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**THE 'ART' OF SHAPING
IDENTITIES:
FRANKENSTEIN, BY
MARY SHELLEY AND *THE
PICTURE OF DORIAN
GRAY*, BY OSCAR WILDE**

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JUSTIFICATION

The choice of this topic is due to my personal and professional experience. Since the very moment in which I started my degree, I had a clear preference for the study of grammar. However, in my second year, I found that literature was also gradually catching my attention by analysing poems and texts, and all the possible interpretations hidden in texts as short as four lines. I want to emphasize the influence and passion for literature I received from my literature teachers all the years that made me make the decision to write my final composition about this topic, and in particular, it was the subject given by my academic supervisor in this End Degree Project where I discovered and investigated the two masterpieces of Gothic Novel I have analysed in this approach. Furthermore, I decided this topic was the one to work in for my End Degree Dissertation because I knew I would enjoy writing and investigating more about it.

ABSTRACT

Two of the most important novels in Gothic Literature, *Frankenstein* (1818) by Mary Shelley and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890), by Oscar Wilde, which mark the beginning and the end of Romanticism, bear a comparative relation between the main characters and the succession of events which take place in both novels. This dissertation is principally focused on the similarities which make both the work by Mary Shelley and the one by Oscar Wilde resemble each other, and to that effect I will analyse the creators and creations, as well as the factors which influence or shape the personalities of the latter, the sequence of events, starting with the triggering factor of the act of creation up to the consequences. These consequences take place under the creation of a new being and the shaping of identities going against the laws of nature. Moreover, I will deal with the role of the society in the novels, which directly sways the creations in a negative manner by means of rejection or idolatry.

Key words: *Frankenstein*, Dorian, creator, creation, shaping, influence, recognition, rejection, society, beauty, detachment, suicide, experimentation.

RESUMEN

Dos de las obras más destacables de la literatura gótica como lo son *Frankenstein* (1818), de Mary Shelley, y *El Retrato de Dorian Gray* (1890), de Oscar Wilde, que marcan el inicio y el final del Romanticismo, guardan una relación similar entre los personajes principales y la sucesión de eventos que tienen lugar en ambas novelas. Este ensayo está enfocado principalmente en las similitudes que hacen que tanto la obra de Mary Shelley como la de Oscar Wilde se asemejen, y para ello haré un análisis tanto de los creadores y las creaciones como de los factores que influyen en el modelaje de las personalidades de estas últimas, los hechos que se relatan, empezando por el factor desencadenante del acto de creación hasta llegar a las consecuencias. Estas consecuencias tienen lugar bajo la creación de un nuevo ser y el modelaje de identidades, yendo en contra de las leyes de la naturaleza. También trataré cómo el papel de la sociedad en ambas novelas influye directamente en las creaciones por medio del rechazo o la idolatría de un modo negativo.

Palabras clave: *Frankenstein*, Dorian, creador, creación, modelaje, influencia, reconocimiento, rechazo, sociedad, belleza, separación, suicidio, experimentación.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this academic essay is to expose the main similarities between *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890) and *Frankenstein* (1818) in a parallelism that also shows the slight differences among them. I want to show how both authors, Mary Shelley and Oscar Wilde, are able to describe how devastating the exploration of the limits of human creativity can be. This comparison will be exposed in a horizontal manner, that is to say, one novel does not influence over the other but both are understood as two independent works.

I will differentiate three stages in this composition so that I can structure the sequence of events concerning the act of creation. In this manner, I will focus on the facts which happen in each stage between both novels, which have their own interpretation of the act of creation. Mary Shelley and Oscar Wilde present the monstrous *other* characterised as an outer figure, which determines the fate of a creator and a modeller (the latter shapes and influences the personality of a creation) and whose scientific and moral curiosity goes beyond the limits of nature. I will quote authors such as John Milton with his *Paradise Lost* and Sigmund Freud among others to show the correspondence between these two works, *Frankenstein* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Although there are some articles which discuss the creator-creation relationship, I will address another perspective in the notion of creation, including the influence or shaping of personalities as a new form of creation or modelling, together with the misogyny analysed in these novels and the dark sides of the idea of beauty, two issues much talked-about nowadays. To finish, I will deal with the analogy with *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) written by Robert Louis Stevenson and the concept of fear as an element bound to both works, which includes the terror of the creation and of the self.

2. FRANKENSTEIN AND THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY: A COMPARATIVE RELATION

To introduce this approach, concerning the sequence of events in both novels, there are a series of similarities which, in that sense, make their purpose clear. I will take into account three stages, in view of the fact that each novel plays the role of a creation story, which revolve around the act of creation: before, during and after it.

The first stage is connected to the creators and creations that I found in the novels: the painter, the picture, the doctor and the creature among others. The act of creation is moved by a trigger, different in each work, either to get social recognition, social idolatry or even personal satisfaction, but with the aim of reaching immortality to a certain extent. It is important to analyse how the creators feel before the act of creation because the action will have negative consequences which will have a direct effect on them, such as the death of a beloved person.

Continuing with the second stage, the act of creation is important in each storyline considering that although there is a creation in both, it is executed in a different way. In other words, each creation is carried out under specific conditions which allows the creation to take place.

