). Such feeling stems from his desire for recognition and adoration similar to that bestowed upon the Son, leading to feelings of resentment and rebellion against God’s authority and favoritism.[238] He is also envious at the sight of Adam and Eve’s mutual love, contrasting their idyllic existence with his own wretched state in Hell:

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[231] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, cit., p. 131.
[232] Ping, *op. cit.*, p. 256.
[233] Ibid., p. 257.
[234] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, cit., p. 129.
[235] Lamb, *op. cit.*, p. 303.
[236] Bernatchez, *op. cit.*, p. 213.
[237] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, cit., p. 129.

> “Sight hateful, sight tormenting! Thus these two
> Imparadised in one another’s arms,
> The happier Eden, shall enjoy their fill
> Of bliss on bliss, while I to hell am thrust,
> Where neither joy nor love, but fierce desire,
> Among our other torments not the least,
> Still unfulfilled with pain of longing pines;
> Yet let me not forget what I have gained
> From their own mouths.” (IV, 505-513)

Such envy drives him to plot the two humans’ downfall, seeking to disrupt their paradise and inflict misery upon them, thereby alleviating his own sense of inadequacy and bitterness. In *Frankenstein*, Victor’s Creature is envious of his creator as an ambitious happy human, living in a beloved family, being loved by a woman, and respected by society, examples of affection and tenderness that the Monster could never experience.

> “If I have no ties and no affections, hatred and vice must be my portion; the love of another will destroy the cause of my crimes, and I shall become a thing, of whose existence every one will be ignorant. My vices are the children of a forced solitude that I abhor; and my virtues will necessarily arise when I live in communion with an equal. I shall feel the affections of a sensitive being, and become linked to the chain of existence and events, from which I am now excluded.”[239]

When asking Frankenstein for his female mate, the Monster aspires to live the same peaceful life that his maker lives, surrounded by affection and accepted by a community. Despite his wishes, the Creature finds himself trapped in a cycle of rejection and despair. Driven by primal instincts and the desire to alleviate his own suffering, he is initially compelled to satisfy basic bodily needs in order to survive.[240] Seeking refuge, he shelters in a humble shepherd’s hut as a means of preserving himself from further anguish. The refuge is described “as exquisite and divine a retreat as Pandemonium appeared to the daemons of hell after their sufferings",[241] creating another connection to *Paradise Lost*. Compared to the "high capital/ Of Satan and his peers" (I, 756-757), a majestic structure that offers solace to the demons after their sufferings, the shepherd's hut provides a sanctuary for the Creature amidst his own trials and tribulations. Both settings represent moments of respite and shelter for characters who have endured immense suffering and hardship. Another connection is articulated by Victor's Creature: "Satan had his companions, fellow-devils, to admire and encourage him; but I am solitary and abhorred."[242] In contrast to the Devil's portrayal, who is followed by "hundreds and thousands trooping" (I, 760), Mary Shelley's Monster experiences profound alienation and loneliness. His grotesque appearance repels others, leaving him without the support and companionship he craves, exacerbating his sense of isolation. Both characters are judged as embodying evil based on their outward appearances, their countenances associated with evil intentions and deceitfulness. Milton employs a semantic field of dishonesty to establish Satan as inherently deceptive, with descriptions such as "Artificer of fraud" (IV, 121) and someone who "practised falsehood under saintly show" (IV, 122). Similarly, Frankenstein judges the Creature as "ugly", "a thing such as even Dante could not have conceived".[243] Based on his "ghastly grin",[244] the Monster's malevolent countenance is stressed, emphasizing his appearance as malicious. However, in contrast to the traditional portrayal of Satan as deceptive in both Christian tradition and Milton's epic poem, Victor's Creature lacks inherent evil, only becoming malevolent when the scientist neglects his responsibility for his Creation.[245] The Monster's actions, such as seeking revenge and causing harm, stem from his experiences of rejection and loneliness, rather than from an innate predisposition towards evil. Therefore, "evil became [his] good",[246] leaving him with a sense of bitterness and a desire for vengeance. On the contrary, Satan's words "all good to me is lost;/ Evil, be thou my good" (IV, 109-110) stress his deliberate choice to accept the bad as new guiding principle, intentionally renouncing goodness entirely.[247]

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[238] Williams, *op. cit.,* p. 262.
[239] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, cit., p. 148.
[240] Bernatchez, *op. cit.*, p. 206.

The Creature's reading of *Paradise Lost* grants him with a discernible moral framework, imbuing him with a clear sense of ethics and values which he articulates with eloquence.[248] Such an aspect mirrors Satan's portrayal since he also possesses a compelling rhetorical prowess and a distinct set of values. If the public discount the Epic Voice's introduction, the Devil's is the first word spoken in the poem,[249] beginning with "If thou beest hee; But O how fallen!" (I, 84). Through his words, Satan captivates readers with his lamentation over his fallen state, setting the stage for his complex characterization. Similarly, Victor's Monster employs a potent rhetoric that resonates with readers, compelling them to empathize with his plight.

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[241] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, cit., p. 104.
[242] Ibid., p. 130.
[243] Ibid., p. 51.
[244] Ibid., p. 171.
[245] Ziolkowski, *op. cit.*, p. 43.
[246] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, cit., p. 227.
[247] Gilbert, "The Problem of Evil in *Paradise Lost*", cit., p. 177.
[248] Ryan, *op. cit.*, p. 152.

> "Yet you, my creator, detest and spurn me, thy creature, to whom thou art bound by ties only dissoluble by the annihilation of one of us. You purpose to kill me. How dare you sport thus with life? Do your duty towards me, and I will do mine towards you and the rest of mankind. If you will comply with my conditions, I will leave you and them at peace; but if you refuse, I will glut the maw of death, until it be satiated with the blood of your remaining friends".[250]

Through such a passage, he demonstrates his ability to craft his own narrative, one that is compelling enough to sway Frankenstein to comply with his demands for a time. As the Monster prepares to share his side of the story, his persuasive storytelling prowess becomes evident, exerting a significant influence over his creator.[251] Therefore, through their speeches, the two creatures transcend their outward appearances, inviting readers to explore the complexities of their psyches and the moral dilemmas they confront. After their attempts for mastery, both Mary Shelley's Creature and Milton's Satan face dire consequences. Despite his initial aspirations for power, Victor's Being can only accept his fate of isolation, rejection, and self-loathing, leading to his eventual demise in pursuit of revenge against his creator.

> "I shall die, and what I now feel be no longer felt. Soon these burning miseries will be extinct. I shall ascend my funeral pile triumphantly, and exult in the agony of the torturing flames. The light of that conflagration will fade away; my ashes will be swept into the sea by the winds. My spirit will sleep in peace; or if it thinks, it will not surely think thus. Farewell."[252]

Considering "the monster's immolation" as an attempt to undo the consequences of the fall by experiencing a catastrophic dissolution back into nature, death symbolizes the ultimate rejection of the master-slave dynamic that has defined the Creature's existence.[253] Through demise, he seeks reconciliation with the primal state of existence, free from the oppressive structures of human society. Similarly, Milton's Satan meets a tragic fate, condemned to suffer in Hell for eternity after being cast out of Heaven.

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[249] J. Foley, " 'Sin, Not Time': Satan's First Speech in Paradise Lost", *ELH*, vol. 37, no. 1 (1970), 37-56, p. 38.

[250] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, cit., p. 97.

[251] Garrett, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

[252] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, cit., p. 230.

[253] Cantor, *Creature and Creator: Myth-Making and English Romanticism*, cit., p. 257.

"The space of seven continued nights he rode
With darkness, thrice the equinoctial line
He circled, four times crossed the car of Night
From pole to pole, traversing each colure;
On the eighth returned, and on the coast averse
From entrance or cherubic watch, by stealth
Found unsuspected way." (IX, 63-69)

Considered "one of the longest episodes in the whole plot", Lucifer's journey through darkness reveals a deeper struggle with his own sense of powerlessness and submission to the consequences of his rebellion against God and of Adam and Eve's temptation.[254] Examining his "foul descent" (IX, 163), his experience underscores the escalation of his treachery and the depth of his malevolence, emphasizing the global scale of his defiance and its profound consequences. However, in both narratives, the pursuit of mastery by Victor's Creature and Satan leads to tragic consequences. While the Monster grapples with the rejection and isolation imposed by society, the Devil contends with the consequences of his rebellion against divine authority.

II.4.4 Timeless Theory

The enduring presence of the lord-bondsman relationship signifies a timeless thematic thread.[255] In literature, the recurrence of themes related to power, authority, and submission serves as a testament to the permanent human struggle with hierarchical structures and the tensions inherent in master-slave relationships. In the epic poem, the relationship between God and Satan exemplifies complex hierarchies of power, authority, and submission. Similarly, Mary Shelley's novel delves into the intricacies of dominance and servitude through the connection between Victor and his Creation. Such an exploration of the master-slave dialectic has manifested in various forms in literature throughout history, illustrating its enduring relevance and capacity to illuminate the complexities of human interaction and societal structures across different cultural and temporal contexts. This dialectic can be found also in twentieth-century *Poor Things*. Presenting a modern take on the lord-bondsman relationship,

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[254] G. Ittzés, "Satan's Journey through Darkness: *Paradise Lost* 9.53-86", *Milton Quarterly*, vol. 41, no. 1 (2007), 12-21, pp. 18-19.

[255] S.B. Smith, "Hegel on Slavery and Domination", *The Review of Metaphysics*, vol. 46, no. 1 (1992), 97-124, pp. 98-99.

Gray’s postmodernist novel scrutinizes the complexities of autonomy and dependence through the connection between the two characters of Godwin and Bella Baxter.

