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## Virtue and Vice in Frankenstein and Vathek

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## Introduction

The concepts of virtue and vice haven't been explored solely in the Gothic genre. Both of them have been explored for ages as a way to better understand the complexity of humanity. As such, these themes have many interpretations, but one aspect that is shared between them is that they are intrinsically related with good and evil, hence, they are complete opposites forces. Hurka states that virtue is intrinsically good while vice is intrinsically evil. Explaining that benevolence, courage, and similar traits make a life better, while vices, such as malice, make it worse (181). Continuing, London demonstrates what Hobbes, Plato and Aristotle think about them, and he says that Hobbes "values the virtues only for their social benefits" (13), while "Plato and Aristotle both claim that there is something valuable about possessing the virtues even if one receives no social benefits from them" (18). This means that for Hobbes virtues are valuable because they are valuable socially, so if you are virtuous, others are going to be the same with you. On the other hand, for Plato and Aristotle virtues are valuable by themselves, it does not matter if you do not receive a social benefit from them. Another example is Rousseau, who, according to Emberley, says that virtue is "founded on love because only love can support human longing, if men are to live decently. Love and the intimacy of the domestic partnership produce all the virtues a man will need: decency, fidelity, love of family, humanity, a sense of hygiene, modesty, and sensitivity" (750). In this case, virtue is narrowed into love, which provides all the other virtues mentioned. And finally, Martin states that Hume "believed that virtue is distinguished by the pleasure and vice by the pain, that any action, sentiment, or character gives us by the mere view and contemplation of it" (170-171). This is close to the idea that virtue and vice comes from an external force that provokes a certain reaction in us.

These definitions of virtue and vice were selected because they are closely related to what is going to be discussed in the pages below. With this being said, it is imperative to bear in mind that in *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley and *Vathek* by William Beckford virtue and vice are portrayed in two ways; in the surface, it is perceived that they follow the traditional depictions that these concepts have, that is, the same that were presented above. But also, they are portrayed in the complete opposite, meaning that the novels challenge what these concepts could actually signify, making the possible differences more complex, and therefore, giving the characters more depth within their personalities. Considering this, my thesis

statement is that in *Frankenstein* and *Vathek* virtue and vice evokes in the characters a variety of feelings and actions that deeply change their personalities and relationships with others, which adds layers into what they really are and what they have become.

The aspect that is going to be explored in chapter one is how both of these themes are presented separately and distinguishable with one another, to present how they have become the other, showing the type of impact that these dynamics have on the characters of the creature, Victor Frankenstein, and Vathek, who are facing this phenomenon, and the impact on their stories. In chapter two, what is going to be examined is the reasons behind why these characters become what they have become, what apparent benefits they have received by being in a certain way, and how affected are other characters who are related with the ones mentioned before. Finally, chapter three will be dedicated to show how they seem to constantly ignore or not take responsibility for their vices, to then ultimately accept it, however, as they are in a critical condition, it does not solve what they did, and at the end, they are punished.

## Chapter 1: Between Worlds

In *Frankenstein* and *Vathek*, there is a presence of two binary concepts, namely, virtue and vice, that are displayed in different characters, highlighting different feelings and actions that are caused by these concepts. Through their stories, virtue and vice can be highly distinguishable and distinct between each other, but also they can become the other depending on the character's condition within a context. In this chapter I am going to discuss the presence of virtue in the creature, Victor Frankenstein, and Vathek, along with the feelings and actions evoked through it. Also, I am going to discuss the presence of vice in the characters, along with the feelings and actions caused by it. Finally, I am going to discuss the presence of virtue in vice or vice in virtue, along with what that implicates.

### 1.1 Being Virtuous

In *Frankenstein*, the first time the creature shows that he possessed virtues is when he and Victor meet. The first expresses to his creator that at the moment he opened his eyes, he was a completely virtuous being: "'I was benevolent and good; misery made me a fiend. Make me happy, and I shall again be virtuous'" (78). By his last words, it is implied that his benevolence and goodness have partially disappeared in his life, as he had no one to share those sentiments with, therefore, his harsh condition transformed him into a "fiend", as he says. But still, he does not want to abandon virtue, and he needs the appreciation of Frankenstein to recover it. Even though Victor is at first reluctant to listen to his story, he finally accepts as he says that: "partly urged by curiosity, and compassion confirmed my resolution" (79). He admits he is interested to know what the creature has to say, and that he is moved by his words, so that could suggest that he believes the creature can be virtuous. Thereupon, the creature reveals that he prefers virtue over vice since the moment he spent some time observing a family, who provoked on him sympathy: "when they were unhappy, I felt depressed; when they rejoiced, I sympathized in their joys" (89), and who inspires in him love or goodness: "I admired virtue and good feelings, and loved the gentle manners and

amiable qualities of my cottagers" (97). Since he appreciates the virtues DeLacey family has, he expects that they will accept him, despite his physical appearance. However, that does not occur and he is forced to abandon the house. Although he was badly treated by the family, virtue still remained in him, which is demonstrated when he saves a girl who falls in a river. After he does this, instead of receiving gratitude, he is shot by a man who was accompanying the girl, something that affects him deeply and he says: "This was then the reward of my benevolence!" (116). As before, the creature's act was moved by virtue, but yet he is maltreated. All of his experience contradicts Hobbes's idea that virtues are only valuable because they give social benefits. The creature expects that humans are virtuous with him once he shows that he is virtuous, so in result he will receive the affection he wants so much, however, people are not interested in whether he is virtuous or not, they pay more attention to his appearance.

Continuing with *Frankenstein*, in Victor there is also the presence of virtue expressed by affection, sympathy and kindness. In the first passages, Frankenstein refers to his family and close friends with deep affection, for instance, when he talks about Elizabeth, he expresses about her lovingly: "she was lively and animated . . . her feelings were strong and deep. . . While I admired her understanding and fancy, I loved to tend on her" (20-21). He is able to recognize such traits in other people, and apart from recognizing them, he admires them, having a strong sentiment of endearment. Moving forward, after he went to university, he said how alone he felt, saying that he has always been used to being with his family and friends: "I loved my brothers, Elizabeth, and Clerval; these were old familiar faces" (28). At the moment, since he is not accompanied with his loved-ones, he manifests how much he loves them, which shows his virtue. In the same way, sympathy appears when Justine is falsely accused of murdering Victor's little brother: "You are all mistaken; I know the murderer. Justine, poor, good Justine is innocent" (59). He is supposing that the actual murderer was the creature he created, which caused him intense distress, and by telling his father that she is innocent, is demonstrating that he feels sympathy towards her and the process she will have to face. Eventually, we know that Justine died, and Victor was feeling tremendously guilty and mischievous for it, because he feels responsible, however he confesses that: "Yet my heart overflowed with kindness, and the love of virtue" (69). When he created the creature, he did not pretend this event to happen, as he did not create him to kill people, it was born out of virtue. Here, the idea given by Rousseau fits with Frankenstein, as he is full of love of his family and friends, nonetheless, as it will be further developed

below, Victor slowly starts to abandon this for being much more preoccupied in creating the creature, giving the impression that perhaps this virtue is important to him, but not that much.