In the third stage, after achieving the aim, the feeling of fear leads the creator to avoid the result of his desire. In *Frankenstein* it takes place since the very moment in which the creature comes to life; in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, however, since Dorian perceives the first changes suffered by the picture and not since Basil paints it. Following the rejection of the creators over the creations, we should point out the same behaviour by the society which gives rise to the final coercion, manipulation and shaping of the creations. Particularly, in relation to the misogyny exposed in the novels, together with the concept of beauty and what is considered to be correct according to the physical appearance. As a result of this contamination, a series of deaths occur and the creations turn against their creators, the master becoming the slave and the slave, the master. The creators find their alter ego in their creations, which brings them to degeneration. They are afraid of being discovered and the creations, in turn, find themselves sunk in an abyss of incomprehension because of society, their creators and what they have become. This degeneration leads to the final death of the creators and, consequently, the creations because they are not independent characters but

entities which are divided into two, as an extension of the other. In the case of *Frankenstein*, Victor dedicates the rest of his life searching for the creature to kill it, but he finally perishes in the attempt and the creature commits suicide because, with the death of its master, its life loses all sense. Similarly, Basil is murdered by Dorian and Dorian commits suicide by slaying the picture. Finally, in both novels we have a clear challenge to the laws of nature.

Once that I have exposed the main points that I will address in this composition, I will expound the different ideas to show the comparative relation visible in *Frankenstein* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. I will exchange the similarities and differences between the two novels not to superimpose one novel on the other and give both the same importance.

3. BEFORE THE ACT OF CREATION

In this first stage, before analyzing the different aspects and events in *Frankenstein* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, it is important to distinguish the function of the creator in both novels as the one who creates and models, the one who shapes, as well as the creations as the ones which are created or influenced by a creator or modeller.

3.1. Duality: Creators and Creations

First of all, considering a creator as the one who creates, in the case of *Frankenstein* there is only one: Victor Frankenstein. He is presented in the novel as an overambitious person with respect to the human body and his acknowledgement about it. He is the creator and his creation is a way of self-expression. Nevertheless, he could be considered the father of the creature as he emphasizes in the novel:

A new species would bless me as its creator and source; many happy and excellent natures would owe their being to me. No father could claim the gratitude of his child so completely as I should deserve theirs. (Shelley, 2003: 55)

I will go deeper into the ambition that motivates Victor to carry out the experiment in the next section “Shaping humans: the trigger”.

Secondly, in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, we can consider four different creators and modellers: Basil Hallward, Lord Henry, Dorian Gray and the picture. I should start with Basil Hallward, the creator of the picture and consequently the initiator of the tragic end that the main character will finally suffer.

By portraying Dorian, Basil tries to capture a pure young male full of innocence, or it could be a way of portraying the person he wants Dorian to be. However, Basil has always tried to avoid the influence of Lord Henry over the fair curly-haired man. Basil and Lord Henry are opposite characters. In this triangle, Basil Hallward could act as the conscience of Dorian and Harry Henry as his temptations and all the bad things that it involves. Basil warns Dorian against the influence of Lord Henry, as he says: “don’t move about too much, or pay any attention to what Lord Henry says. He has a very bad influence over all his friends, with the single exception of myself” (Wilde, 2001: 17) This overprotection is related to his feelings for Dorian. We know it from the very moment in which Basil talks to Lord Henry about Dorian:

'He likes me,' he answered, after a pause; 'I know he likes me. Of course I flatter him dreadfully. I find a strange pleasure in saying things to him that I know I shall be sorry for having said.' (11)

As Victor, Basil puts part of himself on his creation and that is one of the reasons why he does not want to exhibit it. He would be totally exposed to every single person that would see the picture. Consequently, he affirms:

Because, without intending it, I have put into it some expression of all this curious artistic idolatry, of which, of course, I have never cared to speak to him. He knows nothing about it. He shall never know anything about it. But the world might guess it, and I will not bare my soul to their shallow prying eyes. My heart shall never be put under their microscope. There is too much of myself in the thing, Harry--too much of myself! (12)

Following with the modellers, the influence of Lord Henry Wotton is a problem for Basil and, in consequence, it is also important in the novel as a way of modelling Dorian Gray. John M. L. Drew makes reference to this influence quoting that "he would seek to dominate him" (Introduction, XVI)¹. Lord Henry is the highest influence over Dorian together with the picture. Harry Henry would be connected with Victor Frankenstein because, although in the novel by Mary Shelley the act of creation is understood as a scientific experiment, he plans to model the personality of Dorian Gray, which could be understood as a personal challenge and a social experiment. In other words, both creations are experiments which prove and release the social and scientific inquisitiveness of Lord Henry and Victor Frankenstein, respectively.

