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Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus*: Friendship, Monstrosity and Radical Otherness

Abstract

This essay looks at the relationship between Victor Frankenstein and his Creature, examining the ethical implications of Victor's hostility towards the Creature. This problem is considered with reference to the views of various philosophers, ancient and modern, stressing one's responsibility for the Other and the importance of the Self's will to befriend another being. It is argued that Shelley indeed presents the Creature as "befrienable." Such presentation, this article indicates, is a consequence of Shelley's sympathy for the rejected and persecuted and her insistence on parental responsibility – the ideas actually emphasised in the novel, yet passed over in the 1930's Hollywood production, as a consequence, permanently affecting the popular image of the Creature.

In her *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus*, Mary Shelley consistently portrays the two major characters, Victor Frankenstein and his Creature as vowed enemies. While popular adaptations of Shelley's novel vilify the Creature, it is my aim to examine the character of Victor as culpable. Since Victor's failure consists in a refusal of friendship for which his Creature craves, I propose to consider the question of whether Victor's hostility was excusable in the light of ancient (mainly Aristotle's), modern (Kant's and Emerson's) and contemporary (for example, Derrida's) philosophies of *philia*.

1. Philosophers on Friendship with Radical Otherness

However, a strong argument for viewing Victor's hostility towards the Creature as inexcusable can be also found in Mary Shelley's reading of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's autobiography. Unwilling to establish a meaningful relationship with his mistress and her family, Rousseau is reported by Shelley to have abandoned their five children in an orphanage, where – due to the severe living conditions – few children had much chance of survival. Mary Shelley re-read the excerpts of Rousseau's *Confessions*, which convey the information on this aspect of the pedagogue's

life, when she was writing *Frankenstein* (O'Rourke 545–546). Shelley regarded Rousseau's excuses for abandoning his children as 'refutable' and his argumentation as 'futile' (Shelley, qtd. in O'Rourke 546). She stated that a man's "first duty is to render those whom we give birth, wise, virtuous, and happy, as far as in us lies" – a statement of paternal responsibility which resonates in *Frankenstein* (Shelley, qtd. in O'Rourke 547). What was, then, Rousseau's *refutable* excuse?¹ The famous pedagogue confessed that he "trembled at the thought of intrusting [his five children] to a family ill brought up, to be still worse educated [and that t] he risk of the education of the foundling hospital was much less" (Rousseau and Cohen, Book IX 2015).

Critics also note Shelley's ever-present sympathy "with marginalized and oppressed characters" of the works by various authors who influenced her writing (Sawyer 21, Ryan 154). Even the early 19th-century critics "[admitted] sympathy with the monster" and noticed that the reader's "interest in the book is [to be] entirely on the side of the [Creature]" as the "justice is indisputably on his side" (20). Both Mary Shelley and her father, William Godwin, openly condemned the racial prejudice in their contemporaries and often expressed their animosity against slave trade² (20–21). Godwin's tales, which mocked racism, and his general disapproval of such practises might have also inspired his daughter to depict the Creature as suffering from oppression and intolerance.

When considering the relationship of Frankenstein with his Creature, it is worthwhile to recall the philosophical discourse of friendship with a creature regarded as monstrous, or as representative of Radical Otherness. The first of the modern essays which I consider particularly helpful in the understanding of the nature of such relationships is Darren R. Walhof's *Friendship, Otherness, and Gadamer's Politics of Solidarity*. In this essay, Walhof describes our place in relation to the Other. The second essay to which I would like to refer is Mirko D. Garasic's *What Love Means to a Creature*, where Garasic elaborates his idea of an ethical attitude to otherness, stressing that the Self is to remain humane, tolerant and understanding. The third article is the *Empathy and Alterity in Cultural Psychiatry* by Laurence J. Kirmayer, which is firmly embedded in modern psychology, and which argues that whenever one interacts with radical otherness, one should also employ empathy which, according to Kirmayer, can always be developed and mastered. The fourth approach employed in this study is that of Jacques Derrida, who advocates respect and responsibility for the other, as offered and assumed beforehand so as to eradicate the forced equality. In the present essay, I shall also refer to Ralph Waldo Emerson's idea of tolerance towards that which is different, as expressed in his essay entitled "Friendship."³