CHAPTER III

Poor Things: A Homage To *Frankenstein*

First published in 1992, *Poor Things* is a novel by Scottish author Alasdair Gray. In the same year, the book clinched both the prestigious Whitbread and Guardian awards for Best Novel and Fiction.[1] Set against the backdrop of the 19th-century Scottish landscape, the story weaves together history, philosophy, and social commentary, criticizing the societal norms and power structures that oppress individuals. "Enacting a gender-play on Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*",[2] *Poor Things* contains parallelisms with the nineteenth-century gothic novel, exploring themes of power, identity, and autonomy. Gray's fiction recontextualizes and subverts these topics, centering on a female protagonist, Bella Baxter. In this chapter, *Poor Things* is examined, particularly highlighting how it encapsulates and explores the master-slave dialectic, echoing the motives present in *Frankenstein*. Having in mind the relationship between Mary Shelley's scientist and his Creature, Gray adeptly delves into the intricate dynamics between creator and creation, master and servant through the characters of Bella and her creator, Dr. Godwin Baxter. While her maker initially exerts control over her existence, shaping her identity according to his desires, Bella gradually asserts her autonomy and challenges his dominance. Examining Gray's figure as an artist and the main features of his fiction are functional in unravelling how he intertwines elements of social critique, philosophical inquiry, and narrative experimentation, offering profound insights into the human condition and the intricacies of power dynamics within society.

III.1 Alasdair Gray: A Scottish Writer

Alasdair Gray (1934-2019) stands as a towering figure in Scottish literature, renowned for his bold and imaginative works that encapsulate the complexities of Scottish identity, history, and culture.[3] Born, raised and dying in Glasgow, after earning a degree in mural painting and design from the Glasgow School of Art, Gray pursued a diverse career path, primarily as a freelance painter, arts educator, and author.[4] Often credited with playing a significant role in the resurgence of Scottish literary and cultural vitality, his influence predates and coincides with the political shifts that culminated in the establishment of the Scottish Parliament in 1999.[5] In the pantheon of his literary contributions, including *Ten Tales Tall and True* (1993), *1982 Janine* (1984), and his 1996 collection of short stories *Mavis Belfrage: A Romantic Novel,* his first novel, *Lanark: A Life in Four Books* (1981), stands as a seminal achievement. The book "reads like a portrait of the artist as a young Glaswegian",[6] intertwining the protagonist's journey of self-discovery in the dystopian city of Unthank with the author's reflections on art, identity, and existentialism. It is through his *Lanark* that Gray is frequently credited in Scottish literary discourse as the influential figure spearheading the 'new literary Renaissance' emerging in Scotland during the late 1970s and early 1980s.[7] Among the figures that prompted the resurgence of interest in Scottish identity, names like Irvine Welsh, James Kelman, and Alasdair Gray himself appear. They challenged traditional narratives and forms, embracing experimentation and pushing the boundaries of literary expression.

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[1] J. Glending, "Education, Science, and Secular Ethics in Alasdair Gray's *Poor Things*", *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal,* vol. 49, no. 2 (2016), 75-93, p. 75.

[2] C. March, "Bella and the Beast (and a Few Dragons, Too): Alasdair Gray and the Social Resistance of the Grotesque", *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction*, vol. 43, no. 4 (2002), 323-346, p. 338.

[3] A. McMunnigall, "Alasdair Gray and the Postmodernism", *Studies in Scottish Literature*, vol. 33, no. 1 (2004), 335-348, p. 337.

Despite Gray's refusal to accept the label of a postmodernist, his works often exhibit characteristics associated with the movement, particularly through his strategy of manipulating "notions of reality and textual authority".[8] In *Lanark*, he departs from conventional narrative structures to engage with themes of fragmentation, mirroring the disjointed nature of modern life and consciousness. In his other challenging works, issues such as national, cultural, and economic oppression, as well as the intricate relationship between literature and politics, are rigorously examined. Analysing his novel *Poor Things* (1992), considered "Gray's most complex integration of book design into storytelling",[9] he weaves together postmodern experimentation with sharp political commentary, appearing as a socialist with a fervent desire for Scottish political independence. Such a story stands as "his commercially most successful novel",[10] garnering widespread acclaim and recognition, largely attributed to its 2023 film adaptation, *Poor Things*, directed by Yorgos Lanthimos and written by Tony McNamara.

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[4] D. Böhnke, *Shades of Gray: Science Fiction, History and the Problem of Postmodernism in the Work of Alasdair Gray*, Berlin: Galda und Winch, 2004, p. 2.

[5] Ibid., p. 1.

[6] A. Gray, J. Kelman, and T. Toremans, "An Interview with Alasdair Gray and James Kelman", *Contemporary Literature*, vol. 44, no. 4 (2003), 564-586, p. 566.

[7] Böhnke, op. cit., p. 3.

[8] McMunnigall, *op. cit.*, p. 336.

[9] F.D. King, A. Lee, "Bibliographic Metafiction: Dancing in the Margins with Alasdair Gray", *Contemporary Literature*, vol. 57, no. 2 (2016), 216-244, p. 218.

[10] Böhnke, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

III.1.1 Postmodernist Traits In *Poor Things*

Coined in the 1950s, the term 'postmodernism' refers to a broad and complex movement that emerged in the mid-20th century as a reaction against the principles and assumptions of modernism.[11] It encompasses various disciplines, including art, architecture, literature, philosophy, and cultural theory. Despite Alasdair Gray's aversion to such a cultural and literary phenomenon, *Poor Things* stands as a "postmodern metanarrative that explores the notion of selfhood [...] by literalizing the mind/body split".[12] Embodying numerous features of postmodernism, such innovative work weaves together elements of fragmented narrative, metafiction, and intertextuality, presenting a multifaceted story that challenges traditional storytelling norms. Starting with its disjointed narration, the novel presents the story through multiple perspectives and formats, challenging the idea of a singular, authoritative narrative, and allowing for a more complex and layered narrative experience. *Poor Things* is characterized by multiple explicit and untrustworthy narrators, alongside the intertwined principal stories of Archibald and Victoria.[13] The voice is extended to minor and secondary characters, granting them significance and agency within the story framework. Another aspect that aligns Gray's novel with postmodernist works is its classification as historical metafiction. Blending imaginative storytelling with "well-research, historical document[s]",[14] the Scottish author re-imagines the period of the Victorian era through the lens of inventive fiction. Bella's fantastical story is set in a precise historical setting in which epochal details are interwoven with anachronisms and speculative elements, challenging the perception of history as a fixed reality. Mirroring the postmodernist attitude of blending past and present, *Poor Things* illuminates the non-linear nature of the narration, portraying it as a mosaic of eccentric fragments rather than a straightforward progression.[15] The story jumps between the present-day interactions of Bella Baxter, Archibald McCandless, and Godwin Baxter, and the historical events surrounding her transformation, embodying Scotland's struggle for autonomy. Through a playful and ironic tone,[16] Gray addresses issues of social class and inequality during the

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[11] R.K. Fischer, A. Graham, "Postmodernism", *Reference & User Services Quarterly*, vol. 54, no. 1 (2014), 29-33, p. 29.

[12] D.P. Kaczvinsky, " 'Making up for Lost Time': Scotland, Stories, and the Self in Alasdair Gray's "Poor Things"", *Contemporary Literature*, vol. 42, no. 4 (2001), 775-799, p. 775.

[13] K. Berndt, " 'The Things We Are': Alasdair Gray's Poor Things and the Science of Man", in G. Bystydzieńska, *Anglica, An International Journal of English Studies*, Warsaw: Institute of English Studies University of Warsaw, 2016, pp. 125-141, p. 128.

[14] Kaczvinsky, *op. cit.*, p. 792.

[15] King, *op. cit.*, p. 242.

[16] McMunnigall, *op. cit.*, p. 336.

Victorian era depicting such a period with a critical eye. The criticism of gender roles, patriarchal society, and economic disparity highlights the constructed nature of cultural norms, exposing the ways in which such rules serve to perpetuate power imbalances and social injustices. Gray also employs the literary technique of pastiche, typical of postmodernism, serving to blend and juxtapose various styles and genres. Incorporating poetry, prose, and epistolary elements such as letters and diary entries, *Poor Things* adds an intimate and personal dimension to the narrative.[17] Among the "paratextual conventions" employed in postmodernist writings, the inclusion of notes, illustrations, and subtitles is relevant, adding layers of complexity to the embedded narrative, making it more ambiguous and multifaceted.[18] Apart from supplementary comments and explanations, images drawn by the author and etchings are found in Gray's novel, deepening the public's immersion into the narrative while also inviting interpretation.[19] Considering postmodernists' "rereading of the past",[20] the revision of existing myths becomes a means of deconstructing dominant narratives and exposing their inherent biases and limitations. *Poor Things* can be described as a contemporary reimagining of the Frankenstein narrative through a postmodern lens,[21] engaging a revisionist approach to Mary Shelley's classical tale. The character of Bella Baxter aligns with Victor's Monster, challenging the traditional portrayal of the Fiend as passive and obedient. Therefore, despite "Gray's dislike of Postmodernism",[22] his *Poor Things* ultimately embodies many of its keys and principles, showcasing a complex interplay of narrative experimentation, metafictional elements, and critical engagement with historical and cultural constructs.