In connection with the creators and creations, there is a dichotomy of role between Dorian Gray and the picture. While Dorian and the canvas are creations themselves, they also influence each other as a modeller. On the one hand, the picture performs a psychological influence over Dorian because it illustrates his corrupted soul as a reflection of himself. All the terrific modifications that the canvas suffers bring the young man to a constant obsession and fear of the discovery of the picture by all the people unaware of the odd phenomenon. The way in which it affects Dorian is accomplished day by day by showing him the destruction of his soul as a consequence of his acts. The portrait, as in *Frankenstein*, plays the same role as the creature with its creator because it represents a part which comes out of Dorian himself. On the other hand, Dorian provides a narcissist influence over the portrait by committing all kinds of immoral acts and feeding the transformation and corruption of his

¹ This edition of Penguin Classics includes an introduction and notes by John M. L. Drew. This quotation belongs to the chapter "The Personalities" in which he deals with the evolution of the different characters and their personalities.

soul reflected on the picture. In *Frankenstein*, the physical appearance of the creature represents the soul of Victor and his inner monster, whose rejection promotes the creature to perpetrate a series of murders in his family.

The last modeller identified in both novels is the role of society. Society also creates and models the personality of the creations, Dorian and the creature. Apart from its creator, the creature is repudiated by every person who sees it, with the single exception of a blind old man, who does not reject him because of its physical appearance. However, this point will be widely described in section six: “The Role Of Society: Context, Circumstances And Consequences”.

The creations (the creature, Dorian Gray and the picture) are considered and remembered as monsters through the years, although each novel has its own description of a monster, which is not only determined by the external features but also the internal ones. The one who keeps a terrific appearance is the creature in *Frankenstein*. It is a combination of a scientific experiment full of good intentions and a hulking and loathsome façade. Its naïve personality cannot hide its external look. Such is the case of its abhorrent aspect that its own creator, Victor Frankenstein, hardly hurls his words in a fume at the creature by describing it during the funeral of the fair child, William, murdered at the hands of his creation:

I could not be mistaken. A flash of lightning illuminated the object, and discovered its shape plainly to me; its gigantic stature, and the deformity of its aspect, more hideous than belongs to humanity, instantly informed me that it was the wretch, the filthy daemon to whom I had given life...*He was the murderer!* (77-78)

On the contrary and physically opposed to the creature in *Frankenstein*, Dorian Gray is the perfect blend of youth and beauty with a hateful personality. In this case, Dorian brings to the forefront his inner monster. A different perception of the concept that we are used to see because his monstrosity is not seen at first sight. He becomes “more and more interested in the corruption of his own soul” (103) by feeding the portrait with his sins. There is a mutual modelling between Dorian and the portrait. “The evil and ageing face on the canvas” (103) reflects the last monster in the novel by Oscar Wilde. The gaunt and dreadful image into which the picture has transformed has a clear purpose that brings Dorian to degeneration: “the portrait was to bear the burden of his shame” (85).

After analyzing the different creators, modellers and creations, I will assay the trigger that brings Victor Frankenstein, Basil Hallward, Harry Henry and even Dorian Gray to behave that way.

3.2. Shaping Humans: The Trigger

In relation to the link which connects creators with their creations, and before the act of creation, each creator has their own intention whose touchpaper is determined by pride, scientific curiosity, love, moral curiosity and egotism among others in the stories. Both novels act as a creation process so it is important to go deep in the personality and mindset of the creator.

To get to know better the feelings which lead Victor Frankenstein to challenge nature, I should mention some events which take place in his youth. He narrates how his parents were with him and his premature ambitions since a young age. Victor Frankenstein is born in a peaceful atmosphere with no worries or difficulties other than learning or enjoying his childhood. He ensures his family is very fortunate because his “parents were possessed by the very spirit of kindness and indulgence” (39). With the passing of time, he has acquired knowledge and showing a clear desire to know more about the world which surrounds him and, in particular, everything related to life:

My temper was sometimes violent, and my passions vehement; but by some law in my temperature they were turned not towards childish pursuits but to an eager desire to learn, and not to learn all things indiscriminately. [...] It was the secrets of heaven and earth that I desired to learn; [...] still my enquiries were directed to the metaphysical, or in its highest senses, the physical secrets of the world. (39)

One night, Victor witnesses a thunder-storm when he is fifteen, and this phenomenon arouses his curiosity in the subject of electricity. Electricity is an important element in the act of creation in *Frankenstein*. His scientific inquisitiveness increases when Victor happens on the leading figures who help him to carry out his major experiment: “Natural philosophy is the genius that has regulated my fate. [...] When I was thirteen, [...] I chanced to find a volume of the works of Cornelius Agrippa” (41). Cornelius Agrippa was a philosopher and scientist with a deep interest in the occult. Paracelsus studied medicine and contributed a great deal to the understanding and treatment of diseases. He was also drawn to alchemy. St. Albertus Magnus was a versatile scholar whose work ranged from philosophy and theology to

psychology and the natural sciences.² Together with Albertus Magnus and Paracelsus, he finds inspiration in their lectures. However, the role of M. Krempe and M. Waldman “decided [his] future destiny” (50) with their “sense and real information, combined with a repulsive physiognomy and manners” (51).