Indeed, a respectful attitude towards the Other is stressed by both Emerson and Derrida. Emerson anticipates Derrida's claim that friendship is a relationship which involves both "likeness" and "unlikeness" (Emerson 228). This implies that two individuals can become friends if they derive joy from the other's being different,

or, as proposed by Emerson, from the fact “that the not mine is mine” (228). The increased awareness of this paradox creates a positively “dissymmetrical” relation, to which I shall refer again shortly (Derrida, qtd. in Kwok-ying 415). For the time being, it suffices to say that both Emerson and Derrida stress the importance of the Other’s (not only complimentary) differences, which the Self ought to *respect* and allow for the Other to preserve.

The Other’s distinctiveness can be retained by the Self’s observance of the *respectful distance* between the Self and the Other. Trying to befriend another individual, Emerson claims, the Self should allow for their being not as easily approachable and *certainly* not a mere “echo” of the Self. The Self must not assume that the Other is an object devoid of will or opinion, ready to agree with us on every matter (Emerson 228). Derrida confirms this view, when he suggests that befriending the Other should involve some degree of a respectful and “minimal” distance (qtd. in Kwok-ying 422). Thanks to this very distance, the Self does not assimilate the Other, but rather preserves their “transcended alterity” and the autonomy of the potential friend (423–424). Thus, indeed, both to Emerson and to Derrida, respect in friendship stands for the “[r]everence” of other’s distinctiveness, whose presence constitutes a fascinating part of friendship (Emerson 229).

Although retaining the Other’s distinctiveness and privacy ought to be our priority, an “abstract, cold and distanced” tolerance implies a mere bearing with something” – an attitude that is insufficient if we wish to truly befriend the Other (Derrida, qtd. in Kwok-ying 421). Instead, our attitude towards the Other should be filled with pure solicitude and, thus, respect. What Derrida proposes in order to eliminate a cold and forced equality is a kind of “lean[ing]” towards the Other and creating a “dissymmetrical” relation (421). This all implies that when encountering the individual we wish to befriend, we ought to balance the respectful distance with a caring and affectionate approach, so as to create a slight, but positive, dissymmetry. In other words, while our distance ought to be “minimal,” it should be also *friendly*.

Still in their emphasising of the respectful aspect of our encounters with the Other, Emerson and Derrida remind us not to objectify the Other. This can be achieved in two ways: by the Self having respect for the Other’s name and by the Self assuming the attitude characterised by a caring interest rather than a cognitive curiosity. To begin with the first issue – or the name-learning process, to which Derrida assigns a lot of importance – it is suggested that, when befriending the Other, merely getting to know their name is insufficient; one must also respect its form as provided by the Other. Otherwise, claims Derrida, any change coming from the encountering Self would contribute to the unwelcoming and objectifying attitude (Derrida, qtd. in Kwok-ying 420). Thanks to a form-and-freedom retaining approach, we show our respect, our genuine responsibility and our care for the Other (Derrida, qtd. in Kwok-ying 420).

The objectifying attitude towards the Other, as Emerson stressed over one century before Derrida, is an effect of too much inquisitiveness and too little genuine care. Emerson says that the companionship of our friend should be to us “poetic, pure, universal” and based on the emotional rather than merely cognitive side (Emerson 229). The respect for the Other’s personal space, argues Emerson, urges us to perceive the Other as the “Beautiful enemy, untamable, devoutly revered, and not a trivial convenience to be soon outgrown and cast aside” (229). Too close an observation, Emerson declares – and Derrida would confirm – objectifies the Other and “profanes” their otherness (230).