III.2 *Poor Things*: Two Versions Of The Same Story

The novel begins with an introduction by the supposed editor, identified as 'Alasdair Gray', who explains the discovery of Archie McCandless's manuscript and introduces the main narrative. Such work, titled by Gray himself as *Episodes from the Early Life of a Scottish Public Health Officer,* is supplemented by a post-scripted letter from McCandless's sceptical wife and Gray's own pseudo-research on the manuscript's authenticity. *Episodes* is set in Scotland and dated 1909 within the narrative, yet the introduction by its editor suggests a composition date of around 1991, creating a temporal dissonance that adds to the novel's intrigue and complexity.[23] Archie offers a firsthand narrative of his wife Bella Baxter's peculiar origins and life, detailing the scientific experiment that brought her into existence and shaped her subsequent choices. However, Bella's postscript dismisses McCandless's account as fantastical, offering a more logical interpretation of events. Yet, Gray's presented evidence subtly favours Archie's version, casting doubt on Bella's rebuttal and leaving the truth of the narrative tantalizingly open-ended.[24] Dr. Godwin Baxter, a scientist obsessed with experimenting on warped bodies, revives a pregnant woman after her drowning by implanting the brain of her unborn foetus into her body. The newborn creature is named Bella Baxter, a lady possessing extraordinary beauty, having the body of an adult woman and the mind of a child.[25] Through her creator, she encounters Archie McCandless, a student of medicine both fascinated and disturbed by Godwin's experimental surgeries. At the sight of Bella, the young man remains drawn to her and consequently, the two make a promise of marriage. Thanks to the education received by Baxter himself, she develops a remarkable intellect and a sense of escapism to the point of being sexually seduced by the Scottish scoundrel, Duncan Wedderburn, and eloping with him. Despite being engaged to McCandless, Bella decides to embark on a journey through Europe and the Levant with her new lover, testing his charisma and unconventional lifestyle, and encountering a cast of colourful characters. Among them, she meets Mr. Astley, an English man on a business trip, and Dr. Hooker, a missionary returning from China, serving as guides for Bella. Illuminating the existence of injustice and cruelty in the world, the two men reveal how political and economic power can manipulate both science and religion, showcasing how societal structures can override humane values.[26] In the meanwhile, Wedderburn becomes increasingly desperate and erratic, resorting to drastic measures to maintain control over Bella and protect his own interests. Consequent to his descent into desperation, his oppressive behaviour leads him to eventual confinement in an asylum. Bella returns to Scotland only after becoming a prostitute in a Paris bordello, stripped of her illusions and facing the harsh realities of her choices. Once home and determined to marry McCandless, she confronts the daemons of her past, discovering that she is a "reincarnation of Victoria Blessington",[27] wife of General Sir Aubrey de la Pole Blessington and dead of suicide while pregnant. A tyrannical and abusive husband, the General justifies his wife's death as a selfish act of mental illness, evident in her "insane [sexual] appetites" for which "she should have had a surgical operation".[28] On the contrary, the truth is that Victoria put an end to her life after discovering her husband's infidelity with one of his servants. Fearing the repercussions of his past misbehaviour with his wife, General Blessington resorts to drastic measures, brandishing his revolver and compelling Bella to come with him. In the ensuing struggle, she wrestles for control of the weapon, resulting in a gunshot wound to her foot. The story concludes with Blessington's suicide two days later and with Bella marrying McCandless and becoming the first woman doctor to graduate from Glasgow University.

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[17] S. Bernstein, *Alasdair Gray*, Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1999, p. 24.
[18] L. Hutcheson, *The Politics of Postmodernism*, London and New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2005, p. 79.
[19] Berndt, *op. cit.*, p. 128.
[20] Hutcheson, *op. cit.*, p. 91.
[21] Berndt, *op. cit.*, p. 125.
[22] McMunnigall, *op. cit.*, p. 347.

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[23] Glending, *op. cit.*, p. 76.
[24] March, *op. cit.*, p. 338.
[25] Kaczvinsky, *op. cit.*, p. 784.
[26] Glending, *op. cit.*, p. 88.
[27] A. Gray, *Poor Things*, London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2002, p. 227.

In the letter penned by Victoria McCandless, formerly known as Bella Baxter after her marriage, she condemns her late husband's publication as a grotesque misrepresentation of her formative years.[29] She provides more detailed accounts and memories that challenge the inaccuracies and fabrications within his work, giving a more truthful and realistic portrayal of her life experiences. Her story focuses on a young and well-educated Victoria marrying General Blessington as expected by societal norms. At her "third hysterical pregnancy", she is suggested by her husband to remove her clitoris and the surgeon Dr. Baxter is charged with the operation, being "so careful and alert" that inspires her trust and safety.[30] Godwin convinces her to change her mind, and when Victoria acknowledges that her husband "who would not give [her] a child was about to have one by a servant",[31] she escapes from home and is sheltered by the surgeon. To disappear from the wicked world where she was living, Victoria constructs a new identity under the pseudonym of Bella Baxter, dwelling with Godwin and learning from his macabre experiments. Despite having suitors like Duncan Wedderburn and Archie McCandless who frequently visit Dr. Baxter, Victoria falls in love with Godwin. Unfortunately, due to his syphilis, the surgeon is not able to satisfy the woman's desires but, on the contrary, inspires her to become a doctor and heal him from his illness. McCandless results to be "the useful, unselfish husband who would help [her] do what [she] wanted while satisfying [her] amours",[32] aware of the fact that Bella and Godwin cannot separate from each other. However, involved in a "delicious experiment" with Duncan, she decides to elope with him solely to

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[28] Gray, *op. cit.*, p. 216.
[29] Glending, *op. cit.*, p. 76.
[30] Gray, *op. cit.*, p. 259.
[31] Ibid., p. 261.
[32] Ibid., p. 268.

"discover how suitable McCandless [is]",[33] being sadly aware of Baxter's impossibility of making her happy. At her return home, the surgeon dies, bequeathing unto Bella and McCandless a proposal of marriage.

Comparing the two contradicting accounts of the story, "the reader is given neither of the versions as the truth, but must find a balance somewhere between the two or just enjoy".[34] Like skilled alchemists blending disparate elements into a harmonious whole, readers must navigate the tangled web of narratives and perspectives presented before them, seeking a balance between truth and fiction, reality and illusion. In this thesis, the analysis of *Poor Things* and the exploration of its underlying features and themes primarily revolve around Archie's version of the narrative, considered the primary lens through which it is possible to engage with the story's intricacies.

III.2 Exploring Its Main Themes

Showing an "overt mixing of fact and fiction, multiple viewpoints and discourses",[35] *Poor Things* embodies a trenchant critique of various societal issues. It satirizes imperialism, capitalism, and class inequality, highlighting how such systems provoke injustice and exploitation, and how profit-driven medical practices contribute to the marginalization of individuals and the perpetuation of harmful norms.[36] Bella acknowledges the principles of British imperialism through her conversation with Dr. Hooker. Embodying the role of an agent furthering the agenda of economic domination, he believes that "God has sent the Anglo-Saxon race to purify the globe with fire and sword".[37] Considered as "the teachers in a playground of children who do not want to know that the school exists",[38] the Anglo-Saxons are depicted as more civilized than those they perceive culturally inferior, underscoring a "historical notion of progress"[39] consisting in the most powerful oppressing the weakest. Gray critiques the inherent arrogance and self-righteousness of British imperialism, exposing the damaging effects of such a mindset on the colonized and aborigine populations. Such thoughts make Gray's novel an example of "historiographic metafiction",[40] whose narrative reflects the process of interpreting and representing history itself. Considering the conversation on the appropriation of the Suez Canal, seen as a testament to British control over strategic waterways, the attempt of Egyptian natives to rebel against such power is seen as causing "disturb trade and [the British] smooth running of the canal".[41] Through Hooker's words, Gray highlights a paternalistic and self-serving attitude towards colonial subjects, prioritizing their interests and stability over the rights and aspirations of natives. The same character consequently expresses himself on the Anglo-Saxon education which ensures protection from "the degrading spectacle of human filth and misery", remarking that "a fine police-force keeps criminals, the unemployed and other incurably dirty creatures away from places where the nobler natures, the Anglo-Saxon natures live".[42] Advocating for discrimination based on race and class, Hooker reveals the complicity of institutions in upholding systemic inequalities and reinforcing divisions within society. The government itself is described as shouldering the blame for the impoverishment of its citizens, stifling prosperity, and suppressing beneficial initiatives. Paradoxically, through such repression, Britain emerges as the industrial powerhouse of the world, fostering a society dominated by "heartless plutocracy".[43]

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[33] Gray, *op. cit.*, p. 270.

[34] Johanna Tiitinen, "Alasdair Gray's Poor Things and the Resurrection of Frankenstein's Monster", in S.K. Tanskanen and B. Wârvik (eds.), *Proceedings from the 7th Nordic Conference on English Studies*, Turku: University of Turku Press, 1999, pp. 315-325, p. 322.

[35] Glending, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

[36] Ibid.*,* p. 77.

[37] Gray, *op. cit.*, p. 142.

[38] Ibid., p. 139.

[39] Berndt, *op. cit.*, p. 126.

