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Gazing at the creature, gazing at the monster:
An insight into monstrosity in Mary Shelley's
Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus

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Introductory words

That which surpasses the laws of nature, that which is irrevocably monstrous has been a recognisable trait in light of Romantic literature. A faithful example where this feature plays a pivotal role is Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*. So as to truly evidence its importance within the novel, the axis which is going to delineate the forms of this study is *monstrosity*, taking strictly into account its etymological origin. This English word has its roots in the Late Latin *monstrositas*, meaning "strangeness"; whereas the word *monster* derives from the Latin *monstrum*, which means "divine omen" (Etymonline.com). According to Joan Corominas in his *Diccionario Crítico Etimológico Castellano e Hispánico* (1980), at the same time, both the word *monere* derives from *monstrum*, having the significance of "warn"; and also *monstrare*, from which the Spanish verb "mostrar" stems (165). Having arrived at this particular verb, the idea of exhibition and exposition can be successfully connected with it.

For the purposes of the present work, it is essential to put the notion of exhibition at the centre of the scenery. It is the quality of being conceived under external eyes what fulfils the value of a monstrous creature –the monster must confirm their nature as such by showing himself towards the curious public view, by displaying its features upon the outward world, upon people who can perceive and assure their monstrous physiognomy. Possessing the value of being a strange omen, the monster must complete its essence as it is looked at by people likely to be amazed upon a deformed art which surrounds a warning born to be known.

Under the frame of modernity, something monstrous is regarded as a deviation from the established norm –a Romantic-like unbinding intended to be a shelter from the rigidity of rationality. In this sense, how can a monster be a monster when it does not even have the possibility to be stared at, being rejected from public exhibition? Could this fleeing from modern constraints be conceived as a shelter or a liberation if the deviation cannot find its proper place, a place of conspicuity?

As mentioned at the very beginning, monstrosity is going to be the primal force which will contour the analysis and interpretation of one of the literary works most representative of this trait –*Frankenstein*, written by Mary Shelley and published in 1818 in England. This novel is considered a fundamental work in Romantic literature, developing

significant axes such as sublimity, the figure of the genius, and the one at stake in the present study, just to name a few.

The concept of monstrosity in *Frankenstein* has acquired strong notoriety when it comes to offer an interpretation of the novel, and the quality of being a monster has been mainly attributed to Victor Frankenstein's creation. In fact, the creature is a being primarily identified by its unrestrained appearance that is completely out of the norm; appearance which is the cause of living on the verge of life, isolated from any human contact and deprived of outer recognition. Victor's creation is an unintended monstrous being, the product of his creator's genius.

Together with Shelley's novel, another work is going to be included as a primary source in this study –it is called *Critique of Pure Reason*, written by the German philosopher Immanuel Kant. This work, first published in 1781, deals with Transcendental Idealism, a doctrine established by its author. Although it is not strictly related to the object of study of this dissertation, it *does* lay the foundations for the subsequent critical proposal, functioning as an ultimate piece that complements the conception of exhibition derived from the etymological meaning of monster.

Kant's doctrine is founded upon the notions of subject and object, giving the former a pivotal role. In the introduction to the book, Paul Guyer and Allen Wood state the primal assumption regarding Transcendental Idealism –“it is only from the human standpoint that we can speak of space, time, and the spatiotemporality of the objects of experience, thus that we cognize these things not as they are in themselves but only as they appear under the conditions of our sensibility” (7). Following these ideas, the one in charge of perceiving outer objects and acquiring knowledge in their respects is the subject, for they are given the capacity of sensuously identifying the objects which surround them and compose the space and time in which the subject is immersed, a particular reality conceived differently from subject to subject.

The conception of monstrosity has been widely analysed in light of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, backing up the monstrous nature of Victor's creation. In a general overview of some critiques, the creature does find a recognition under the notion of being a monster. Critics such as Thomas Dutoit and Denise Gigante, for instance, have linked the creature to a faithful notion of monstrosity. The former ascribes a textual function to the unseen face of

the creature –insofar as the monster remains hidden, a descriptive and representative account of his inward nature is fully neglected (850); whereas the latter also associates the creature with a physicality that refuses to be known, implying by consequence that the creature’s face, which is unrepresentable to public sight, gains the value of an enigma (571). A disruption between face and its sensuous appreciation prevents the potential knowledge of inside values and flaws.

As these critiques interpret monstrosity in light of unrecognition and therefore the incapability of gaining a full knowledge of the creature, Barbara Freeman provides an insight which emphasises that the hidden physicality of this creature does find a place of expression. The monster, she states, makes himself present through sublime nature and inspires terror; with his presence, he taints a sort of nature which is supposed to elevate man’s spirit, as Kant highlights in his account of sublimity (24). In this respect, the monster is deprived of recognition but is able to show himself through sublime nature, as much as he is recognised by means of a social construction. According to Mark Mossman, monstrosity is shaped by the daily experiences of the creature; his monstrous nature is an incarnation of cultural effects (176). Monstrosity, thus, finds a place in nature and culture, as a manifestation and product.

Another display of monstrosity, this time in light of psychology, is found in an introduction to *Frankenstein*, written by the essayist Diane Johnson, which states that the category of monstrosity is akin to Freud’s categorization of the id. She claims that the monster is precisely the embodiment of the id, and by consequence, Victor’s double. He creates a concrete representation of his unconsciousness and fulfils his deepest and most fearful wishes (xviii – xix). Along similar lines, the literary critic Barbara Johnson writes about monstrosity as representative of Mary Shelley herself. The repressive force of the monstrous comes to light upon the physicality of a monster, inasmuch as Shelley restricts potential autobiographical desires in her writing (243 – 244). In this sense, monstrosity is portrayed as an extension of Victor and Shelley, a condition that lives primarily in his and her inside, which is let loose and transferred to a monstrous body. Victor’s creation is conceived as a representation of a psychological and autobiographical reality, one that is found in the plot and another that is outside, respectively. Erinç Özdemir is another critic who classifies monstrosity in light of representational parameters, for the monstrous nature

which lives in the creature reveals the unleashed desire for knowledge and power as a quality of the civilised man (140). Basically, these authors agree that monstrosity can potentially bear a reflection of reality, one that offers a metaphor of a psychological insight, of a biography, and of civilization.

What is common to all these critiques is the recognition of Victor's creation as a distinct monster, leaving the characteristic of exhibition unattended. Monstrosity has been broadly considered a representation of reality; metaphorical readings which highlight the monster as an enigma or as reflective of nature, culture, unconsciousness, and biographical facts have been generally the rule. It is important to underline that all of them address a monster per se, one whose authenticity is going to be put to question in this study, for a significant respect regarding the etymological meaning of monstrosity/monster has been left aside. An insight into exhibition as a mandatory quality for a comprehensive view upon the creature is going to be the main axis in the present work.

Taking Kant's philosophical doctrine into account, is it possible to say that Victor's creation is apprehended as an object by the outward world? Not exactly. The creature is most of the time burdened with unrecognition; he spends his days in isolation after trying to make himself present to some people, by whom he received nothing but rejection upon the sighting of such strange physical appearance. There is no subject who can cognise him through perceptual mechanisms, specifically sight. Apart from his creator who does possess some knowledge about the creature (which he wishes to forget, though), along the novel, it is possible to obtain only mere glimpses of the physical figure of this being who is destined to live free from external sensuous apprehension.

At this point, the disruption of a gap becomes prominent –Victor's creature does not fulfil the characteristic of being visually apprehended, one that is essential for being a monster. The etymological meaning pointed out by Corominas does not find a place in the novel's *monster*, for he is absolutely deprived of being part of someone's reality, he has been unseen most of the time and must remain unseen.

Considering the previous notions, the present study intends to pursue the idea that, throughout Shelley's novel, Victor's creation exists to defy a comprehensive significance of monstrosity –the lack of visual perception undermines it and causes the existence of the creature to be a defective one. A new insight into the monster dawns along the novel, one

whose features lack exemplary forms of monstrosity, for there are just glimpses of a monster; only dispersed fragments account for his existence. The monster, or rather the creature, may be the very incarnation of the failure of Victor's Romantic enterprise.

Although Victor's creation does appear under the figure of a monster in many critiques regarding the issue and he is referred as such in the very novel, the main proposal in this study is that along Shelley's work there are just glimpses of total monstrosity within the creature; he presents himself in fragments. He is not able to make himself visible in front of the eyes of people, on the contrary, he must live in seclusion. Following Kant's terms, the creature mostly reveals himself upon nobody's eyes, upon nobody's conditions of sensibility; accordingly, the emphasis of the Romantic sensibility towards sensuous perceptions does not entirely reach the creature's existence –he is invisible most of the time, he remains hidden and scared of showing himself; whereas for Victor, the creature takes the form of a memory and reminiscence worthy of obscurity; enough obscurity so as to diffuse the image of his hideous creation and apart it from sight (or even from reminiscence).

Victor narrates: "I beheld the wretch—the miserable monster whom I had created" (44), and continues with desperation: "Oh! No mortal could support the horror of that countenance" (44). The young scientist beholds his creation, giving him a place in someone's sensibility and a territory in someone's reality; however, Victor affirms and foreshadows the creature's subsequent deprivation of human sight and contemplation, banishing his creation from a total fulfilment of the implications of being a monster par excellence.

The most important aspect derived from critiques regarding monstrosity in *Frankenstein* is the recognition of a monster under the notion of disclosure. In these critiques, the monster had been linked to a revelation –or not– of inner traits, psychological relations, cultural forms, biographical facts, among others. However, the etymological significance has been left aside, despite being a fundamental characteristic of a monster. In the theoretical framework, authors such as Foucault, Niall Scott, and Jeffrey J. Cohen complement this conception of monstrosity as a disclosure. The intelligibility of the monster highlighted by Foucault, for example, will take particular prominence in dialogue with sight as a mechanism for apprehension and knowledge postulated by Kant.

One of the principal objectives of this study is to evidence the instances in which Victor's creation can be termed as a monster per se; this implies the recognition of all the characteristics which compose the quality of being an authentic monster. On the other hand, another objective is to prove the creature's lack of monstrosity –in terms of the etymological meaning of the word–, feature that can be observed along most part of the novel.

Accordingly, the lack of apprehension by means of sight towards the creature constitutes one of the main objectives for this work –to identify the moments in which Victor's creation is configured under the notion of space and time stated by Kant. As the creature must be placed in a particular space and time through the subject's sensibility, how can he belong to these conditions of knowledge if he cannot reveal himself physically in front of people?

Finally, meeting special attention towards the pivotal purpose of this seminar, another objective is to identify the Romantic traits in connection with the notion of monstrosity. Is the creation of Victor a successful freeing from the constraints of modern times? Which are the implications of the concealment of the creature? And, how are these related to the Romantic sensibility which is clearly a present tension throughout Shelley's novel?

Theoretical framework

As one of the Romantic works of the epoch, *Frankenstein* is a novel which entirely emphasises self-exaltation –the Romantic subject portrayed along Shelley’s work possesses exalted abilities and skills, power is by nature embedded in their ways of acting. This is precisely what leads the plot to disaster, to misery and death. In *The Visionary Company* (1971), Harold Bloom writes about this and states: “As an assertion, this Romantic self-exaltation can be viewed as mere megalomania of course” (xxiii), implying that Romantics may well be placed under an exaggerated sense of talents and a delusive greatness; and establishing that many modern critics have considered this in such manner. However, Bloom immediately affirms that “the Romantic assertion is not just an assertion; it is a metaphysic, a theory of history, and much more important than either of these, it is what all of the Romantics [...] called a vision, a way of seeing, and of living, a more human life” (xxiii – xxiv). Assuming this, the Romantic poet may be similar to Victor Frankenstein, whose deeds resemble God’s deeds.