Victor Frankenstein, motivated by the working of the human body and the mystery of life, death and decay, begins his research to find an explanation to the secrets of life and death. To go beyond, I consider that Victor tries to resemble God with his behaviour. Belt affirms the assumption of ‘Playing God’ in this novel by saying:

In discussions on biotechnology and synthetic biology, alongside and in combination with allusions to the presumed arrogance of playing God, a name is very often invoked that many scientists consider a tainted ‘F-word’: Frankenstein. In fact, the Frankenstein theme is closely entwined with the motif of playing God. [...] In other words, Frankenstein wanted to play God and was as severely punished for his transgression as Prometheus, who had stolen fire from the gods. (Belt, 2009: 260)

The idea of giving birth to a new species is what turns Victor into a scientist engrossed in his all-consuming experiment. However, Victor Frankenstein also tries to overcome the human disease and death. Full of good intentions, and marked by the death of his mother, a tragedy he has suffered at a young age, his research could be considered a response to a cruel life. Both, Victor Frankenstein and Basil Hallward share a kind of self-absorption in the act of creation and the creations they carry out. Whereas Victor stays solitary in his laboratory for years trying to find the climactic element for giving life to his creation, Basil turns his blindness into some feelings for his creation.

On the one hand, I would like to start defining the trigger which leads Basil to create the picture with one quotation in the book *The Picture of Dorian Gray*:

The artist is the creator of beautiful things. To reveal art and conceal the artist is art’s aim. [...] We can forgive a man for making a useful thing as long as he does not admire it. The only excuse for making a useless thing is that one admires it intensely (3-4).

So, according to Oscar Wilde, there would be no such motivation for Basil other than his admiration for the young man because the painter says that Dorian is to him “a motive in art” (12), and would reflect this *artistic idolatry* unconsciously in the canvas. Consequently, the trigger that would carry Basil to paint the picture would be his wish to preserve the youth,

² “More on Cornelius Agrippa, Paracelsus and Albertus Magnus.” *Frankenstein Study Guide*. <crossref-it.info/textguide/frankenstein/7/971> Accessed 18 May 2017.

beauty and innocence of Dorian Gray eternally in the canvas, but not in the way it turns in the novel. That is to say, the gratification and self-satisfaction of capturing his admiration for Dorian and turning the picture into his major work of art, as he affirms:

There is nothing that art cannot express, and I know that the work I have done, since I met Dorian Gray, is good work, is the best work of my life. (11-12)

On the other hand, and continuing with the modeller Harry Henry, the most important influence in the novel, decides to initiate the process of influence he carries out along the whole novel, mentioned in the last section, as a kind personal challenge and a social experiment. From my point of view, unconsciously, Basil becomes the trigger of Harry Henry, although he tries to do just the opposite, making the last one to take an interest in the young man by saying:

His personality has suggested to me an entirely new manner in art [...] I can now recreate life in a way that was hidden from me before. 'A dream of form in days of thought' [...] it is what Dorian Gray has been to me. [...] he defines for me the lines of a fresh school, [...] the romantic spirit, all the perfection of the spirit that is Greek. The harmony of soul and body [...] Harry! if you only knew what Dorian Gray is to me! [...] It is one of the best things I have ever done. [...] while I was painting it, Dorian Gray sat beside me. Some subtle influence passed from him to me, and for the first time in my life I saw in the plain woodland the wonder I had always looked for and always missed. (12)

It is possible to appreciate his attention in Dorian since the very beginning on page 12: “Basil, this is extraordinary! I must see Dorian Gray.” And Basil even warns him: “Don’t spoil him. Don’t try to influence him” (15), but with no success. Lord Henry alleges: “There is no such thing as a good influence, Mr. Gray. All influence is immoral,—immoral from the scientific point of view” (17-18). And then he explains it: “Because to influence a person is to give him one’s own soul.” (18). Dorian Gray has become a major and essential focus of study with his white-rose youth and innocence. In this case, Harry Henry admits that he will mould the personality and way of thinking of Dorian justifying it as a “good influence”: “He would make that wonderful spirit his own” (32) .

I can observe in the novel some features which motive Dorian to continue destroying his soul. An example of this behaviour could be that he stares at the picture repeatedly, contemplating every single change the canvas has suffered: a new wrinkle, a wound, the drawn face it is acquiring. He feeds himself with the horrifying figure contributing to reinforce the influence of Lord Henry with his acts and sins: “the face on the canvas bear the

burden of his passions and his sins” (73). Thus, the trigger which moves Dorian could be, in this sense, to discover the edge of that transformation and the corruption of his soul while he remains young and beautiful.

As man and picture stand in front of each other, a confrontation takes place. One is the triumph of nature, the other is the triumph of men, but the latter, a mere copy of the first, will remain unspoiled through time while the real person will become “dreadful, hideous, and uncouth” (Wagatsuma, 2011: 83)³

To continue the analysis and after exploring the creators, their creations and the facts which unleash those creations, the next stage gives room to how takes place the process of creation.

³ This quote belongs to the pdf version found in the webpage <http://scholar.googleusercontent.com/scholar?q=cache:UM0j-q7X69UJ:scholar.google.com/&hl=es&as_sdt=0,5> Accessed 4 April 2018

4. THE ACT OF CREATION

The second stage involves the act of creation itself, the process which each creator carries out, depending on the creation, the means used, and taking into account the differences of the process in each novel. Nevertheless, apart from the process, the environment is also essential, also considering the time spent and the reaction of the creator in the very moment in which the creation process is achieved as well as the reaction of the creation. In other words, how a similar process ends in very different results. It should be pointed out that, as a main difference in the act of creation in *Frankenstein* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, the former is considered a scientific experiment, while the later concerns an artistic and social perspective. In both cases, the act of creation can be considered an act of liberation by the creator because Basil, Victor and even Lord Henry free their curiosity for science, art, feelings, moral and human shaping. Moreover, in both novels, Dorian with the picture and Victor with the creature, “bestow animation upon lifeless matter” (55).