In *Poor Things*, economic forces, governmental policies, and societal structures highlight the rigid tensions within Victorian society, portraying a stratified social order in which individuals are valued and treated differently based on factors such as wealth, status, and lineage. At the story's beginning, McCandless is a marginalized student due to his "farm-servant origins"[44] and lack of social connections. He is portrayed as an outsider in the academic world, where wealth and privilege often determine one's status and opportunities. His isolation is further compounded by his association with Godwin Baxter since they are "the two most intelligent and least social people attached to the Glasgow medical faculty".[45] In a Scotland of disunity and inequality, *Poor Things* serves as a poignant reflection of the socioeconomic landscape of the time. Another relevant theme worth mentioning is related to scientific progress. Gray criticizes not only the medical profession's prioritization of financial gain over patient welfare,[46] but also the dangers linked to the misuse of science.[47] One of Godwin's first controversial experiments is his macabre testing on two rabbits. Anesthetizing them and performing a surgical procedure on them, he affixes male genitals to one rabbit along with female nipples, while on the other, he attaches female genitals but with nearly imperceptible nipples. Such an act of surgical manipulation results in the rabbits possessing hybridized and non-functional reproductive organs, the reason for which "they are no longer interested in procreation, an activity that they once greatly enjoyed".[48] From such a framework, nature's inherent characteristics and evolutionary processes are exploited in the name of scientific research, often without regard for ethical considerations or the well-being of the subjects involved. Bella herself becomes a victim of such exploitation as her body is altered and manipulated solely to satisfy Godwin's personal desires. He created her because of his "woman-shaped emptiness",[49] attempting to fulfil his longing for companionship and validation. In doing so, he reduces Bella to a mere object of his own making, devoid of her own agency. Linked to Dr. Baxter's need for a female presence, the theme of sexual obsession deserves to be pointed out. Under his guidance, Bella undergoes development without experiencing guilt or shame regarding any of her natural impulses, including sexual desire.[50] Once in the outer world, her unusual and extravagant behaviour results in a "social and sexual unconventional frankness" that "shocks all who meet her".[51] By her voyage's conclusion with Duncan, he comes to the stark realization that she has been objectifying him sexually in the same manner as he initially objectified her.[52] At first, he is infatuated with Bella, viewing her as a mere instrument capable of providing him with physical satisfaction. Having a bad reputation as "the worst man possible [...] in seducing women of the servant class",[53] he pursues Godwin's Creature with a predatory determination, driven by his usual sexual impulses. His surname Wedderburn, including 'wedder' as a term Bella uses to refer to the penis, serves as a metaphorical commentary on his indulgent and self-destructive sexual behaviours. Sex is a quintessential element also during Bella's time in Paris. She engages in sex work as a means of survival, "not for pleasure but cash like most people do".[54] Through her interactions with clients and fellow workers, Bella confronts societal expectations and norms surrounding female sexuality in Victorian society, challenging conventional notions of purity and morality.

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[40] Berndt, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

[41] Gray, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

[42] Ibid., p. 142.

[43] Ibid., 24.

[44] Ibid., p. 9.

[45] Ibid., p. 11.

[46] Berndt, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

[47] Glending, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

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[48] Gray, *op. cit.*, p. 23.
[49] Ibid., p. 38.
[50] Glending, *op. cit.*, p. 78.
[51] Douglas Gifford, "Contemporary Fiction I", in D. Gifford and D.McMillan (eds.), *A History of Scottish Women's Writing*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997, pp. 579-603, p. 599.
[52] March, *op. cit.*, p. 340.
[53] Gray, *op. cit.*, p. 57.
[54] Ibid., p. 180.

Differently from her who navigates her carnal instincts with curiosity, McCandless openly admits "I am a virgin",[55] contrasting with the prevailing stereotypes of female chastity and virtue of Victorian society. A conversation about sexual desire is also held concerning Bella's previous life as Victoria Blessington. Lying on the real events leading his wife to suicide, General Blessington invents that she was mad, "a poor thing needed cuddling" and obsessed with "diabolical lusts".[56] For the Victorian society of that time, such behaviour appears scandalous since "no normal healthy woman–no good or sane woman want[ed] or expect[ed] to enjoy sexual contact, except as a duty".[57] Such thought reflects the pervasive belief that ladies were meant to be passive and virtuous, with any form of carnal enjoyment limited to reproduction purposes and seen as abnormal or deviant.[58] The preoccupation with the theme of sexual obsession stems from Gray's deliberate intent to juxtapose and underscore the rigid sexual mores of Victorian society, unveiling the stark contrast between outward decorum and inner turmoil.

Considering the author's reflection on faith, *Poor Things* challenges conventional and institutionalized religion, portraying it as complicit in the oppression of the powerless while indicting its debased forms for undermining humane values and lacking scientific basis.[59] Possessing "no strong anti-religious prejudice",[60] Gray defines religion as unacceptable, especially referring to acts of exploitation and aggression perpetuated by institutionalized religious authority, often justified as divine will.[61] Since "only bad religions depend on mysteries, just as bad governments depend on secret police",[62] Gray underscores the dangers inherent in systems of power relying on secrecy and mysticism to maintain control, advocating instead for transparency, rationality, and ethical accountability in both spiritual and governmental spheres. Both Baxter and McCandless are atheists whose rational and empirical outlook contrasts sharply with the religious fervour and superstition prevalent in Victorian society. Mirroring Gray's ideas on such a theme, Godwin vehemently criticizes what he perceives as violations of Christian morality, such as society's treatment of suicide and the concept of a supernatural 'God', which is defined as "a handy name for all and everything".[63]

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[55] Gray, *op. cit.*, p. 190.

[56] Ibid., p. 217.

[57] Ibid., p. 218.

[58] M. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1978, p. 3.

[59] Glending, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

[60] Lidia Vianu, "Alasdair Gray, I have never wanted to confuse readers", in C.I. Vianu (ed.), *Desesperado Essays Interview*, Bucharest: Bucharest University Press, 2006, pp. 167-171, p. 171.

[61] Glending, *op. cit.*, pp. 83-84.

[62] Gray, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

[63] Ibid., p. 134.

Reflecting on Bella's character development, Baxter voices his discontent about "God's displeasure when Eve and Adam chose to know good and evil–chose to be Godlike".[64] In his view, such biblical account stifles human autonomy and independence, condemning the pursuit of knowledge and self-awareness.

Concerning the title, *Poor Things*, the character of Editor Gray asserts that he personally selected it for the book, explaining the reasons behind his choice:

> "*Things* are often mentioned in the story and every single character (apart from Mrs. Dinwiddie and two of the General's parasites) is called *poor* or call themselves that sometime or other."[65]

Carrying a hint of irony and moral ambiguity, the title refers to the characters of the story, who engage in morally questionable actions, blurring the line between victimhood and culpability, compassion, and empathy. Bella exhibits compassion toward the less fortunate, while Archibald often finds himself in a state of self-pity, directing his empathy towards her and Godwin. Editor Gray, on the other hand, extends his mercy to those who doubt the authenticity of Archibald's account and to the characters themselves, considering the tragedies they endure. Examining the title from another perspective, it also embodies the broader spectrum of society, including the sick, poor, and deprived classes untouched by Victorian affluence, ultimately reflecting on humanity's spiritually impoverished state.[66] The world depicted in Gray's narrative is a place where the societal structures of Victorian-era Glasgow perpetuate systemic injustices, witnessing individuals living in a "damnably unfair society".[67]

III.2.1 National Identity

In *Poor Things*, Alasdair Gray explores the rich tapestry of Scottish identity juxtaposed with the influence of English culture and politics, weaving a narrative that underscores the historical dichotomy between Scotland and England. The Treaty of Union in 1707 between the two nations birthed the entity of 'Britain', providing Scotland with newfound legitimacy to partake in the imperial pursuits of the era.[68] Amidst the fervour of pro-Empire sentiment, Scots found themselves in a position akin to that of a quasi-colony: despite not being constitutionally disenfranchised, "[they] had to content themselves, as far as participation was concerned, with carrying out policies decided upon by a remote government dominated by English interests".[69] Such a statement, while outwardly praising England's perceived control over Scotland, implicitly acknowledges the Scottish subordinate and reliant position within the Union and the broader Empire. The framework of oppression resulted in a loss of national autonomy and economic freedom, leaving Scotland without the ability to govern itself effectively. In *Poor Things*, a nuanced exploration of the British Empire and its relationship with the Scottish nation and other colonies is stressed, highlighting the tension between political independence andthe pressures of imperial assimilation. Through Bella's journey spanning from the Victorian era to post-World War II, Gray metaphorically translates her existence into political terms, portraying her as a living testament to the rise and fall of the British Empire.[70] In her existence as Victoria, wedded to General Blessington, a figure representing imperial authority in Gray's narrative, the female protagonist symbolizes Britain's dominance over colonies. Consequently, her death and reincarnation into Bella's constructed and fragmented body highlight the inherent instability within British imperial construction, reflecting the complex and often precarious nature of power dynamics. Bella's unconventional behaviour with other humans "prefigures the failure of social reform"[71] in post-World War II Britain, symbolizing the potential for change within a shifting social landscape.

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[64] Gray, *op. cit.*, pp. 99-100.

[65] Ibid., p. xiii.

[66] Böhnke, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

[67] Gray, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

[68] R.J. Finlay, *Partnership for Good? Scottish Politics and the Union Since 1880*, Edinburgh: John Donald, 1997, p. 15.

Scottish writers hold the reputation of being "assimilated into the development of English literature as though they were an integral part of its creativity rather than Scotland's".[72] Gray explores the enduring difficulty of articulating the Scottish unique cultural and historical legacies within the broader context of British history and literature. Reflecting on a conversation with a Russian friend, Bella notes:

> "I said Burns was a great Scottish poet who lived before Scott, and Shakespeare and Dickens et cetera were all English; but he could not grasp the difference between Scotland and English, though he is wise about other things".[73]

Marking the persistent challenge of conveying the nuanced distinctions between Scottish and English culture and history, the two nations appear interconnected. They are considered inseparable due to their strong political, economic, and literary connections, with perceived differences viewed more as variations within regions rather than distinct markers of national identity.[74] The choice of Scotland as the primary setting of *Poor Things* provides Alasdair Gray with a fertile ground for political critique. Apart from the complexities of Scotland's relationship with England, the author offers an incisive commentary on the country's socio-political landscape, criticizing the modifications imposed on Glasgow by its governing authorities:

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[69] M. McLaren, "From Analysis to Prescription: Scottish Concepts of Asian Despotism in Early Nineteenth-Century British India", *International History Review*, vol. 15, no. 3 (1993), 469-501, p. 501.