Following Bloom’s ideas, Victor’s self-exaltation is what paves the way towards his creature. He assumes a task which is not human but godly, not profane but sacred. In this sense, the exaltation of Victor’s capacities could be the most conspicuous Romantic trait along the plot of the novel. Monstrosity, for its part, finds existence within a Romantic subject whose potential is overrated and produces a defective creation –although he succeeds in the task of giving life upon lifeless matter, he fails in creating a beautiful being; further, he even fails in creating an authentic monster who bears authentic monstrosity.

So as to develop an account for the concept of monstrosity, a significant work by the French philosopher Michel Foucault must be addressed. First published in 1999, *Les Anormaux* deals with the condition of monstrosity within a legal scope. For the author, a monster –or the *human monster*, in Foucault’s words– is a being who surpasses or violates society’s and nature’s laws; appearing, thus, under a biological-legal domain. The human monster’s existence finds a place in a total corruption of laws (61). It is the monster’s natural form of counter-nature what possesses both the impossible and the forbidden, and he must be affirmed as such, so as to incarnate an explanation of all his deviations and violations of the norm, legally and naturally (62). Foucault links monstrosity to the biological-legal domain, emphasising the essence of the monster as something that corrupts

the norm, condensing in his figure all which is illicit, and remaining intelligible for the outward world. In other words, the monster is a creature who must be readable.

Apart from Foucault's view on monstrosity stated above, another domain which has been linked to this category is the social sphere. In light of Shelley's novel, Bloom's *Modern Critical Interpretations* (2007) about *Frankenstein* offers various essays which develop a critical perspective towards an interpretation of the novel. One of them, called "Acts of Becoming: Autobiography, *Frankenstein*, and the Postmodern body" and written by Mark Mossman, conceives monstrosity to be a constant construction reflected upon Victor's creature. Along the novel, what the creature experiences "is a continued repetition of scorn, hatred, and fear" (175), qualities which are precisely responsible for configuring his monstrosity. Mossman states that Victor's creature is an embodiment of cultural forms, the product of daily life, resulting in his self-conception characterised by abnormality. The main mechanism that –according to the critic's view– shapes the category of monstrosity is culture; the cultural effects of the creature's existence are what construct it. Following this author's ideas, it can be said that the components which take part on modelling the monster are culture and the people who can be found inside; all of them relate in favour of configuring the force of monstrosity –"It is when the creature is "capable," then, when it articulates an ability, and worst of all when it looks back at the observer, that it becomes a monster" (177). The relation between observed and observer takes a pivotal role, establishing it as fundamental for the achievement of the category of monstrosity. The monster still remains readable and intelligible, however, as a metaphor of society.

Along the same lines and in a broad sense, as stated by Niall Scott in his introduction to *Monsters and the Monstrous: Myths and Metaphors of Enduring Evil* (2007), the figure of the monster is the reflection and critique of human existence (1), which is again strictly related to cultural and social influence. More specifically, under Scott's perspective, monstrosity has gained increasing significance as a metaphor of imagination; a monstrous being is one who represents an incarnation of "subterranean depths" (1). This idea is complemented by another which emphasises the sense of the monster being "a deviation from an idea of acceptability" (3), from the established norm. In other words, the monster is what surpasses the boundaries of rational forms, exhibiting the imagination's free expression.

Similar to Scott's perception which relates monstrosity to subterranean depths, the essayist Diane Johnson in an introduction to *Frankenstein* links the category of monstrosity to Freud's categorization of the id. She states that the monster is Victor's double since he represents an incarnation of the id. Following Johnson's ideas, what Victor creates is an actual representation of his unconsciousness that acts as an agent for the fulfilment of the scientist's deepest and most fearful wishes; dramatizing, in this way, two sides of himself (xviii – xix). In this sense, monstrosity is portrayed as an extension of Victor himself, a condition that lives primarily in his inside, which is let loose and transferred to a monstrous body. The monster is a figure of boundless expression that accounts for the violation of an established order.

Going back to a rather cultural domain, a similar critical perspective is presented by Jeffrey J. Cohen in his *Monster Theory* (1996). He argues that monstrosity is basically a disguised form of a particular culture, and it includes elements such as fear and anxiety – “the monster only exists to be read” (4). Cohen supports the latter idea by means of the etymology of the word, *monstrum*, meaning “that which reveals”; in this sense, what he emphasises is the revealing of a determined culture embodied by the monster. A monstrous figure is supposed to be a reflection of “social, cultural, and literary-historical” relations (5), a sort of binnacle which reveals a particular culture at a particular time. For Cohen, monstrosity and the forbidden “makes the monster all the more appealing as a temporary egress from constraint” (17). Thus, the author configures this monster under a space that has no defined boundaries, he is the way out of any possible cultural limitations.

After revising these literary critiques and accounts about monstrosity, it is possible to observe a certain tendency towards a characterisation regarding cultural and social patterns. The monster being a construct configured under these spheres is common to the works of authors such as Mossman, Scott, and Cohen. Another indispensable feature displayed in this brief revision is the conception of monstrosity in light of an extreme release of imagination and a materialization of the id, as stated –once again– by Scott, and Johnson, respectively. Following these ideas, the focus of attention upon the category of monstrosity has been guided by a metaphorical sense of culture, and imagination. Foucault's account is also very significant –although monstrosity is considered under a different domain, the biological-legal, the monster's intelligibility property delivers a

paramount axis which reappears in the other revised works also. In this sense, monstrosity must be readable; that which surpasses the norm is meant to be known.

It can be said that most of these perspectives build the significance of monstrosity upon elements which are alien to it; rather, they seem inclined to conceive monstrosity as being reflective of the human condition. Romantic literature, for its part, conceives monstrosity as a reflection of artistic creation. In an account of Romantic aesthetics, Marie-Hélène Huet states that “monstrous beings [...] came to simbolize the singular and tragic power of the work of art” (122), positing the artist as “sole genitor of an inimitable progeny” (162), and emphasising on a direct relation between monstrosity and art (162). Following these ideas, artistic creation under a Romantic view has been oriented towards the conception of a monstrous project, one that is not restrained to rules.

Along similar lines, Gigante acknowledges that “The aesthetic definition of monstrosity changed significantly during [the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries], from an Enlightenment concept of defect or deformity to a Romantic notion of monstrosity as too much life” (434). From the mere conception of monstrosity as abnormality, Romanticism comes to reformulate it, adding a sense of excess and lack of moderation. In addition, the author makes a contrast between the idea of beauty and monstrosity –whereas the former stands for a fixed harmony of parts (as the principle of life), the latter arises from an opposed principle in which harmony does not shape the forms (436). Therefore, the Romantic perspective towards monstrosity underlines an aesthetic quality which is characterised by the cult of what is disproportionate, excessive, and distant from what has been usually considered *beautiful*.

Another work which draws on the notion of the opposite of beauty is *Historia de la Fealdad* (2007), by Umberto Eco. It provides a significant insight into the monstrous and the ugly as conceived along history. Under the frame of Romanticism, Eco establishes the relation between the aesthetic category of the sublime and the idea of ugliness, highlighting that the former imposes a shift on the common conception of the latter (272). In this respect, Romantic literature has been characterised by exploring monstrosity in relation to ugliness and sublimity. The author also states that Romanticism admits a great aesthetic pleasure towards this kind of ugliness, the one that provokes repulsion (278). The most faithful Romantic exaltation of the ugly, continues Eco, can be found in the “Preface” to

Cromwell, published in 1827 and written by the French Romantic writer Victor Hugo in his account about drama (279 – 280). “Lo bello no tiene más que un tipo, lo feo tiene mil” (10), writes Hugo, emphasising that beauty offers absolute but restricted harmony, on the contrary, what is ugly presents unlimited aspects which find harmony within the entire creation (10). Monstrosity and ugliness are explored as endless and pleasurable aesthetic experiences.

For Romantic literature, the aesthetic expression of monstrosity and ugliness rests on an immense territory of pleasure. Broadly, Huet arrives at the idea that monstrosity symbolises the power of the work of art, one that is subject to an unrestrained creative force. Gigante, on the other hand, contributes to the notion of monstrosity by relating it to the idea of excessiveness and disproportion. These elements, by consequence, could be seen in light of Huet’s view upon monstrosity as art, a pleasurable art that bears *too much life*. Along with these conceptions, Hugo posits the vastness of the ugly and the monstrous, highlighting the pleasure which this immensity of elements entails. Finally, Eco places monstrosity –as conceived by a Romantic sensibility– in light of the aesthetic category of the sublime, emphasising also the pleasure of experiencing it, along with the ugly, and the monstrous.

For the purposes of the present investigation, the property of monstrosity as something readable and intelligible given by Foucault will be of paramount importance. Since the focus of this work is the etymological meaning from which the word monstrosity derives, that of exhibition and revelation, the characteristic proposed by the French philosopher acquires a major significance. It is worth to mention that this notion can be repeatedly found among the rest of the authors cited –Mossman writes about the relationship between observer and observed (monster), Scott considers the monster an exhibition of an unleashed imagination, Johnson conceives monstrosity as a revelation of Victor’s deepest wishes, and Cohen claims that the monster is *that which reveals* a culture. Under the frame of this investigation, Victor’s creature will not be considered a monster par excellence for he cannot be exhibited, and therefore he is not apprehended by means of the sensuous mechanism of sight. In this sense, the creature does not fulfil Foucault’s property of intelligibility which characterises the human monster. Furthermore, the view on monstrosity as a representation of cultural and social spheres will be left aside, for this

category –closely associated to its etymological meaning of exhibition– will be mainly analysed by taking into consideration the novel itself. The creature reveals himself through fragments of monstrosity, hence he does not embody a certain culture but the failure of Victor’s Romantic enterprise.

Along with monstrosity, the axis of this study, it is important to include the concept of fragmentation. An essential claim which is going to mould the subsequent analysis is that Victor’s creature bears a kind of monstrosity which presents itself through loose fragments. Along the plot, the murders are basically the only means by which the creature’s existence is hinted. In this sense, fragments compose the totality of a monster, but the creature cannot fulfil the one which is at stake –exhibition. Most of the characters in *Frankenstein* are deprived of sighting an authentic monster, they are only offered glimpses of a monster.

For the sake of this study, then, it is important to take into account the notion of fragmentation. The Mexican poet Octavio Paz, in *The Bow and the Lyre* (1956), reflects on the process of poetic composition carried out by the poet. He conceives the poem as a whole, an integral unit which finds a sense of completeness by means of fragmentation. Following this author’s ideas, each fragment reflects unity and creates a secret coherence; the poem flows, which is what designs its totality (59). Although he refers to poems, this idea of fragmentation can be faithfully applicable to Shelley’s novel, for it is composed also by fragments –letters and accounts of different narrators– which carry –and relate in– the notion of totality. Paz basically establishes that fragmentation must be seen in strict relation with unity, a literary work forms links between fragments and produces something intelligibly bigger. At the level of the narrative, then, Shelley’s *Frankenstein* does account for the whole by means of the interrelated fragments; however, etymologically speaking, does the creature achieve the same state?

In his *Critical and Clinical* (1998), Gilles Deleuze also develops some ideas regarding the notion of fragmentation in terms of the writing activity. He establishes a distinction between the European and the North American writer –the former has the sense of organic totality by essence, whereas they voluntarily need to acquire the notion of fragment, reaching it through a tragic reflection or an experience which involves disaster and chaos (90). In this respect, as Mary Shelley represents European culture, it can be said

that she included fragments within the composition of her novel –the narrations of different voices, letters, intertextual references–, and these fragments, at the same time, were configured under a violation of norms, under a disastrous and boundless event at the novel’s plot. Thus, spontaneously, the European writer possesses an easiness towards totality as the American writer inclines to a natural form of fragmentation. On the other hand, the former deliberately leans towards fragments for they do not appear naturally in their works. In other words, the inclination to fragmentation is not spontaneous but consciously planned. Fragments upon the novel are as planned as the creature himself –he has been intended, his features selected, his fragments collected.