Virtue in *Vathek* is represented through love or courtesy, coming mainly from the Caliph, who in the beginning it is described as someone who appreciates his people: "Notwithstanding the sensuality in which Vathek indulged, he experienced no abatement in the love of his people, who thought that a sovereign giving himself up to pleasure, was as able to govern, as one who declared himself an enemy to it" (4). Despite the fact that it is recognized that he is a man who enjoys physical pleasure, it does not reduce his love for the people, who think that he is as able to govern as someone who does not indulge himself in such pleasure. Similarly, when it mentions how he enjoys astrology or adventures coming from other places, it is also mentioned how courteous he is with strangers: "Prompted by motives of curiosity, he had always been courteous to strangers" (6). Moved by his genuine fascination of extraordinary and unknown places, he results to be attentive with people coming from such places. Plato's and Aristotle's depiction of the virtues are directly challenged in this, since for Vathek they are valuable, because he receives social benefits, meaning that he, for example, receives the appreciation of his people, despite his vicious characteristics.

For Martin, virtue "consist of excellence of character, specially love, sympathy, justice, and self-respect" (159). Some of the concepts are mentioned and are connected with virtue, namely, love and sympathy. Feelings that have an important present in the novels. However, self-respect is something that only Victor and Vathek possess, because the creature, thanks to how he was treated, did not have self-respect; he hated himself, but still virtue remained in him. The same occurs with justice, a concept that also involves the creature, but it is not related with virtue, since there is no justice for him, as it will be mentioned below.

## 1.2 Being Vicious

Over the creature's situation respecting vice, Goldberg says: "Alternating between the role of Adam and Satan, hoping he might still be lifted to the glories of love and sympathy, but fearing that he might be forced into the depths of malevolence and depravity because of his isolation, the creature soon finds his fate determined, once DeLacey's reject his



friendly advances, just as all mankind has rejecting him beforehand'" (36). By the reading of John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, the creature feels identified with both Adam and Satan, for his abandonment of his creator. Even if virtue still existed inside of him, with the continuous rejections, vice started growing inside him inevitably, despite the fact that he expressed to hate it. Soon he developed feelings of revenge and hatred: "for the first time the feelings of revenge and hatred filled my bosom, and I did not strive to control them; but, allowing myself to be borne away by the stream, I bent my mind towards injury and death'" (113). He is full of vicious feelings and admits he does not want to control them, going to whatever those feelings take him to, such as injuring or killing someone. Following this, the first person who is murdered by the creature is Frankenstein's little brother, who comes across him and reveals his identity, so the creature says: "Frankenstein! you belong to my enemy—to him towards whom I have sworn eternal revenge; you shall be my first victim'" (117). Right after he says this, he kills the boy, as he is determined to avenge what he had suffered. Subsequently, he found himself not only killing people, but also plotting to blame others for such acts, as it is what he does to Justine: "thanks to the lessons of Felix, and the sanguinary laws of man, I have learned how to work mischief. I approached her unperceived, and placed the portrait securely in one of the folds of her dress'" (118). With what he had learned of humans, and considering the aspect of justice, he had learn that it is not fair, consequently, justice is not virtuous, so he decides to apply the same humans do, by attacking humanity itself, and as result he plans to blame Justine for the murder of William, continuing his craft to destroy Frankenstein.

Seeing that his ultimate wish to have a partner to share those feelings of affection and that his creator continues with his life – he is planning to get married– while he is completely appalled by his unfortunate existence, he kills Henry Clerval, which produce a profound impact on Victor: "I gasped for breath; and throwing myself on the body, I exclaimed, Have my murderous machinations deprived you also, my dearest Henry, of life?" (148). Taking into account Frankenstein's reaction, the creature's intention to hurt him, at the moment, has been successful. However, Victor and his cousin Elizabeth plan to get married, which is something that deeply upsets the creature, seeing that the person responsible for his misery is seeking happiness. As a result, he also kills Elizabeth the same way he did with William: "The murderous mark of the fiend's grasp was on her neck, and the breath had ceased to issue from her lips" (166). With this, his aim had changed, and now he is being focused on damaging his creator.

Victor Frankenstein also experiences a variety of feelings related to vice, particularly after he observes how his family, friends or close people to him, are being killed by his creation. To him, vice is associated with the same words the creature does; revenge and hatred. Inside of Victor, there is a strong need to take revenge upon the creature's actions, which he expresses to the magistrate in Geneva:

My revenge is of no moment to you, yet, while I allow it to be a vice, I confess that it is the devouring and only passion of my soul. My rage is unspeakable, While I reflect that the murderer, whom I have turned loose upon society, still exists. You refuse my just demand: I have but one resource; and I devote myself, either in my life or death, to his destruction (170).

He talks to the magistrate about the creature, and by saying that he allows revenge to be a vice, he is very similar to the creature, since both of them associated those terms to accomplish the destruction of the other. The same occurs when they have an encounter, in which they manifest their hate for one another, and Frankenstein says: "'Scoffing devil' Again do I vow vengeance; again do I devote thee, miserable fiend, to torture and death'" (174). In this situation, he is as angry as the creature for his own reasons, in which he is swearing to avenge what the creature has done to his loved-ones.

In *Vathek*, vice is portrayed quite differently, since it is not attributed to revenge and hatred for someone, or humanity as a whole. At first, it is related to physical pleasure and gluttony, coming from the Caliph, who is "much addicted to women and the pleasures of the table" (3). Such preferences are mentioned accompanied by the critic of others, for instance, when he continues enjoying himself in his palaces destined to the gratification of the senses: "Vathek devoted his time to the sole gratification of his senses, in the palaces which were severally dedicated to them. . . One half of Samarah followed his example, whilst the other lamented the progress of corruption" (32). The amount of devotion he puts in the satisfaction of the senses is not entirely approved by the people of Samarah, even though half of it did the same as him, the other one did not, something that the novel refers to as corruption. Moving on, vice is then associated with "pride", "ambition", and "indulgence", in instances when Vathek and Nouronihar are in the presence of Eblis, who is exclaiming what they have done: "At their feet were described [. . .] their pride and their crimes" (88), "reproached themselves with [. . .] a thousand projects of impious ambition" (82), "instead of squandering thy days in

voluptuous indulgence, lament thy crimes. . ." (83). He shows to each of them their vices, in moments when he was prideful, ambitious and indulgent, which drive him to commit crimes. Here, Hume's proposition is also relevant, because *Vathek* contradicts it. Pleasure is related with vice and not virtue, by the way it is exemplified, as some people criticise him and eventually he is punished for being like that.

