

The Ultimate Hybrid: A Racial Analysis of the Creature in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*

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Faculty Introduction

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Ms. Campbell wrote this paper as part of her Honor's thesis. She takes a critical approach to Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein*, illustrating how the epistemes of the time around race affect Shelley's depiction of the creature. She demonstrates how racial bias supported by the scientific community reflected the anxieties of the time as Europe began to come into contact with different cultures and peoples. Her work examines one of the most popular cultural myths of our time—Frankenstein. While much has been written on the novel and some critics have begun to address the issues of race evident in the text, Campbell's work illustrates the novel's importance in helping us examine our own racial strife today in America.

Abstract

Much of the scholarly conversation surrounding Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* focuses on the racial make-up of the creature. First, this article analyzes scientific studies conducted before and during Shelley's time that impact the ideas of racial science within her novel and directly affect the creature's racial hybridity. Second, this article reviews the two main racial parallels scholars of *Frankenstein* have found within the creature's visage and behavior, while also referring back to the novel to prove or disprove the accuracy of the racial identities he has been given. In conclusion, though the scientific studies and literature review establish the creature as a racial hybrid, his humanity is often overlooked or underestimated—a humanity that can provide insight into current racial tensions in America. Further research should focus on locating similarities between the creature's racial hybridity and America's racial hybridity.

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* is considered one of the great literary classics for a plethora of reasons. The characters, the plot, and the overarching themes of rebellion and human suffering contribute to the novel's wide-achieving success two centuries from its publication date. Perhaps another reason Mary Shelley's novel has achieved such success even in today's time lies in the similarities of racial divisions prevalent in both eras. Mary Shelley made sure she maintained a running awareness of both the scholarly and secular happenings of her time, and one of the many topics of conversation with which she familiarized herself centered on racial classifications within European society. Two of these racial classifications—African and Oriental¹ groups—were not only Others

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in literature, but in Shelley's society, as well. Even so, they are still Others in society two centuries after Shelley's publication of *Frankenstein*,

and perhaps more than ever, the topic of conversation has increased in volume and intensified in dividing opinions. Thus, Shelley's creature provides an outlook into racial classifications that may turn current conversations of race onto a more hopeful track. Shelley assigns a certain visage and behavior to the creature, both of which often point to stereotypes typically assigned to African or Oriental Others. Although Mary Shelley frequently allows the creature to contradict these stereotypes rather than confirm them, the fact that she created such a racial hybrid being within her text demonstrates that she was aware of the debated racial prejudices of her time and formed the creature with these prejudices in mind—prejudices that still exist today. By forging the racially hybrid creature, she inserts herself into the racial conversation of her time and claims that there are fibers of humanity to be found among the animalistic characteristics upon which Shelley's European society often dwelled.

¹ "Oriental" is a category of analysis employed in the literary theory of Edward Said, meant to denote "others," or those foreign from the European context. In the 18th and 19th centuries, European scholars used the term "Oriental" to describe people from broader East Asia. For Europeans, "Oriental" denoted one of the "five races of man."

The Concept of Race and its Scientific Origins

The racial prejudices that Mary Shelley uses to highlight the theme of racial Others in her novel stem from eighteenth- and nineteenth-century scientific studies. Among these studies is the field of comparative anatomy—a scientific field that supported the racial classification of societal minorities and marked these minorities as the lowest among men. Peter Kitson highlights several comparative anatomy studies—ranging from the late seventeenth century to the early nineteenth century—that attempt to categorize race along lines of physical and characteristic division. The first of these is a 1699 study by physician Edward Tyson in which he concludes that “the lowest Rank of men, and the highest kind of some Animals” share similarities (52). Using a pygmie (chimpanzee) as a test subject, Tyson posited 48 similarities and 34 differences between the human body and the pygmie body (52). This almost equal balance between shared and varied traits led Tyson to believe that the “Pygmie more resembles a Man than Apes and Monkeys do; but where it differs, there ‘tis like the Ape-kind” (52). Thus, the pygmie is a sort of stepping-stone—a hybrid—between other monkeys and humans.