Following Deleuze’s idea of chaos in light of the novel, this comes with the existence of Victor’s creature, fragments of a monster account for the disaster and for his quality of strangeness. In *The Anatomy of Influence* (2011), the critic Harold Bloom points out the Latin origin of strange *extraneous*, meaning “foreign”, “out of doors”; in his own words, “strangeness is uncanniness: the estrangement of the homelike or commonplace” (19). The separation of the conventional and the established norm, according to Bloom, is a consequence of uncanniness, which is appropriate to the etymological meaning of the word. As an outside figure, the rest of the characters only obtain a fragment of the monster, whereas readers are able to conceive the creature as a whole unity.

Through revising these authors in light of the concept of fragmentation, the insight obtained is that although this accounts for separation, it is also possible and accurate to visualise the matter as a whole. Paz recognises that by fragments the author has the potential to create a coherent unit; Deleuze conceives these fragments as likely to be found within European literature; and finally Bloom, through his vision of strangeness, opens the path to make a relation between the foreign nature of the creature and his fragmented appearance for the rest of the characters in the novel. In this sense, the uncanny creature is not meant to be totally apprehended by the characters, the limited place where he belongs makes him incapable of reaching a sense of totality.

In the present investigation, the notion of fragmentation as the bearer of a totality stated by Paz will be highlighted at two different levels –in light of the narrative and of the plot. Long descriptions given by both Victor and his creature, for instance, offer the readers of the novel an organic view on monstrosity along the narrative. On the contrary, the

creature –who remains constantly hidden from the characters’ sensibility– just reaches the category of fragment; succeeding, in this manner, the sense of fragmentation which comes together with modernity as a threat against the state of totality. At this level, monstrosity is neither entirely exhibited nor affirmed by his surroundings, therefore the creature remains a fragment for the outward world rather than a unity. He is intelligible for the readers but unreadable for any sensuous perceptions in his environment.

Summing up, monstrosity and fragmentation are going to be essential concepts for the present study, concepts which are found in confluence within *Frankenstein*. On the one hand, the former acquires its significance from the etymological sense of the word which inevitably leads to think about one of its aspects, exhibition. On the other hand, monstrosity is regarded as being composed of fragments, therefore a fragmented (not comprehensive kind of) monster may be reflected along the novel. These notions are going to be interpreted in light of the work of art itself, hence the pertinent elements that will support this study derive from a New Critical perspective. The main features of this literary theory, then, will be explored so as to arrive at a thorough view upon the theoretical foundations of this work. Furthermore, another theory which is relevant for the purposes of this analysis is the Theory of the Gaze, therefore some of its main characteristics will be also taken into account so as to complement those which are part of a New Critical view.

In order to develop a brief but broad account of the aims of the literary approach, it is necessary to recall one of the main contributors to New Criticism, Cleanth Brooks. In his essay, “The New Criticism” (1979), he states that a metaphor which is drawn from outside the work of art is always second-hand in comparison with the one which derives from the work itself (600), assuming a more valuable significance to the evidence that can be found along the lines of a poem. At the same time, he does not deny the worth of those aspects which are external to the work of art but certainly do not treat them as priority when understanding and interpreting such work (600). Brooks writes that the New critic “engage[s] in a microscopic study of a text” by means of an “adequate reading” (601) in which the elements of the text form relations and accounts for its organic composition.

In a more specific account of the elements which offer concreteness to the present study, the *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957) by Northrop Frye –another important literary critic associated with New Critical perspectives– provides some relevant insights. Frye

emphasises the significance of “poetic etymology, or the tendency to associate words similar in sound or sense” (334), and states that, historically, students were encouraged to make verbal associations between words and concepts (334). Following Frye’s ideas, the present analysis has its basis on the etymological sense of monstrosity and monster, which leads to relate those words to the notion of exhibition, the Latin *monstrare*. The etymological sense serves to build an authentic monster, one that rests on varied branches of different meanings. Each of these branches accounts for each fragment that composes a monster par excellence; being etymology, then, a bearer of great relevance in criticism and in the present work.

Another aspect relevant for the purposes of this study is drawn from Frye’s literary critique –the interpretation of a work of art is embedded in a larger totality (73). Together with the assumption that words have polysemous meanings, these meanings, writes Frye, have to be understood in terms of the whole. This whole, in a broad sense, is formed by three parts –meaning or *dianoia*, narrative or *mythos*, and characterization or *ethos*. In this manner, word meanings –most of the time polysemous– are seen as “a sequence of contexts or relationships” that the author calls “phases” (73). Frye gives the text the possibility of meeting different and various interpretations thanks to polysemy, and diverse meanings acquire more or less significance that others for the relations that can be established taking into account other aspects of the novel, its narrative and characters. In the analysis of *Frankenstein*, through the ambiguity of meanings it is possible to arrive at certain tensions within the work of art itself, tensions that account for the very configuration of Victor and the monster and contribute to the notion of monstrosity.

Along with the aspects drawn from the New Critical perspective, the Theory of the Gaze will also be helpful for the aims of the present study. As its axis comes from the Latin *monstrare*, the act of sighting or gazing will be relevant as well. In their *Cultural Studies and Critical Theory*, first published in 1997, Patrick Fuery and Nick Mansfield sum up the importance this topic, the gaze. They state that, apart from being a mechanism that allows for sensuous perception, it is also one that relates subject and cultural orders, and one by which subjectivities are made up –it “impacts on, shapes, and contorts the body/subject” (71 – 72). In this sense, the gaze is the force that validates the subject, both as individual

and as part of a sociocultural sphere. This confirmation by means of the gaze is sought by subjectivities in order to be recognised by their surroundings, outside their self (76).

Following the ideas of this book, it is relevant to explore the foundations that the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan has contributed to the study of the gaze. By means of an experience with fishing, Lacan arrives at a metaphor that reflects a “universal psychic struggle” –while a sardine can floats past, a fisherman asks him whether he could see it; Lacan answers yes, and the fisherman says “Well, it does not see you” and laughs (82). The point is that this experience sheds light on the sense of confirmation that subjectivities seek throughout their lives –they continually seek the gaze of another so as to validate their existence and presence (82). Similarly, “when we read we are seeking confirmation from the gaze of the text; we want the gaze to see us” (82); and it is only in this manner by which readers are able to be recognised by the text and also understand the text.

Going to the direct source in which Lacan writes about this experience, he states: “No doubt, in the depths of my eye, the picture is painted. The picture, certainly, is in my eye. But I am not in the picture” (96). The configuration of a reality in which the can belongs is achieved by means of establishing the gaze towards it. On the contrary, the observer is not involved in this reality through any other means than the gaze, a gaze that is not reciprocal and hence minimises his relevance in the picture. In *Frankenstein*, this feature will be considered in light of the manner in which the creature relates to his surroundings, and how these surroundings configure a defective version of monstrosity along the narrative.

Along with all these elements which form the bases of this study, Kant’s doctrine is also an essential complement for it establishes a kind of relation between subject and object that is precisely supported by sensuous apprehension. In this case, sight is, of course, the sensuous mechanism that will be highlighted along the analysis and interpretation of *Frankenstein*. All the elements explored above are fundamental for moulding the analysis of Shelley’s novel and developing a new insight into monstrosity.

The roots of a defective monstrosity

As discussed in the introductory words of the present study, authors have been extensively arguing about the notion of monstrosity in light of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. Their works usually associate monstrosity with a metaphorical significance regarding sociocultural aspects, and a representational function that gives an account of reality. However, these works tend to leave an important feature aside –the quality of exhibition which can be faithfully linked to monstrosity as they are connected by etymological roots, and which is going to delineate the following insights.

“It was on a dreary night of November that I beheld the accomplishment of my toils. [...] I saw the dull yellow eye of the creature open; it breathed hard, and a convulsive motion agitated its limbs” (43), declares a regretful Victor in chapter V when narrating the first moments of a creation which was born with a flash of unrecognition in himself, and being somehow fated to live at the verges of the characters' perceptions. At this point, however, Victor's gaze upon the creature –contradictorily– ends up sentencing the gaze of the rest of the characters towards his creation, for the creator despises the fruit of his *toils* just like the rest of the characters, at least the ones who get the chance to encounter the creature's countenance. Victor's rejection upon his creation becomes a foreshadowing force that determines a similar reception of the creature in the hands of the other characters, and hence shapes the view upon monstrosity. Using Lacan's words, the picture of the cottagers, for example, is painted in the depths of the creature's eyes, nevertheless, he is not part of this or any other picture that emerges along the novel; and if so, these pictures reject him.

Following the previous ideas, the night in which the creature breaths for the very first time is as dreary as the creature's monstrous countenance. The creature's opened *dull* yellow eye finds correspondence in the obscurity with which he is conceived within the characters' sensuous perceptions because of his incapability of exhibiting his figure in front of them. The kind of nature that accompanies his miserable existence is murky, horrific, sublime; one that intensifies the dullness of his very eyes and figure.

Chapter V delights the readers with the feelings and corporeal sensations that Victor experiences when gazing the fruit of his toils, emotions and perceptions which are not at all harmless but powerful enough to be the ghost that haunts and deprives the creature of the

recognition which he yearns for. Victor curses his creation – “Oh! No mortal could support the horror of that countenance” (44), on the one hand, giving the creature a space in his own sensibility; and on the other hand, alienating him from any other sensuous perception, for no one would withstand a frightful frame as the monster’s.

The scientist sentences his creation to be only known through fragments for the rest of the characters along the novel; whereas readers are provided even with the creature’s own narration of his experiences and feelings, shaping the figure of an exemplary *monster* who fulfils the etymological significances as such. Reading Shelley’s novel paves the way towards a comprehensive view upon the monster; by means of Victor’s narration, for instance, the planning of his creation and the procedures that give him life are conveyed with great detail:

I collected bones from charnel-houses and disturbed, with profane fingers, the tremendous secrets of the human frame. In a solitary chamber, or rather cell, at the top of the house, and separated from all the other apartments by a gallery and staircase, I kept my workshop of filthy creation; my eyeballs were starting from their sockets in attending to the details of my employment. (40 – 41)

Since the very beginning of the novel, readers are able to apprehend the strangeness (*monstrositas*) of such creature. Profanation allows for the birth of an eccentric sort of being, therefore contemporary readers can be witness to the origins of a monstrous event. As much as Victor attends to the details of his employment, readers are provided with a step-by-step process of creation, a process which underlines the oddness of a supernatural event. Furthermore, could this monster be representative of a divine omen (*monstrum*) for readers? Of course. It could be the omen for the unrewarding coexistence between positivist knowledge and the pursuit of a Romantic enterprise. The monster comes to warn (*monere*) the readers about defying the limits of human capabilities; self-exaltation, one of the most conspicuous Romantic traits in the novel, is portrayed as a means for misery and disgrace.

Going back to the central element of this study, exhibition (*monstrare*), readers are provided with a detailed account of his birth and experiences; creating, thus, a conceptual image of a monster. This image finds definite concretion in the narration of the creature that begins in chapter XI:

It is with considerable difficulty that I remember the original era of my being; all the events of that period appear confused and indistinct. A strange multiplicity of sensations seized me, and I saw, felt, heard, and smelt at the same time; and it was, indeed, a long time before I learned to distinguish between the operations of my various senses. (90)

With difficulty at first, the creature begins his own account of experiences. Throughout his story, readers imagine both his physicality and the sensations that his experiences bear. As the creature learns how it is to be alive, readers –at the same time–learn about the life of the monster, one that fully achieves the category of monstrosity.

It is interesting to notice that this distinction moulds the creature into a dichotomous form, since –at different levels, the plot and the narrative– Victor’s creation is composed by contrasting natures; on the one hand, he is just the fragment of a monster, and on the other hand, he is a monster par excellence. In this respect, the creature can be considered a dichotomy since two antithetical sides coexist in himself. The characters who form part of the plot are unable to apprehend this monstrous figure by sight because he remains hidden from their view, the murders and their consequences are the only hints of his existence, leaving aside any kind of perceptual involvement. On the contrary, letters, different narrators, and intertextual references are some of the fragments which provide the readers with an organic composition and with a monster who actually fulfils the etymological significance emphasised in this work –his quality of being exhibited, specifically. Throughout the narration of the novel, the reader can imagine the monster and be witness to the process of his creation and his miserable life experiences.