In order to finish this idea of vice, London states that: "If we are excessively prideful, selfish, intemperate, and rude, then we may fail to have a realistic estimation of our own abilities, needs, and even desires" (20). All three of the characters possess at least one of these vicious traits, as *Vathek* is prideful and selfish. Frankenstein is somewhat selfish, if we consider that he does not think further of himself about why the creature is killing people. The creature is also fairly selfish and even intemperate, considering that he is also thinking about how miserable he is while killing people, especially a child, which, in addition shows that he lacks self-control in those moments. Overall, possessing such vices does alter the abilities, needs and the desires of the characters presented, because they modify what the characters originally wanted, whether is affection or discover the unknown, to the complete opposite or going to an extreme.

### 1.3 Virtue in Vice and Vice in Virtue

In *Frankenstein*, the creature experiences a lot of changes within virtue and vice. These elements at some specific moments in the novel fluctuate and are demonstrated differently. One important moment related with this is when he says: "I felt the greatest ardour for virtue rise within me, and abhorrence for vice, as far as I understood the signification of those terms, relative as they were, as I applied them, to pleasure and pain alone" (104). He says that in that specific moment he related virtue and vice with pleasure and pain, a thought that connects with Hume's interpretation, by perceiving them in any action, sentiment, or character given. Although they are related in that moment, that idea changes drastically when he visits Frankenstein in a cemetery, while he is mourning the death of his loved-ones and he enjoys seeing Victor in that condition: "'I was answered through the stillness of night by a loud and fiendish laugh [. . .] 'I am satisfied: miserable wretch! you have determined to live, and I am satisfied'" (172). Taking into account his laughter and satisfaction, he is pleased at Frankenstein's suffering, which is the same reaction towards a different situation. At the beginning he expressed happiness and pleasure when he saw the De

Lacey's family happy and content, not when they were in harsh moments, while in this moment, he is finding pleasure in cruelty, hence, vice. However, after Victor's death, the creature seems very different, and meanwhile Walton reproached him for being responsible for his friend's passing, the creature says that: "Think ye that the groans of Clerval were music to my ears? . . . After the murder of Clerval, I returned to Switzerland, heart-broken and overcome" (188). Over this, he reveals that he also suffered when he killed Henry Clerval, instead of the pleasure one would presume he felt, by the way he so intensely expressed before to Frankenstein that he will take revenge on him. Then, he says: "Evil thenceforth became my good" (188). By his words, vice became his virtue to him, because at some point in his life, being vicious brought him sentiments associated with virtue, such as the already mentioned; pleasure.

Continuing with *Frankenstein*, the fluctuation of virtue and vice exist also within Victor. One important point in particular, is related with a term called "intellectual virtue", that according to Cooper, are "capacities, abilities, and dispositions which are concerned with aiming at the truth, with the advancement and the transmission of knowledge" (459). Victor Frankenstein talks about what things delight him, while comparing himself to Elizabeth, and he says: "The world was to me a secret, which I desired to discover" (21). For his profound interest in discovering the secrets of the world, he gets engaged in philosophy, science, along other disciplines. His persistence is admirable, however, when he finished creating the creature and he was admiring it, he says: "how dangerous is the acquirement of knowledge, and how much happier that man is who believes his native town to be the world, that he who aspires to become greater than his nature will allow" (35). He has realised that the virtue of seeking knowledge and wanting to discover the world is not that good. It could carry severe consequences, just like the creation he finished. In the same way, he was so busy with his experiment that his father says that he was neglecting other aspects of his life, including his friends, people that he loved so much. In response, he says: "I then thought that my father would be unjust if he ascribed my neglect to vice. . . but I am now convinced that he was justified in conceiving that I should not be altogether free from blame" (37). In that instance, he was aware that he abandoned his other duties and friends for being too occupied with his creation, even if that was perceived as good in the beginning.

In a parallel way, in *Vathek* the term "intellectual virtue" is also portrayed in the Caliph, from whom virtue and vice are fluctuating. This seeking of true, knowledge and

understanding is something that highly interest Vathek, for example, when it is said that: "He had studied so much for his amusement in the life-time of his father, as to acquire a great deal of knowledge, through not sufficient to satisfy himself; for he wished to know everything; even sciences that did not exist" (4). He is genuinely interested in knowing the world, that when he can not transcript messages written on his new sabres left by the Giaour, he becomes thirsty, abandoning his vices: "This unhappy prince, being thus incapacitated for the enjoyment of any pleasure, commanded the palaces of five senses to be shut up; forebore to appear in public, either to display his magnificence, or administer justice, and retired to the inmost apartment of how wives" (12). He is so distressed that what is a passion of his could not be accessible to him, that he finds it impossible to fulfil his vices as he regularly does, showing that the seeking of knowledge is more important to him. Nevertheless, this virtue slowly transforms into something else when Giaour demands him to sacrifice children to obtain what he wants. At first, Vathek accepts and prepares the children, but then he doubts and declares: "'Relentless Giaour! answered Vathek, with emotion; 'can nothing content thee but the massacre of these lovely victims? Ah! wert thou to behold their beauty, it must certainly move thy compassion'" (22). Vathek shows sympathy towards the children, calling them "lovely victims" and they should move the "compassion" of Giaour.

The sacrifice is not stopped, which causes an immense impact within the parents, and Vathek is fairly worried about it: "'Nefarious Giaour! where art thou not yet devoured those poor children? where are thy sabres? thy golden key? thy talismans?'" (24). Again, by saying "poor children", it is demonstrated that he is aware of the crime and still is able to sympathise with the victims, however, the need to accomplish his need was stronger. This reflects that his virtue of seeking true, knowledge, and understanding was also impregnated with vice, at the moment he performed the sacrifice.

In relation with Victor and Vathek, Emberley states that: "'Moreover, personal glory can corrupt and be the source of social disorder because it relies as much on vice as it does on the appearance of virtue'" (735). Both of them have in common that they seek knowledge, to know more about the secrets of the universe, science, etc. Even if it started as a virtue for both of them, by wanting to give something to humanity, they also wanted to receive credit for their accomplishment, therefore, they also pursue knowledge, true, etc. for personal glory.

*Frankenstein* and *Vathek* portrayed virtue and vice by means of mental states producing feelings and actions that impact characters. Across the novels, some virtues and vices are distinguishable, to name some; benevolence and hatred, which caused the different characters to feel or act according to them, influencing themselves and others. On the other hand, some virtues and vices become interconnected, when in relevant occasions, the characters experience feelings that originally were related to the opposite concept. In the same way, "intellectual virtue" reveals that characters share interests that at first were born out of virtue, but soon they become a vice, as it seems they lost control of it.

## Chapter 2: The path of Vice

As mentioned in the first chapter, the novels exhibit two concepts that are the complete opposite, but soon enough they get interconnected. In this chapter I am going to cover the path of vice, which is something that takes relevance over the characters. Over this, there is a demonstration of vice owing to feelings of hatred, revenge or ambition, thanks to circumstances faced by the characters. As such, vice is used as a benefit, since it becomes a tool to accomplish certain growing aspirations. Finally, vice not only produces an impact on the creature, Victor, and Vathek, but also other characters, who are involved in relevant moments whether they have a close relationship with the mentioned characters or not, having as a result, a damage inflicted on them.