This characterization of the pygmie applies to the creature, as well. Born from “the dissecting room and the slaughter-house” (Shelley 42), the creature already holds a position between humans and animals since Frankenstein composes him with human and animal assemblages. His large and animalistic structure—which ironically “ha[s] the shape of man” (Shelley 21)—contrasts his human capability of critical thinking, emotional capacity, and morality. Even more confusing is Walton’s description of this gigantic creature guiding the dogs that pulled his sled across the Arctic ice (Shelley 21). While the creature is human enough to hold authority over a pack of dogs, he is still animal enough to scrounge for food in the middle of the night when most humans are asleep in their beds (Shelley 87). The creature’s hybridity, though frustrating when it comes time for one to define his character, is no fault of his own. Frankenstein seeks to “give life to an animal as complex and wonderful as man” (Shelley 42) yet only succeeds in giving life to an animal whose complexity can make him wonderful in his humanity and miserable in his animality. Moreover, this complexity automatically labels the creature as an Other within the human-animal boundary and within racial classifications.

Part of this complexity lies in the creature's physical form. Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century scientists studied skulls from varying human ethnicities and animal species. From four distinct studies, they concluded that the European skull ranked highest in its facial structure and size. This conclusion racially complicates the creature's status as a human-animal hybrid as he is inferior to the European both as a racialized human and as an animal. Even John Hunter, "the most celebrated British comparative anatomist" (Kitson 61), based his ordering of various skulls on the "gradation both in the skulls, and in the upper and lower jaws" (58). He produced this order of skulls ranging from superior to inferior: European, American, African, monkey, and dog (58). Hunter did not publish his anatomical findings, however, so it is difficult to "know exactly what Hunter believed" and when he conducted this study (61). It is also unclear whether Hunter meant to "prove a theorem or simply display an interesting phenomenon" through his system of gradation. Hunter's biographer, Everard Home, commented in his preface to Hunter's posthumous 1794 *A Treatise on the Blood, Inflammation and Gunshot Wounds* (61) that Hunter sought "to view the gradation of nature, from the most simple . . . to the most perfect and most complex of the animal creation,—man himself" (61). It is possible, then, that Hunter's purpose in his gradation system was not to mark the inferiority of particular races, but rather to show a progression of complexity in life that he observed through different animal species and human races. However, through this process, he clearly marks distinct rankings of race.

Several other scientists in the eighteenth century produced similar classifications. Anatomist/surgeon and sculptor Pieter Camper, for example, outlined in his 1764 *Redevoering over den oorsprung en de kleur ser zwarten* (60) the employment of his innovation—the "facial angle" (58)—in measuring skulls and classifying them. Attempting to accurately depict human faces of different ethnicities in both his and others' art, Camper invented a line that measured the angle "made by lines drawn from the forehead to the upper jaw and from the lower jaw to the base of the skull" (59). This formed an "angle of the jaw's protuberance from the rest of the face," and Camper basically selected the wider angles of the European as beautiful and the smaller angles of minorities and animals as primitive (59). Though Camper "affirmed that the measurement had no correlation in moral or intellectual terms,"

it is awfully suspicious of racial implications (58). Based on Camper's calculations, an angle ranging from 70 to 100 degrees marks "the Grecian antique," an angle under 70 marks "an orang or an ape," and "lessen [the angle] more and you have the head of a dog" (60). This ordering mirrors the one put forth by Hunter in which the facial structure of the European is set as the perfect example of superiority, whereas the facial structures of other human races and animals are marked as the perfect examples of inferiority.

Furthermore, physiognomist Johann Lavater's invention of the frontometer accomplished the same effects and conveyed the same implications as Camper's facial angle while using a different measurement. Measuring the arch and height of different ethnicities' foreheads and recording these in an essay published between 1775 and 1778 (58), Lavater suggested that the shape and size of a forehead could tell "national and racial characteristics," such as the "coldness" of the European, the "sensuality" of the [American] Indian, or the "stupidity" of the Mongolian and African (59). Again, the European is deemed the example of perfect humanity. Lastly, between 1800 and 1805, French anatomist Georges Cuvier created a third measurement that combines Camper's facial angle with Lavater's frontometer—the "cephalic index" (66)—and published these results in *Leçons d'anatomie comparée* (66). Despite its combination of Camper's and Lavater's measurements, the index was built on racist prejudices.