As the nature and fate of the creature, very much condemned by Victor, is to live in isolation from the rest, the feature of exhibition is not fulfilled at the level of the plot. However, at the level of the narrative, readers encounter a monster par excellence, not only a fragment but a totality which is definitely appreciated along the progression of the novel. Taking this into account, the contrary occurs in the plot since the monster just can be considered a creature, one that does not reach totality but loose fragments.

In *Frankenstein*, the characters in general –Victor’s family can be a clear example– get to *know* the creature just by means of his acts, the murders. Nevertheless, this knowledge is absolutely distant from the sensitive knowledge exposed by Kant in his

Transcendental Idealism, for no one –except Victor, and Walton by the end of the novel– is able to sensuously apprehend the physicality of the creature, threatening the very significance of senses, which finds emphasis in Romantic literature and unites both subject and object, the beholder and the observed, in the establishment of a relationship based on recognition by means of perceptual and sensitive mechanisms. Following Kant’s doctrine, the creature actually appears under the conditions of Victor’s sensibility, not strictly as the creature is *per se* but as his creator perceives him.

Since the reception of the object –in this case the creature– hinges on Victor’s narration, the feelings and emotions of the latter are exposed. It is paramount to take this into account because it is precisely Victor’s sensibility what sentences the monstrous nature of the being he had just created. During the recall of the birth of his creation, the scientist expresses: “[...] breathless horror and disgust filled my heart” (43), emphasising on the manner in which the creature is perceived by him, in other words, on his reaction at the contemplation of what he had done. He continues, “A mummy again endued with animation could not be so hideous as that wretch” (44), highlighting his horrific appearance which is worthy of aversion. “I had gazed on him while unfinished; he was ugly then, but when those muscles and joints were rendered capable of motion, it became a thing such as even Dante could not have conceived” (44), says Victor, again highlighting the repulsive sensation at gazing his creation. The creature, in this manner, gains an indelible place in the scientist’s mind and sensibility, and is coloured in accordance with his artist’s palette.

At this point, his emotions are at the service of dismay and abhorrence. Thus, monstrosity is configured under what Victor creates and what he feels about this creation. The relationship between subject and object highlights the receptive quality of sensibility of the former towards the latter. In the novel, monstrosity is mainly visible from the eyes of its originator to the eyes of the readers –Victor is the one who assigns a monstrous essence to the creature by creating and rejecting him, and also the one who deprives the rest of the characters of the contemplation of the creature’s hideous countenance. Victor withholds the creature from exhibition, and the characters from gazing at him.

As stated at the beginning of this section, a contradiction hinges on the fact that it is the very gaze of his inventor what deprives the monster of a total fulfilment of monstrosity. Victor confesses he was “Unable to endure the aspect of the being [he] had created” (43),

afraid of the possibility to look at him again. Nevertheless, the aspect of this being is already part of the scientist's spatio-temporality, and located in his imagination. Underlined by the Romantic sensibility, imagination and reminiscence are constant traits noticeable in the works of art which can be qualified along a Romantic perspective. In this sense, Shelley's *Frankenstein* is a novel written in past tense and constituted by the narrations of different voices, hence they are accounts of each narrator's sensibility and experiences. These narrations, by consequence, are shaped by reminiscence, the recount of past events.

Along these lines, as Shelley's narrative is composed by the accounts of different narrators and letters, it displays a variety of fragments which end up forming an organic composition. Each of these fragments are moulded out of the characters' reminiscence, out of their imaginations capable of renewing past experiences. Thus, the narrative technique, that underlines the importance of fragments as bearers of totality, can be faithfully linked with the manner in which the creature unfolds throughout the plot. Monstrosity is seen in terms of fragments, but ones that do not achieve a state of totality, on the contrary, they only allow for a defective version of a monster. In this sense, characters' lack of visual apprehension of the creature helps to defy a comprehensive view upon monstrosity, and the monster loses his nature as such, remaining just a creature. As a consequence, two conceptions of fragmentation are notable –one that does bear the fulfilment of a bigger unit or organic composition, and one that fails at achieving a whole, hence an exemplary form of monstrosity.

Fragmentation as a narrative technique, then, is carried out by each of the narrators through the mechanism of reminiscence. Surely, the readers of the novel may think about Victor as engaged in a process of writing and retelling, not of any kind but one that puts emphasis and finds success throughout a recollection of life experiences; they may also think about some of the letter's senders –Victor, Elizabeth, Walton– and place them at a desk, writing in the ink of reminiscence.

Along Victor's account of past events, the sensations evoked by the birth of his creation in a present time are recollected once again as consequence of this reminiscence which finds concreteness in his writing. In this respect, imagination is likely to work at the service of an increased form of horror. Sensations and emotions are moulded into a renewed sort of monstrosity, one that is bound to revive the manner in which Victor

perceived his creation and to produce a reformulated and more intense fear, where the figment of imagination is far more unpleasant than the event itself which took place in the past.

Recalling his first experiences, Victor declares himself unable to endure the contour of the being, whereas at the present time of creation he spent a long time working on his task and, by consequence, being witness to and actually tolerating his horrid frame. However, through Victor's imagination and its reminiscence, he experiences a new vision towards the creature, one where fear is intensified at the possibility of sighting him, and that inspires intense and terrible sensations. Accordingly, this new vision threatens the possibility of exhibition –erasing the conceptual representation of the creature within Victor's consciousness would eradicate the only kind of authentic monstrosity along the plot.

As Victor continues reminiscing about his misfortunate deeds, he recalls his deplorable state: “But I was in reality very ill, and surely nothing but the unbounded and unremitting attentions of my friend could have restored me to life. The form of the monster on whom I had bestowed existence was forever before my eyes” (48). Terrified about meeting the hideous frame of his creation again, Victor's reminiscence helps to renew the fear produced at gazing the creature in the present and, in this way, it sentences him to endure an everlasting image of the fruit of his toils. The monster lives, inevitably, forever before his eyes, and forever inside his imagination.

At this point, the notion of exhibition finds explicit form –Victor's imagination is engaged in an eternal depiction of the creature's monstrous countenance. In this sense, under an etymological significance, monstrosity fulfils the meaning which the rest of the characters cannot, that of being exhibited. Although the form of exhibition is not carried out by an actual contemplation of the physicality of the monstrous creature, it is performed by the inventor's imagination. Victor condemns himself to an everlasting recalling of his creation's eccentric contour and, as mentioned previously, he also condemns the rest of the characters to the impossibility of staring at his body. In this manner, the consequences of the scientist's self-exaltation are directed towards a comprehensive recognition of monstrosity.

This idea of Victor's double condemnation upon himself and the others can be evidenced in the following quotation: "I then reflected, and the thought made me shiver, that the creature whom I had left in my apartment might still be there, alive and walking about. I dreaded to *behold* this monster, but I feared still more that Henry should *see* him" (47, emphasis added). When Victor expresses these worries, he acknowledges the burden of unrecognition with which the creature has to deal with throughout his experiences. Rejection is what the creature finds, even from the one character who has formed and sensuously apprehended his monstrous physical appearance. Exhibition is denied, hence a comprehensive view towards the category of monstrosity is refused. There is no turning back for Victor –he is afraid of looking at his creation, but the latter is already *forever before Victor's eyes*. In this sense, what seems important for the scientist is to save others from a possible gaze at this monstrosity. In this respect, Victor's reluctance towards his monstrous being is a constant force that determines the creature's defective monstrosity.

In Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, the subject is assigned with a crucial role at the establishment of relations. As part of his doctrine, he states: "Now one can, to be sure, call everything, and even every representation, insofar as one is conscious of it, an object" (305); thus, subjects –as they perceive outward objects– form depictions of these objects in their minds. By consequence, subjects are aware of these external objects, and it is precisely the quality of consciousness what permits the existence of these objects. Taking this vision into account, in *Frankenstein*, the creature persists in Victor's awareness of his existence. The subject –Victor– is the one who has established a perceptual relation with his creation and who has extended his persistence by means of a purely Romantic mechanism –imagination.

Imagination is the primal force that causes the beginning of Victor's tasks, and it is also the mechanism by which monstrosity faithfully endures along the novel. Not any kind of imagination though, but one that is too much exalted and disturbed. As mentioned in the theoretical foundations of this study, Bloom acknowledges that self-exaltation forms part of the way of living of the Romantic poet; similarly, this feature can be transferred to the manner in which Victor considered his abilities. Through reminiscence, the scientist explicitly describes the motto which directs his deeds –"[...] my imagination was too much exalted by my first success to permit me to doubt of my ability to give life to an animal as

complete and wonderful as man” (39). The guiding force that paves the way towards the achievement of his endeavours is his *exalted* imagination, which keeps increasing its exaltation insofar as he keeps succeeding in his experiments.

Following the philosopher’s postulates, the awareness of objects goes hand in hand with perceptual devices, the ones that establish the origin of the relation subject-object. In an account of the notion of object, Kant continues: “Insofar as they are, merely as representations, at the same time objects of consciousness, they do not differ from their apprehension” (305); this apprehension or ability to understand and perceive the objects is fundamental at the time of creating ties between subject and outward representations. Along the novel, Victor’s sensuous apprehension towards his creation is relevant since the scientist’s sensibility is the only place where the creature actually exists, therefore, fulfilling the etymological meanings of monstrosity with excellence. The creature *is* a monster under his inventor’s perceptions; the quality which cannot be found in relation to the other characters –that of exhibition– does find a place in accordance with Victor, for the creature, or rather the monster, *is* exhibited in front of the inventor’s eyes principally as an advance warning of the subsequent tragedy, as an omen of the Romantic enterprise’s failure within the ruling positivist thinking.

An authentic monster is shaped under the conditions of Victor’s sensibility, for there the creature fulfils the etymological significance of monstrosity, especially exhibition (*monstrare*), feature which is unattainable for the rest of the characters. It is only in Victor’s consciousness –and the readers’– that the creature gains the identity of a monster. By consequence, as he acquires this value that approaches an exemplary kind of monstrosity, he is also the warn (*monere*) that hints the future murders in the hands of the monster, and the omen (*monstrum*) that signals the unrewarding coexistence of positivism and a Romantic sensibility.

In this sense, both warn and omen confirm the tension between the Romantic aim of creation and positivist means. Victor, excited about new rational knowledge, embarks on an empirical task and carries out his Romantic enterprise inside his laboratory. The execution is defective though; it brings pieces of lifeless matter into life but in an eccentric frame. Victor succeeds in giving life, however, fails in making his creation beautiful; as much as

he succeeds in creating a monster for himself, but fails in creating one for the rest of the characters.

Victor's first sensuous apprehension of the creature opens the path to an *excess of sensitiveness* –“I felt my flesh tingle with excess of sensitiveness, and my pulse beat rapidly. I was unable to remain for a single instant in the same place; I jumped over the chairs, clapped my hands, and laughed aloud” (47). In other words, the very first sighting upon this creature paves the way to a more exalted form of senses. Basically, the word *sensuous* accounts for a double significance –both the capacity to perceive something by means of the senses, and to affect the senses. In this manner, the exhibition of the creature in front of his inventor's eyes allows him to feel corporeal conditions with particular ease.

An increased form of sensibility results from the act of sighting the creature for the first time –“I passed the night wretchedly. Sometimes my pulse beat so quickly and hardly that I felt the palpitation of every artery; at others, I nearly sank to the ground through languor and extreme weakness” (44), confesses Victor, emphasising the extreme sensuous sensitivity to himself. The double meaning of the adjective *sensuous* is precisely reflected in the quotation –as Victor opens up his perception to experience the details of his agitation, he also suffers from and sinks into an extreme lethargy that blocks his senses. The apprehension of monstrosity, in this manner, allows for this dichotomous mode of feeling – on the one hand, exceedingly sensitive; and on the other, awfully languid.