Next to the complete yet friendly respect for the Other, the encountering Self should also employ a humane and empathic attitude. This idea, in turn, has been developed by Laurence J. Kirmayer and Mirko Garasic, who regard the empathy and humanitarianism as constituting the obligatory elements of any successful trial to befriend the radical otherness. Considering the humanitarian element, Garasic observes that when trying to befriend the Other, one ought to respect their humanness: emotions, preferences and will. Even though the Other may greatly differ from the Self in their otherness, there is a possibility of a dialogue between ‘us’ and the Other once we acknowledge their resemblance to ‘us’ in our shared humanness. Reinforcing Emerson’s and Derrida’s warnings against the risk of the overly cognitive inquisitiveness, Garasic proposes that, in responding to otherness, we approach the Other in a humane way and make use not only of our rational abilities but also of our emotional capacities in responding to otherness. Otherwise, as claimed by Garasic, the Self cultivates a loveless “form of intellectual narcissism,” and prepares to prove his/her own cleverness for the sake of it (8). Instead, one should show a true, loving interest in the Other, which involves the Self’s openness to the other person’s needs (10). The idea of openness is closely related to the notion of empathy, which is further elaborated by Laurence J. Kirmayer.

Kirmayer describes the existence of empathic behaviours as proving one’s ability to understand another’s experience by feeling or thinking something similar oneself “and possessing the willingness to meet, engage, and be moved by the Other” (458). Kirmayer warns us that the *inability* to employ empathy when approaching the Other causes us to perceive them as “alien, uncanny, and unknown” (458). However, empathy by itself is not enough. An empathic approach has to entail also the “moral commitments” since, otherwise, empathy alone may serve “sadism as well as compassion.” This is so, because the avoidance of morally correct behaviours, argues Kirmayer, does not “guarantee our kindness and concern” (461). Empathy must be also buttressed by the Self’s readiness to learn. It must go along with a “detailed knowledge of specific pragmatic social and cultural contexts” (461). Empathy, therefore, tolerates no prejudgements and no prejudices, yet it still employs some degree of the rational judgement.

Importantly, in Kirmayer’s view, empathy can be practised and developed. Even though our personal experience constitutes a limit to our empathy with the

Other, Kirmayer says, experience is also “interpersonal and intersubjective in origin” (462). Thus, even though one is unlikely to immediately “elicit the right responses in a particular situation,” if one has never experienced something beforehand, one can put oneself in the Other’s place, keeping in mind the general idea of being the Other from works of literature, from mass-media, or even from the stories told by those of one’s friends who once found themselves in an unfamiliar situation (462). Kirmayer does not excuse, therefore, the unwillingness on the part of the Self to even try to comprehend what the Other may be experiencing in a given situation.

An empathetic attitude which involves the Self’s acceptance and acknowledgement of the Other’s differences, declares Kirmayer, ought not to be devoid of the Self’s openness to the *direct communication*. The Other’s human-like capacity of maintaining a dialogue should be *always* made use of; thus, whenever one is able to make a conversation with the Other, there is *no* excuse for the Self’s rejection of the Other. Kirmayer believes that this process of communicating should involve the Self’s respectful trust in the Other beforehand – by which, he further confirms the Derridean idea of the positive “dissymmetry” in a relationship with radical otherness (Kirmayer 470–471).

Both Garasic and Kirmayer, then, caution against too much reliance on the Self’s rationality. Similarly to Garasic, Kirmayer also warns us against overly trusting in our cognitive abilities, by which we would not only diminish our empathy but we could also destroy the Other’s otherness. This, in turn, may lead to the “replacement [of otherness] by some generic cultural emblem or icon of feeling” (470). This occurs, for example, when the features of monstrosity are assigned merely on the basis of one’s appearance. “[M]isappropriation, narcissism, collusion, and submission to the power” are all a result of the lack of empathy; therefore, our trying to be compassionate and sensitive when befriending the Other is just as necessary (and, in fact, overlaps with) respecting Otherness (470). Othwerwise, friendship becomes an impossible project when “the [inhumane] obsession to achieve personal glory” supersedes our respectfulness and empathy towards the Other (Garasic 12).

The complexity of a friendly attitude calls for yet another, essential element: a specific balance in the Self’s approach towards the Other. Darren Walhof discusses several areas in which there is a necessity for such balance. Firstly, Walhof warns us against the instrumental treatment of the Other as if they were a mere object for our own understanding, since such behaviour causes the denial of Otherness (579). However, a balanced approach allows us neither to overly assimilate the Other and treat them as identical with the Self nor to leave them “completely other” and, by this, reject them without the mildest intention of offering them friendship. Secondly, the appearance of the Other always entails some degree of novelty. While we should not apply any procrustean paradigms when addressing the Other, we should also avoid confronting those who are strange to us merely