Cuvier concluded that the "protruding jaws" of the African and Oriental skulls evidenced a smaller

space for a smaller brain—and thus, less intelligence (66). In each of these four cases of gradation, the European skull serves as the measure of perfection, whereas anything differing slightly is automatically considered lower and imperfect. It is evident through these studies that the idea of gradation, while a scientific exploration, was easily employed as a justification of racism.

Mary Shelley, being "seriously interested in Enlightenment science" (76) and also a part "of the connection between the Shelley circle and [comparative anatomist] William Lawrence" (75), addresses these racist

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conclusions through her depiction of the creature's construction. At the time of her writing *Frankenstein*, she possibly could have read Humphry Davy's *A Discourse, Introductory to a Course of Lectures on Chemistry and Elements of Chemical Philosophy* (76). Both of these works mirror Professor Waldman's lecture on how modern chemists have "penetrat[e] into the recesses of nature" (Shelley 38)—a lecture that held "the words of the fate, enounced to destroy" (Shelley 38) Frankenstein and his Icarian desire to seek and to apply the secret of life to his monstrous creation. It is also possible that Mary Shelley based the character of Frankenstein on Lawrence and Hunter, who were both "student[s] of anatomy interested in discovering the principle of life" (77).² Thus,

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before she even establishes the human-animal hybrid creature within the text, she first crafts its creator: an ambitious scientist whose interests in "the structure of

the human frame, and . . . [the] animal endued with life" (Shelley 40) lead him to rebel against the notions of gradation mentioned above and build the creature of human and animal parts. Frankenstein, in forging a creature out of human and animal parts—thus mixing elements of superiority and inferiority—creates a being in which humanity and animality are equally important to the creature's physical and mental structure. Mary Shelley seems to say that the creature is no more animal than he is human, and his hybridity, while feared by humans, does not always match their prejudiced expectations of race and animality found in the gradation systems mentioned above.

The Creature as Black Racial Other

The creature's racial hybridity, though, proves to be as complex as his animal-human hybridity. His racial make-up is still a highly contested topic within scholarly conversation on Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. The majority of this conversation positions the creature as mostly resembling one or two races: African or Oriental. H.L. Malchow, in "Frankenstein's Monster and Images of Race in Nineteenth-Century Britain," explains

² Paul Youngquist, in *Monstrosities: Bodies and British Romanticism*, points out linguistic similarities between John Hunter's anatomic language and Frankenstein's syntax, especially in the context of Frankenstein describing his creation process for the creature.

the similarities and differences between Frankenstein's creature and the racial stereotypes given to Africans. First, he highlights that the creature, "larger and more powerful than his maker" and "dark and sinister in appearance" (102) matches the description given by Mungo Park's *Travels* for the Mandingos (a West African tribe): "[they were] commonly above the middle size, well-shaped, strong, and capable of enduring great labour" (102). Both entities are also associated with a "simian dexterity" that allows them to climb seemingly impassible rock faces (102). Second, the creature's desire and capability to learn contradict the prevalent belief at the time of Shelley's novel that "the black could no more be educated into whiteness than a leopard could change his spots" (105). It was also often thought that slaves possessed a sort of "childishness" regarding intellectual advancements (122). The creature, however—despite his childlike lack of speech the night Frankenstein imbues him with life—contradicts this low-intellect stereotype through his rapid learning to listen, speak, and read while residing in the hovel by the De Lacey family's residence. Third, the creature's "acute sense of right and wrong" (122) mismatches the stereotypical "lack of moral judgement" attributed to Black slaves.

One must wonder if any human, regardless of race, would mirror the creature's decision to stop stealing the De Lacey's food supply and begin gathering wood for them—actions indicative of preserving their lives at the expense of his energy. This contradicts the selfish tendency that all humans possess which rules over any thought of kindness when it comes to a matter of survival. Lastly, Malchow reverts to Mungo Park's *Travels* again to exhibit the "violently contradictory and unbridled emotions" (106) characterized of Africans. This is one aspect that the creature half embodies. While the creature maintains a relatively peaceful attitude before the De Lacey's rejection of him, he quickly reverses his emotions and channels the pain of rejection into a violent, greedy appetite for revenge. Thus, regarding the physical, intellectual, moral, and emotional stereotypes given to Africans, the creature is an apparent match—but not a perfect one.