### 2.1 The Origin

*Frankenstein* demonstrates vice through feelings and acts that emerged for different reasons. In the case of the creature, he explains that he became vicious as he was rejected from every person he came across, and as a result he finds himself unable to create bonds, which was his main purpose at that moment. He was treated horribly by De Lacey's family, and the son even called his short visit in the house a "dreadful circumstance" (112). This situation provoked a profound impact on him that was even more aggravated with the attack suffered when he saved a girl's life. Seeing that his approaches had been rejected over and over again, along with being abandoned by the person who gave him life, he says: "Inflamed by pain, I vowed eternal hatred and vengeance to all mankind" (116). He is making a clear statement of taking actions against humanity for what he had been going through. He sees Victor as the main responsible for his misery, so he demands him to create a female companion for him, so he can "live in the interchange of those sympathies" (118) that he was deprived of. As Frankenstein hesitates to accept his demand, the creature explains that with company, he will not disturb him again, as he will see his desire of affection fulfilled, stating that: "My vices are the children of a forced solitude that I abhor" (121). In other words, his vices are the cause or product of the loneliness he was forced to be in and he hates so much. In words of Gold, the creature's "fall to ultimate evil is always linked to seductively legitimate complaints about his treatment and the hopelessness of his life and future" (106).

As seen previously, the fact that he became vicious can be understandable because of how humans treat him, provoking a sensation of desperation that he sees could be resolved with a companion that looked like him, as to have that companionship with humans is impossible.

The other reason why vice is recurrent in *Frankenstein*, comes to light with Victor. He was fully aware that the creature was the culprit of his family's death, however, he was not taking actual actions. At first, he was avoiding him, but after he destroyed the female creature, he was decisive to do the same to the creature: "All was again silent; but his words rang in my ears. I burned with rage to pursue the murderer of my peace, and precipitate him into the ocean" (141). Here, the creature threatens Victor by telling him he might be present at his wedding-night, which implies that he pretends to murder him. This marks the first moment where Frankenstein shows his vices regarding the creature, wanting to actually end his existence. The same as his creation, his vice is as well associated with feelings of revenge, in particular, when he arrives to Geneva, an occasion where he express that not even being far away from the creature reduces his anger and his desire for revenge: "I was possessed by a maddening rage when I thought of him, and desired and ardently prayed that I might have him within my grasp to wreak a great and signal revenge on his cursed head" (168). The more he thinks about the creature, the more vice gains power inside him, realising these feelings that he did not experience before with anyone, as we know.

In *Vathek*, some vices have no necessary explanation of why they exist. At the first moment the Caliph is introduced we know that he enjoys spending time with women, eating, or being prideful, however, there is no origin of them. Nonetheless, his obsession with possessing knowledge and wanting to know more is the main reason why he accepts to sacrifice innocents, and why he temporarily stops being kind or courteous with his people. As Wormald says: "The quest for knowledge and obtainment of what one does not have leads to more desires for things unattainable [ . . . ] he pushes onward and is willingly to sacrifice anything to get what is unattainable" (7-8). When an opportunity to have what he wanted so ardently was presented, he took it, even if he was capable to discern that they were just innocent children. In the end, his quest for knowledge and wanting to have what it is not possessed was more important. After Giaour disappears without giving what he promised to him, he gets very angry: "No language could express his rage and despair. He execrated the perfidy of the Indian; loaded him with the most infamous invectives; and stamped with his foot, as resolving to be heard" (23). Here, it is revealed how his genuine interest became a



vicious need, as he is more annoyed for not obtaining what he wanted, instead of being worried by how the people –whom he loved– are going to react. Other reason that explain his character is his own mother, who evokes an immense influence on him, for example, when she convinced him to perform another sacrifice in order to complete the pact with Giaour: "Let us offer them to the Giaour, —let them come up; our mutes, who neither want strength nor experience, will soon dispatch them; exhausted as they are, with fatigue'" (28), and Vathek responds: "'Be it so'. . . provided we finish, and I dine'" (28). With the impact his mother has on him, he accepts to perform such an act, and meanwhile, he is going to be eating, demonstrating that his vices are potentiate, partly thanks to Carathis.

## 2.2 The benefits

The benefits of the path vice in *Frankenstein* comes from the idea that vice could become a tool to achieve certain goals. The creature, when he was telling the story to Victor, says that he decided to concentrate on harming him in any form. He then states that he accomplished that in his first murder: "I gazed on my victim, and my heart swelled with exultation and hellish triumph: clapping my hands, I exclaimed, I, too, can create desolation; my enemy is not impregnable; this death will carry despair to him, and a thousand other miseries shall torment and destroy him'" (117). When he fell into vice, he was momentarily away from his main purpose to have affection and company, as he was determined to inflict pain upon others, especially his creator. His vice is perceived by him as beneficial, since it provided him a sense of satisfaction. After Frankenstein does not complete the family body for him, he states that: "'Remember that I have power; you believe yourself miserable, but I can make you so wretched that the light of day will be hateful to you. You are my creator, but I am your master; —obey!'" (140). The creature categorically tells Frankenstein that now he has power, which means that he can make him the most miserable person if he wants, so he is in charge of Frankenstein's moves. This statement gives the creature the perception that vice is allowing him to obtain what he wants at this moment.

For Victor Frankenstein, vice becomes a way to end the creature's existence. He says that his threats do not work on him, expressing that: "I have declared my resolution to you, and I am no coward to bend beneath words. Leave me; I am inexorable'" (140). With the intense conflict they both have been involved in, Frankenstein has taken the decision to not pursue what the creature wants. He is determined to finish him, which is even more clear

when he says: "Villain! before you sign my death-warrant, be sure that you are yourself safe" (141). With his words, he is also threatening him by informing him that he could do something to him also. Afterwards, Victor tries to convince a magistrate to finally seize the creature, but since they do not entirely believe him, he takes the decision to stop him himself: "I was hurried away by fury; revenge alone endowed me with strength and composure; it modelled my feelings, and allowed me to be calculating and calm, at periods when otherwise delirium or death would have been my portion" (170-171). Revenge has given him a moment to ponder what he is about to do in respect of the creature. After being so disturbed by him, those vices bring him an instant where he is finally in control of himself. Schug, in relation with Victor's "The moral consequences of Frankenstein's actions are not containable; in fact, they eventually consume him" (609). This idea carries the consequences of creating the creature, but most importantly, the fact that he neglected him, which is the main motive of the creature's acts. And with the ideas exposed above, he continues complicating his own actions, instead of trying to fix the problem. With him now pursuing revenge against the creature will not solve what he already did, in words of the author, the series actions taken will actually consume or destroy him, a consequence that will be explored in depth in the next chapter.

