"For What Crime Was I Driven from Society?"

Material Bodies in Hays's *The Victim of Prejudice* and Shelley's *Frankenstein*

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Abstract:

Despite their similar themes of ravaged female bodies and voiceless women, Mary Hays's *The Victim of Prejudice* (1799) and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) have not been considered together. Taken together, these novels dramatize the double bind that women face as material objects and thinking subjects during the nineteenth century. Applying Julia Kristeva's psychoanalytic theories of the *chora* and the abject, in addition to Jacques Lacan's theory of the law of the father, I argue that when Hays's central character Mary Raymond and Shelley's creature, whom Shelley uses to provide a voice for the otherwise voiceless female characters, enter the symbolic order, they come to understand the significance of their material bodies and their lack of power. In Kristevan terms, Mary and the creature begin in the maternal *chora*, which they both reject. After entering the realm of the law of the father, Mary, a rape victim, and the creature, an unnatural being, understand the presence of the abject. The typical reaction to the abject is one of horror, as it threatens to break down meaning and the symbolic. While society reacts with horror, viewing Mary and the creature as monstrous, Mary and the creature themselves accept it, but, first, they undergo harrowing circumstances. Acquiring knowledge and language only constricts and fragments Mary's and the creature's identities. When Mary and the creature become aware of their bodies, they attempt to reject society's confinements and transcend its boundaries. While they find transcendence when they escape in their imaginations, a place that transcends the symbolic, they are unable to transcend society's verbal reactions to their material bodies. Their transcendence is momentary, and they ultimately fail. Despite their failure in patriarchal society, Mary and the creature return the abject to the abyss of death, which they look forward to, wherein they will leave behind the patriarchal language and the Father's law.

1 In Mary Hays's *The Victim of Prejudice* (1799) and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), Mary Raymond's and the creature's identities are circumscribed when their material bodies prevent them from attaining the agency they desire. After Mary is raped, she learns "that her desire and her body are perverse and unacceptable to respectable society" (Ty, "Imprisoned Female Body" 144). Viewed as "perverse and unacceptable", Mary recognizes her subordinate role and learns that her body will be subject to men's gazes at all times. Although Mary actively resists victimization and attempts to find happiness, she remains a victim of a patriarchal society. Similarly, in *Frankenstein*, the creature recognizes society's injustice when he is rejected and abused for his deformed body. Shelley uses the male creature to provide a voice for the otherwise voiceless female characters in the novel. Although a male, he encounters treatment similar to Mary Raymond and is in several regards marked as female. He faces the same

problems as females in the nineteenth century: he may not interact with society, he lacks the agency to own property and other material possessions, and he faces prejudices based on his material body. Therefore, he may be read as both a male and a female. Within the two texts, neither the victims who rage against their plight (Mary Raymond and the creature) nor the silent victims who remain passive (*Frankenstein's* Elizabeth) find happiness. The novels, taken together, demonstrate a pervasive feature of women's lives at the time and reflect the impossible circumstances that women faced then. Both Mary and the creature are outcasts due to society's unfair labels and prejudices.

2 To better understand their situations, I apply Julia Kristeva's psychoanalytic theories of the *chora* and the abject, in addition to Jacques Lacan's theory of the law of the father. Mary and the creature begin in the *chora*: "a prelinguistic, pre-oedipal signifying process centered on the infant's complete immersion and oneness with the body of the mother" (Hoeveler 50-1). Then, repressing the maternal *chora*, Mary and the creature fall into language and enter the symbolic, which Lacan defines as "the realm of the law of the father, in which the 'phallus' (the symbol of the father's power) was the 'privileged signifier' for all discourse" (50). Here, Mary and the creature understand the consequences of their material bodies. Accordingly, Mary and the creature attempt to reject society's confinements and transcend its boundaries; however, their transcendence is momentary, and they ultimately fail. They learn that they never really separated from the "body of the mother": "the mother's body, now called 'the abject,' can never be completely expelled from one's consciousness and instead always exists on the borders of one's identity" (51). Mary and the creature understand the presence of the abject when they are outcast from society. The typical reaction to the abject is one of horror, as it threatens to break down meaning and the symbolic. While society reacts with horror, viewing Mary and the creature as unacceptable, Mary and the creature themselves accept it. In order to complete total transcendence, Mary and the creature return the abject to the abyss of death, which they look forward to, wherein they will leave behind the patriarchal language and the Father's law.