Despite the non-perfect alignment between the creature and Africans as racial Others, the creature's behavior in the novel does somewhat support two tropes that were largely associated with "the primitive"

African (110) or any racial group that were deemed savages: cannibalism and oversexualization. Regarding cannibalism, a depraved and irrational thirst for vengeance marks the Gothic image of cannibalistic Africans (110). William immediately judges the creature to possess this thirst, and it is this prejudice that leads the creature to become exactly what William believed him to be. Cannibalism appears elsewhere in the text through Frankenstein's reflections upon his creation. He ponders:

I considered the being whom I had cast among mankind, and endowed with the will and power to effect purposes of horror, such as the deed which he had now done, nearly in the light of my own vampire, my own spirit let loose from the grave, and forced to destroy all that was dear to me. (Shelley 58)

Two things of interest occur within the phrase “the light of my own vampire” (Shelley 58). First, the very definition of vampire conveys a “reanimated body of a dead person believed to come from the grave at night and suck the blood of persons asleep” (“Vampire”). Not only is the creature a reanimated corpse that Frankenstein constructed of human and animal parts from the grave, but his first action upon waking up, so to speak, was to stand over Frankenstein as he lay in bed—as if he was waiting to suck the blood of a sleeping Frankenstein. Frankenstein's conclusion, then, that the creature killed William is not a far leap in a mind that is traumatized by this image of a vampiric hybrid creature looming over a place meant for rest and security. Second, Frankenstein claims the vampiric creature as his own, creating the ambiguous effect that the vampiric tendencies of the creature mimic the same tendencies in Frankenstein. Malchow affirms this when he claims that “[i]t is Frankenstein himself who takes on the character of the savage . . . [and] is the cannibal who tears ‘to pieces’” the human and animal parts employed to construct the creature and his female counterpart (111). While it is easy to only associate the creature with cannibalism, Frankenstein's vampiric ability negates the idea that acts of cannibalism can only belong to racialized Others. Whites, too, can render horrific ruin upon fellow human beings.

The second trope of oversexualization—associated with both males and females—provides light to several passages within the text. The most prominent of these is Frankenstein’s destruction of the incomplete female creature. Her ability to produce from her womb “a race of devils [that] would be propagated upon the earth” and her possible “turn with disgust from [the creature] to the superior beauty of man” is enough to horrify Frankenstein and send his fingers into

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a frenzied hurry to tear apart the body that would be capable of such things if there was a “spark of being” within her (Shelley 126). While Frankenstein is able to envision the female creature becoming “a thinking and reasoning animal” (126), his main concern with her reproductive ability demonstrates that he mostly associates the female creature with her body’s sexual abilities rather than any mental capacities she may possess. To him, she is only a sexual creature whose reproduction would “make the very existence of the species of man a condition precarious and full of terror” (126).

Just as the female creature is a sexually charged racial Other within the text, so is “Mary Shelley’s monster . . . suffused with a kind of dangerous male sexuality” (Malchow 112). His sexuality presents itself vividly when he kills Elizabeth on her own marriage bed. Malchow points out the stark contrast between the racially Other creature murdering the high-born, white Elizabeth, nor is he hesitant to suggest that the creature’s murder of Elizabeth may have involved rape (112-3). This trope of the über-sexual Black male ruining the feminine European female is representative of the threatened violence that “over-sexed ‘Others’” posed to the White race (113). Mary Shelley, aware of this concept since it was “already a part of the racial discourse of [her] era” (Young 27), uses it as an enhancement in her 1831 revised edition of *Frankenstein*. The creature’s sexuality is featured on the frontispiece that showcases his larger size and his “long black hair and bulging eyes” (Baumann 15). The creature’s size—associated with the Black Other—is emphasized through the sexual pose the creature casually flaunts as Frankenstein flees “from his newly awakened monster” (15). The creature’s Black sexuality here is suggested as being an innate quality he manifests immediately

upon coming to life. His sexuality is furthermore emphasized when Shelley strips Elizabeth of her title as Victor's cousin and identifies her as "a foundling" (Young 27). This plays on the public's embedded fear of a Black man raping a young white girl—thus deepening the sexuality

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of the creature already heavily associated with the Black Other. Frankenstein is aware of this sexualization from the moment the creature awakes to the moment Frankenstein dies. It hangs over the De Lacey family's head when they view the creature and his racial resemblances for the first time. While the creature cannot help what he looks like nor the prejudices the public associates with his visage, several of his actions throughout the novel help to cement his similarities with the Black Other.