It is interesting to observe that this excessiveness of sensitivity cannot reach any other character in relation to the creature. Victor has acquired a more intimate involvement with his senses, which can be noticeable in the eternal image of the monster within his imagination. On the contrary, whereas the creature is ever-present in Victor's mind, the other characters cannot contemplate his contours –his monstrosity has been vetoed for them. Whenever it becomes visible, the next moment it is rejected so as to continue living on the edge of the fiction world, in the narrative itself where a *monster* is the axis of the novel. Certainly, Victor's *excess of sensitiveness* –the consequence of the monster's exhibition– brings him closer to a Romantic conception and differentiates him from the rest of the characters. After seeing the monster, the scientist easily feels every detail of his corporeal sensations, Victor sinks into a state of profound awareness towards his inside, a state that increases and decreases. As the Romantic poet is closely connected to the

surrounding objects that open the path to their inspiration, Victor is –most of the time– linked to an excessiveness of sensitivity to his inside, which at the same time instigates an increased form of horror and repulsiveness towards the monster.

The logic of sight is a steady trend during chapter V which is concerned with Victor's impressions and sensations when looking at the creature moving for the very first time. When reminiscing about the encounter with his best friend, he states "Nothing could equal my delight on *seeing* Clerval; his presence brought back to my thoughts my father, Elizabeth, and all those scenes of home so dear to my recollection" (46, emphasis added). The ability to see plays an important role in the present work, as its chief axis is the (practically nil) exhibition of the monster in relation to the characters. So as to evidence its significance, in this case, the sighting of his friend Clerval right after Victor's escape from his creation becomes a fountain of recollection of his beloved ones. The mere glance at the creature serves to exalt a form of extreme horror and fear in Victor's sensibility; on the other hand, the glance at his friend allows for a benevolent recalling of domesticity and security. Inasmuch as sight allows for (re)experiencing or reminiscing about warm sensations and emotions, it is also the ultimate piece that completes the significance of monstrosity, a piece that appears to have been stolen and appropriated by Victor.

Taking into account the issue of the gaze, Clerval's and the creature's physicality form part of the sensibility of the scientist, he keeps them as cognised objects which exist in his consciousness, however, evoking very dissimilar sensations. The sense of presence of both his friend and his creation is confirmed by means of the gaze, and establishes an unfortunate but inevitable relation with the latter. It is possible to argue that monstrosity is under a constant threat, or rather more specifically, the feature of exhibition is in tension, and hence the notion of monstrosity cannot be fully conceived.

Along the novel, the exhibition of the creature is by no means explicit. As already mentioned, the only character who has sensuously apprehended the creature is Victor, therefore he is the only one who possesses a conceptual image of his creation in his sensibility and consciousness. The first moment of sensuous apprehension, of the establishment of the relation subject-object is recalled by Victor as follows: "I beheld the wretch— the miserable monster whom I had created. He held up the curtain of the bed; and his eyes, if eyes they may be called, were fixed on me" (44). The relation formed between

creator and creation has its roots in the reciprocal gazes between subject and object; both of them have cognised the other by means of sight, both of them are relevant to each other's consciousness. In this manner, by the very beginning of his existence, the creature approximates to the value of a monster inasmuch as exhibition is not denied.

However, a comprehensive view upon monstrosity –that is to say, one that allows for exhibition– is threatened by the characters who cannot gaze at the creature and by Victor's desire to eradicate his creation from his consciousness and remembrance. Although the latter is fruitless, it *does* increase the tension in regard to exhibition, and hence monstrosity. “The porter opened the gates of the court, which had that night been my asylum, and I issued into the streets, pacing them with quick steps, as if I sought to avoid the wretch whom I feared every turning of the street would present to my view” (45), expresses Victor, scared about a potential encounter with his monster. Along with Victor's wish to forget and not to gaze at the creature, the conception of monstrosity remains unsteady. If the scientist had erased, in some way, the conceptual recall of the monster from his mind, it would not have been possible to talk about a monster per se at the level of plot.

“‘Do not ask me,’ cried I, putting my hands before my eyes, for I thought I saw the dreaded spectre glide into the room;” (47), says Victor in response to Clerval's enquiry into the cause of his sickness, and continues – “‘*he* can tell. Oh, save me! Save me!’ I imagined that the monster seized me; I struggled furiously and fell down in a fit” (47). Frankenstein wishes not to gaze at the creature anymore and, in this manner, erase the awareness of what he has done, together with the monstrous physical appearance of the being, hence contributing to a defective kind of monstrosity.

Although the young scientist is the one single character who keeps a vivid image of the creature inside his own sensibility, he longs for forgetfulness. The act of putting his hands before his eyes is not an innocent one –it is the evidence that accounts for a reluctance upon the recognition and sensuous apprehension of the being. On the one hand, the creature is an actual part of Victor's experiences, and on the other hand, the scientist wants to deprive his sensibility of a physical recognition of his creation. Therefore, given such a scenery, monstrosity is exemplary for Victor since the creature has been apprehended as an object and lives in his imagination, nevertheless, it is under a continual condition of tension. The bond between the scientist and the creature rests on reciprocal but

ambivalent gazes –it is a shared gaze what has established the sensuous apprehension and subsequent conceptual image of the creature and monstrosity (hence of a monster), however, Victor’s gaze at the creature within his imagination is repressed for it evokes repulsive sensations, establishing the tension in regard to monstrosity. Thus, this tension is moulded by Victor’s desire of obliviousness and his appropriation of the creature, a being who already possesses an indelible space in the inventor’s sensibility, consciousness and experience.

Another tension along the novel can be visible with regard to the confluence between rationality and imagination. The creature himself is the product of a mixture between positivist thinking and young Victor’s overflowing imagination. As the scientist reminisces about his illness and deplorable condition, he states:

Poor Clerval! What must have been his feelings? A meeting, which he anticipated with such joy, so strangely turned to bitterness. But I was not the witness of his grief, for I was lifeless and did not recover my *senses* for a long, long time (47, emphasis added).

The word *senses* is both associated with sensory devices and sanity. On the one hand, sensory experiences –specifically sight– go hand in hand with sensations and emotions; on the other hand, sanity elicits a connection with a more rational side. Thus, it is interesting to make the distinction between these two perspectives for it gives readers an explicit account of this tension. Senses as perceptual mechanisms possess great significance in light of this analysis, since one of them has the capacity to actually shape the manner in which monstrosity is conceived. Sight is the tool by which the creature finds existence in Victor’s sensibility and consciousness, and precisely a desire of blindness towards this unnatural being is what he wishes, a blindness that is intended to prevent the feeling of horror to a potential gaze at his creation.

The association of perceptions with rational thinking paves the way towards an analysis that puts this tension at the centre of the scenery. Victor declares he is no longer sane, and this situation only gets worse through the progression of the plot. Although he is not lucid, he possesses an excess of sensitiveness which shapes the relation between the scientist and the defective execution of his experiment. His immensely sensitive perceptions account for a similar exalted imagination, where the monster permanently

exists. “Clerval at first attributed my unusual spirits to joy on his arrival, but when he observed me more attentively, he saw a wildness in my eyes for which he could not account, and my loud, unrestrained, heartless laughter frightened and astonished him” (47), says Victor, recalling his altered emotional state. The *wildness* in his eyes may be linked with the ever-present image of his aberrant creation within his imagination, the cause of his illness. In this sense, the eyes of his imagination appear to be far more effective in proving the monster’s presence rather than an actual physical apprehension –“I imagined that the monster seized me; I struggled furiously and fell down in a fit” (47), admits Victor, evidencing the power of his imagination and its capacity to reminisce about the monster.

Although this discussion is centred on the notion of monstrosity, one that is attributed to the creature, it is essential to take Victor’s perceptions into account. These have a paramount role when moulding the reception that monstrosity has in relation to the rest of the characters; and also, based on the idea that the creature exists as an object only because of his sensuous apprehension in the hands of his own inventor. In this respect, the creature represents an exemplary notion of monstrosity within his creator’s mind and imagination –the being is eternally exposed to Victor, he keeps being portrayed through reminiscence inside the scientist’s consciousness and sensibility. Similar to Lacan’s experience when he went fishing, in the depths of Victor’s eyes, the creature’s silhouette is drawn and painted, to keep existing in his imagination.

Turning back to the idea of fragmentation, it is possible to look at the creature and observe a fragmented composition. From beginning to end, readers are provided with the image of disintegration, in strict relation to the progression of the plot and the characters who form part of it. As mentioned previously, this is not the case for the narrative itself though, where a monster rather than a creature can be contemplated by the readers, and where monstrosity achieves an exemplary position. However, along the plot the opposite occurs, what characters obtain are glimpses or fragments of a monster. “His limbs were in proportion, and I had selected his features as beautiful. Beautiful! Great God!” (43), states Victor in a regretful tone, establishing that the pieces of dead matter which he chose to form the creature were near an aesthetic category reflective of beauty, they were *luxuriances*. Nevertheless, from the very moment in which the creature breathes and moves for the first time, the bunch of fragments put together just did not work, his enormity finally

accounts for an aesthetic category which is not worthy of appreciation within the plot but rejection and horror. This also brings to mind that the idea of totality, of an organic composition as regards to the creature, is rather faulty.

The quotation above can be considered a foreshadowing of a defective sense of monstrosity since it is associated with the failure of completeness. “[...] these luxuriances only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes, that seemed almost of the same colour as the dun-white sockets in which they were set, his shrivelled complexion and straight black lips.” (43), continues Victor, highlighting the idea that the fragments collected for his task could only compose something fated to disaster, something incomplete, and dreadful to look at. The glimpses of a monster subsequently lead to a faulty version of monstrosity. For the characters –except Victor–, the creature is not apprehended therefore non-existent, he does not bear a warning, an omen, or any sense of strangeness because he is not put in disposition to be gazed at. Basically, monstrosity is destined to be unknown.

Whereas totality is not reached, fragments are. According to Deleuze’s thoughts regarding European culture, Shelley has deliberately acquired the notion of fragmentation within the plot and the narrative. The difference rests on the idea that the former does not bear the same sense of organic totality as the latter. It is interesting to notice that the voluntary inclination to reach the fragment can be found both in the process of writing and in the process of Victor’s creative task of giving life. What permits this achievement is precisely the experience of disaster and chaos pointed out by the author. The passionate scientist pursues a task which is not human, and this is how the experience of disaster and misery begins, and how fragmentation is attained.

Taking strictly into account the manner in which the plot is developed along the novel and the relations of Victor’s creation with the characters, the creature is a monster in a sense, but a defective one, a monster that represents the failure of Victor’s Romantic enterprise within the world of positivism. Nevertheless, the dichotomy remains a dominant force –as monstrosity is seen through fragments and does not form an organic construction within the character’s sensibility, these fragments *do* function as bearers of totality for the readers of the novel: they encounter a monster who is product of an unleashed imagination inside a world of rational thinking, a monster who is exhibited in front of their eyes so as to

warn them against an abnormal mode of being, one that cannot succeed in the modern times where positivist knowledge is the prevailing rule.

Two sides of the creature: the sacred and the profane

In chapter VIII, a guilty Victor blames himself upon the deaths of William and Justine, “the first hapless victims to [his] unhallowed arts” (76). What is interesting is that the scientist calls his abilities to endow dead matter with life an *unhallowed art*; thus, this feature can be transferable to the creature’s own existence. It can be possible, then, to call him an unhallowed art as he is the product of it. This art is wicked, as the creature himself, hence it does not find a fair reception –or does not find reception at all–, which makes difficult, if not impossible, the capacity of being contemplated through perceptual operations. As a novel is meant to be read, the monster is meant to be exhibited and visually apprehended by his surroundings so as to reach the form of a work of art, leaving behind an art whose essential quality is to be *unhallowed*, and one that is not even appreciated by his very originator but despised.