Before analysing the process in which the creation is accomplished, I would like to emphasize that the pivotal moment of the creation is omitted by both authors. In other words, the moment of creation is not explicit, leaving aside the specific details to recreate the scene. One of the reasons why the moment is omitted could be that both authors leave the reader free to interpret it subjectively. The concept of creation could be related to many different meanings, however, R. Harré asserts that:

To create is to produce or generate what did not exist before, and most importantly, it is to produce not only an individual which did not exist before but one of a new and hitherto unknown kind.
(Dutton, 1981: 19)

It is clear that the creation process in the novels is related to the concept of giving birth, as Dutton affirms: “Plato in his Symposium metaphorically describes artistic and intellectual creation as ‘giving birth in beauty’.” (69). The concept of “giving birth in beauty” is a correct definition considering that the picture represents the perfect beauty and youth of Dorian Gray, and it finally comes to life metaphorically because it changes with the corrupted life and acts which Dorian commits. In *Frankenstein*, Victor’s intention is not that of achieving a beautiful creature but a complete and wonderful being as a man. He states that “although [its] limbs [are] in proportion” (58) and its features are selected as beautiful, the result is not that expected because its yellow skin, lustrous black hair, white teeth, watery eyes and straight

black lips only “formed a more horrid contrast” (58) of that beauty. So, he aims to form a complex creature able to act as a man as he affirms:

I should attempt the creation of a being like myself, or one of simpler organization; but [...] my first success to permit me to doubt of my ability to give life to an animal as complete and wonderful as man. (54)

In addition, Victor gives birth to the creature in an untraditional way. That is to say, there is no woman to create the new life, and as Mary Poovey affirms: “He would deny relationships (and women) any role in the conception of children and because he would reduce all domestic ties to those that center on and feed his selfish desires.”⁴ (Shelley, 2012: 347). Both Victor and Basil create a new species or picture out of nothing because Basil paints the picture in a canvas, while Victor, although he uses parts of bodies to carry out his experiment, brings to life the creature considered a new species or being. All the creations in both novels are alive, including the picture, and, consequently, they have an essence on their own. In the case of the picture, the essence is shared with Dorian, because it is the mirror of his corrupted soul: “The quivering ardent sunlight showed him the lines of cruelty round the mouth as clearly as if he had been looking into a mirror after he had done some dreadful thing” (73). The creature in *Frankenstein*, on the contrary, is not able to take control over its instincts and feelings, but preserves an innocent soul, as the creature states:

My heart overflowed with kindness and the love of virtue. I had begun life with benevolent intentions and thirsted for the moment when I should put them in practice and make myself useful to my fellow beings. (93)

As Richard Holmes states, this innocent soul is as that of an infant without knowledge inside the body of an adult:

Frankenstein's creature has been constructed as a dully developed man, from adult body parts, but his mind is that of a totally undeveloped infant. He has no memory, no language, no conscience.⁵ (189)

In *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, the creation process is divided in many creations as the novel explores. In other words, it comprehends the creation of the picture, and the modelling of Dorian and the canvas once it is painted. First of all, we have the process in which the portrait, and the triggering object of the novel, is painted. The studio, which is located in the

⁴ “My Hideous Progeny”: The Lady and the Monster”

⁵ Shelley, 2012: “Mary Shelley And The Power Of Contemporary Science.”

city of London, where the picture is created, is described as a floral environment, nearly idyllic, typical of a summer day in an exotic Oriental atmosphere⁶:

The studio was filled with the rich odour of roses, and when the light summer wind stirred amidst the trees of the garden, [...] the heavy scent of the lilac, or the more delicate perfume of the pink-flowering thorn. [And] the fantastic shadows of birds in flight flitted across the long tussore-silk curtains [...] producing a kind of momentary Japanese effect, and making him think of those pallid, jade-faced painters of Tokyo (5)

Concerning the materials used to paint the canvas, apart from the colours on his palette, according to Oscar Wilde an artist is able to express everything through his thought, language, vice and virtue: "The artist can express everything. Thought and language are to the artist instruments of an art. Vice and virtue are to the artist materials for an art." (3). This assertion reveals the role of the picture: Basil's idolatry for Dorian. The time he spends in his work of art is not specified, but it turns around one or two months, and once it is finished he expresses admiration for the young man and satisfaction for his masterpiece. Moreover, in this moment, from the very beginning, Basil feels some new emotions which appear by contemplating his handiwork.