The Creature as Mongolian Other

Despite the apparent semblances between the creature and stereotypical portraits of Blacks, there is reason to believe that Mary Shelley's monster is based more on the Mongolian image than the African image. Mary Shelley was most likely aware of the Mongolian classifications conducted in the name of science in the eighteenth century. Her friend and model for Professor Waldman in *Frankenstein*, William Lawrence, probably introduced her and Shelley to Johann Friedrich Blumenbach's work in this area, which Lawrence "vigorously promoted" (Heringman 178). Blumenbach organized mankind into five categories based on "skin color, hair, the shape of the skull, and physical anatomy" (176). These categories were Caucasian, Mongolian, Ethiopian, American, and Malayan (Kitson 30).³ He lists Mongolians as having "yellow, olive-tinge" skin and "black, stiff, straight, and scanty" hair (Heringman 176). Lawrence extended on Blumenbach's work by assigning moral characteristics to each category, and he described the Mongolian race as "culturally stagnant [and] lazy" yet "innately violent" (179). Thus, Mary Shelley could have easily taken Blumenbach's and Lawrence's descriptions of the Mongolian race, assigning "yellow skin" and "black"

³ Johann Friedrich Blumenbach's *Handbook of Comparative Anatomy* (1805) builds from earlier European conceptualizations of the "races" or "orders" of man. His categories at times borrowed from earlier European thought and applied different labels to them. In Blumenbach, the "Oriental" race becomes "Mongolian," African is labeled "Ethiopian," and "Indian" labeled "American."

hair to the creature (Shelley 44). Although the creature hardly remains stagnant or idle within the text—as he is constantly roaming in the forest surrounding the De Lacey residence or pursuing Frankenstein over barren lands—he is susceptible to violent behaviors that even fail to fall short of attempted and successful murders. The creature, then, matches the Mongolian description both in his bodily appearance and his violent behavior.

Ironically, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, in depicting the creature as a giant yellow Mongol, contributed to the nineteenth century conversation surrounding Asiatic races. It provided “the gigantic yellow man [that] had become a synecdoche for the population of China as a whole” (Heringman 181). The Chinese, as well as every Asiatic race, were grouped into the image of a yellow, barbaric creature—an image that the creature himself represents. This grouping of all Asiatic races into one yellow image was later coined as “the ‘yellow peril’” in the title of painter Hermann Knackfuss's *Die Gelbe Gefahr* (181, 183). Even if Mary Shelley did not mean to create a literary symbol for Blumenbach's and Lawrence's scientific and racist classification, the similarities between their Mongolian descriptions and Mary Shelley's creature cannot be overlooked.

The similarity between the creature and the Oriental Other is evident in the uncanny parallels between Safie and the creature. Upon seeing Safie for the first time, the creature quickly recognizes her different look and speech. “Her eyes . . . dark, but gentle, although animated” (Shelley 89) and her “wondrously fair” skin (Shelley 89) set her apart in looks, while her being “neither understood by, nor herself underst[anding] the cottagers” (Shelley 89) sets her apart linguistically. Though the creature observantly marks her differences, he fails to recognize their mirroring of each other. However, their similarities begin to command attention as soon as Safie enters the door of the De Lacey house. She “was dressed in a dark suit, and covered with a thick black veil,” and her hair was “shining raven black”—all of which matched “her eyes . . . dark, but gentle” (Shelley 89). This darkness in appearance, though an indicator of her racial difference, becomes obscure when she lifts her veil to reveal “wondrously fair” skin beneath (Shelley 89). The word “fair” in this description produces a troubling ambiguity that blurs Safie's complexion.

While “fair” here is interpreted to mean lovely skin instead of white skin (for Safie, as an Oriental, would have dark skin), it is the same word Frankenstein uses to describe Elizabeth when she was first seen by Frankenstein’s mother: “this child was thin, and very fair” (Shelley 29). This one-word connection between Safie and Elizabeth establishes both as having lovely appearances, despite the difference in color and culture.