[70] March, *op. cit*, p. 341.

[71] Ibid., p. 342.

[72] Crains Craig, "Twentieth Century Scottish Literature: An Introduction", in C. Craig (ed.), *The History of Scottish Literature: Twentieth Century*, Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1987, pp. 1-10, p. 4.

[73] Gray, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

> Life in Glasgow was very exciting during the nineteen seventies. The old industries which had made the place were being closed and moved south, while the elected governors (for reasons any political economist can explain) were buying multistorey housing blocks and a continually expanding motorway system.[75]

The book can be interpreted as the author's response to the idealized portrayal of modern Glasgow, particularly epitomized by the European City of Culture celebrations in 1990.[76] Such depiction emphasizes glossy facades while disregarding the realities faced by ordinary working-class individuals, including the unemployed and homeless. Gray also stresses a profound identification between Bella and Scotland itself.[77] Just as she grapples with the fragmentation of self, struggling with her memory loss and the search for her identity, Scotland navigates the complexities of its historical and cultural heritage amidst shifting socio-political scenarios. After the revelation of Blessington's mistreatment of his mistress, Bella confronts her 'father', seeking answers and perhaps grappling with the betrayal of trust and the unravelling of familial and moral certainties.

> "I feel how that poor thing felt," she said, "but it will not madden me. So I visited you in Manchester, Dad. What did you do to me?"
> "The wrong thing! The wrong thing, Vicky," said the old man thumping the arms of the chair with his fists. "I should have kept you with me, sent for Sir Aubrey and thrashed out a better deal with him- a deal which would have benefited you as well as me. Instead I explained that a wife who abandons her husband is a truant in the eyes of man and God. I said you must fight the marital war on your own hearthstone or you would never win it."[78]

Paraphrasing it into political terms, Scotland has endured a tumultuous relationship with England, often seeking collaboration rather than independence, yet occasionally resorting to opportunism in its efforts to maximize gains. During the nineteenth century, Scotland, akin to a Victorian wife, was expected to stand silently, refraining from expressing displeasure or outrage at England's actions.[79] However, unable to tolerate such treatment indefinitely, Scotland found itself without effective political representation and faced with limited options: to continue enduring frustration or to take drastic measures. Bella's narrative represents a modern solution to the Scottish dilemma: divorce, a foreign and unconventional concept to Victorian society.

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[74] March, *op. cit.*, p. 327.
[75] Gray, *op. cit.*, p. ix.
[76] Böhnke, *op. cit.*, p. 120.
[77] Bernstein, *op. cit.*, p. 131.
[78] Gray, *op. cit.*, p. 231.

III.3 Alasdair Gray And *Frankenstein*

As a talented academic and writer, Alasdair Gray certainly encountered Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* as part of his literary education and exploration. He must have recognized the significance of the nineteenth-century novel within the broader literary canon and its influence on subsequent generations of writers and artists. Given his background in mural painting and design, Gray may have been drawn to the visual imagery and symbolic richness of *Frankenstein*, which offers a wealth of material for artistic interpretation. Moreover, as a writer known for his investigation of complex themes and narrative experimentation, he must have appreciated the thematic depth and moral ambiguity of Mary Shelley's novel, as well as its exploration of timeless questions about humanity, morality, and the limits of scientific knowledge. Considered as a "postmodern rewriting of the Frankenstein myth",[80] Gray's *Poor Things* revisits Mrs. Shelley's classic tale through a contemporary lens, reflecting the anxieties and uncertainties of the postmodern era. By infusing her narrative with elements of social satire, metafictional playfulness, and intertextual references, Gray offers a provocative commentary on the enduring relevance of *Frankenstein* to contemporary debates surrounding progress, ethics, and the human condition.

III.3.1 Similar Patterns

Poor Things inherits a rich tapestry of thematic and narrative parallels from Mary Shelley's novel, revealing core elements that resonate deeply within its narrative structure. The trio of main characters in Gray's narrative–Archibald McCandless, Godwin Baxter, and Bella–echoes the presence of three leading figures in *Frankenstein*: Walton, Victor, and the Monster. Drawing parallels between the two groups reveals common patterns, emphasizing the initial figures, McCandless and Walton, as ‘apprentices’ to successful scientists. Walton perceives Frankenstein as a role model worth emulating, drawn to his unwavering commitment to scientific exploration. Ultimately, he is advised to “seek happiness in tranquillity, and avoid ambition”,[81] learning from Victor’s mistakes. In *Poor Things*, Archibald views Godwin as a mentor figure, admiring his intellect and success as a scientist to the point of considering himself “Baxter’s bulldog”.[82] In the end, reflecting on his teacher’s hollow existence and past behaviour with Bella, McCandless is offered a simple yet profound recommendation to get married and “have children and teach them good behaviour and honest work by example”.[83] The two figures of scientists, Frankenstein and Godwin, are both driven by a fervent passion for scientific discovery that leads to their alienation from society. Victor does his experiment in a “solitary chamber”, dedicating “heart and soul, in one pursuit” and forgetting “those friends whom [he] had not seen for so long a time”.[84] Godwin, consumed by his fascination with science, finds himself isolated since he “formed no special attachment to those who fostered him”[85] and is forced to “seek affection by following a lonelier road”.[86] Through their ambitious scientific experiments, the two scientists breathe life into beings, Bella and a Monster, who eventually develop distinct identities of their own. Frankenstein’s Creation shows to be a “rational creature”,[87] exhibiting intelligence, emotions, and a capacity for self-awareness. Likewise, Bella Baxter, despite having the mind of a child in an adult body, is “sane, strong, cheerful, with a vigorously independent attitude to life”.[88]

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[79] Kaczvinsky, *op. cit.*, p. 790.
[80] Berndt, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

The theme of creation takes centre stage in both narratives, as existence is bestowed upon assembled and altered bodies without the involvement of a female figure. In Mary Shelley’s novel, Victor creates a creature through “intricacies of fibres, muscles, and veins” from carcasses and corpses, using “baffled operations” to make a perfect being.[89] In *Poor Things*, Godwin “dabbles with brains and microscopes”,[90] creating Bella by “recovering a dead body”[91] of a pregnant woman and implanting the brain of her child inside her. Scientific research and experimentation become the means through which life is manipulated and reconfigured, turning the two creators into life-making gods. The absence of pregnancy in the act of creation serves to highlight the unnaturalness and ethical ambiguity of the creators' actions. Mary Shelley writes "a tale of motherless birth",[92] in which Victor's making of his Monster is a solitary, scientific endeavour conducted in the laboratory rather than through the traditional means of procreation. In Gray's *Poor Things*, the absence of pregnancy in Bella's creation is further complicated. Not only does Baxter bypass the traditional processes of conception, but he also appropriates the potential for maternal fulfilment of a pregnant woman who has chosen to end her own life while being in an "advanced pregnancy",[93] thus denying the act of childbirth.

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[81] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, cit., p. 224.
[82] Gray, *op. cit.*, p. 25.
[83] Ibid., p. 243.
[84] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, cit., p. 48.
[85] Ibid., p. 38.
[86] Ibid., p. 24.
[87] Ibid., p. 224.
[88] Gray, *op. cit.*, p. 222.
[89] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, cit., p. 46.
[90] Gray, *op. cit.*, p. 21.
[91] Ibid., p. 212.

In both novels, the word 'misery' is frequently employed, underlining the profound suffering experienced by the characters and the bleakness of their circumstances. In *Frankenstein*, such a concept is mostly used to refer to Victor's Creation, described as a "demoniacal corpse to which [he] had so miserably given life",[94] "whose delight was in carnage and misery",[95] indicating his monstrous nature. The scientist himself is described as pitiful, referring to the "miserable slavery"[96] he experiences as a result of his creation's actions and his moral culpability. Depicting *Frankenstein*'s universe as a "world of misery",[97] Mary Shelley also underscores the pervasive injustice and cruelty permeating the fabric of human civilization, highlighting society's systemic flaws and moral failings. In Gray's novel, all characters are shown to be wretched, living an existence where "misery and pain age folk faster than happiness does"[98] and where individuals are constrained by oppressive collective norms and social expectations. When McCandless defines himself as "miserable",[99] he refers to his social prospect of marrying Bella who, on the contrary, chooses to elope with a stranger over a conventional life with him.

The author's social engagement can be retrieved from both novels which highlight the complexities of social injustice and inequality. Mary Shelley expresses her commentary on public unfairness through the trial scene where Justine is wrongly convicted of murdering

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[92] Johnson, *op. cit.*, p. 249.
[93] Gray, *op. cit.*, p. 41.
[94] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, cit., p. 51.
[95] Ibid., p. 70.
[96] Ibid., p. 156.
[97] Ibid., p. 82.
[98] Gray, *op. cit.*, p. 68.
[99] Ibid., p. 60.

Frankenstein's youngest brother. Considering the episode as a "wretched mockery of justice",[100] Victor's servant is perfectly aware that her disadvantaged position and the weight of circumstantial evidence make it unlikely for her to receive a fair trial.[101] Despite her innocence, she resigns herself to the grim reality that justice may elude her and that there is no escape to "the sanguinary laws of man".[102] In *Poor Things*, Gray criticizes the "desperate conditions of city's people",[103] condemning the richest individuals "who want no care for the helpless sick small, who use religions and politics to stay comfortably superior to all that pain".[104] Gray's reformist thoughts reflect William Godwin's idealism: dedication to gender equality, reluctance towards governmental authority, rejection of societal hierarchies, and support for the underprivileged.[105] The Scottish author has intentionally used the name of the radical philosopher to name Dr. Godwin Baxter, signalling the character's alignment with William Godwin's progressive ideas and philosophical perspectives regarding societal structures, individual freedom, and the role of government. The surname 'Baxter' might refer to a Scottish friend of William Godwin who agreed to have Godwin's daughter Mary live with his family in Dundee, with the understanding that Baxter's daughters would occasionally visit London.[106] It was in Dundee that Mary developed a love for the woods and mountains, where she could wander freely, and experienced the warmth of a peaceful and contented home life for the first time. Another crucial parallelism between *Frankenstein* and *Poor Things* is the creator-creation relationship, echoing the power dynamics already explored in the analysis of the gothic novel and its intertextual references to *Paradise Lost*. In both novels, the creators hold power over their creations, positioning themselves as masters while relegating their creations to the role of subservient subjects.