As the painter looked at the gracious and comely form he had so skilfully mirrored in his art, a smile of pleasure passed across his face, and seemed about to linger there. But he suddenly started up, and closing his eyes, placed his fingers upon the lids, as though he sought to imprison within his brain some curious dream from which he feared he might awake. (5)

In this quotation we can observe that Basil's reaction is not to flee, but to remain all the time with Dorian, as if the picture and the young man were now part of himself, that is to say, as if he has given his soul. For Basil Hallward, the picture is a mere representation of his own domination by Dorian. In others words, he feels submissive towards the young man. The feeling he has the first time he sees Dorian was that of an mindlessly obedient person, as he says:

I knew that I had come face to face with someone whose mere personality was so fascinating that, if I allowed it to do so, it would absorb my whole nature, my whole soul, my very art itself. (9)

⁶ This atmosphere is not accidental, because according to Chen the décor is based on the studio of Charles Ricketts, painter and designer, cited as the 'original' Basil Hallward and who designed the title-page and binding of the book by Oscar Wilde. Information taken from "The Metamorphosis of Adonis in Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*." *Studies in English Literature: Regional Branches Combined Issue*, The English Literary Society of Japan, 2 May 2017. <www.jstage.jst.go.jp/article/elsjregional/9/0/9_135/_article>. Accessed 1 March 2018.

Together with the creation of the picture, Dorian himself plays an important role once the picture is finished because, astonished and sorrowful at the same time, he regrets how dreadful and ephemeral life can be, arguing that his youth and beauty will never last in time as it will do in the picture. He seems to make a devil's bargain offering his soul as tax:

How sad it is! I shall grow old, and horrible, and dreadful. But this picture will remain always young. It will never be older than this particular day of June...If it were only the other way! If it were I who was to be always young, and the picture that was to grow old! For that--for that--I would give everything! Yes, there is nothing in the whole world I would not give! I would give my soul for that! (24)

The youth and beauty of the young man reflected on the canvas gets him jealous of his own appearance, the picture becoming the triggering object of the influence by Lord Henry and the corruption of his soul. Although Dorian is perfectly conscious of the changes in the picture, he cannot avoid the strong power which Harry Henry has over him and he attempts to avoid the old man unsuccessfully:

For every sin that he committed, a stain would fleck and wreck its fairness. But he would not sin. The picture, changed or unchanged, would be to him the visible emblem of conscience. He would resist temptation. He would not see Lord Henry any more--would not, at any rate, listen to those subtle poisonous theories. (74)

However, Lord Henry, since the moment he meets the young man, begins his process of shaping his personality influencing him with a hedonist philosophy of life. Lord Henry describes Dorian as "a wonderful creation." (20). However, the crowning moment of this influence happens when he sends Dorian the "Yellow book" which shows the natural rebellions also known as sins:

His eye fell on the yellow book that Lord Henry had sent him. [...] After a few minutes he became absorbed. It was the strangest book that he had ever read. It seemed to him that in exquisite raiment, and to the delicate sound of flutes, the sins of the world were passing in dumb show before him. Things that he had dimly dreamed of were suddenly made real to him. Things of which he had never dreamed were gradually revealed. (100)

This book is described in the story as a "poisonous book" (101), whose main character becomes "to him a prefiguring type of himself" (102) and which contains the whole philosophy of the Hellenic ideal and Hedonism. "Indeed, the whole book [seems] to him to contain the story of his own life, written before he [has] lived it." (102). This book finally turns Dorian into a cynical person with no principles, as Lord Henry means: "I like persons better than principles, and I like persons with no principles better than anything else in the

world.” (11). This book, together with the picture, is an element in the modelling of the young man, as electricity in *Frankenstein*, issue which I will deal with below.

The only creator or modeller in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* who shuns his creation is Dorian, although he also delights in staring at every single change which suffers the canvas. Dorian shows how the picture dominates him by changing the appearance of the young man that morning in summer. It acts as a diary of his life, as the ‘yellow book’, but in this case he can recreate every moment and sin he commits imprisoned in every wrinkle, skin blemishes, wound or grimace in that now imperfect visage.

For there would be a real pleasure in watching it. He would be able to follow his mind in to its secret places. This portrait would be to him the most magical of mirrors. As it had revealed to him his own body, so it would reveal to him his own soul. (86).

In *Frankenstein*, Victor’s obsession for the human anatomy and their death and decay is similar to that of an artist, such as Basil, who is obsessed by the young man and turns the picture into his masterpiece. Victor’s way of acting is similar to Dorian considering that, once the creature is finished, he also tries to escape from it once it comes to life. Concerning the time Victor spends in carrying out his achievement, it takes several months, similar to a regular pregnancy. The act of creation is accomplished in a night of November, but this choice is not accidental because, as it explains during the story, the most important element, apart from the pieces of corpses, is electricity. The election of that night to carry out the experiment is due to the storm, which will provide Victor the necessary energy for the creature to come alive. He makes reference to “the instruments of life” (58) which could be the name he gives to the surgical tools and a kind of battery, cables and wires to infuse the creature ‘the spark of life’, as an artificial organ.

It was on a dreary night of November that I beheld the accomplishment of my toils. With an anxiety that almost amounted to agony, I collected the instruments of life around me, that I might infuse a spark of being into the lifeless thing that lay at my feet. It was already one in the morning; [...] when, by the glimmer of the half extinguished light, I saw the dull yellow eye of the creature open; it breathed hard, and a convulsive motion agitated its limbs. (58)

Shelley mentions ‘galvanism’ (43) which consists in inducing some electric current into a muscle and convulses as a result. Mary Shelley introduces in her book the theory of Galvani and the subject of electricity. The author could have been inspired by the theories of Galvani and Volta because they exposed their demonstration and the controversy of ‘animal electricity’ in the previous years of the publication of *Frankenstein*. Although Galvani was

considered the 'father of animal electricity', Volta, a galvanian, argued that the electricity produced in a dead animal was not a 'new definition of electricity' but only an artificial working of the muscles and nerves in the moment in which the electric current is induced⁷. Shelley defends the statements of Galvani because in the novel the creature comes alive in an artificial way using electricity as main element.