The creature remains unintelligible for the rest of the characters in *Frankenstein*, depriving them of a potential artistic delight. In this case, as the etymological significance is highlighted, the exhibition of the monster –apart from being a source of admiration for its eccentric physicality and an enormity which surpasses normal boundaries– comes to warn people about challenging the restrictions of human abilities. It is the omen that signals the coming of disgrace, of an unrewarding coexistence between positivism and Romantic aims; the abnormality of the being may be the visual representation or the incarnation of the failure of the scientist’s Romantic enterprise inside the modern times.

The impious process of collecting the fragments which later on gave birth to the creature is one that stresses also the quality of wickedness within the creature himself. The arts that brought him are as *unhallowed* as the physicality and life experiences of the being Victor has created. It is this very wickedness what helps to shape the creature’s defective monstrosity –he is unintelligible, unreadable, and opposed to the characteristics that Foucault, for example, associates with monstrosity¹.

¹ Foucault defines the *human monster* in the following terms: “Es el límite, el punto de derrumbe de la ley y, al mismo tiempo, la excepción que sólo se encuentra, precisamente en casos extremos. [...] Es la infracción, y la infracción llevada a su punto máximo” (61 – 62). The author emphasises that this monster breaks the law in various respects –social, legal, biological–, and carries a principle of intelligibility (62). Although they live on the edges of society, they remain readable for they must affirm their monstrous nature. Monstrosity, then, is an extreme natural irregularity (69) that departs from the ordinary sphere but maintains its quality of

Throughout Victor's and the monster's narration, the term *unhallowed* is used several times in representation of the acts carried out by the scientist and their product. This term can be linked to two notions –the sacred and the profane, which is going to be discussed in light of Giorgio Agamben's work *Profanaciones* (2005), an Italian philosopher of the contemporary era. Along a chapter from this book, which is called "Elogio de la Profanación", Agamben gives an account of the notions of consecration and desecration, notions that are very useful for the purposes of this study, for arriving at the core of this defective monstrosity.

Following, then, the ideas which emerge from his work, a definition of both terms will be given. On the one hand, the sacred rests on the conception of things which are removed from a public and free use, and in general removed from the communal sphere; these were restricted to gods, and godly use. In this manner, to consecrate points to the way out of something from the human sphere and its entrance to the holy sphere. On the other hand, the profane points to what is returned to the common usage of human beings, and hence, as opposed to the former, the act of desecration refers to the way out of something from the holy sphere and its entrance to the human sphere (97).

In chapter IV, Victor reminisces about the process of collection of the fragments which will form the physical body of his creation. The *unhallowed damp*s are the places where he has profaned so as to achieve his task of creating life:

Who shall conceive the horrors of my secret toil as I dabbled among the *unhallowed damp*s of the grave or tortured the living animal to animate the lifeless clay? My limbs now tremble, and my eyes swim with the remembrance; but then a resistless and almost frantic impulse urged me forward; I seemed to have lost all soul or sensation but for this one pursuit.
(40, emphasis added)

Once again, an emphasis on sensations is associated with his task. As the mere sighting of the creature helps to alter his senses –by increasing the sensibility to perceive through sensory devices, and also a disturbed mental sanity–, similarly, this cruel reminiscence

intelligibility. In *Frankenstein*, the latter is not a characteristic immediately transferable to the creature, indeed, the characters are most of the time unable to perceive or read his monstrosity. Therefore, the creature does not entirely fulfil Foucault's conception of monstrosity or the *human monster*, leaving a gap as regard to the notion of exhibition.

accounts for an intensified emotion, faithfully linked with his enterprise. Along the previous quotation, the *unhallowed* means –or the act of profaning– could be identified as the mechanism by which the creature is composed and originated. Corpses were desecrated by Victor’s worldly hands and wicked pursuits, fact that leads to the birth of a creature as unholy as the means responsible for his presence, a faulty existence that is only perceived and understood by his inventor. In other words, as the *unhallowed damp of the grave* are the source in which the scientist finds the pieces of his creation, the fruit of this fountain is also unholy.

In chapter XXII, readers encounter a Victor who imagines the manner in which he would be conceived by his fellow beings and society in general if they happen to know the atrocity he has committed and which continues having unfortunate consequences. “How they would, each and all, abhor me and hunt me from the world did they know my *unhallowed* acts and the crimes which had their source in me!” (175), exclaims Victor, qualifying his proceedings as unholy once again. Victor’s profane hands have stolen parts of corpses, and then united them so as to form an even major figure of *unhallowed* frame. Each fragment which is part of the creature is, at the same time, the product of a sacrilege, one that accounts for the defective view upon his monstrosity. Hence this unhallowed creature cannot achieve the state of being readable –he must remain unintelligible, hidden from the character’s sensibility.

The last chapter of this novel, chapter XXIV, delights the reader with an end narrated in the monster’s voice. At this point, he uses the term *unhallowed* to refer to his very creator and any other potential inventor of such a hideous abnormality. The monster, gazing at Victor who has finally encountered death, expresses his thoughts in front of Walton and longs for his death. “I shall collect my funeral pile and consume to ashes this miserable frame, that its remains may afford no light to any curious and *unhallowed* wretch who would create such another as I have been” (212, emphasis added), confesses the miserable being, wishing for a death which saves no remnants of his frame so that these are not subject to another wicked inventor. The monster continues –“I shall die. [...] He is dead who called me into being; and when I shall be no more, the very remembrance of us both will speedily vanish” (212), emphasising on the fact that only death has the capacity to break off the strong tie between subject and object, between beholder and observed,

between creator and creation. Only death can vanish their relation originated from sensuous perceptions –specifically from the establishment of the gaze–, relation that lasted throughout the progression of the plot inside the imagination of both of them.

Apart from serving as a means of sensitive perception, the gaze is what founds the relation between subject and object, and what shapes reality. Objects are apprehended by – and thanks to– the subject’s perceptions, and in this manner, they exist and form part of the subject’s reality. By consequence, recognising the other or gazing at the other accounts for the construction of otherness. According to Lacan, “[...] the subject is subject only from being subjected to the field of the Other, the subject proceeds from his synchronic subjection in the field of the Other” (188); in this sense, the gaze is fundamental for the perception of otherness. Subject and object exist as long as they apprehend each other. In the plot, then, the creature exists as long as Victor recognises and constructs him by means of the gaze.

Turning back explicitly to the philosopher’s ideas, it is worth to mention that Agamben associates the act of consecrating to the procedures of religion. Basically, what religion does is to remove things, places, animals or people from the common usage so as to transfer them to a separate sphere, one that is deprived of communication with the public domain (98). He states –“Hay un contagio profano, un tocar que desencanta y restituye al uso lo que lo sagrado había separado y petrificado” (99), meaning that for somebody who belongs to the worldly sphere, it is enough to touch something sacred so as to deprive it of its sacredness. In this manner, the subject has the ability to profane or desecrate through their perceptual mechanisms, in this case, a tactile kind of sacrilege.

This definitely leads to the axis of the present study –the sensuous relation with monstrosity, that of sight, of exhibition. In *Frankenstein*, the perceptual mechanism that helps to protect what is sacred is the deprivation of the gaze upon the creature. This sort of sensory deprivation which comes with Victor’s appropriation of his own creation is the constant force that shapes a faulty monstrosity, for the creature cannot be apprehended by sight. Considering the plot, the creature cannot be called a monster per se –he cannot be conceived a bearer of intrinsic monstrosity because most of the time he remains unseen and unknown to the characters, hence leaving the characteristic of exhibition unattended. As he

is not exhibited in front of the characters' eyes, the omen which he entails does not find any outward correspondence, none of them is able to truly comprehend his miserable presence.

The existence of this creature bears a double significance –he is both sacred and profane. In light of Agamben's views, it can be claimed that Victor was engaged in a process of desecration which finds its roots in the *unhallowed arts* that build the creature's destiny. In this sense, the creature is a profane being for his creator, he is ever-present in Victor's imagination; not the case, though, in the imagination and sensibility of the rest of the characters. The creature is represented, therefore, by common and free usage within the imagination and sensibility of his inventor. By consequence, however, the contrary occurs if the rest of the characters are taken into consideration –the creature embodies a sacred significance for them since he is not available to be sensuously perceived, or specifically, he does not offer the possibility to be looked at. A gaze at this creature would be an act of profaning his consecrated figure, the consecration that was carried out thanks to Victor's appropriation of his creation which is foreshadowed by the scientist's destructive sentence recalled at the very beginning of this study: "Oh! No mortal could support the horror of that countenance" (44).

In light of the views upon Romantic art developed by William Wordsworth in his "Preface" to *Lyrical Ballads*, one important idea rests on the conception of the poet's work –he does not write only for poets, the authentic Romantic poet writes for men (251). Thus, the poet must transmit their poetry to common men; this poetry must remain readable for ordinary people. Along the novel, Victor engages in a creative task, just like the poet creates a poem. In the fiction world of the novel though, the scientist does not create an intelligible work of art, for the result is a defective monster. In this sense, the failure of Victor's Romantic enterprise is also the failure of the poet's creative undertaking –as the creature results in a monster, indeed a defective one, Victor's creation remains unknown, unseen, and intelligible for the characters.

Victor's creation can be conceived under a dichotomous import –he is sacred and profane at the same time, sacred for the characters of the novel and profane by the procedures that shape their forms and the appropriation in the hands of his creator. Based on this dichotomy, a question can be asked –is it possible to find instances in which the creature is actually profaned by some external gaze along the novel? Apart from Victor, the

monster *is* actually looked at throughout the novel, these cases were few and very brief though. So as to review their importance, the instances which provide the readers with some kind of approximation to an act of desecrating will be analysed.

First of all, it is worth to admit that the murders that the creature commits can be qualified as instances where a correspondent gaze between murderer and victim took place. This kind of observation by means of sensory mechanisms lasts only the seconds that take the creature to kill the prey. As it was mentioned previously, a quotation in the creature's voice establishes that death is the only state that will vanish his tie with Victor; their relation, founded on a sensory recognition, is only meant to forgetfulness with the help of their deaths –“when I shall be no more, the very remembrance of us both will speedily vanish” (212). In this case the same happens, the victims who encounter death in the hands of the creature form a sensuous recognition of the murderer which lasts just a few seconds, and which neither remains within their consciousness nor to be told. Basically, the sensory bonds that attempt to threaten the sacred condition of the creature –the bond with William, Clerval, Elizabeth– are not quite significant for they are soon vanished by the loss of their lives.

One of the moments in which exhibition can be seen as a present threat against the sacredness of the creature is when he himself decides to show up in front of the cottagers in an attempt to befriend them. However, it is no coincidence that the person he approaches first is deprived of his capacity to see. The creature deliberately takes this decision so as not to be rejected just by his hideous physical appearance and knocks at the door –“‘Enter,’ said De Lacey, ‘and I will try in what manner I can to relieve your wants; but, unfortunately, my children are from home, and as I am blind, I am afraid I shall find it difficult to procure food for you’” (121), responds the blind man. Paying close attention to the language employed by the cottager, *I am blind* means that he cannot offer the creature a real possibility to restore him to the worldly sphere –no exhibition, no desecration. The only sensory means De Lacey is able to provide is his hearing, which is not enough, though, to profane the sacred being and, in this manner, fulfil the notion of monstrosity.

The meaning behind De Lacey's reply is a proof for both the incorruptible sacred nature of the creature and his defective monstrosity –no exhibition, no desecration, no authentic monstrosity. Following Agamben's view upon religion and its process of

sacralisation, a tactile logic is at the core of desecration. In light of the novel, monstrosity is etymologically linked to exhibition, hence a visual logic accounts for profaning what is sacred. The cottager's inability to see, and therefore to sensuously cognise Victor's creation, reaffirms a defective monster and contributes to his lack of recognition. In this sense, the creature must remain in seclusion, unrecognised by most of the characters, except by his inventor. The appropriation of the creature in the hands of the latter highlights the sacredness of the creature, the futile attempts to desecrate him, and subsequently, the unrecognition of Victor's creative task.