on account of their radical alterity (576). The employment of a balanced, *thus*, an open-minded and non-judgemental attitude “allows [us] to open up for the real possibility of understanding” and reaching “beyond” one’s own constraints (580). By confronting the other without any ‘prejudgements or prejudices,’ not only can we observe our limitations (having realised that our knowledge is often faulty or insufficient), but we are also able to overcome them and, having ourselves enriched and our ‘self-knowledge’ developed, broaden our perspectives (580–581). Thirdly, Walhof warns us against the possibility of our suppressing of the Other. He believes that allowing for some degree of the dissymmetry between the Self and the Other, we ought to remember that it cannot be the one of domination or hierarchy. He claims that whenever one of the friends, or of the friends-to-be, “so dominates the friendship that [s/he] refuses to acknowledge the distinctiveness of [his/her] friend,” one eventually forms a relationship which is full of inequality and resembles rather the one between the “leader and follower, or teacher and disciple” (582). Furthermore, rejecting an overly cognitive approach, Walhof argues a friend should never believe that he can fully and completely know the Other, because, even in a profound friendship, the individuals must “remain distinct” (582). In fact, in its insistence on the respectful presentation of the element of otherness in friendship, Walhof’s idea of friendship is coterminous with the philosophies of friendship developed by Emerson, Derrida, Kirmayer and Garasic.

2. The Befriendability of the Frankenstein’s Creature

It should be noted that the radical otherness may pose overwhelming problems; hence, Victor Frankenstein’s animosity might seem, at least to some extent, justifiable. The question, however, arises whether the Creature was *befrienable* at all. Befriendability should not be confused with ‘friendliness’ or ‘amiability.’ The main difference is that a ‘befrienable’ person may not always behave in a friendly manner, and occasional displays of friendliness, on the other hand, do not directly denote one’s befrienableity. Instead, befrienableity should be defined as a set of features, behaviours and actions which enable an individual to form and *maintain* an actual friendship, whereas friendliness denotes merely one’s initial kindness and approachability.

Arguably, his tragic conundrum comes from the fact that – despite being the most loveable, benevolent and soulful out of all characters in Mary Shelley’s novel – the Creature never fulfilled his dream of being anyone’s true friend. His enormous potential for being a good friend could be observed on numerous occasions throughout the novel. Notably, the Creature was extremely strong, self-sufficient and exceptionally intelligent. His superior intellect, constantly stimulated by his life experiences and literary artworks (e.g. Milton’s *Paradise Lost*) with which he was surrounded, was reflected, for example, during his process of learning to speak and

read. In his case, the process lasted for a considerably shorter period of time than in humans; what is more, it was far more effective. Importantly, it was his wish to become friends with the villagers that caused his willingness to learn (Shelley 92). Sensitive to art – “the delight[ful] beauty of nature and music or “enrapturing” stories or literary artworks made the Creature weep with emotion – the Creature was also very thoughtful and judicious (90–91). He cared for the villagers, next to whom he lived, so much that, to save them the distress of a sudden intrusion, he waited and, meanwhile, mastered their language and customs. First, he intended to talk to the blind man, old De Lacey, as he wished to spare them the initial shock that his appearance could cause (102). At the same time, nonetheless, the Creature was rather self-aware of his mental capabilities and intelligence as well as of his benevolent attitude. He admitted to feeling worthy of people’s “kindness and sympathy” (102). Likewise, he was not impaired by false humility when he “demanded” from Victor that he “ma[de] him happy” as, unlike other humans, he “owed” this to his Creature (78). As far as his strengths are concerned, the Creature was also, to a great degree, self-sufficient. Not only did he manage to recover from his initial helplessness and clumsiness, but soon he became so smart that he was also able to help other people. He chopped the wood for the villagers and helped them in their duties around the house, while himself maintaining physical and material independence (86).