3 At the beginning of *The Victim of Prejudice*, Mary focuses on her intellectual abilities, rather than her physical attributes, until a man introduces desire and sexuality to her. As a young girl, Mary finds happiness in her mental pursuits: "[M]y figure was light and airy, my step firm, my aspect intelligent, and my mind inquisitive" (Hays 5). Mary places significance upon strength – "my firm step" – and her intellect – "my mind inquisitive"; furthermore, she regards her body

as “light and airy”, avoiding sexually charged terms and employing spiritual terms. Mary lives with her guardian, Mr. Raymond, who provides her with a “liberal education” (7) and whose house she calls a “dear and well-known asylum” (14). Mary’s education helps her to understand the possibilities besides marriage and family that exist for her in the world. Accordingly, Mary’s mind and body are not separate entities, but united. However, Mr. Raymond will soon influence her to separate from “reason”: “In *Volatile Bodies*, feminist Elizabeth Grosz points out that in Western philosophy from Plato to Descartes there has been a tradition of separating the mind from the body. This dualism is often gendered and hierarchized so that women are associated with the body, while men are linked to the mind or reason” (Ty, “Imprisoned Female Body” 147-8). As a woman, Mary exists at the bottom of the “hierarchized” separation. Consequently, the paradisiacal nature of her life at her “asylum” is a pre-fall in the Garden of Eden, before God imposes gender distinctions, so to speak, and Mr. Raymond will destroy this paradise.

4 Mr. Raymond assumes he may legitimately reduce Mary to her sex simply because she is a woman. He treats Mary equally; however, this is a false paradise of equality, for Mr. Raymond begins to question and “doubt” Mary’s education when his charge, William Pelham, and Mary display signs of something more than platonic friendship (Hays 25). Mr. Raymond reduces Mary to her physical aspects and thereby cannot appreciate her as an individual. Eleanor Ty explains that “[t]hrough language”, Mr. Raymond introduces Mary to her feelings for William, and he prompts her “to see herself as a sexual being” (“Imprisoned Female Body” 143-4). Mary begins to think of herself in terms of her body, for the conversation “awaken[s] in my heart new desires” (34). She turns her attention away from her mind and toward her “heart” and her body. Here, Mary represses “the completely unified mother and child [the *chora*]” (Hoeveler 51). If Mary follows the same trajectory of Kristeva’s theory, she must repress the *chora* – considered “unacceptable [and] anti-social” – to assume her “clean and proper” place within society: “In *Powers of Horror* [Kristeva] argues that it is only through the delimitation of the ‘clean and proper’ body that the symbolic order, and the acquisition of a sexual and psychical identity within it, becomes possible” (Gross 86). Accordingly, when Mary enters “the symbolic order” and “acquire[s] a sexual identity”, she heeds Mr. Raymond’s advice: “Far be from my heart, then, these weak and womanish regrets” (Hays 40). As a young woman, she admires her strength, which she now considers a “womanish” weakness. She leaves in order to satisfy Mr. Raymond’s fears that her sexual allure will cause trouble in his home. She trusts his wisdom

above her own, acquiescing to his view of her body, falling into the naming conventions that subordinate her based on her sex.

5 Hays emphasizes how men label women, consequently undermining how women define themselves. Mary especially is confronted with her physical body when she meets Sir Peter Osborne, who preys upon her virtue and rapes her, exploiting her body. Upon first meeting Mary, Osborne tries to kiss her, and he objectifies her: "A little beauty! A Hebe! A wood-nymph! I must and will have a kiss; and damn me! You shall be welcome to all the grapes in the greenhouse" (Hays 14). When he uses the sexually suggestive words such as "beauty" and "wood-nymph", he strips her identity down to her physical appearance. When Osborne identifies Mary with symbolic descriptions, he fixes her to a specific place in the symbolic order. Mary already exists in the symbolic order, but not in the way Osborne suggests. Osborne's symbolic descriptions of Mary reflect Lacan's theory that "It is the name, the symbol, that provides unity over time" (Oliver 20). Rather than "provide unity", the symbols fragment Mary's identity. Mary feels ashamed after Osborne's objectification – he refers to Mary with sexually charged symbols: "beauty" and "wood-nymph" – as her cheeks are "flushed by the consciousness of guilt" (Hays 15). The symbolic ascriptions mark a change in Mary, and Lacan would refer to it as Mary entering "the realm of language and symbols, structures and differences, law and order" (McAfee 48). Osborne completes Mary's prior introduction to language and the symbolic. She further represses what Kristeva calls the maternal, semiotic *chora* and enters the patriarchal 'law and order', which causes Mary's "guilt". The incident sacrifices part of what she regards as her virtue; however, she will do whatever it takes to remain in control of her virtue, and she will not willingly release that control to Osborne.