Where Galvani believed that he had discovered a new form of electricity, Volta insisted that such animal electricity was merely artificial electricity, a man-made electricity caused by the connection between two metals. (Sha, 2012: 1)

Once the creature opens its "yellow eye" (58), Victor Frankenstein feels shocked by the appearance of the creature since the first convulsion, and describes it as a "catastrophe" (58), whose hulking aspect is determined by the materials used for his experiment: parts of corpses. He assembles his creature collecting "bones from charnelhouses" (55) and the rest of materials from "the dissecting room and the slaughterhouse" (55). Victor is not able to endure the aspect of his abhorrent creation so his reaction is no other but to leave the room quickly. In that moment, he is conscious that his experiment was not as expected. He was full of good intentions whose result became an eager research for success and social recognition. As I exposed above, Basil does not flee from his creation once it is created, but Dorian hides the picture when it begins to change. Victor, on the contrary, shuns his creation since the creation is achieved, avoiding any kind of responsibility taking into account that the creature continues living and contradicting his own affirmation considering himself as the "father of a new species". In relation with *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Victor is dominated by the creature, feeling a constant anxiety for stumbling into it since it abandons his laboratory. Dorian, shares this feel once the picture suffers the changes for the first time. Nevertheless, these feelings will be analysed in section seven: "Fear, Degeneration And Final Death: A Mirrored Situation".

Considering the act of creation as the essential section in this research, the facts which happen after it are also important because they are determinant in the similar dénouement of both novels, having the influence of the social atmosphere in mind as well as other factors which affect the resulting creations and the tragic end of the creators.

⁷ Bernardi, Walter. "La controversie sur l'électricité animale dans l'Italie du XVIIIe siècle : Galvani, Volta et... d'autres /The controversy over animal electricity in 18th-Century Italy : Galvani, Volta and... others." *Revue d'histoire des sciences*, vol. 54, no. 1, 2001, pp. 53–70.

5. AFTER THE ACT OF CREATION

This third stage includes all the events and factors which take place after the act of creation, different from those that include the main creators and which directly influence in the personality of the creations. Apart from the relationship of rejection between the creators and their creations, the role that society plays is important because, although both novels were published with hardly seventy years of difference, society did not change too much from one novel to other, for example, in the way women are treated or how the physical appearance can shape the personality of someone in the eyes of other people.

5.1. Creator and Creation: A Relationship of Rejection

The mirroring situation of rejection in *Frankenstein* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is related to the reaction of fleeing mentioned in the last section. This reaction is associated with the hideous aspect of the creations, the picture and the creature to be more precise. Nevertheless, the actions committed by the creations, in this case Dorian, and the creature again, distance the creators from them.

The rejection felt by the creature in *Frankenstein* comes from his own creator from the very moment it comes to life given that Victor denies his creation because of its physical monstrosity. The creature is not able to understand the reason why its “father” (141) acts that way. Victor feels such anger and refusal over the creature that he even thinks of destroying it after the deaths of William and Justine and it increases with the misfortunes caused by his creation: “When I thought of him I gnashed my teeth and, my eyes became inflamed, and I ardently Wish to extinguish that life which I had so thoughtlessly bestowed” (95). The way in which Victor acts leads the creature to refuse itself because it is conscious of how its acts have affected its creator and feels guilty of its misery. One more evidence of this disavowal over his creation accrues to the fact that Victor does not give him a name, so the doctor does not recognize the creation as his son or even a person, as Hardisson affirms:

Frankenstein, en un principio, parece entender el drama de su criatura y acepta compadecido por la inmensa soledad de la Criatura que él ha creado, pero que no ha reconocido como obra suya, sino que ha abandonado sin ni siquiera haberle dado un nombre. (Hardisson, 2002: 252)

However, the creature is not responsible for its acts and feelings because no one teaches it the difference between Good and Evil; it only acts as it feels. Consequently, the frustration the creature experiences is the trigger that leads it to commit those crimes. It implores Victor to recognize it as his son or a person, this finally being the main topic in the

novel. The creature, physically represented as a “daemon” (174), preserves its kindness and the desire of assisting others and being accepted in society⁸. On the contrary, Dorian is perfectly conscious of his acts and his desire is centred in satisfying his own necessities and not other people. In this case, Dorian does not yearn for the acceptance in a society in which he is already worshipped because of his youth and beauty.