For its part, the unrecognition of the scientist's ability to artificially create life could be considered the product of the coexistence of Romantic aims within modern constraints. Victor's Romantic enterprise enriches its value by actually creating a disproportionate giant creature who departs from restricted harmony, and in this sense, it is consistent with the Romantic appreciation of what is opposed to ordinary beauty. Nevertheless, his enterprise reduces its worth when the fruit of Victor's creative power is not admired by the characters. None of them gets to apprehend the creature, he is a work of art which nobody reads.

De Lacey continues expressing his difficulties to provide the creature with food, meaning practically that he cannot give the creature what is necessary for his subsistence, what he deeply longs for –a sense of recognition that can reconcile him to the public human sphere. The creature yearns for company, for being just as normal as the people living in the cottage. The man's sensuous impediment obliges him to remain in a state of consecration. Along the creature's speech, it is recognisable that: “[...] a fatal prejudice *clouds their eyes*, and where they ought to see a feeling and kind friend, they *behold* only a detestable monster” (122, emphasis added). The logic of exhibition continues to be the force that gives form to monstrosity. People's eyes are obscured by his monstrous countenance, depriving him of a potential sensory apprehension; and if they do behold him, they would reject him, and together with this rejection, the warning that his monstrous appearance bears is finally refused.

As the works of the Romantic writer are meant to be read by the common men, modernity –for instance– offers the figure of the museum under the logic of exhibition, of intelligibility. On the one hand, in Shelley's work, exhibition plays a fundamental role that determines the manner in which monstrosity is conceived. On the other hand, modernity

secularises objects worthy of exposure and places them inside the museum, so as to apprehend and validate their reality through the public sight. In relation to this topic, Agamben writes –“[...] todo puede convertirse hoy en Museo, porque este término nombra simplemente la exposición de una imposibilidad de usar, de habitar, de hacer experiencia” (110), expressing that this dimension entails the impossibility to form any kind of perceptual experience with the objects found in the museum, except for the sensuous experience that involves the logic of sight. Exhibition, in this respect, basically appears to be the only means to experience the presence of the objects and validate the reality that apprehends them.

Along similar lines, zoos may be also considered a secularised form of understanding reality, the reality of the primitive man –for example– who had to live with animals and subsist on them. The captions on the glass that separates observers from objects, and that describe these animals, are an attempt to bring their reality closer to visitors, exhibiting them and reproducing their environments as faithful as possible to the public view. Thus, exhibition can be considered a mechanism that allows for a reality that was purely human but not anymore. Along the present study, exhibition in *Frankenstein* puts its emphasis on the gaze of the subject upon the object, for the latter does not possess a kind of reality within themselves; on the contrary, the subject is the one who attributes a reality for them. Accordingly, in modern times, exhibition allows for a form of experiencing a reality which comes hand in hand with these objects; whereas in the novel, the logic of exhibition shapes the creature by determining his defective monstrosity and is also the mechanism by which the desecration of the creature is potentially latent.

Going back to De Lacey’s experience with the creature and his frustrated attempt for sensuous recognition, in the event that follows, the creature does not find apprehension as regard to the rest of the cottagers either. The next quotation is taken from the creature’s narration about his unsatisfied efforts:

At that instant the cottage door was opened, and Felix, Safie, and Agatha entered. Who can describe their horror and consternation on beholding me? Agatha fainted, and Safie, unable to attend to her friend, rushed out of the cottage. Felix darted forward, and with supernatural force tore me from his

father, to whose knees I clung, in a transport of fury, he dashed me to the ground and struck me violently with a stick. (123 – 124)

All the creature can find is a lack of willingness towards the desecration of his body. He is withheld from the ideal quality of being a monster since he must remain hidden. His enormous figure is rejected from sight because it inspires terror. As a sacred being, he is only perceived by the person who has created, consecrated, and despised him.

After these unfortunate events at the cottage, another circumstance comes to challenge the creature's form of exhibition and sacredness. In the woods, he tries to help a girl who has fallen into a stream and he reminisces about it as follows –“She was *senseless*, and I endeavoured by every means in my power to restore animation” (130, emphasis added). Moved by both a feeling of humanity and a thirst to be recognised by subjects, the creature helps the girl. It is no coincidence that the girl was *senseless*, meaning that the hopes of being sensuously apprehended were, once again, destined to fail. The being consecrated by Victor seems to be forever unintelligible. Before he could actually restore her to consciousness, a rustic appears –“On seeing me, he darted towards me, and tearing the girl from my arms, hastened towards the deeper parts of the wood” (130). However, as it previously occurred with the cottagers, the creature only finds rejection and an immediate sense of disapproval, being the ultimate source of terrible fears. These fleeting events are simply not enough to account for an ideal or exemplary kind of monstrosity. These brief encounters with subjects cannot fully profane the sacred physicality of the creature, contributing to a sense of incompleteness and lack of totality.

The miserable creature cannot find a gaze which is willing to look at his abnormal physical countenance. In this manner, the being is deprived of sensuous recognition, hence of existence. As a monster, he only exists for Victor² and for the readers; for them, this monster goes hand in hand with what is recognised as monstrous. Following these ideas,

² “La Belle Dame Sans Merci”, a poem written by the Romantic poet John Keats, can also be linked to this idea. In the poem, a “knight-at-arms” (1) expresses his grief towards “[...] a lady in the meads, / [...] a faery's child” (13 – 14) who apparently has cast a spell on him. This fantastic creature could be considered an extension of the knight's imagination. Throughout the verses, the knight builds an image of the lady –“I made a garland for her head, / And bracelets too, and fragrant zone;” (17 -18). The construction of the lady leads to think about a fantastic supernatural woman that seduces him. However, this fantastic creature only exists in the lyric speaker's imagination, (and the readers') as he recalls his experience; being representative of a female presence which appears transformed by a beauty that surpasses common standards.

the creature is able to return to the worldly domain –he embodies an exemplary form of monstrosity and he is restored to the common usage of the profane postulated by Agamben. On the one hand, Victor acknowledges his presence by means of his senses and imagination. On the other hand, readers are provided with fragments of a monster which in combination form a totality –the monster himself relates his dreadful life experiences, sensations, and emotions. His strangeness and unleashed contour come to be exhibited in front of the readers’ eyes so as to warn them about the omen he embodies, probably about the failure of a Romantic sensibility within modernity, the failure of Victor’s Romantic enterprise.

Another relevant instance in which an act of desecration could have been an affront to the creature’s sacredness occurred in chapter XXIII, when Elizabeth is murdered right after getting married to Victor, and his father encounters death. This action is carried out by Victor himself, however, it results in a frustrated attempt towards the recognition of his creation. As the blind man who can only offer the sense of hearing to the creature, the magistrate hears Victor’s narration about the being but this is not enough to truly denounce the acts involving the supernatural creature. The scientist confesses –“I repaired to a criminal judge in the town and told him that I had an accusation to make, that I knew the destroyer of my family, and that I required him to exert his whole authority for the apprehension of the murderer” (189), laying emphasis on his willingness to eradicate the creature, and opening his path towards his desecration. It is his very inventor –the same who consecrated the monstrous figure for himself and transformed him into an unintelligible object for the rest of the characters– the one who wants to end the sacredness of his creature so as to conclude, also, the misfortunes which came together with his creation.

“He had heard my story with that half kind of belief that is given to a tale of spirits and supernatural events; but when he was called upon to act officially in consequence, the whole tide of his incredulity returned” (190), narrates Victor, pointing out that the fruit of his unleashed imagination cannot be conceived within the rationality of the criminal judge. This can be considered a metonymy of society in general, where two forces are in confluence, one representing the Romantic sensibility and the other modernity, respectively. It is important to emphasise the word *confluence*, for Romanticism and

modernity coexist; the former is the other side of the latter (105), states Paz in *Los Hijos del Limo* –Romanticism displays its sensibility *from* modernity. In this respect, the attempt of desecration finds no fair reception on the side of the magistrate; law works at the service of the *human monster*, establishes Foucault, in the sense that they remain intelligible, readable, and exposed inside society. On the contrary, this is not the case for a creature whose nature is to be unknown, and whose home is anywhere except inside the community.

Dealing with the magistrate's incredulity, the young scientist recalls his impressions upon the attitude of the judge:

But to a Genevan magistrate, whose mind was occupied by far other ideas than those of devotion and heroism, this elevation of mind had much the appearance of madness. He endeavoured to soothe me as a nurse does a child and reverted to my tale as the effects of delirium. (191)

Taking into account the two forces previously mentioned –the Romantic sensibility and rational thinking–, it can be argued that these *other ideas* in which the magistrate is focused on are more inclined to be part of the demands of modern times rather than imagination and supernatural powers which are precisely what delineate Victor's creation. Rationality, in this sense, does not provide the necessary mechanisms to comprehend the totality of the creature, as much as the subjects who could not sensuously apprehend the appearance of this being through the faculty of sight.

In light of Agamben's ideas, it has been established that the act of desecration comes with the mere touch of that which is sacred. In other words, the profane subject who dares to touch the sacred object has the capacity to transfer the latter to the worldly sphere. The sensory relation that is at the core of this study is sight; therefore, in *Frankenstein*, instead of a logic that follows a tactile order, the act of profaning comes hand in hand with the notion of exhibition. Following these views, in the novel, the same subject who has consecrated an object cannot restore it again. The creature –a dichotomy in the sense that he is of free usage for Victor but deprived of communal life– has been sacralised and appropriated by Victor, and at the same time, this sacralisation has forbidden an inclusion in the earthly domain and a fulfilment of the notion of monstrosity.

The *unhallowed arts* which created and moulded the creature do not admit the completion of the being. Paradoxically, this unhallowed creature is actually sacred for most

of the characters in the novel; such paradox accounts for his dichotomous sense – unhallowed in his forms but holy in his position inside the community. Along the novel, the creature entails this paradox for he embodies contradictory ideas. As recognised by Victor, the arts responsible for the birth of his creation are wicked; the inventor's unhallowed acts that qualify the process of constitution of the being are transferred to his frame, and determine the consequences of having a body whose fragments are collected from the desecration of graves.

However, the other side of the paradox rests on the sacredness that the creature embodies within the plot and in relation to the characters of the novel. Considering Agamben's ideas about the act of profaning, Victor's creation has been appropriated by and for his own inventor, hence consecrated by him and removed from the worldly sphere. Accordingly, the creature has a sacred position inside community since he is not available for the earthly domain of human beings; the only space in which he is restored to free usage is in Victor's imagination, where he is painted in the colours that the subject chooses and curses. In this respect, De Lacey's assertion *–I am blind–*, which alludes to the incapacity to desecrate or profane the creature by means of a visual logic, may be considered just one example within a disposition that affects the whole community –an impossibility to gaze at the creature, hence to make him an authentic monster.

A sense of totality has been denied for the creature along the novel, however, by its end it is possible to be witness to a significant confrontation between Walton and the creature. At this point, the establishment of a sensory relation between them defies the notion of exhibition and sacredness, and at the same time, it comes hand in hand with the fulfilment of an exemplary kind of monstrosity.

Following these ideas, the unhallowed being is found by Walton, lamenting over the misfortunes he has been living and the death of his wicked creator. By means of sight, the captain of the ship gives the readers an account of his impressions when beholding the creature. Walton –as opposed to the cottagers or the rustic– is willing to maintain his gaze at the creature's enormous body and engage in dialogue with him. In this manner, the sensuous apprehension which involves sight as a mechanism for defilement is extensively established.

Threatening the sacredness of the creature by looking at him, Walton affirms – “Never did I behold a vision so horrible as his face, of such loathsome yet appalling hideousness. I shut my eyes involuntarily and endeavoured to recollect what were my duties with regard to this destroyer. I called on him to stay” (209). Taking Kant’s doctrine into account, at this point, the object –or the creature– becomes readable and intelligible thanks to the sensuous relation established by the subject –Walton–, whose perceptions regarding the creature have been stored as conscious knowledge. This being appears under the conditions of Walton’s sensibility and is kept in the spatiotemporality the captain attributes to him. In this sense, the relation subject-object succeeds and finds a definitive place in Walton’s consciousness.