The benefits existing within vice in *Vathek* is illustrated when the Caliph meets Nouronihar, who caused a considerable interest in him, not only because she is beautiful, but also because she is quite similar to him: "Her vanity irresistibly prompted her to pique the prince's attention; and this, she before took good care to effect, whilst he picked up the jasmine she had thrown upon him" (53). He gets immediately fascinated by her, wanting to possess her and make her his wife, however he is told by Fakreddin that she is already promised to Gulchenrouz, a fact that is not important to him, as he says: "Would you surrender this divine beauty to a husband more womanish than herself. . . No! she is destined to live out her life within my embraces: such is my will: retire; and disturb not the night I devote to the worship of her charms" (59). He simply refused to let Nouronihar go, a situation that highlights how he always wants to do what is fitted for him, even if that is not possible. Then, we can see how he shares and enjoys his vices with her, as she follows him without criticism: "Whilst they were feasting, laughing, carousing, and blaspheming at pleasure. . ." (80), along with their new bond based on vice, they also have entertainment by seeing others suffering: "Nouronihar and the Caliph mutually contented who should most enjoy so degrading a sight. They burst out in peals of laughter, to see the old men and their

asses fall into the stream. The leg of one was fractured; the shoulder of another dislocated; the teeth of a third, dashed out; and the rest suffered still worse" (81). In finding someone who enjoys the same questionable activities as he does, vice has bestowed him a new form to do as he pleases, while having a potential partner that also benefits his interest in physical pleasure.

### 2.3 Them and the others

The type of impact that vice produces in characters outside of the perpetrators in *Frankenstein* occurs in the way that these characters are involved in crucial moments with the characters who are vicious, and in the meantime they do not discern their actions. For the creature, this first occurs with Justine, who is accused for the murder of William, something that the creature purposely planned. Although she did not do it, she still declares guilty: "I did confess; but I confessed a lie. I confessed, that I might obtain absolution; but now that falsehood lies heavier at my heart than all my other sins. . . Ever since I was condemned, my confessor has besieged me; he threatened and menaced, until I almost began to think that I was the monster that he said I was" (66). The creature hurled her into a very severe accusation that caused her, with the force of others, to almost think of herself as the author of the crime. Despite this, when the creature appears, he mentions this even without further interest, to then explain that he was already hated by Frankenstein and mankind even when he did not do anything: "I am malicious because I am miserable; am I not shunned and hated by all mankind? . . . remember that, and tell me why I should pity man more than he pities me? . . . Shall I respect man, when he contemns me?" (119). Overall, he is justifying his actions based on the hate, pity and contempt he received from mankind, implying that what he did was fair, as he treated them, the same he was treated. His words are understandable, as it is visible how badly he was treated, even when he was trying to be kind, but still, the case of Justine is quite problematic, as she did not say hurtful words to him, as all previous humans he encountered.

For Victor Frankenstein this occurs connected directly with the creature, because he is the main responsible for the creature's existence and partly responsible for his wrongdoings. His first mistake –apart from making him– was to abandon him. Eventually, when they see each other and the creature tries to engage in a conversation, Victor firmly dismisses him: "Begone! I will not hear you. There can be no community between you and me; we are

enemies. Begone, or let us try our strength in a fight, in which one must fall'" (78). Similarly to the creature, it is fairly understandable that he reacts like this seeing his family dead, however, at this moment, he does not contemplate that he is the reason why the creature is there, why he did all those crimes. In his purpose to create life and discover the world, he created a "demon", to then proceed to declare him his enemy, which does not help in the situation. After he refused to make the female creature, he said to him: "'Shall I create another like yourself, whose joint wickedness might desolate the world. Begone! I have answered you; you may torture me, but I will never consent'" (119). In his rejection, he is expressing that he will not allow another creature to desolate the world, however, he does not question why he is desolating the world, he does not see himself as the reason. Afterwards, he became aware of his role, stating: "'... and did I not, as his maker, owe him all the portion of happiness that it was in my power to bestow?'" (120). He reaches a point where he is able to sympathise with him, and sees himself as the person who can give him what he is requesting. Nonetheless, that sensation does not last long, and he reiterates his message: "'Begone! I do break my promise; never will I create another like yourself, equal in deformity and wickedness'" (140). From this moment on, he was determined to not listen to him, completely closing himself in the idea of seeing him as a wicked demon.

In respect of the creature and Frankenstein, O'Rourke states that: "No matter the purity of your intentions or how well you can justify your own actions to yourself, you can be the agent of others' misfortunes" (565). This englobes the situation of these both characters, who are in a quest to hurt each other, based on their own reason. Whether their acts can be justified or understandable, the point is that they are hurting others in the process, using them to victimise themselves.

To continue with *Vathek*, this occurs not directly connected with one character, but more likely some of them. At almost the beginning of the novel, Vathek wants to decipher a transcription left by Giaour, and he offers a reward to anyone who can help him, but at the same time, he punishes those who fail. An elderly man offers himself to help and succeeds, so Vathek gives him "robes of honour and thousands of sequins of gold as he hath spoken words" (10), and also invites him to dine and stay some days in the palace. Nonetheless, his amability last a day, as the message has changed, so he sends the old man to punishment: "'to-day thou art void of understanding: begone from my presence, they shall burn but the half of thy beard, because thou wert yesterday fortunate in guessing: —my gifts I never

resume'" (11). This reflects how his deep interest for knowledge is slowly becoming a vice, since he is punishing people for not doing what he requests correctly. The old man is able to escape, but others that follow are not. The children that he sacrificed are included, but also the parents, who were told that it was a contest, to then see their children killed. With this horrid scene, the parents say: "let us throw this cruel prince into the gulph\* that is near, and let his name be mentioned no more!" (24). These people were involved in a calamitous episode of Vathek wanting to accomplish his desires, producing an immeasurable impact on them, which changed their vision of him, as they first loved him, but now they called him "cruel". To continue, the next character that comes into discussion is Fakreddin, who observes how Vathek sets aside the plan of marriage between Gulchenrouz and Nouronihar, and arranges for Bababalouk to kidnap the young boy. As an answer, Fakreddin declares: "My friends! violent evils require violent remedies: the Caliph has brought desolation and horror into my family. . ." (59). Here, Fakreddin is making a statement against Vathek, considering his words "violent evils require violent remedies", means that he is planning to deceive the Caliph into believe the two young couple to be dead, since he sees as the only way to take revenge upon Vathek's continuous demonstrations of vice.

Considering this discussion in Vathek, Al-Alwan says that: "If there is any goodness in this world, it is presented in weak helpless persons, or in the pitiable common people" (44). All of the examples above put common people as the main victims of the Caliph, people that never did anything wrong or evil. The only ones that are not a part of the common people are Gulchenrouz and Fakreddin, but the first one is a weak helpless person, because he is just a child. Fakreddin does not fit in any category, because he is not a weak helpless person neither, and is the only one mentioned that actually took actions against Vathek and was successful in it.

The path of vice in *Frankenstein* and *Vathek* consists of the reasons behind why this concept emerges within the novels, whether it has a justification or not. For the characters presented above, their vices appear as a form of an inevitable option or to accomplish a greater good for themselves. Their vices were distinguished by them as beneficial, since they were useful to attain an specific important goal to each of them. These tendencies to embrace vice have drastic implications over themselves and others characters, who were or not directly involved with them, and without them actually seeing their behaviour with the others characters.