However, one must question the extent of beauty’s role in Safie’s warm welcome into the De Lacey family. The fair Elizabeth was chosen and adopted from “dark-eyed, hardy little vagrants” (Shelley 29); the “sweet Arabian” (Shelley 89) was gladly welcomed into a family whose race, culture, and language differed from her own. Both women were chosen instead of racial Others, and gladly welcomed into a European family. However, whereas Elizabeth is a European herself, Safie is not. The possibility that Safie’s beauty is the only thing standing between acceptance and rejection based on her race cannot be ruled out. The extent of beauty in accepting the racial Other helps illuminate the connection between Safie’s complexion with that of the creature’s. Both are racial Others who seek acceptance into a family whose entire background does not match their own. Both seek shelter, but more importantly, they seek human companionship. Safie, though, will be the one who witnesses the manifestation of her desires. The creature will be forced to run off, nursing a wound to his humanity that will enrage his animality.

The role of language also helps illuminate the connection between Safie and the creature. Along with recognizing Safie’s communicative obstacles, the creature notes she “converse[s] in broken accents” (Shelley 90). Up until this point, the creature, too, does not possess an extensive understanding of the De Lacey’s foreign language. Safie’s limited control over the foreign language, then, matches the creature’s similar limited control, which only allows him to produce “inarticulate sounds” when he first approached Frankenstein in his bedroom (Shelley 44). However, when Felix begins to give Safie linguistic lessons, the linguistic similarity ends as the creature “improve[s] more rapidly than the Arabian” (Shelley 90), though he merely observes the lessons and receives no direct instruction. The creature’s linguistic improvement does not fully negate his racial appearance, though. The creature’s mastery of

language is enough to cause the blind De Lacey to assume him as a fellow Frenchman and to have an extensive conversation with him in which “there is something in [the creature’s] words which persuades [De Lacey] that [he is] sincere” (Shelley 101). Because De Lacey cannot see the monstrous visage of the creature, he can only rely on the quality and sincerity of the creature’s language. This is enough for De Lacey to command the creature to “Enter” (Shelley 100) and seek to help the creature’s social dilemma by suggesting to “be of use in undeceiving” (Shelley 101) that family of which the creature desires acceptance.

At this point, the creature is accepted because he does not sound like an Other. It is not until he is seen by Felix, Safie, and Agatha that he is deemed as an Other through his appearance. Consequently, his visit is cut short. Agatha faints, Safie flees, Felix attacks, and the creature retreats to his hovel after bearing the brunt of Felix’s stick. Ruined are the creature’s

hopes that his “voice, **Race, then, and its conformity to aesthetic and linguistic standards cannot be the sole factor in his rejection.** although harsh, [yet] had nothing terrible in it” could outshine “the

unnatural hideousness of [his] person” (Shelley 99). Questions over standards of acceptance must be raised here when the creature—more advanced in language than Safie—is met with cold dismissal at his monstrous Other appearance, whereas Safie is met with a warm welcome at her beautiful Other appearance, despite her limited control of the language. Race, then, and its conformity to aesthetic and linguistic standards cannot be the sole factor in his rejection. If possessing the right appearance and language were the standards that had to be met to be included in the De Lacey family, then Safie should have been thrown out, as well, on account of her still-progressing English. Gender differences, then, might provide more insight into this.

Joseph W. Lew presents a gender and race combined stereotype that possibly explains Safie’s acceptance and the creature’s rejection. Using Frankenstein and Henry’s relationship as an example, Lew points out “the use-value of the Orient to the mentally-disturbed European” (264). Henry, a scholar of the “Persian, Arabic, and Sanscrit languages” (Shelley 53), gives the mentally disturbed and traumatized Frankenstein comfort through his Oriental studies. Frankenstein, however, finds nothing

more in the study of these languages than a “temporary amusement” that brightens his mind with “a warm sun and a garden of roses” (Shelley 53). This picture greatly contrasts the creature’s visage, which inspires horror in Frankenstein’s heart. Thus, Henry’s soothing, nurturing nature and studies positively affect Frankenstein. This nurturing image reinforces that of Henry sitting at Frankenstein’s bed, the “only nurse” Frankenstein had during his mental relapse (Shelley 48). Not only are Henry’s Oriental connections merely means for Frankenstein’s comfort, but his feminine nursing—even mothering—of Frankenstein is a physical means of providing Frankenstein with more comfort.