6 Despite her heroine's resistance toward her victimizer, Hays emphasizes that a man like Osborne does not waver in his pursuit. First, he exerts verbal power over her when he labels her; next, he will exert physical control over her. Osborne continues to accost Mary. He wants Mary only for her body, which solidifies her role in society as a subordinate body rather than an independent mind. When she leaves Mr. Raymond's house, she stays with his friends, the Nevilles; while there, Osborne forces himself into their company. Once Mary leaves the Nevilles' care and her guardian dies, Osborne seizes his opportunity to hold Mary prisoner at his London house. Trying to escape, she mistakenly takes refuge in his bedroom chamber, and he rapes her: "[T]he hour, the solitude, – my defenseless situation, – my confusion, my terror, – my

previous exhaustion [. . .] his native impetuosity, heightened by recent scenes of riot and festivity, by surprise, by pride, by resistance, – combined to effect my ruin" (Hays 116). Mary's "confusion" and "terror" prevent her from fighting Osborne. When Osborne rapes Mary, he assumes authority over her:

> [R]ape is structured like a language, a language which shapes both the verbal *and* physical interactions of a woman and her would-be assailant [. . .] The language of rape solicits women to position ourselves as endangered, violable, and fearful and invites men to position themselves as legitimately violent and entitled to women's sexual services. (Marcus qtd. in Ty, "Imprisoned Female Body" 147)

Since "rape is structured like a language", its language constricts Mary's identity as much as the symbolic patriarchal language, defining her as "endangered", rather than allowing Mary to define herself. The verbal scars of rape affect Mary as much as the physical. While she is able to transcend the physical repercussions, she will be unable to transcend the verbal because the symbolic order still traps her.

7 Hays's heroine rejects the labels that society creates for women, and, through Mary, Hays portrays her redefined notion of virtue. Although Osborne takes away Mary's virginity, "her *virtue* is intact if her hymen is not" (M. Brooks 21)[1]. Mary responds to the rape as follows: "My honor, say you, can never be restored to me? Oh, 'tis false! 'tis base as barbarous! Its luster, which you have sought to obscure, will break out, in your despight, from the temporary cloud which envelopes it, with undiminished brightness" (Hays 119). For Mary, her "honor", her virtue, persists even though Osborne rapes her and takes her virginity. Sustaining her honor's "luster" transcends any of the repercussions she faces. Rejecting the language of the father, Mary continuously tries to redefine the word "virtue" itself, which signifies her collision with the symbolic order, language, and her attempt to control it. By challenging the notion that a woman who has sex outside of marriage is ruined, Hays strongly suggests that such a notion is false, and Mary "exposes it as the symbol it has always been" (M. Brooks 21). Mary still believes in her innocence, and she claims that her "honor" still exists, challenging Osborne's subordinate view of her and the symbolic structure of society.

[1] Besides Ty's work in the 1990s and M. Brooks' 2012 article, there remains a lack of recent scholarship on Hays, specifically in regards to feminism. Laura Mandell's "Bad Marriages, Bad Novels: The 'Philosophical Romance'" (2008) discusses Mary and William's relationship, but does not mention her rape. While Susan Purdie and Sarah Oliver's "William Frend and Mary Hays: Victims of Prejudice" (2010) discusses the rape, they focus more on Osborne and his behavior. Moreover, many scholars prefer to discuss Hays's first novel *The Memoirs of Emma Courtney* (1796).

8 Despite Mary's rejection of society's labels, Osborne has already 'ruined' her, an act she cannot undo as far as society is concerned. Society remains steadfast, unaccepting of Mary's new definition of virtue, and it will punish Mary for her rebellion: "[T]he refusal to yield to the Father's law brings about marginalization and isolation under the specific historical and social circumstances in which [Hays] and her heroines lived" (Ty, "Mother and Daughter" 65). Although Mary rejects the "Father's law", she will pay a price. While Mary still believes in her virtue, which she views as "undiminished", Osborne claims that "honor and character, can [. . .] never be restored to you" (Hays 119). Osborne cautions Mary about society, which labels women as "either [the] lovely angel or [the] contaminated whore" (Ty, "Imprisoned Female Body" 139). Mary rejects Osborne's reasoning; therefore, when he tries to apologize for his actions and offers to take care of her financially, she deters him from further ruining her: "I spurn the wealth you offer, the cursed price of innocence and principle, and will seek, by honest labor, the bread of independence" (Hays 119). Even though Osborne takes away her physical virtue, he cannot take away what she regards as her internal virtue; nevertheless, society continues to push the Father's law upon Mary.