III.3.1 Creator-Creation Relationship

Godwin Baxter assumes the role of a creator when he reanimates the deceased body of Victoria Blessington to give life to a new being. In the fifth chapter of *Poor Things*, named 'Making Bella Baxter', he provides a detailed account of the techniques he used to bring the woman back to life after her apparent drowning. His new creature is defined as a “surgical fabrication”, hoping that “[her] brain will one day be as adult as her body”.[107] While Baxter has succeeded in reviving Bella’s human form, her cognitive and emotional development initially remains uncertain. She exhibits a behaviour that is initially childlike and disoriented, finding herself in a state of confusion and vulnerability and lacking memories of her previous life. In hiding her past existence, Gray’s scientist plays the role of a master, embodying the archetype of a “domestic tyrant”,[108] restricting her freedom, monitoring her movements, and manipulating her perceptions of reality. Since Bella is initially unable to fully comprehend the world around her due to her childlike perspective, Godwin takes advantage of her fragility, educating her by himself using methods rooted in imaginative exploration and devoid of societal norms.[109] His teachings instil in Bella a sense of compassion and empathy towards living beings, without experiencing guilt or shame for her natural and sexual instincts. In such a situation of dependency and subordination, the woman addresses him as “God”, sometimes interpretable as an interjection expressing emphasis, “He is still my little Candle, God!”.[110] Using such a nickname for her creator, Bella stresses the authority that Baxter holds over her life, relying on him for guidance, protection, and knowledge. The narrative depicts a reversal in the power dynamics between creator and creature, master and submissive figure, when she rebels against Godwin’s will and Victorian societal conventions, eloping with a stranger named Duncan Wedderburn. Being curious to have “a lot of past”,[111] memories that would shape her identity and knowledge of the world, she embarks on a journey with her new lover, driven by her innate carnal appetite that neither Godwin nor McCandless can satisfy. In Bella’s first letter to the two men, named by Baxter as ‘MAKING A CONSCIENCE’, she narrates her adventures of self-discovery, shaping her own identity through the realities she faces and her experiences in touch with other individuals. After witnessing Duncan’s treatment of her as a sexual object, she learns that “women need Wedderburns but love much more/ their faithful kindly man who waits at home”.[112] Becoming aware of her decision-making power, Bella refuses to conform to Duncan’s expectations on their sexual adventure together.[113]

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[100] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, cit., p. 75.

[101] A.F. Wake, "Justine's trial revisited: A space for women's subculture in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein", *European Romantic Review*, vol. 12, no. 4 (2008), 493-516, p. 499.

[102] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, cit., p. 144.

[103] Kaczvinsky, *op. cit.*, p. 786.

[104] Gray, *op. cit.*, p. 176.

[105] Glending, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

[106] Glynn Grylls, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

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[107] Gray, *op. cit.*, p. 35.
[108] Ibid., p. 34.
[109] Glending, *op. cit.*, p. 78.
[110] Gray, *op. cit.*, p. 47.
[111] Ibid., p. 61.
[112] Ibid., p. 108.
[113] March, *op. cit.*, p. 340.

> "I had planned to enjoy her in some quiet little inn of a lonely Breton fishing village, but now the thought of being in a lonely place with Bella chilled me to the soul".[114]

Using his body for her physical fulfilment, she reverses the initial situation with her lover, proving to possess agency and autonomy. She makes her man "so dependent [on her] that [she] can leave him for hours in a hotel bedroom while [she] make[s] arrangements".[115] Throughout the story, especially from her encounter with male characters, she gains insights into the complexities of human relationships, shaping her personal world vision and discovering an existence of injustice and cruelty. Through Dr. Hooker's religious theories and Mr. Astley's "bitter wisdom",[116] whose ideas encourage her to think deeply, Bella acknowledges that existential experiences can be harsh teachers and make individuals "poor and desperate [also] inside".[117] Therefore, despite being previously raised largely ignorant of violence and human suffering, Bella now undergoes a comprehensive political education in the complexities and imperfections of human nature.[118] She acquires a more complete and mature depth of understanding that enables her to engage with other characters using her wisdom and intelligence. In a moment in which she must sever ties with Wedderburn, Bella fully comprehends the necessary steps to take for her liberation, concocting that "the kindest way to get rid of [him] [...] was by returning him to his mother".[119] Once she finally gets rid of Duncan, Bella is completely excited to do something she has never done before: "working for a living".[120] Accepting to "wed a total stranger for periods of one hour or less",[121] she enters the reality of prostitution, confronting the exploitation that often accompanies such transactions. Her autonomy of thought is stressed when she talks with her socialist friend Toinette about politics, despite not being allowed to do it in her workplace. Her experiences in touch with multiple situations instil in her a sense of self-assurance and a commitment to political reform aimed at improving the lives of all individuals.[122] She is determined to rectify the world around her, to the point of openly complaining about her workplace's "unfair and inefficient" medical inspection.[123] She asserts that rather than subjecting the girls to inappropriate examinations and gestures, “it is clients who should be medically examined”.[124] After such an unpleasant episode, she makes her decision to return to Scotland.

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[114] Gray, *op. cit.*, p. 85.
[115] Ibid., pp. 124-125.
[116] Ibid., p. 152.
[117] Ibid., p. 164.
[118] Glending, *op. cit.*, p. 90.
[119] Gray, *op. cit.*, p. 165.
[120] Ibid., p. 179.
[121] Ibid., p. 177.
[122] Kaczvinsky, *op. cit.*, p. 787.
[123] Gray, *op. cit.*, p. 183.

Her personal growth, consciousness development, and self-awareness acquisition are evident from the shift in the way she communicates and expresses herself. At the beginning of the novel, Bella speaks as “a bad case of brain damage”, articulating words as an infant who does not know how to talk properly:

> “Hell low Miss terr Candle [...] new wee man with carrot tea red hair, inter *rested* face, blue neck tie, crump pled coat waist coat trou sirs made of brown. Cord. Dew. Ray?”.[125]

Once out in the unknown, from the first letter sent to Godwin and McCandless, she has improved considerably in her expressive manners to the point of writing in Shakespearean verses.

> “Madame, will you forgive if I intrude?”
> and looking sideways ding ding whoopee God!
> The dinner bell! I’m feeling ravenous–
> hungry parched famished and athirst for bortsch,
> a splendid beetroot soup, but still have time
> to finish off this entry with a rhyme”.[126]

Despite the elements of a playful and whimsical expressive manner, her use of language, punctuated by exclamations and vivid imagery, adds depth and charm to her writing, showcasing a newfound eloquence. A shift is also stressed concerning her relationship with McCandless. If she initially accepts to marry him because she can treat him however she likes, she ultimately changes her perspective, repeating that she “no longer thinks he must do all she bids”.[127] The transformation of her point of view is related to her maturation, recognizing herself as an autonomous individual who embraces equality and mutual decision-making in their relationship.

Bella’s empowerment, consequent to her significant development, complicates Godwin’s position as “a parent”,[128] who now must confront a woman and not a child. Since told by Wedderburn about her pregnancy due to her scar and her “deflowered”[129] state, Bella asks her creator about her baby. Baxter replies fearing her reaction to hearing the truth about her fetus, the reason why it is McCandless who directly confesses to her: "The shock that destroyed your memory killed the *child* in you!".[130] The same fright is felt when Godwin must explain to his creature about her creation and previous life as Victoria Blessington. He grapples with how best to reveal her origin without causing further harm, admitting to "have told lies"[131] and forecasting Bella's hate towards him for the untold truth. Baxter's fear of her reaction is deeply tied to his awareness of her evolved sense of identity. Over time, she has grown into a person with her thoughts, feelings, and moral compass, being no longer just a character to be shaped by Godwin's whims, but rather an autonomous individual capable of making her own decisions and judgments. In the end, after discovering General Blessington's real personality and despite the looming spectre of scandal, Bella resolves to initiate divorce proceedings from him. Ultimately, added to such a determination to forge her own path, she also becomes a successful doctor "through her management of the Godwin Baxter Natal Clinic, her Fabian pamphlets and promotion of female suffrage".[132] In making decisions independently, she affirms her commitment to living a life guided by integrity, self-respect, and the pursuit of genuine happiness, underscoring her evolution as a character. For Godwin, a maker now in a "bed-ridden state",[133] the only consolation is the enduring presence of his creature by his side, being satisfied with the goals and development she reached. His deepest wish is for Bella and McCandless to bless their lives with children, guiding them with nurturing care and providing them with a robust education. He also adds: "Never be violent with them, and never preach",[134] emphasizing the importance of fostering an environment of gentleness and refraining from imposing strict ideologies.

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[124] Gray, *op. cit.*, p. 183.

[125] Ibid., p. 30.

[126] Ibid., p. 115.

[127] Ibid., p. 101.

[128] Ibid., p. 99.

[129] Ibid., p. 106.