### Chapter 3: The Consequences of Being Vicious

As noticed in the previous chapter, the three characters become vicious, or their vices become aggravated, if we talk about the creature, Frankenstein, or Vathek, respectively. This chapter will dive into the consequences of being vicious upon the characters and the novels as a whole. Firstly, in *Frankenstein* and *Vathek* there is a presence of overlook and lack of responsibility for actions committed, in which characters do not care or they blame others for their own actions. Secondly, when they recognize their wrongdoings, it does not change anything, since the characters are found in a situation where they can not revert what they did. Finally, the endings of their stories culminate with them being punished, not achieving what they always wanted, or both cases.

#### 3.1 Overlook and Responsibility

In *Frankenstein*, there is a process of overlook and lack of responsibility for one's actions driven by vices, in which they do not seem to care or blame others for what they have done. The creature is implicated in this when he asks Victor to listen to why he had become vicious, and not judge him beforehand: "But hear me. The guilty are allowed, by human laws, bloody as they may be, to speak in their own defence before they are condemned. Listen to me, Frankenstein. You accuse me of murder; and yet you would, with a satisfied conscience, destroy your own creature" (78). What he says contains a lot of truth facts; he is allowed to defend himself to the accusations of murder. He is also aware of the law of humans, that can be cruel and unjust, occasions where they blamed innocents and saved the guilty. He is also right about the fact that while he is blamed for murder, Victor would do the same to him, but he will be free of guilt. However, he is trying to persuade and drive the idea of him killing innocent people to his life experience. Even if he was abandoned and suffered physical or verbal violence from humans, that does not redeem him for murder. As an answer to the creature's tale, Frankenstein states: "You swear,' I said, 'to be harmless; but have you not already shewn a degree of malice that should reasonably make me distrust you?'"(121). while the creature says: "How is this? I thought I had moved your compassion, and yet you

still refuse to bestow on me the only benefit that can soften my heart, and render me harmless” (121). Both of them are right to a certain degree, Victor is quite right to doubt him, because the creature has revealed what he is capable of doing, on the other hand, the creature is also right to question Frankenstein’s indecision, as he also shows that he sympathises with him. Nonetheless, what I want to argue is the fact that the creature seems to not consider that he did not commit a minor mistake, he kills people, and whether the partner he asked for makes him virtuous again or not, it will not change the fact he is responsible for murder and scheming.

Continuing with *Frankenstein*, this idea also takes importance respecting Victor. At first, he reached a point when he says he has a major responsibility over the creature: “Cursed be the day, abhorred evil, in which you first saw light! Cursed (although I curse myself) be the days that formed you! You have made me wretched beyond expression” (78). While he cursed the creature for his crimes, he also cursed himself for being the creator, the motive of his existence. As we progress, he starts to doubt about making the other creature and says: “They might even hate each other; the creature who already lived loathed his own deformity, and might he not conceive a greater abhorrence for it when it came before his eyes in the female form?” (138). By his words, he does not consider that the creature hated his appearance because he learned to do it from humans, including him, who is calling him a "deformity". Then, he proceeds to imagine possible scenarios if the creature had the partner he is asking for: “I shuddered to think that future ages might curse me as their pest, whose selfishness had not hesitated to buy its own peace as the price perhaps of the existence of the whole human race” (138). Here, he was getting paranoid about what the creature with another like him would do in the world, referring to them as "selfish" beings with the potential to destroy whole humanity, but he does not think that when he was occupied creating him, while neglecting his loved-ones, to then leave and abhor him, was not selfish of him. Is irresponsible to put the entire fault on the creature, when he has a paramount culpability in such a situation. Over this, Ziolkowski said that: "If Victor Frankenstein had not been overcome by his initial disgust, if he had responded to this creature with love and understanding, it might have become an instrument of good rather than evil" (43). When Victor and the creature talk for the first time, the creature says on some occasion that besides everything that he had suffer for the abandonment, he still hopes his creator can help him: “I am thy creature, and I will be even mild and docile to my natural lord and king” (77). In this moment, he still has a connection with him that reveals that their relationship might have

worked the same as him when he watched DeLaceys family. Instead of admiring their virtues, he could have admired Victor's ones and he would still have learned to appreciate them and wanting to be virtuous.

In the case of *Vathek*, this is displayed in the Caliph's unbothered reactions towards his acts over other characters that are with him. This is exemplified when, after Carathis takes her son away from the place where the sacrifice of the children occurred, he gets hungry and indiscriminately attacks his mother servants: "For having totally forgotten their deafness, he had impatiently asked them for food; and seeing them regardless of his demand, he began to cuff, pinch, and bite them, till Carathis arrived to terminate a scene so indecent, to the great content of these miserable creatures" (26). This can alluded to the regain of his vice, after he lost it temporarily for being thirsty to have the answers of his desire to knowledge, and as it was not actually achieved, he came back to eating with much more eagerness, harming other people without further realization. A similar situation occurs when he, along with his mother, performed a sacrifice that involved "the most faithful of his subjects" (29), and he got immediately enthusiastic over a feast: "The Caliph, notwithstanding his habitual luxury, had never before dined with so much satisfaction" (30). Unlike in the sacrifice of the children, where at least he shows some sympathy towards the victims, here, he does not show any sentiment connected with it. He got invested in fulfilling his already known vice. Even so, he and Carathis lied to Morakanabad about what occurred: "They told him, with an air of composure and commiseration, that the fire at the top of the tower was extinguished; but that it had cost the lives of the brave people who sought to assist them" (30). This moment highlights the actual character that Vathek has acquired, a character that totally dismissed his impact on the surroundings. He did the same in the past, but not so carefree and with the same level of severity, adding also that he demonstrated to possess virtues, something that in the present moment has changed.

### **3.2 Admitting One's Fault**

The final recognition of one's actions driven by vice does not change anything, as the characters in the novels are found in points of no return, where they have already committed critical wrongdoings. In the view of *Frankenstein*, the creature takes the decision to kill people close to his creator. He recognizes his authority upon the crimes that he had been



accused of, but does not take all the blame. That changes when Frankenstein dies, because there is a moment when he manifests: "Oh, Frankenstein! generous and self-devoted being! what does it avail that I now ask thee to pardon me? I, who irretrievably destroyed thee by destroying all thou lovedst" (187). He is very distressed about the death of Frankenstein, although that was what he proclaimed to want formerly. By asking Victor for forgiveness suggests that he is openly accepting the blame for the crimes. Walton counters him by saying that: "It is not pity that you feel; you lament only because the victim of your malignity is withdrawn from your power" (188). His words might be true, as previously the creature saw Frankenstein suffering and he was enjoying it. But then he says that he is not able to seek virtue and he is not trying to do it anymore, there is no hope for him after everything that has happened: "But now, that virtue has become me shadow, and that happiness and affection are turned into bitter and loathing despair, in what should I seek for sympathy?" (189). He is defeated in his attempt to find companionship and affection, the virtues that he possesses did not bring him what he needed, and now he does not have anything. People hated him when he was virtuous, and now they hate him for his vicious character.