9 Hays illustrates that when a woman tries to change the patriarchal language and the Father's law, she is denied, such as when Mary maintains her definition of virtue. Men pay attention to her body – and, as in Mary's case, either abuse or violate it – but disregard her contribution to language. Aware of her sexuality and the importance society places upon it, Mary still attempts to change her fate and the fate of other fallen women. After Osborne rapes her, she does not feel ashamed. Her 'ruined' fate does not define her; rather, she rises above it, surviving: "The fact that Mary continues to live and fight for her dignity and self-sufficiency long after her loss of virginity is an indication of Hays's defiance of the popular belief in the male ability to manipulate the female through controlling her body" (Ty, "Mother and Daughter" 70). Mary maintains her "dignity and self-sufficiency" as indicated by the following assertion: "[V]irtue still maintains her empire in my bosom" (Hays 127). For Mary, her virtuous "empire" triumphs over Osborne's definition of her body; thus, she sustains her "empire", transcending the physical. Although she continuously refutes the physical ruin Osborne subjects her to, her internal virtue saves her from external antagonists for only so long.

10 Mary is beginning to transcend patriarchal restrictions, but the people around her follow and adhere to society's symbolic structures, specifically the definition of "virtue"; thus, because

society believes that she is 'fallen' and cannot recover her virtue, they think that she feigns innocence. Her employer thinks she will sleep with him due to rumors that she consensually slept with Osborne, rumors which are implied to have been spread by Osborne himself (Hays 139). Then, after she leaves that job, Osborne prevents her from becoming a traveling companion for a woman, and he taints her reputation in a town where she tends to a farm with Mr. Raymond's servant, James (145, 162). Mary wants to escape her 'fallen' status, but everywhere she ventures, she meets more objectification. Men do not see an individual, but a body, which "is no longer private, but becomes a site for public viewing, for comparison, for abjection and horror [. . .] she becomes simply body and no mind in others' eyes" (Ty, "Imprisoned Female Body" 149). People respond with "abjection and horror" because the abject, the maternal body, "persists in occupying the boundaries of the subject's identity" (Mulvey-Roberts 198). In Mary's case, when she is raped, she comes into contact with one of these "boundaries" – the "unacceptable form of sexual desires" (Gross 87). Here, Kristeva means incest, but I suggest that rape fits the category. According to Kristeva, within abjection, "[m]eaning collapses" (2) and "'I' is expelled" (4). Despite these losses, Kristeva writes, ""[a]bjection [. . .] is an alchemy that transforms death drive into a start of life, of new significance" (15). The "alchemy" will save Mary from the life Osborne and society subjects her to. Soon, Mary will begin the journey which will culminate in her death.

11 Hays underscores the interminable attack upon a ruined woman, even when she does not willingly choose her status. After overcoming the sexual way men define her, Mary understands that, at all times, her body is sexually violable for not only Osborne, but also other men, and she may escape them only in death. When her circumstances – poverty and eventually debtor's prison – begin to reflect the consequences of Osborne raping her, her inner strength fails her, signifying that, in reality, she may transcend society's boundaries momentarily, but not permanently. The people around her stay the same, continuing to follow society's standards. Therefore, every time Mary transcends society's boundaries, either Osborne or someone else forces her to face her grim reality, bringing her awareness back to her physical body. At first, she tries to stay positive: "The wrongs I had suffered appeared to me as a dream, the reality of which was wholly inconceivable" (Hays 135). She thinks of her injuries as a "dream" and hopes that they will not prevent her from living her life as she did before the rape. Nevertheless, Mary's circumstances worsen:

> Difficulties almost insuperable, difficulties peculiar to my sex, my age, and my unfortunate situation, opposed themselves to my subsistence: amidst the luxuriant and the opulent, who surrounded me, I put in no claims either for happiness, for gratification, or even for the common comforts of life: yet, surely, *I had a right to exist!* – For what crime was I driven from society? (141)

Mary's "crime", being a rape victim, overwhelms her life. Her situation appears all too real as unfortunate events unfold, and she "sink[s] beneath a torrent" (168). Once she becomes "simply body", she cannot return to the patriarchal definition of "virtue". Try as she might, the gender distinctions implicit in language suffocate her. She preserves her virtue internally; however, to society, she is ruined because all that matters to society is her body. When she realizes this, she falls fatally ill: "The disorder which has gradually wasted my strength and sapped the powers of life gains hourly ground" (174). Even though Mary exposes the patriarchal definition of womanhood, and specifically "virtue", she may not find freedom from society's oppression until she escapes the body that patriarchal language has circumscribed.