III.4 Power Dynamics In *Poor Things* And *Frankenstein*

In both novels, the intricate interplay of power dynamics serves as a central theme, shaping the trajectories of the characters' lives and the unfolding of the narratives. The connection between Godwin and his Bella mirrors the dynamics between Frankenstein and his Monster in terms of master-slave relationships. Victor is a master asserting dominance over his Creation which plays a subordinate role until his self-discovery and subsequent acquisition of autonomy and agency. Likewise, Baxter assumes a position of authority over the dependent figure of Bella until she develops her consciousness and self-awareness, making decisions based on her own desires and values. Drawing parallels between the two sets of characters, creators (Frankenstein and Godwin) and creatures (the Monster and Bella), reveals both similarities and differences in their dynamics. Examining such features offers insight into the themes of power, autonomy, and morality, enriching the understanding of the relationship between makers and their experiments.

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[130] Gray, *op. cit.*, p. 192.
[131] Ibid., p. 205.
[132] Ibid., p. 240.
[133] Ibid., p. 240.
[134] Ibid.., p. 243.

III.4.1 Godwin And Frankenstein

Mary Shelley's and Alasdair Gray's creators are figures of ambition and intellect, driven by a desire to push the boundaries of scientific discovery and achievement. Nevertheless, the reasons behind their acts of creation differ. Frankenstein crafts his new being due to his excessive ambition to "render man invulnerable to any but a violent death",[135] expecting glorious recognition for his scientific discovery. "Enter[ing] with the greatest diligence into the search of the philosopher's tone and elixir of life",[136] the mad scientist delves deeper into the realms of forbidden knowledge, consumed by a fervent obsession to unlock the secrets of immortality. On the contrary, Godwin's decision to give life to a new creature stems from his desire for companionship and intimacy, stressing that "[he] needed to admire a woman who needed and admired [him]".[137] His desire for connection and affirmation suggest a sense of loneliness and inadequacy, as he seeks external validation to fill the void in his life. Concerning the two creators' reactions to their fabrications, Frankenstein's initial horror and rejection of his Monster stand in stark contrast to Baxter's affection and nurturing attitude towards Bella. After creating his being, Victor feels "the bitterness of disappointment",[138] despising his creation for his monstrous traits and fearing his possible appearance wherever he goes. Godwin's reaction is entirely different, marking his feeling of satisfaction and contentment in his new being's existence to the point of confessing that "[her] smile is happier than Ophelia's was, and makes [him] happy too".[139] Comparing Bella to the literary female figure that most excited him when he was lonely, Gray's scientist highlights his genuine admiration for his creature who embodies his idealized vision of beauty. Another relevant point worth mentioning concerns the two creators' roles as fathers and approach to their creatures' education. Showing to be an incompetent parent, Frankenstein does not impart any education to his Monster, leaving him nameless and without parental affection. The Creature can only complain: "No father had watched my infant days, no mother had blessed me with smiles and caresses; or if they had, all my past life was now a blot, a blind vacancy in which I distinguished nothing".[140] Due to his "heartless creator",[141] the Fiend is forced to learn alone how to live in a violent social community, relying on external individuals and his own ingenuity for survival. In *Poor Things*, Baxter shows to be a different kind of 'father', educating Bella at home, to prevent her from any individuals "treat[ing] her as an oddity", and planning a journey in which "she will see and learn many things".[142] However, his sheltered education results insufficient in preparing Bella for life beyond the confines of their home. Lacking first-hand experience and exposure to the complexities of human society, she wrongly "find[s] the world a good and happy place",[143] resulting in her struggle to navigate social interactions, understand societal norms, and assert her independence in the face of unfamiliar situations. Therefore, the two 'fathers', like all parental figures, grapple with the complexities and limitations of parenthood, ultimately falling short in their attempts to guide their creations.

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[135] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, cit., p. 32.
[136] Ibid.
[137] Gray, *op. cit.*, p. 39.
[138] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, cit., p. 52.
[139] Gray, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

While the Monster and Bella explore the unknown shaping their identities and developing autonomy, their creators have two different approaches toward their creations' progress. Witnessing his Monster's violent behaviour in touch with society, Victor is "torn by remorse, horror, and despair",[144] aware that his Fiend will continue to spread fear and death. Godwin, instead, while reading Bella's letters of her experiences abroad, is proud of her advancement and wise conduct with other individuals, underlining that "her growth appears most clearly in the quality of her reflections".[145] From her attitude with Wedderburn, Dr. Hooker, and Mr. Astley, Baxter values not only her ability to navigate external challenges but also her capacity for introspection and self-examination.

While both scientists ultimately meet their ends in death and with their 'apprentices' hearing their last words, the concluding scenes of the two novels highlight another distinctive trait in the two creators' behaviours. On the point of dying, Frankenstein encourages Walton to

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[140] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, cit., p. 120.
[141] Ibid., p. 139.
[142] Gray, *op. cit.*, p. 36.
[143] Ibid., p. 136.
[144] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, cit., p. 83.
[145] Gray, *op. cit.*, p. 151.

"undertake [his] unfinished work",[146] renewing his quest to chase the Being and destroy him after all the pain he inflicted on his maker. On the contrary, Godwin tells McCandless his intention to "leave all to Bella and [him]",[147] signifying a relinquishment of control over his creation's future. Differently from Victor, Baxter's decision symbolizes a departure from the egotism that characterized his earlier actions, prioritizing the well-being and happiness of Bella and McCandless over his own desires.

III.4.2 The Monster and Bella

Despite existing in two vastly different narratives, Frankenstein's Monster and Baxter's Bella share striking analogies and differences that illuminate profound insights into themes of identity, humanity, and the pursuit of acceptance. Starting from their identities, Victor's Creature is denied a name and thus denied a sense of individuality, contributing to his feeling of alienation and dehumanization. On the contrary, Bella, originally named Victoria Blessington, is bestowed with a new name and surname by her creator, reflecting his acknowledgment of her as a deserving individual worthy of recognition and respect. Furthermore, Godwin himself decides to assign his creature a fictional backstory, claiming that she resides in his home and identifying her as "a distant niece whose parents died in a South America railway accident".[148]

The two beings' physical aspects considerably influence their makers' reactions to their creations, highlighting the impact of appearance on perception and empathy in the process of life making. Victor's being is described as a "miserable monster" to the point of admitting that "a mummy again endued with animation could not be so hideous as that wretch".[149] The extreme ugliness and repulsiveness of the Fiend's aspect instils such fear and dread in his creator that Frankenstein hastily flees, "rush[ing] downstairs" to "escape" the terrifying sight.[150] The Creature's grotesque features contrast with the description of Godwin's creation who is depicted as a "tall, beautiful, full-bodied figure".[151] Despite their divergent physical aspects, both beings share commonalities in the coloration of their traits, including their dark black hair and the sallow hue of their skin. However, their corporeal attributes shape how individuals perceive and respond to their appearances. When the Monster arrives at a village, in his first encounter with humans, "some fled, some attacked [him]", violently assaultinghim with "stones and many other kinds of missile weapons".[152] On the contrary, Bella's beauty becomes a source of fascination and admiration, eliciting positive reactions from those around her, who are drawn to her charm. Considering her as "bright and beautiful as ever",[153] Wedderburn is captivated by her presence to the point of eloping with her and making her his new lover. Mr. Astley is so fascinated by her allure that asks her to marry him and be his "slave in law".[154] Moreover, during her experience as a prostitute, Bella herself admits to be "a splendid looking woman",[155] able to satisfy her clients' sexual requests. Contrasting the Monster's fear of villagers' reactions to his appearance, that force him to hide himself from society and public relations, "Bella likes meeting new people",[156] highlighting her confidence in navigating social situations and desire for acceptance. She describes herself as "a well-known character"[157] among the individuals she encounters, learning from their conversations and being able to express her own thoughts. The impact of society on the two beings in *Frankenstein* and *Poor Things* is profound, yet divergent in its consequences. Victor's Fiend, repelled by society due to his grotesque aspect, is driven to acts of violence and despair. Despite his initial innocence and desire for acceptance, the relentless rejection he faces from humans ultimately "degrade[s] [him] beneath the meanest animal"[158] and leads him down a path of vengeance and destruction. In contrast, Bella is not defeated by society, but rather spurred to action. Affected by the sight of cruelty, injustice, and violence, she is fueled by a desire to challenge societal norms and effect positive change. She becomes a beacon of hope and progress, suggesting to "start using money properly"[159] to help the poor and the marginalized. Certainly, the upbringing provided by the two parental figures significantly influences the development of the two creations. Victor's Monster, receiving no education from his maker, grows up with a profound sense of inadequacy, isolating himself from the community as a result of his lack of understanding of societal norms and expectations.[160] He must rely on observing and learning from the humans he encounters, piecing together fragments of knowledge and social behaviour through observation, trial and error. At the foundation of his self-directed education are texts such as Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Plutarch's *Lives*, and Goethe's *The Sorrows of Werther*, from which the Creature seeks to understand the complexities of human nature and morality. On the other hand, Bella benefits from a more structured and nurturing upbringing provided by her creator. Unlike Victor's Fiend, she receives education and guidance tailored to her needs and interests, at least formed on how to behave with other humans and interact with individuals. Despite lacking practical experience and a firsthand understanding of the harsh realities of life, she is guided by "what [she] was told by [her] own God",[161] demonstrating her own moral compass and faculty of thought. The conversations held with other characters about religion, politics, and ethics represent a relevant source of knowledge for her, shaping her deeper understanding of the world and influencing her moral outlook. A communal trait shared by both creatures concerns their language acquisition after experiencing the world alone. In *Frankenstein*, as well as in *Poor Things*, "[the] linguistic development moves sequentially from the inarticulate speech of nature to the articulate writing of culture".[162] Victor's Monster initially communicates through primal grunts and gestures until evolving his linguistic abilities, eventually culminating in eloquent and articulate speech. Similarly, Bella's linguistic development undergoes a transformation from rudimentary communication to sophisticated expression, mirroring her intellectual and emotional improvement.[163]

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[146] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, cit., p. 224.
[147] Gray, *op. cit.*, p. 243.
[148] Ibid., p. 35.
[149] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, cit., p. 51.
[150] Ibid., p. 51.
[151] Gray, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

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[152] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, cit., p. 105.
[153] Gray, *op. cit.*, p. 78.
[154] Ibid., p. 155.
[155] Ibid., p. 180.
[156] Ibid., p. 128.
[157] Ibid.
[158] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, cit., p. 228.
[159] Gray, *op. cit.*, p. 196.
[160] A. McWhir, "Teaching the Monster to Read: Mary Shelley, Education and *Frankenstein*", in J. Willinksy (ed.), *The Educational Legacy of Romanticism,* Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1990, pp. 73-92, p. 86.