This, perhaps, is the comfort that the De Lacey family—specifically Felix—seeks from Safie. Although the family’s trials in France adequately explain, and even validate, their welcoming of Safie, her comforting Oriental presence might be one of the reasons they accept her, especially considering the family was cast out of France because of an association with an Oriental. Another reason might be the lessons Safie received from her Christian mother that taught her the “higher powers of intellect and an independence of spirit,” as well as a “noble emulation of virtue” (Shelley 94)—values that opposed the hardened selfish values usually attributed to Turks such as Safie’s father. Safie’s fierce independence and virtue might serve as a balm to a family who must learn to be independent yet empathetic toward each other if they are to survive in the forest in which they reside. The creature notes this soothing effect of Safie’s presence, which invoked “the sole alteration [of] joy [that] had taken place of sadness in the countenances of [his] friends” (Shelley 90). Moreover, her playing of the guitar—producing “some airs so entrancingly beautiful”—was described as being “the greatest delight” by the father (Shelley 90).

Thus, Safie’s presence provides as much joy and comfort for the De Lacey family as Henry does for Frankenstein. If Safie and the creature are similar in their Orientalism, however, then why does the creature not provide the same level of joy and comfort as Safie, thus causing the De Lacey family to reject him? Though both Safie and the creature are Oriental figures, Oriental males were associated with different characteristics than that of the comforting Oriental female. The Oriental male was “considered in isolation from the total community” (Said 207)

and was blocked from the “possibility of development, transformation, [and] human movement” (208). The Oriental male also tended to “be identified with a bad sort of eternality” (208). In the creature’s case, he is eternally marked as overwhelmingly hideous. On account of this, the creature will be forever isolated from the community he grew to love and cherish through his observances. Because he is not included in the De Lacey family, he is denied any opportunity to have meaningful connections with humans and any development in his humanity that could have resulted from these connections. Instead, he is thrown out because he does not look human, making him an outcast cast out by outcasts. He is the ultimate Other who shares similarities with all Others but wholly mirrors none.

Conclusion

As an outcast, the creature still desires to belong to society. It is a wonder, truly, how a hybrid being whose fate left him without any true counterpart could still despise the pangs of isolation and desire a place among the human society that hated him. As readers, we find ourselves empathizing with the creature. Although Mary Shelley penned this awful fate of the creature two hundred years ago, the racial divisions it presents mirrors recent racial tensions in America. With race dividing the American people more than ever, it is difficult to have hope that racial tensions will cease one day. Yet Mary Shelley’s creature might provide us insight. Mary Shelley, though her creature never finds resolution to his issues with racial prejudice, remarks on the hypocrisy that often comes from projecting assumptions and stereotypes onto others. Frankenstein, for example, was often quick to condemn the creature for his immoral and violent behavior, but Frankenstein was often just as immoral and violent himself during multiple occasions throughout the story. In her novel, then, Mary Shelley provides a discourse not only on the problematic issue of placing importance within racial classifications, but also on the need to see the humanity in every living being. The creature, underneath his racialized and horrid visage, had a human soul and a human heart in pain from rejection and suffering. Mary Shelley saw his humanity—and we should too. ■

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Student Biography

Kaylee Campbell recently graduated from Sam Houston State University, earning her Bachelor of Arts in English in December 2020. She worked as a student assistant in the Department of English for the majority of her undergraduate career and served as a CHSS Ambassador for two years. During her junior year, Kaylee enrolled in ENGL 3385, taught by Dr. Kandi Tayebi, and it was while writing the semester research paper over Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* that she became fascinated with the idea of humanity and animality in Shelley's novel. When she decided to focus her Honors senior thesis on this topic, Kaylee wanted to combine the idea of the creature's humanity with his racial hybridity and how the two concepts conflicted or merged. Kaylee plans to continue her interest in writing and research by attending graduate school at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Spring 2022.