12 Hays's rebellious heroine attempts to change society's outlook upon women and their chastity; however, Mary withers under the cruel realities of living as a societal outcast. Her inner virtue fails to save her, and "Hays's plea for female independence can only be a future eventuality" (M. Brooks 22). After Osborne rapes Mary and she struggles for survival, she longs for death. No matter how strong and independent Mary is, she disintegrates under the hardships society presents to a physically ruined woman. Upon her final days, Mary rallies for change: "*I have lived in vain!* Unless the story of my sorrows should kindle in the heart of man, in behalf of my oppressed sex, the sacred claims of humanity and justice" (Hays 174). In recognizing her "oppressed sex", Mary casts off the Father's law. She returns the abject to the abyss of death; in doing so, Mary returns to "a stage preceding binary opposition and distinct categories, before language and naming" (Gross 93). In death, Mary discards society's labels and finds freedom from objectification. Mary fights her fate, but, outside of death, no escape exists for Hays's heroine, whose oppressor – society – crushes her.

13 Nineteen years later, Mary Shelley published *Frankenstein*, which also wrestles with the social injustice women faced in the nineteenth century: Elizabeth Lavenza and Victor Frankenstein's male creature, like Mary Raymond, suffer at the hands of a patriarchy which outcasts them based on their gender and material bodies. Whereas Hays portrays a heroine who embodies both proper womanhood and female rebellion, in Shelley's novel, the heroine is split

into two – the 'good', passive woman (Elizabeth) and the angry, independent creature (a man who is in several regards marked as female for the injustices he suffers due to his 'otherness', existing on the outside of acceptable society). Elizabeth acts passively and virtuously, adhering to societal expectations and succumbing to the Father's law when she grows up and lives with Frankenstein's family. During the nineteenth century, society divided men and women into two spheres: the public sphere for men and the private, domestic sphere for women (Mellor 220). The distinction between spheres "causes [women's] destruction", for "women cannot function effectively in the public realm" (221). They cannot participate in its symbolic language, which relegates them to the role of objects. Like Mary Raymond, Elizabeth, Victor Frankenstein's childhood companion and fiancée, is subject to the symbolic language of patriarchal order, falling into subordination, unable to participate in it on an equal level with Frankenstein.

14 In Elizabeth, Shelley presents the proper woman; however, by staying within her proper, domestic sphere, her role is thankless, and she lives an empty life without agency. Throughout the novel, Elizabeth's feelings are almost exclusively connected to the domestic and familial, and she lacks a role besides a companion and housewife. After all, as Mellor points out, Frankenstein believes in a "sexist aesthetic that insists that women be small, delicate, modest, passive, and sexually pleasing – but available only to their lawful husbands" (224).[2] Elizabeth fits this description. When Elizabeth and Frankenstein grow up together, he describes her as meek and mild: "She appeared the most fragile creature in the world [. . .] I loved to tend on her, as I should on a favorite animal" (Shelley 20). She fulfills her "small, delicate" role as an inferior "favorite animal". Then, when Frankenstein's mother dies, Elizabeth turns into the perfect, ideal woman, who remains "passive" in regards to her own life, but asserts action in her domestic tasks,

> [R]enew[ing] the spirit of cheerfulness in our little society. Since the death of her aunt, her mind had acquired new firmness and vigor. She determined to fulfill her duties with the greatest exactness; and she felt that that most imperious duty, of rendering her uncle and cousins happy, had devolved upon her. (26)

[2] While scholarship on the feminist and psychoanalytic aspects of *Frankenstein* remains prevalent, recent scholarship focuses mainly on the replacement of women with technology or the parent/child relationship between Frankenstein and the creature. See, for instance, Galia Benziman's "Challenging the Biological: The Fantasy of Male Birth as a Nineteenth-Century Narrative of Ethical Failure" (2006) and Donna Mitchell's "Of Monsters and Men: Absent Mothers and Unnatural Children in the Gothic 'Family Romance'" (2014).

Before she even marries Victor, she performs the "duties" of a wife and mother, overseeing the Frankenstein household and taking care of the Frankenstein family. Moreover, Frankenstein appreciates her appearance, or her "sexually pleasing" looks: "She was now a woman in stature and expression of countenance, which was uncommonly lovely" (53). Mary Raymond's marginalized status results from her rape and subsequent hardships, whereas Elizabeth's begins with her limited role in the domestic sphere and later ends with her death. Unlike Mary Raymond, Elizabeth does nothing to fight her marginalized position. With the exception of the occasional letter, Elizabeth is voiceless. When she speaks, she speaks of the household and of her loved ones; thus, she remains the ideal woman, living within the patriarchal language of symbolic order and uncompromised in her passivity.