Concerning the creatures' relationship with the other sex, Frankenstein's marginalized Creature relies entirely on his creator to fulfil his need for a female companion, as he is unable to form relationships with human beings. Denied a partner who may "accompany [him] in [his] exile",[164] the Monster is deprived of the opportunity to share his life with another individual, fuelling his anguish and reinforcing his status as an outcast. On the contrary, Baxter's creation is given the chance to explore her sexual liberty and make deliberate choices about her companions. In asserting to be "a very romantic woman who needs a lot of sex but not from [McCandless] because [he] cannot help treating [her] like a child",[165] Bella articulates her desires and boundaries, refusing to settle for a relationship that does not meet her emotional and physical needs. A crucial aspect worth noting pertains to two different existential inquiries posed by the two creatures to their creators, highlighting the primary themes addressed in each of the two narratives. In the case of Frankenstein's Fiend, the question is "what am I?",[166] underlining the Monster's struggle in defining his identity and place in the world. By posing such a question to his maker and emphasizing his profound crisis, the stress is put on the theme of the Creature's self-validation and recognition, hoping to reconcile his monstrous appearance with his innate capacity for emotion and intellect. In the case of Bella, she asks Godwin: "Where is my child?",[167] marking one of the main issues of Gray's novel: procreation. Highlighting her yearning for motherhood, her question underscores her curiosity to understand why she has a childbirth injury, prompting her to seek answers about her past and origins. In both narratives, asking such important questions, the two creatures show their agency and autonomy, as they search for responses and take initiative in discovering their identities.

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[161] Gray, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

[162] C. Bok, "The Monstrosity of Representation: *Frankenstein* and Rousseau", *English Studies in Canada*, vol. 18, no. 4 (1992), 415-430, p. 418.

[163] Kaczvinsky, *op. cit.*, p. 785.

[164] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, cit., p. 148.

[165] Gray, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

The divergent conclusions of *Frankenstein* and *Poor Things* underscore the profound impact of societal influence on the creatures' respective journeys of development and emphasize their ability to navigate life independently. Rejected by both society and his maker, Victor's Monster can only "suffer alone", paying the consequences of having murdered "the lovely and the helpless".[168] "Polluted by crimes" and aware of losing his creator as his unique source of validation and companionship, the Fiend concludes that he "can find rest [only] in death".[169] Highlighting his existential despair, such a declaration stresses the tragic consequences of societal alienation and the profound anguish experienced by his creator's abandonment. In contrast, Gray's ending of *Poor Things* takes a different trajectory. Finding a sense of fulfilment and purpose through social interactions, Bella defies the odds and creates a life of meaning and significance. She becomes a successful woman of a "greater fame",[170] encouraged to reform societal norms and advocate for change. She uses her "swelling sail"[171] spirit to challenge injustices and promoting equality for all, becoming a doctor and a passionate feminist, engaging actively in social and political spheres.

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[166] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, cit., p. 120.
[167] Gray, *op. cit.*, p. 191.
[168] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, cit., p. 228.
[169] Ibid., p. 229.
[170] Gray, *op. cit.*, p. 240.
[171] Ibid.

III.4.3 Reflections

Through this parallel reading of the master-slave relationship tying Frankenstein to his Monster, and Godwin to Bella, two main aspects are worth stressing. The first one refers to the importance of a wise exercise of power, as well as good parenting behaviour, for a better growth of the subordinate subject or newborn creature. In *Frankenstein*, the Monster's growth and development are stunted by the irresponsible exertion of power and the absence of positive paternal or maternal conduct.[172] Victor demonstrates a reckless disregard for ethical considerations and fails to provide the guidance and nurturing that the creature desperately needs. As a result, the Fiend grows up isolated and misunderstood, experiencing profound loneliness and existential despair, driven to acts of violence and revenge. On the other hand, Bella's growth and development are positively influenced by Godwin's wise application of authority and nurturing parenting behaviour. She is provided with love, guidance, and support throughout her upbringing, to the point of fostering a strong sense of self-worth and agency and making meaningful contributions to her community once in touch with harsh realities.[173] The second point emphasizes that self-discovery empowers individuals to make decisions for themselves and shape their own identities. Despite the fact that the Monster's "better nature is repressed by the social order",[174] his experience into the unknown allows him to grow, gain insight into his own individuality, and define his values. Added to his emancipation shown through his authorial behaviour with his creator, the Creature, at the end of his journey, is perfectly capable of recognizing his mistakes and deciding not to pursue them anymore, leaving "his spirit sleep in peace".[175] Similarly, Bella's experience towards self-awareness enables her to assert her autonomy and make choices aligned with her desires. After witnessing the brutalities of the world and refusing to be defined by the limitations imposed upon her by society, she affirms "I will be a doctor",[176] determined to pursue a path that reflects hervalues and aspirations. Sexual and emotional self-discovery allows her to gain a deeper understanding of herself and what she wants from life, to the point of challenging traditional notions of femininity and sexuality.

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[172] Mellor,"Making a "monster": an introduction to *Frankenstein*", cit., p. 10.

[173] Glending, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

[174] Benjamin, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

[175] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, cit., p. 230.

[176] Gray, *op. cit.*, p. 197.

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has focused on the master-slave dialectic in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and Alasdair Gray's *Poor Things*, emphasizing the intricate power dynamics between creators and creations. To accurately describe the functioning of authority relations in the three books, their central themes and characteristics have been previously investigated. Based on Hegel's theory of the lord-bondsman dichotomy and through the comparative literary analysis of the three works, this study has revealed significant parallels and discrepancies between Victor and his Creature, God and Satan, and Godwin and Bella Baxter. Encouraged by a thirst for independence, the three creations free themselves from authority, rebelling against their masters who, subsequently, must pay the price for their poor parenting and misuse of power. Frankenstein's Monster, Lucifer, and Bella share the same initial subordination to their makers to the point of rebelling, driven by a profound sense of injustice and a desire for self-determination. Once freed from subjugation, they undergo significant transformations, each exploring their newfound autonomy in different ways. The Monster embarks on a quest for understanding and companionship. Despite his initial intentions of revenge against Victor, his journey is marked by a deep yearning for acceptance and a place in the world. Satan, after rebelling against God, becomes the ruler of Hell. His quest for autonomy transforms him into a symbol of defiance and the embodiment of pride, making him a complex figure who embraces his role as the antagonist while grappling with the consequences of his rebellion. Bella, once free from Godwin Baxter's control, embarks on a journey of self-discovery. She navigates the complexities of her identity, challenging societal norms and expectations, allowing her to develop her voice and assert her individuality. The three characters' personalities emerge not only through their interactions with othercharacters but also through their eloquent speeches.

The creations experience divergent endings. The Creature immolates himself in the Artic, acknowledging that his actions have brought him no peace nor fulfilment. Lucifer is doomed to eternal suffering, recognizing the irreparable consequences of his deeds. Contrasting with the tragic conclusions of the Monster and Satan, Bella's ending is marked by self-realization, making significant strides in her personal and professional life. This divergence highlights a critical aspect of postmodern literature, where traditional narratives and literary myths are often subverted. *Poor Things* provides a reimagined version of the Frankenstein plot, where the power dynamics between creator and creature are reframed as a relationship between father and daughter, rather than master and slave. Bella's alternative ending emphasizes the possibility of reconstructing identity and achieving fulfilment outside conventional frameworks, suggesting that the quest for autonomy can lead to positive outcomes.

Furthermore, this reading has examined how the quest for self-determination impacts not only the creations but also their creators, forcing them to confront their own limitations and the consequences of their actions. Victor is ultimately destroyed by his Creature. As the Monster seeks revenge for Frankenstein's abandonment and refusal to create a companion, the scientist is driven to the brink of obsession and madness, culminating in his death in the Arctic wasteland. In *Paradise Lost*, God remains an eternal and omnipotent figure, but He is forced to contend with the consequences of Satan's rebellion. While His authority and divine plan are unchallenged in the broader scope of the narrative, Lucifer's defiance introduces chaos and suffering into the universe. This rebellion and the resulting fall of man necessitate the unfolding of God's plan for redemption and justice, illustrating the complexities and challenges of divine governance. Godwin Baxter is compelled to confront the ethical implications of his actions and treatment of Bella. His paternalistic control is challenged, leading to a revaluation of his beliefs and practices. The three makers' encounters with their rebelling beings lead to profound moments of introspection and transformation, highlighting the intricate interplay between power and vulnerability.

However, all three relationships have illustrated the timeless struggle for independence, exploring the difficult interplay between authority and rebellion. The study has enriched readers' appreciation of *Frankenstein* and its legacy, showing its relevance to contemporary discussions about force dynamics, ethical responsibility, and human identity.

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