Furthermore, the Creature’s actions can be all easily justified and, thus, regarded as not monstrous. If the Creature were, indeed, a moral monster, having committed the crimes, the Creature would continue to feel no remorse. He cannot be labelled as morally monstrous also because, typically, the moral monsters are those who inflict pain on others having suffered none in the first place (Bernatchez 205–216). As cruel as some of the Creature’s deeds were, they all can be to some degree excused by his motives, his pain and despair. And cruelty is not identical with moral monstrosity. This means that whatever cruelties he later performed, all of them were (at times unintentional) perversions of justice, which he saw as originally violated by his creator, cowardly and self-seeking Victor. And as cruel as the Creature was, he was still righteous; thus, he expected righteousness from Victor, whose “justice, [...], clemency and affection [were] most due” to the Creature (77). Only when having no other choice but to resort to violence in order to remind Victor of his fatherly duties towards him, the Creature resolved to commit his murders, having first warned Frankenstein.

The Creature’s emotionality also contributed to his befriending ability. Even though initially he was rather confused by various strong emotions that would arise in him whenever he witnessed other people’s affections, the fact that he noticed them and that they affected him in a positive and moving way bespeak his empathy (84). He perceived another person’s “kindness and affection” as of the greatest value (86). Devoting his “attention and time” to the observation of the villagers, the Creature aimed at learning to recognise their emotional states (86). He appreciated the vil-

lager's "manners." Whenever they experienced sadness, he shared it with them, and when they were happy, he "sympathised [with them] in their joys" (87). He longed for affection which he was able to return to his potential friend and he often dreamt of having a soul mate whose "angelic countenance [would breathe] smiles of consolation" for his loneliness (101). It can be said that the Creature genuinely *loved* the villagers. His kindness, gentility, and good manners show when he enters the cottage and converses with the old De Lacey, who recognises the Creature's mildness and sincerity (103).

Aware that he was never of explicitly "sweet, cheerful, and happy temper" – the qualities attributed to a *friendly* individual by Immanuel Kant (216) – the Creature, nonetheless, decided "not to despair" but, instead, "fit himself" for his meeting with the cottagers (Shelley 100). He knew that only his goodness, mildness and kindness could win their love and affection. Thus, he tried everything not to grow bitter or wrathful (Shelley 100). Shelley's portrayal highlights also his altruism and generosity (89, 98). Generous to the hilt, even after he had been violently beaten and driven away by the villagers, he saved the little girl from drowning in a river (108). His forgiveness and patience showed not only in his attitude towards the villagers, but also in negotiations with Victor. When confronting Frankenstein about his companion-to-be, "instead of threatening [he was] content to reason with" Victor and, later, to wait for his female companion to be created (111).

The Creature was also befriendable in the Aristotelian terms. From Aristotle onwards through the 18th century, *virtue* was thought to be the basis of every genuine and meaningful friendship (Aristotle 3–5). It has been already noted that the Creature was endowed with goodness, which he possessed next to his intellectual and emotional capacities and altruism. To form friendship in the Aristotelian sense, goodness was enough, yet to maintain a profound relationship, the Creature would need to be virtuous (which he said he was [Shelley 114]) (Brewer 3,722; Annas 549). Yet his potential for developing the Aristotelian virtue was hampered in him by the emotional tortures he received from nearly all humans he encountered. Condemned to loneliness, banished from human society, the Creature lacked another in relation to whom he could develop his virtue. And virtue, as Josh Bernatchez rephrases Aristotle, requires the company of another to shine (Bernatchez 208). It is impossible, therefore, to conclusively affirm, or deny whether the Creature was virtuous in the Aristotelian sense as none of the relationships he had with other people lasted long enough for him to develop this aspect of his character. It is possible, however, to prove that the Creature, indeed, was good, kind-hearted, well-wishing, sincere and benevolent; thus, it is possible to surmise that in the Shelleyan rendering, if given loving company, he would have surely developed his virtuousness.

The Creature, admittedly, was not devoid of some imperfections of character, which could stand in the way of forming a happy friendship. Also, his

appearance was marred by physical deformities, which Aristotle would term as not “pleasurable,” and which, Aristotle noted, might initially prevent the ease of contact (Aristotle 7–8). However, for someone prepared for his peculiarity, as Captain Walton was, or someone unprejudiced towards it, as was the old De Lacey, even the Creature’s physique was no hindrance from forming friendship. What is more, the Creature was very well aware of his shocking appearance, and he tried to be very considerate of people’s possible reactions. Thus, it may be supposed that even his physique would not have been a barrier for another to befriend him.