15 Shelley uses Elizabeth to portray the passive woman, whereas the creature is used as a vehicle to reveal women's issues, which include the mistreatment he meets due to his outward appearance. Unlike his creator, Frankenstein, the creature is not simply male. Frankenstein, and later others, label and mistreat the creature because of his material body. He encounters social injustices similar to Mary Raymond's, and "the lifting of a monstrous mask produces a startling unveiling: beneath the contorted visage of Frankenstein's creature lurks a timorous yet determined female face" (Knoepflmacher 112). Unlike Elizabeth, the "determined" creature seeks vengeance for the cruelties he suffers: "[I]t can find an outlet for hatred not permissible for nineteenth-century daughters" (95). With a "female face", the creature acts with "hatred" in Elizabeth's stead. Like Mary in *The Victim of Prejudice*, the creature's body is mistreated by others, which provokes his hatred. After the creature is abandoned and he survives on his own, he comes into contact with humans, who mistreat him for no other reason than his physical appearance: "The whole village was roused; some fled, some attacked me, until, [I was] grievously bruised by stones and many other kinds of missile weapons" (Shelley 73). During the incident, the creature understands the material realties of his body – it causes people to attack him – and the wrongs of women, who suffer from "masculine cruelty and injustice" (Mellor 222). He learns "cruelty and injustice" more clearly when he acquires language.

16 The creature's introduction to language limits his identity, and he thereby learns that it privileges men, which he cannot be labeled as. Falling into language and the symbolic, the creature learns that he is an outcast. After the incident with the village, the creature hides in a "hovel", watching a family, the De Laceys, interact in their cottage (Shelley 73). While he

watches the De Laceys, he learns how to speak and how to read. Despite his new knowledge, his own identity remains an enigma, for he does not resemble his creator, Frankenstein: "And what was I? Of my creation and creator I was absolutely ignorant; but I knew that I possessed no money, no friends, no kind of property" (83). When he acquires language, he becomes aware of his 'otherness' – his lack of money, friends, and property. His situation reflects Mary Raymond's after she is raped. Her status as a ruined woman prevents her from finding a job or friends, and Osborne continuously destroys any other prospects for her. Mary's and the creature's lack of possessions and prospects represent that they do not have agency. Furthermore, reading such texts as *Paradise Lost* causes the creature to ask Victor, "Was man indeed, at once so powerful, so virtuous, and magnificent, yet so vicious and base?" (83). It is through reading that he becomes aware of the evil of man. Nevertheless, he still believes in the goodness of others. Like Mary Raymond, he continues to think that he can change the minds of those around him. The creature plans to introduce himself to the blind father, who may accept him without prejudice: "[K]nowledge might make [the De Laceys] overlook the deformity of my figure" (78). However, he carries out his plan unsuccessfully. The family, except for the father, looks upon him with "horror and consternation", while Felix, the son, accosts him violently, reinforcing how different he is (94). The creature wants to follow the Father's law and "be initiated into society through its entry into the symbolic and ultimately language" (Oliver 22). Every time the creature tries to enter "the symbolic" and "language", though, he is met with derision, reminded of his 'otherness' as a material reality similar to Mary Raymond.

17 Shelley supports the idea that naming separates those in marginalized positions from acceptable society. Instead of helping the creature develop his identity, naming makes him question his existence and view it as a burden. Despite their educations and efforts to enter society, Mary Raymond and the creature are outcasts; after all, they remain connected to the abject: "the monster can be read as a spectre of the maternal body as well as Frankenstein's monstrous child" (Mulvey-Roberts 199). As a "spectre of the maternal body", the creature begins his journey toward returning the abject to the abyss of death, but first he must experience the pitfalls of language. Shortly after he is rejected by the De Laceys, the creature meets a boy, who he believes "was unprejudiced" (Shelley 100). However, the boy calls him "monster", "ugly wretch", and "ogre" (100). The boy's response quells the creature's attempts to fit in and is similar to Frankenstein's reaction. When the creature first awakens, Frankenstein runs away from

him. Upon meeting him again, Frankenstein names his creature, calling him "Devil", "vile insect", "[a]bhorred monster", "fiend", and "[w]retched devil", among other names (67-8). Rather than name him like a father names a son, he uses slurs and pejoratives. The creature understands Frankenstein's slight: "I ought to be thy Adam; but I am rather the fallen angel" (68). The slurs remind the creature that he is 'other' rather than the human "Adam". Lacan's theory proposes that a name "provides unity over time" (Oliver 20). Since the creature never receives a name besides slurs, he never has a chance at "unity" in regards to his identity. His differences cause others to outcast him – differences not even knowledge changes, for, like a woman, he is "simply body", the "Devil" that they see. Due to his injustices and being rebuffed so many times, he will ultimately reject the symbolic.