In the case of Victor Frankenstein a similar phenomenon occurs. This thought of perceiving himself as the culpable for the crimes of his loved-ones becomes more recurrent, something that is partially true: "I lay for two months on the point of death: my ravings, as I afterwards heard, were frightful; I called myself the murderer of William, of Justine, and of Clerval" (148). He went from completely blaming the creature for the murders, but he never saw that the creature had become a killer, partly, because of his responsibility. He is the reason why the creature exists in the first place. So to observe his indirect participation in the murders makes a change, since he is becoming aware of his place within the situation he takes part of. Nevertheless, he realised this when the killings already happened, and whatever he does, he can not revert that. When he is in his death-bed, he reveals the existence of the creature to Walton and everything that had occurred between them, stating that now he is miserable by the desires he wanted to accomplish:

'When younger,' said he, 'I felt as if I were destined for some great enterprise. . . But this feeling, which supported me in the commencement of my career, now serves only to plunge me lower in the dust. . . From my infancy I was imbued with high hopes and a lofty ambition; but how am I sunk! Oh! my friend, if you had known me as I once was, you would not recognize me in this stage of degradation' (179-180)

He confessed that he always wanted to achieve something very important, as he was "destined for some great enterprise". This started out as a virtuous characteristic of wanting to give something to humanity, however that creation transformed him into a vicious person. That ambition became his downfall, where he commits severe mistakes. Notwithstanding this crucial moment of recognition, it is too late to have the opportunity to do something against his actions and the consequences that were carried.

In *Vathek*, this circumstance is presented fairly differently, as the Caliph is confronted in his face for the first time for his actions at almost the end of the novel, a thing that happened to the creature and Frankenstein much earlier. In here, it is explicitly mentions that the things Vathek did to other people were evil: "With downcast eyes, they all stood abashed; each upbraiding himself with the devil he had done" (82), "with a sigh of contrition, implored pardon of the women, whom, for his own satisfaction, he had so often tormented" (82). The people who were travelling with him are dragged in a hill where the Genii is waiting for Vathek, and in the process, his crimes are being revealed, an instance where it is being mentioned how he took advantage of women who were a part of his harem, in an attempt to free them from punishment, as they are not really responsible for his wrongdoings; they were other victims. As a result, Vathek and Nouronihar feel the weight of their crimes guided by their vices: "Vathek and Nouronihar turned pale in their litter; and, regarding each other with haggard looks, reproached themselves— the one with a thousand of the blackest crimes; a thousand projects of impious ambition. . . " (82), ". . . and Vathek heard the sobs of the fifty children he had sacrificed to the Giaour" (82). The Caliph comes to realise what he had done previously, including when he sacrificed the children, something that he never mentioned after it happened. Having these descriptions of vices, and what occurs to him, Folsom says that: "*Vathek* is itself ostentatiously moral" (61). At the beginning of the novel, this aspect is not very distinguishable, because he had vicious traits, but his people loved him anyway. It wasn't until he started doing vicious acts against his people, when others started questioning him, or observing his wrongdoings. The idea that he and what he does is, in fact, not admirable, is when he is close to obtain what he wants, since he is exposed for his crimes.

### 3.3 The Beginning and the End

The ending of the characters in *Frankenstein*, strongly conditioned by their vices, culminates with them being punished, carrying also the fact that they do not reach what they always wanted. In the case of the creature, he is capable of noticing it himself, when he manifests to Walton that: "But now vice has degraded me beneath the meanest animal. No crime, no mischief, no malignity, no misery, can be found comparable to mine" (189). The creature continues admitting how vice has corrupted him, reaching a level that no one is more malignant than him, which I do not entirely agree with, as he was a victim of the circumstances. But it is understandable that he reacts like this, seeing that everyone was treating him as a vicious being, while he was denying it or blaming others, to see what he did, he concludes that he is actually vicious. After this declaration, he says how he did not achieve his main goal: "For whilst I destroyed his hopes, I did not satisfy my own desires" (189). Meanwhile he was so focused on harming Frankenstein, he realised that he did not accomplish what he always wanted, stating that the murders he committed were pointless: "But it is true that I am a wretch. I have murdered the lovely and the helpless; I have strangled the innocent as they slept, and grasped to death his throat who never injured me or any other living thing" (190). By killing the "lovely", "helpless", "innocent", and the person who "never injured me or any other thing", means that he is as vicious as the people who mistreat him, because as them, he fatally harm people that did not do anything to him—except William, who insult him by calling him a "hideous monster" (117), but he was a child—just like those people attack him when he was not doing anything harmful to them. The creature finally takes the decision to end his own life, since now he is truly alone, as Frankenstein what the only true connection he had with humanity and the world, so only death remains for him: "But soon,' he cried, with sad and solemn enthusiasm, 'I shall die, and what I now feel be no longer felt. Soon these burning miseries will be extinct. I shall ascend my funeral pile triumphantly, and exult in the agony of the torturing flames'" (191). With death he will no longer feel the guilt he does, even if that will not give him the affection he wanted at the beginning, but now, it is not important to him.

With this being said, Oates states that: "Surely one of the secrets of *Frankenstein*, which helps to account for its abiding appeal, is the demon's patient, unquestioning, utterly faithful, and utterly human love for his irresponsible creator" (545). The creature in a lot of aspects is very human, he does show he is capable of having feelings in any situation,

whether it is good or bad. For that reason I don't agree completely, no one is fully devoted to others, especially when that person is responsible for your suffering. The creature does show that he possesses love towards his creator, but that was not strictly patient, unquestioning, or faithful, otherwise, he would not have murdered the people Frankenstein loves.

To Victor Frankenstein, this process is presented with a similar pattern with the creature. Moments after he confesses to Walton what had happened in his life, he says: "In a fit of enthusiastic madness I created a rational creature, and was bound towards him, to assure, as far as was in my power, his happiness and well-being" (185). Victor once more tells that his duty was to assure the creature's happiness and well-being, but he did not do it because his duty towards humans was more important: "My duties towards my fellow creatures had greater claims to my attention, because they included a greater proportion of happiness or misery" (185). These duties were paramount to him, because in his hands he had the responsibility to give humanity goodness or evil. Then, he says that the creature must die, as it had brought misery to humans, but now he is saying this out of virtue: "When actuated by selfish and vicious motives, I asked you to undertake my unfinished work; and I renew this request now, when I am only induced by reason and virtue" (185). Earlier, he requested Walton to finish the creature's life, driven by his vices, where he was full of hate and revenge. Now he is proclaiming the same, but for the sake of putting an end to his creation, since it was a mistake to have created him in the first place. At the end, he says: "Farewell, Walton! Seek happiness in tranquillity, and avoid ambition, even if it be only the apparently innocent one of distinguishing yourself in science and discoveries" (186). He knows that he is dying, and he wants the creature to perish with him, as is his fault that he exists. By telling Walton to avoid ambition even if it looks as an innocent desire to get involved in science and discoveries, he means that it will eventually become a vice that will carry severe consequences. His punishment is his death caused by himself, and the only thing that he wants now is to destroy his creation, becoming his last opportunity to cease the damage he has evoked.