Although a rejection upon monstrosity is also observed throughout this encounter, the relation between Walton and the creature remains existent; if not by sight, by means of hearing the other. For the captain, a “mixture of curiosity and compassion” (209) upon the creature surpasses the horror and fear that he inspires through his abnormal physicality, and keeps the relation alive by means of perceptual mechanisms. This *mixture*, then, accounts for the path by which the desecration is done; or rather, it is one of the causes that account for this profanation. Apart from this combination, there is another significant event that explains the ease with which the creature now admits a desecration. It is actually the *ultimate* event that permits the act of profaning –the death of the subject who consecrated the creature.

It is the death of Victor Frankenstein –the one who appropriated the creature in order to be part of his sensibility only– what permits the exhibition of the creature, and together with this, a step towards the completion of monstrosity. Taking Agamben’s ideas into account, the death of the creator –the person who condemns the creature to remain hidden from view by consecrating him– easily admits the entrance into the profane sphere, for the creature is already an actual part of the sensibility of a third party, a third party that is looking at him.

Walton gives the creature what the latter longs for, a sense of recognition –and totality–. The fragments or glimpses of a monster with which Walton was offered by means of Victor’s narration were finally united in a final gaze. At this point, the creature can be called a monster for he has been successfully exhibited in front of the captain’s eyes,

probably bearing a warning over his enormous figure, or at least the caution of what *not* to be. In this manner, the sense of presence and relevance of the creature is confirmed; and vice versa, for it must be remembered that Walton also longed for an approving gaze which recognised his existence. As long as the captain focuses his gaze on the monster and the latter corresponds it, they are establishing a relation based on sensory mechanisms which are essential for a posteriori knowledge, the manner by which the creature is apprehended and kept in consciousness.

The sensuous relation established between Walton and the monster seems to be also in a constant tension between the willingness to maintain it and the horror that produces in the captain. “I approached this tremendous being; I dared not again raise my eyes to his face, there was something so scaring and *unearthly* in his ugliness. I attempted to speak, but the words died away on my lips. [...] At length I gathered resolution to address him” (209, emphasis added), states Walton, afraid of looking at the creature’s abnormal physicality, but willing to address him anyway. *Unearthly* is his ugliness, for his existence has been always conditioned by the *unhallowed arts* that gave him shape. Neither sight nor words are easy to articulate, threatening the sensuous apprehension of the creature and his exhibition towards the captain.

Regarding another interesting point, the sense of totality which the creature cannot relish until the death of his creator is carried out through his own deeds. He cannot be an exemplary monster nor the bearer of an exemplary kind of monstrosity, so he conducts his deeds until their satisfactory conclusion. “The completion of my demoniacal design became an insatiable passion. And now it is ended; there is my last victim!” (210), assures the creature, pleased at Victor’s loss of life. The murders he performed are just the fragments which account for a major enterprise –the death of the responsible for his sacred and *unhallowed* frame. “My work is nearly complete” (212), continues the monster, for the remaining fragment is his own death; in this manner, his deeds will achieve a sense of total fulfilment.

“Farewell! I leave you, and in you the last of humankind whom these eyes will ever behold” (212), states the monster, in a potential attempt towards a return to the sphere of the sacred. Walton is the last human being in whom the creature can display his hideous forms, the first –apart from Victor– and last to sensuously contemplate his monstrosity.

Thus, the captain is the ultimate piece to reach the level of monstrosity par excellence, and the piece that closes this brief moment of desecration, in order for the monster to begin a life within the sphere of the sacred, not by means of a sacredness like the one Victor gave him but one that is achieved by the quietness of death.

Fragments and totality, consecration and desecration. The monster can be widely appreciated under the notion of a dichotomy, for he is the representation of two antithetical sides which coexist in himself. At the same time in which he is just a glimpse of a monster along the plot, for the readers he is the bearer of an exemplary kind of monstrosity. At the same time in which he is a sacred being for most of the characters in the novel, for Victor he is a profane creature.

According to Agamben and following the dichotomous import of the creature, the Latin verb *profanare* (profane) bears two contradictory ideas –on the one hand, to desecrate, and on the other, to sacrifice. Along the same lines, he points out another related double significance of the Latin adjective *sacer* (sacred), meaning both “augusto, consagrado a los dioses” and “maldito, excluido de la comunidad” (102). In this sense, the dichotomy that shapes the monster finds its roots in the etymological significance of what is sacred –he is consecrated by his very creator, therefore deprived of a life within the standards of the modern world and community.

Such dichotomous value cannot be left aside regarding also the opposition between hidden and exhibited –the creature remains unknown and deprived of sensuous ties throughout most of the plot, however, he longs for exhibition, and hence the completion of an ideal monstrosity. As a sacred being, he must be excluded from the community and deprived of public sight; this sacredness has been faithfully portrayed through the futile attempts towards his desecration, and hence restoration to ordinary life. The only actual threat against the holy position of the being is the death of his inventor, the one who had consecrated his creation. The appropriation of the being loses its force as long as Victor loses his life. In his sacredness, then, Victor’s creation is not a monster but a creature, one who does not satisfy a comprehensive view upon the etymological significance of monstrosity.

As has been noted, the creature *does* reach the level of a monster, however, only for his inventor’s sensibility and for the readers of the novel. In this respect, exhibition is

successfully attained; having, by consequence, a determining value towards the category of monstrosity. By all means, exhibition is fundamental, either to confirm or annul the creature as a monster par excellence. Along these lines, *Frankenstein* offers the possibility to arrive at different readings in light of the same issue. As evidenced, the etymological significance of monstrosity does not express itself by means of a uniform template. Indeed, it manifests differently, generally leaning towards an interpretation that sheds light on dichotomous hues.

Conclusion

Monstrosity is certainly an unavoidable element to consider when interpreting Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*, and it has actually been repeatedly the topic at stake in the literary criticism surrounding the novel. The nameless creature who is at the centre of Shelley's work has been merely associated with being a monster. However, etymology raises an essential component that challenges this usual relation. The Latin *monstrare* promotes an insight that threatens the monstrous quality of Victor Frankenstein's creation, and adds an essential component to the category of monstrosity.

The relevance of this etymological association rests on the possibility to conceive monstrosity in light of its own implications. It underlines the authenticity of a significance derived from the concept itself, and displaces possible meanings regarding outward aspects; not denying, though, a potential representational import. The reading of *Frankenstein* paves the way towards a kind of monstrosity that offers different views –on the one hand, offering a monster par excellence, and on the other, threatening his nature as such.

Victor's creation –a monster and a creature– can be identified as the bearer of both an authentic and a defective monstrosity. For instance, what Victor and the readers perceive is the existence of an abnormal being, the conveyor of the failure of the scientist's Romantic enterprise together with the hazards of surpassing the boundaries of human capacity, and a constant exhibition of the creature through the former's imagination and the latter's experience along the reading. On the contrary, the characters in general cannot witness to the same, being only capable of apprehending glimpses of a monster, by means of his deeds, for example; they do not find traces of faithful monstrosity, they simply find the consequences of an enraged and miserable creature.

Considering exhibition a central aspect of monstrosity, an important element arises –Victor's creation may be seen in light of a dichotomy. He is, at the same time, the incarnation of a complete and incomplete monstrosity. Whereas the scientist's sensibility does allow for an authentic existence of a monster since the creature is part of the inventor's consciousness, the category of monstrosity is subject to constant tension. The cause for this tension has its roots in Victor's unwillingness at sighting the creature –lack of exhibition would account for a defective monstrosity.

Although the visibility of the monster is indelibly etched on the inventor's imagination and consciousness, a potential gaze at the creature results frightening. This fear, for its part, emphasises the aversion towards the exhibition and sighting of the creature, hence the tension of an incomplete monstrosity is increased along the novel. The first gaze between subject and object, creator and creation, establishes an unbreakable bond, one that is led by rejection and disgust, and one that becomes the rule among the subsequent brief moments in which the creature is seen by some characters.

Along the same lines, Giorgio Agamben's ideas about the notion of profanation posit another important dichotomy in light of Victor's creation. The creature is portrayed as the fruit of Victor's *unhallowed arts*, arts that conceive a being just as unhallowed as them. Consequently, the creature remains in seclusion, detached from the eyes of the community, as if he were in a sacred position and deprived of living with the ordinary people. Opposed to this idea, along the plot, the creature appears unholy for Victor since he *can* gaze at the creature, sensuously or by means of reminiscence.

The visual logic keeps fulfilling a paramount role –apart from being the sensuous mechanism that allows for a comprehensive view upon monstrosity, it is the means by which the creature could be desecrated and restored to the earthly domain. As Victor's creation longs and looks for recognition and company, he is also seeking for exhibition, for a gaze that could desecrate his hallowed position within community. This search attempts to be a threat against the appropriation and consecration in the hands of the scientist, but ends up being futile. As evidenced in the analysis of this study, the only means that opens the path towards the defeat of this appropriation is death, the death of the one who has consecrated the being.

Etymologically speaking, the lack of visual apprehension along the plot sentences the being to remain just as a creature, whereas a monster par excellence can only be observed as regard to Victor. The cottager's assertion about his impossibility to see is projected onto a major scenery –none of the characters can faithfully apprehend and cognise (hence desecrate) the creature. *I am blind* translates into a chain of consequences – no exhibition, no monstrosity, no desecration.

Besides exploring the etymological significance of monstrosity in light of the novel, another important objective of this study was to identify the Romantic traits that could be

related to *Frankenstein* and the notion of monstrosity. Along these lines, Victor's creation could be considered the fruit of the confluence between a Romantic sensibility and modernity; more specifically, a freeing from the constraints of modern times. However, what Victor wanted to create –motivated by his self-exaltation– was a beautiful being at first, on the contrary, he ended up creating a monster, only for himself though. For the rest of the characters he just creates an ugly creature that murders his inventor's relatives and friend. In this sense, this freeing from modern constraints is authentically known by Victor himself; whereas in relation to the rest of the characters, they just get to know some mysterious murders.

Along with the previous ideas, reminiscence plays also an important role throughout the novel. This capacity of recalling and transforming past experiences through imagination is constantly present in the different narrations. Victor's reminiscences about his dreadful experiences with the monster, specially, adds an important Romantic trait to the novel. It is through reminiscence that is possible to obtain an insight into monstrosity as conceived by the young scientist. Therefore, it highlights an emphasis on sensuous perceptions, and the relevance of the relation subject-object, as the relation of the Romantic poet with their surroundings.

The exploration of monstrosity in light of its etymological significance helps to reflect on this category as detached from external aspects. In this sense, the present work paves the way towards the roots of the conception of monstrosity, complementing the vision that has been usually attributed to it, one that provides an understanding of monstrosity as reflective of the human condition. Accordingly, this study could give new lights on monstrosity in regard to its etymological roots, and in relation to the work of art at stake.

Thus, the great import of exhibition raises a new insight towards the novel; at the same time, offering different views upon monstrosity. However, there are many other elements which can complement this vision. Based on the idea that Victor is a character who possesses knowledge of a faithful kind of monstrosity, the aesthetic category of the sublime, which can be linked to it, may offer the possibility to explore the manner in which the monster reveals as such.

Along the same lines and as a final point, it seems also paramount to keep exploring monstrosity in relation to ugliness, considering this study a point of departure. The French Romantic writer Victor Hugo writes about the endless and fascinating elements which can be found at the core of what is ugly as opposed to beauty. Taking this idea into account, in what ways is an exemplary kind of monstrosity painted in Victor's eyes and sensibility? How is the ugliness of the monster perceived by the hands that gave its forms? These preliminary notions offer a scenery where monstrosity as an aesthetic category looks intriguing and promising.

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