18 Shelley reinforces that, like women in the nineteenth century, marginalized creatures cannot fight to change their status. The creature reaches out to Frankenstein and attempts to change his fate, but his transcendence of society's injustice lasts momentarily. He tries to become a 'man' by exerting power over women, specifically when he asks for a bride. He, like Adam, wants a mate, and he asks Frankenstein for "one as deformed and horrible as myself [who] would not deny herself to me. My companion must be of the same species, and have the same defects" (Shelley 101). When he receives his mate, he will not be the "villain" that his creator deems him, and he promises Frankenstein, "If I have no ties and no affections, hatred and vice must be my portion; the love of another will destroy the cause of my crimes" (103). He will attain a mate who is his equal. His paradisiacal Eve will not label him as an outcast, but accept and love him, and they will live outside the Father's law, apart from society. He wants to communicate with his counterpart, and in that respect, he wants to retain his linguistic skills; however, he will soon understand the flaws in language and therefore must give up language. Despite the creature's "activation of the symbolic order", he bears false hope that he is successful, for "the godlike science of language [will] prove deceptive [. . .] it [will] not provide a way to overcome lack and satisfy desire—as, indeed, language never can" (P. Brooks 211). Frankenstein will destroy the creature's counterpart, and the creature will not achieve what he wishes to; consequently, "language [will] prove deceptive", and he will reject the symbolic, returning the abject to its abyss. Asking for a mate, he tries to return to a pre-fallen state, but he fails. He and Victor have already transgressed. The creature has killed innocent human beings,

and Frankenstein has played God. Nevertheless, Frankenstein promises to create the monster's companion.

19 Rather than fulfilling his promise, Frankenstein destroys the female creature – an act which may be read as rape[3]; accordingly, both Hays and Shelley portray rape as a way for men to silence 'monstrous' women and remind them that they are subordinate creatures. During the creation, Frankenstein second guesses his decision, for he perceives women as the weaker sex: "[A] female monster has more potential for excess, as femininity is conceived to be monstrous anyway" (Liggins 139). Just as society views Mary Raymond's femininity as "monstrous", Frankenstein views the female creature's the same way:

> [S]he might become ten thousand times more malignant than her mate, and delight, for its own sake, in murder and wretchedness. [The creature] had sworn to quit the neighborhood of man, and hide himself in deserts; but she had not; and she, who in all probability was to become a thinking and reasoning animal, might refuse to comply with a compact made before her creation. (Shelley 118-9)

Thus, fearing the female creature's possible "malignant" nature and "reasoning" mind, Frankenstein remedies his mistake and destroys the female creature: "I thought with a sensation of madness on my promise of creating another like to him, and, trembling with passion, tore to pieces the thing on which I was engaged" (119). The words "trembling" and "tore" connote sexual violation, especially the word "tear", which compares to tearing a hymen. The action parallels Mary Raymond's rape. She is created like a "thinking and reasoning" creature, but the men in the novel reduce her to body and silence her. Like Mary Raymond, the female creature does not commit any crimes, but Frankenstein prejudices her as soon as the creature labels her "female", leaving her vulnerable to victimization. Frankenstein destroys the female creature before she has the opportunity to speak for herself or develop her own ideas: "Horrified by this image of uninhibited female sexuality, Victor Frankenstein violently reasserts a male control over the female body, penetrating and mutilating the female creature at his feet in an image that suggests a violent rape" (Mellor 224). Rape epitomizes the patriarchal silencing of women, the quintessential example of enforced passivity. The female creature will never threaten men's status as the superior creatures.

[3] See, for instance, Judith Halberstam's *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters* (1995), which argues in a similar direction.

20 Even the women who accept their subordinate positions are punished. Seeking revenge for Frankenstein's broken promise, the creature kills Elizabeth on her wedding night and leaves her body "lifeless and inanimate, thrown across the bed, her head hanging down, and her pale and distorted features half covered by her hair" (Shelley 140-1). Elizabeth, "inanimate" and "distorted", no longer poses a threat, either. While she never opposes her subordinate position as the Frankenstein family's housewife, she could have in the future. Just like Frankenstein silences the female creature, the creature silences Elizabeth and does so violently: "Elizabeth's corpse is 'distorted,' 'bloodless,' 'flung,' across the bed, exhibiting its murderous mark. [Tim] Marshall reads into the description the possibilities of sexual abuse" (Liggins 141). The creature destroys Elizabeth's female body; therefore, the creature destroys her 'monstrous' femininity when he "sexual[ly] abuse[s]" and kills her just as Frankenstein has done with the female creature. In death, the female creature and Elizabeth remain eternally passive. Once the creature kills Elizabeth, he no longer attempts to change the symbolic order.