Now, in the case of Vathek, when he is being exposed for his vices, he is not immediately punished, at first Eblis gives him an opportunity to change over certain conditions:

This moment is the last of grace allowed thee: abandon thy atrocious purpose: return: give back Nouronihar to her father, who still retains a few sparks of life: destroy thy

tower, with all its abominations. . . . compensate for thy impieties, by an exemplary life: and, instead of squandering thy days in voluptuous indulgence, lament thy crimes on the sepulchres of thy ancestors (82).

He is receiving another chance, but in exchange he will have to leave his vices, meaning he will have to leave his purpose of seeking knowledge, destroy the towers dedicated to satisfy the senses, as a whole, he will have to live a life of virtue. However, he is still opposed to fully accepting his crimes, as it said: "The Caliph, fired with the ambition of prescribing laws to the powers of darkness, was but little embarrassed at this dereliction" (83). His ambition to seek what he wants is still strong in him, that he is not disposed to abandon it. When he finally arrives at the Palace of Fire, he actually obtains the talismans the Giaour promised to him at the beginning of the novel. However, his ambition is punished, being trapped in that place forever for his biggest vice:

Such was, and such should be, the punishment of unrestrained passions and atrocious deeds! Such shall be, the chastisement of that blind curiosity, which would transgress those bounds the wisdom of the Creator has prescribed to human knowledge; and such the dreadful disappointment of that restless ambition, which, aiming at discoveries reserved for beings of a supernatural order, perceives not, through its infatuated pride, that the condition of man upon earth is to be—humble and ignorant (94).

This exemplified the same idea of *Frankenstein*, as Vathek's ambition to seek true knowledge and understanding beyond what is allowed to humans, lead him to his own downfall, just as Victor. About this idea, Roberts and Robertson state that: "Vathek is condemned not as a murderer, or a tyrant, or as an immoralist, but as an over-reacher" (205). By pretending he can become godlike, he committed awful crimes against others, which transformed a genuine virtuous interest of truth-seeking, into a vice that led to challenge what is permitted to humankind. Even if he at the end fulfilled his wish –unlike the creature and Victor– he could not enjoy it fully, as he was immediately punished for desiring such a thing that should not be in his hands.

The novels *Frankenstein* and *Vathek* put forth how vices are ignored or no one has accountability for them. Even if some arguments given by characters in order to defend their own actions are right, they should also recognize when they commit crimes, because they did, by more than they try to give excuses, those crimes are still there. When they finally take responsibility, it is when they are involved in a critical circumstance that can not redeem them for what they did. Their journeys end fatally, since vice attracts them to do things that

now have an enormous weight upon them, building up to a punishment of self-destruction or death.

## Conclusion

Virtue and Vice are paramount concepts within the novel *Frankenstein* and *Vathek* that push the narrative forward. They are an intrinsic part of the novels which add complexity and depth, not only to the characters of the creature, Victor Frankenstein, and Vathek, but also the story each author wanted to tell. In general, both of the novels show that humans are more complex and have more depth than just portraying them as entirely virtuous or vicious. It is observed how they all contain virtues such as benevolence, sympathy, or love, feelings that make them do actions towards themselves or other characters, such as both the creature and Frankenstein, Vathek, DeLacey, Vathek's followers, etc. Also, it can be seen how they possess vices such as hatred, revenge, or pride, that have the same result as virtue, that is, it moves the characters to commit certain actions that affects them and other characters. What marks a difference is when these themes become confusing, because at first, they were easily distinguishable; it was clear what was virtuous and what was vicious. But then, the creature, Frankenstein and Vathek, moved by what they wanted to accomplish, whether it was affection or companionship, to know more about the world and its secrets, or to obtain knowledge about everything, started to demonstrate that it is possible to be virtuous in vice and vicious in virtue. This means that they show virtuous feelings in moments that were influenced by vice, or showing vicious feelings in moments where virtue should be appreciated.

The creature showed feelings related with sympathy or enjoyment in moments where it was appropriated, meaning, in moments where other people were happy or content, or showed benevolence towards humans. Frankenstein showed feelings of sympathy or love to other humans. Vathek demonstrated feelings of love or courtesy towards his people, which weakened his already existing vices. Nonetheless, all of them also exhibit that they were capable of finding happiness or hate in instances where they should not be present, following what had been said about virtue and vice. In the case of the creature, it was explored how he felt happy when Frankenstein was suffering the death of his loved-ones, when in the past, he felt sad when others suffer, and also, he confesses to feel sad or heartbroken when he killed Frankenstein's friend, while previously he implied that he would enjoy doing that, for the purpose of making his creator suffer. In the case of Frankenstein, the most important aspect is

his intellectual virtue, namely, his admirable trait of seeking knowledge, true and understanding, elements that potentially helps humans, which is what he wanted to do by creating the creature. However, this pure ambition became a vice when he started neglecting his own people, and most importantly, the fact that he created something that he abhor and abandon, producing a creature that was killing innocents for his fault. In the case of *Vathek*, similarly to *Frankenstein*, also has intellectual virtue, where he wants to know about every science and the universe, and as *Frankenstein*, this virtue soon becomes a vice, when he started to inflict pain upon his own people, reaching a point where he even participate in mass murders.

In addition, the mistakes that each of them commit in order to try to justify their vices, only aggravated the situation. None of them wanted to recognize that they were responsible for their actions, and in some cases, such as the creature and *Frankenstein*, blamed the other, hinting that they were doing the correct thing. While *Vathek*, in the distance, simply ignored his responsibility, including the fact that no one actually dared to tell him explicitly what he was doing. Eventually, they accept their responsibility when a major event has happened in the story that pushed them to do it, however it was too late for them to be able to change or revert what they did. The creature accepted his responsibility and confessed his guilt when *Frankenstein* was already dead, *Frankenstein* accepted his responsibility and guilt when the creature had already killed almost all his loved-ones, and *Vathek* accepted his responsibility and guilt when *Eblis* exposed him and threatened to punish him. At the end, only *Vathek* fulfilled what he wanted, when he finally saw the Palace of Fire, nevertheless, he was still punished. The creature and *Frankenstein* ended their journeys without accomplishing their needs; wanting affection and companionship, and wanting to discover the world and help humans.

Knowing their lives and what they do through them, gives a sense of complexity and profundity, because the message spread in the novels is that humans possess a lot of layers; they are not purely virtuous or vicious, they can be both. It also shows they are inherently affected by their relationships with the world, which can influence their personalities and what they are capable of doing when they want something and the world does not allow it. With this being said, *Frankenstein* and *Vathek* manifest that virtue and vice are not static forces, as they are continuously fluctuating according to circumstances faced by the characters, and also, they sometimes defy their conventional meanings, which enriches



human characterization. But what is also being said, is that it is better to be virtuous than vicious, because even if being vicious has a justifiable or understandable reason, or that being vicious is a human trait, that pushed by the circumstances, could not be avoided, it will never give what you are truly seeking for.

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