Malice and slander, which in the European discourse on friendship are considered to be the main causes behind one’s lack of a friend, were also absent in the Creature’s life⁴. Devoid of proper context, the Creature’s occasional displays of cruelty and his framing of Justine into the murder which he himself committed could have been regarded as graphic examples of malice and slander. However, the justifiability of these deeds makes the prime culprit Victor Frankenstein himself. The Creature’s cruelty came from despair, but he was not malicious or malevolent by nature. As regards Justine’s death, it was at some point – throughout the trial until her death - exclusively in Frankenstein’s power to explain everything and save her. He declined to it; thus the ultimate blame ought to be wholly ascribed to Victor Frankenstein.

The Creature’s bitterness could not be considered an excuse for others’ unwillingness to befriend him either. Initially, even the occasional feelings of loneliness and sadness did not suppress him. He realised his misery, but he would not give in. Instead, he tried to busy himself with physical labour that could help him to forget it. The Creature also tried to derive pleasure from art, from the beauty of nature and from observing the affectionate behaviour of the villagers towards one another. But, eventually, having experienced nothing but severe hatred, violence and abandonment, betrayed by his own creator, he succumbed to bitterness. It was his ultimate reaction to the harshness with which he was treated.

Thus, the Shelleyan portrayal of the Creature is of a being that is a very befriendable individual. His apparent vices resulted from temperamental imperfections, which grew into violence and revenge, not from an inclination to evil. Indeed, during the initial stage of his existence, when encountering the majority of his potential friends, he was not bitter. Neither was he ever malicious or prone to slander. There also existed people who could behold and endure his appearance and, recognising his goodness, maintain a non-hostile conversation with him. Intelligent, open-minded and willing to self-actualise, the Creature was sensitive of other people’s feelings and – being aware of his own limitations – he tried to remain mild and caring towards them. He was exceptionally sincere, disinterested and well-wishing – a most befriendable being.

3. The Creature's Failed Attempts at Befriending Victor. Victor's Inexcusable Hostility

It was, in fact, Victor's attitude towards the Creature that should be regarded as overly monstrous and heartless. Victor's encounters with the Creature always intensified his hatred of his creation. Firstly, Frankenstein constantly disregarded and oppressed his creation. Not only did he deny the Creature's right to have a proper name (and, consequently, the sense of identity) but he also consistently threw at him insults, ranging from "fiend" to "daemon,"⁵ which can be considered as a mockery of the philosophical admonition: to allow for the Other to retain their name with its form unchanged. Usurping the God's right to give and take one's life, Victor decided "to extinguish" the Creature's life as if it were worthless (71). Secondly, his rejection of, and disappointment with, the Creature indicate that Victor's approach was overly cognitive in its nature: Frankenstein looked at him through the old prisms and judged him by the standards which privileged an idealised, proportionate creation rather than a disproportionate, miserable individual requiring the overall upbringing. He regarded him as a mere animal; and he assigned to him features of *moral* monstrosity based only on his outward ugliness (46, 60, 61). He accused him of "ignorance," but at the same time he refused to guide the Creature and he considered him unworthy of his attention (63). Thirdly, the friendly openness and care – advocated by Garasic and Kirmayer – were absent in Victor's approach to the Creature. When the Creature became alive, Frankenstein immediately ran away from his laboratory; and when the then-helpless Creature hopefully followed him, Victor escaped him again (45–46). He offered the Creature no privilege of *friendly dissymmetry*. On the contrary, after a long time of not seeing his creation, Victor was possessed with a wish to instantly kill him (76–77). Devoid of empathy, morally monstrous, Victor ordered the Creature to disappear at once, before even listening to him, ignorant of his pain and needs (78). Overall, this non-acceptance and ever-present disregard towards the Creature were the major negative aspects of Victor's inhumane attitude towards his creation and they were the main reasons behind Victor's turning the Creature into his utmost enemy.