21 Shelley understands that those who encounter injustice, specifically when it comes to the Father's law and the patriarchal language, may only maintain a sense of self and find escape in death[4]. Just as Mary Raymond fails in her effort to redefine virtue and survive as a societal outcast, the creature, after failing in his pursuits, cannot accept the knowledge of his lonely existence and material realities of his body; thus, as when Frankenstein "sinks [the female creature] in the sea", the creature "return[s] the abject to the abyss where it belongs" and "returns" to a time before knowledge (Mulvey-Roberts 200). After all, he cannot survive anyway. When Frankenstein creates his monster he trespasses upon a sacred place: "[A]t every level, Victor Frankenstein is engaged upon a rape of nature, a violent penetration and usurpation of the female's 'hiding places,' of the womb" (Mellor 226). With a "womb", Nature assumes the female sex and forbids Frankenstein to continue living: "Nature is not the passive, inert, or 'dead' matter that Frankenstein imagines" (226). Therefore, women are not "passive, inert, or 'dead,'" either. Society makes them so. Readers may never know the power women possess, for the creature must die. Frankenstein creates the monster out of unnatural circumstances, so nature restores balance. First, Victor dies, for "Nature's revenge is absolute: he who violates her sacred hiding places is destroyed" (228). Then, his creature follows suit: he announces that "the

[4] Shelley's ideas reflect those of her mother, Mary Wollstonecraft, who wrote *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), wherein Wollstonecraft rallies for women's education and equality.

miserable series of my being is wound to its close!" (Shelley 158). P. Brooks discusses the creature's word choice: "'Series' is here used in the sense of 'sequence' or 'order.' Conceptually, this phrase is related to the 'chain' which figures the Monster's understanding of human interaction, and its counterparts in language and narration [and he] fail[s] to enter the 'chain of existence and events'" (215). With its associations to Lacan's "'signifying chain' of language", the creature's word choice – the ending "series" – suggests that he will reject the language that he has learned, returning to a pre-linguistic state (202). His life "wound to its close", the creature wishes to undo his education and forget man's evil.

22 And he, like Mary Raymond, gives up his pursuit to change his fate. The creature understands his failure and the failure of society:

> For whilst I destroyed his hopes, I did not satisfy my own desires. They were forever ardent and craving; still I desired love and fellowship, and I was still spurned. Was there no injustice in this? Am I to be thought the only criminal, when all human kind sinned against me? (Shelley 160)

Like Mary Raymond, attempting to take part in a patriarchal society despite his differences, the creature only finds "injustice", "destroyed" hopes, and dissatisfaction. Society quells aggression; thus, understanding that he may neither change his body for society's acceptance nor find a mate, he succumbs to death. By dying, though, the creature returns the abject to its rightful abyss, rejecting the patriarchal language and the symbolic that shun him: "I, the miserable and the abandoned, am an abortion, to be spurned at, and kicked, and trampled on" (160). Losing his paradise, the creature reiterates that the material reality of his body is "an abortion". Living on earth, he will always meet others who reject him and his appearance. He sees death as an escape: "I shall ascend my funeral pile triumphantly, and exult in the agony of the torturing flames. The light of that conflagration will fade away; my ashes will be swept into the sea by the winds. My spirit will sleep in peace; or if it thinks, it will not surely think thus" (161). The creature hopes that death will eradicate his knowledge, and, if he still contains knowledge, he will "think" differently. He will not reencounter the experiences on earth. In death, he will find "peace" and happiness. While Victor's womanless society dies with him, the creature's beliefs about seeking justice for his and women's injustice will die with him as well, and patriarchy will remain steadfast.

23 Mary Raymond and the creature are not monsters, but they are victims of monstrous acts. Mary transcends her rapist and her ruined reputation when she redefines virtue, but everywhere

she ventures, she meets another man who reminds her of her status. She succeeds only internally. Externally, society remains the same with its strict requirements regarding women's chastity, labeling women as either 'angels' or 'whores', and Mary awaits her death, returning her now abject body to death's abyss. In Shelley's novel, Frankenstein abandons his creature, who meets resistance and violence whenever he attempts to enter society. He asks for an "Eve" as a companion; however, Frankenstein destroys her and the creature never knows what acceptance or love feels like. The creature fails in his attempt to transcend society's prejudices when he kills Elizabeth; after all, he ultimately belongs in the same role as she does with his outsider status and lack of family, disabling him from taking an active role. The creature, created against nature's plans, will die just as his creator dies. Thus, Shelley's voice for women dissipates, and society remains patriarchal. Whether they challenge society's rules or not, Mary, the creature, and Elizabeth disintegrate beneath them. Trying to live as equals in a man's world, these women may try to challenge patriarchy, but they cannot overcome the hardships they endure in order to do so. Ultimately, their subordinate positions, signified by their bodies, crush them. Mary Raymond's and the creature's earthly lives contain the Father's law and language, which brings only harm and misery. In death, Mary and the creature transcend the society which rejects their material bodies.

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