Thus, the main reason behind the failure to form a friendly relationship with the Creature was Victor's moral monstrosity: his injustice, distrust, unkindness and, most notably, his lack of virtue, which further eradicated the potential for forming a profound, virtue-based friendship. Admittedly, Victor often acknowledged that he created the being, but throughout most of the time, Frankenstein felt no responsibility for him and, therefore, no wish to provide him with food and shelter, basic education and up-bringing⁶. Justice was clearly absent from his heartless approach towards his creation. Only at one point – that is during their first encounter since the Creature's departure from Victor's laboratory – did Victor agree to actually listen to the Creature's story, so that he could judge him (76–78). Nevertheless, he primarily intended to, as if, invent an excuse for an instrumental treatment

of (rather than respect and tolerance towards) the Creature. As a result, Victor's wickedness eventually caused him to stifle the sense of justice within himself after he had broken all his promises and sworn his eternal hatred for the Creature (79, 112–113, 127, 156). Victor's hasty judgement of the Creature resulted in his distrust. On the one hand, Victor accused the Creature of adopting such an attitude, saying that he had already shown "a degree of malice." Yet the Creature's misbehaviour can be excused to a large degree (113). At no point was Frankenstein's approach devoid of prejudice. Employing an overly cognitive attitude which definitely eliminated his empathy, Victor constantly "imagined" various terrible deeds that could happen at the Creature's hands⁷, despite knowing that – given no reason – the Creature was unable to commit any crime. Given the promise of receiving a companion, the Creature was even less prone to harm others, patiently awaiting the emergence of a friend with whom he could withdraw from the rest of the human society (118, 127).

Overall, Victor – perhaps a Shelleyan reminiscence of Rousseau – neglected his duty as a parental figure in the life of his Creature. However, he also failed as a person approaching the Other. His attitude is characterised by his monstrous immorality; he lacked a sense of justice, he had no kindness and openness, which resulted in his overwhelming distrust, disrespect, intolerance and oppressiveness. Only at one point did he admit to feeling "compassionate" towards the Creature, but he was still unwilling to tolerate his Otherness and accept his differences (113). He often changed his mind and tormented the Creature, which bespeak his lack of integrity – a feature criticised in the candidates for friends, primarily, by Walhof. All these attempts on the Creature's side to befriend Victor were being consistently destroyed by the latter. What is more, it becomes apparent that there were no such attempts on Victor's side at all. Even Victor's unpremeditated consent to create the companion for the Creature was not an act of friendliness. Actually, Frankenstein intended to create a surrogate companion, thus relieving himself of any duties towards the Creature.

Conclusion

The novel, while entertaining its readers with a Gothic thrill, actually constitutes an important text in the discourses of friendship and otherness understood as monstrosity. It is Mary Shelley's plea on the account of the orphaned and the marginalised. But it is also her critique of the replacing of the affective with purely cognitive patterns in human relationships. The complex relationship the novel presents – that of the Self with the Other, the Creator and Creation, fatherly and filial, and that of unrequited friendship – yields to an analysis in the context of the philosopher's statements on *philia*. Significantly, in their light, this is Victor that reveals his monstrosity. Victor's unwillingness to accept and take care of his creation – in the light

of the philosophical perspectives on friendship with the Other – can be regarded as extreme. Out of all the elements of a healthy approach towards the other – that is Emerson’s *complete respect*, Derrida’s *respectful responsibility and positive dissymmetry*, Kirmayer’s *empathy*, Garasic’s *humaneness* and Walhof’s *balance* – Victor employs none when approaching his Creature. This, further, confirms one’s regard of Victor’s approach as monstrously abusive and unjustifiable.

Notes

- 1 Apart from being argued against by Shelley, Rousseau’s excuse was found refutable also by E. Burke in his *Beauties of the Anti-Jacobin from 1799* and Voltaire in an open letter in 1764.
- 2 See, eW. Godwin’s *Washing the Blackmoor White*.
- 3 Although Frankenstein’s moral failure is also a failure of responsibility, the biblical discourse on the responsibility for one’s neighbour will not be used in this present analysis as hardly a Christian. He did not follow the Christian teachings in his life, and thus, for him the Bible held little authority.
- 4 Among others, St. Paul in *Ephesians* 4.31–32 and Kant in his *Lecture on Friendship* 217.
- 5 See, e.g., M. Shelley 22, 71, 129, 130, 141, 151
- 6 See, e.g., M. Shelley 63, 71
- 7 See, e.g., M. Shelley 127

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