In a similar way, Dorian hides the picture not only from other people but specially from himself trying to elude any kind of responsibility relating to it. Since the young man perceives the changes that the picture begins to suffer, all that idolatry he feels over the canvas turns into a strong refusal for its appearance together with the pleasure of seeing how the picture ages instead of him. It should be emphasized that, while in *Frankenstein* Victor evades his responsibility from the creature as creator, in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* both Dorian and the picture have a mutual existence determined by the other because Dorian feeds the canvas with his sins and the picture feeds Dorian's narcissism, even though it represents his immoral behaviour. Hence, Dorian never distances from it. Despite this mutual existence, the young man preserves the portrait, which reflects all the immoralities he commits, and which was once a reflection of his own beauty, hidden leading to a refusal and rejection of his own depraved identity and, consequently, of the picture:

He saw the face of his portrait leering in the sunlight. On the floor in front of it the torn curtain was lying. He remembered that the night before he had forgotten, for the first time in his life, to hide the fatal canvas, and was about to rush forward, when he drew back with a shudder. (137-138)

Making reference to the nameless being in *Frankenstein*⁹, the creature considers that owing a name is an essential factor to have an identity. During the story he fights for being recognized in society and by his father. Since the creature does not possess an identity on its own, it creates one by giving himself the name of Adam, as the biblical character of Adam and Eve. Rosa affirms that: “the monster [...] does not have a distinct personality until he comes upon four books.”¹⁰ (Rosa, 2011: 9). The reason why the creature uses this name is

⁸ Hardisson 251-252.

⁹ It is curious that, despite Victor never gives the creature a name, through the years, readers associate the name of its creator with it up to the point of naming the being *Frankenstein*, maybe as a response by the reader to the distress call of the unnamed creature.

¹⁰ We could mention that in the last section, we deal with the creation and modelling of the creations. In *The Picture of Dorian Gray* Dorian culminates his new personality with the ‘Yellow Book’, as in *Frankenstein*, where the creature builds an identity also through the reading of books such as Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, Plutarch's *Lives*, Milton's *Paradise Lost*. So both authors use one or more books as elements in their novels to build the identity of their creations.

because, as it happens in the myth, it is not born but directly created from its creator as a part of himself. In addition, one more reason why the creature chooses this name and not another one could be because it identifies with the biblical figure. Adam was banished by God and his creator, so as the creature by Victor Frankenstein. Mary Shelley shows from the very beginning how the creature feels, quoting from a fragment in *Paradise Lost* by John Milton and presenting a new interpretation of the story of Adam, but more tragic, leaving the creature nameless and isolated¹¹:

Did I request thee, Maker, from my clay
To mould me Man, did I solicit thee
From darkness to promote me? (Shelley, *Epigraph* 1818)

On the contrary, Dorian, also named as “Prince Charming” in the novel, does not want to be identified years later he appeared in public for the first time with Lord Henry, so he wants to lose his identity because he is conscious of his sins. He becomes a “monster” in the eyes of people despite his eternal youth and beauty:

Woman: “There goes the devil's bargain!” she hiccoughed, in a hoarse voice.
Dorian Gray: “Curse you!” he answered, “don't call me that.” [...]
Woman: “Prince Charming is what you like to be called, ain't it?” (150)

Dorian refuses the picture and for that reason he finally denies his own identity. He considers himself as a rebel who is paying the price for living his life following all his impulses and instincts, comparing himself with the “morning-star of evil” (150), also known as Satan or Lucifer. This is the name given to Venus when the planet rises before the sun, applied poetically by John Milton in *Paradise Lost*: “His count'nance, as the Morning Starr that guides” (Milton, 1674: Book V, line 708). Oscar Wilde, as Mary Shelley, refers to this poem to compare the creation in his novel with a biblical character, but with a difference: while the creature is compared to Adam, Dorian Gray is compared to Satan. In this connection, both authors focus on the inner part of their characters to make allusion to the epic poem. In other words, the creature's human side with a kind and benevolent mind resembles Adam. Dorian, on the contrary, is comparable to Satan with his dark inner part and the hideous projection of his soul.

¹¹ Rosenberger, Veronica B. “What Makes a Monster and What Makes a Man? Exploring the Relationship between the Creator and the Creation in Three Gothic Novels.” *The Cupola: Scholarship at Gettysburg College*, May 2013, <cupola.gettysburg.edu/student_scholarship/62/>. Accessed 6 January 2018: page 3.

5.2. The Role of Society: Context, Circumstances And Consequences

Victorian society is significant in the work of Oscar Wilde because it shares morals with the one represented in *Frankenstein*. Within Victorian context, 'manliness' characterized the class basis and 'manly' virtues were related to the control of one's environment, the opposite to women, whose 'domain' was associated with the domestic sphere¹². Apart from the manliness which is considered over the feminine virtues, the idea which prevails is that money determines happiness, which is also characteristic in both novels.

Finally, as a difference, we can distinguish the distinctive features of Hedonism in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* such as satisfaction of one's pleasures and temptations, praise of youth and beauty and social recognition, while in *Frankenstein*, the creature lives in misery isolated from the society who refuses it because of its gruesome appearance.

Within the issue of society, I can distinguish three topics which surround the atmosphere of the English society in the 19th century in both novels such as the concept of beauty and the ability to be praised for owing a beautiful face, together with misogyny, because women are out of the story playing a secondary role, despite the heterosexual nature. Narcissism and free will could be the reasons why women are characters devoted to their men and men are devoted to themselves during the Victorian period. The figure of the dandy stands out in this free will as the third topic.

5.2.1. Contamination, manipulation and coercion: the dark sides of beauty

As we know, the artist is in love with Dorian, and, at the same time, Dorian is in love with his own beauty and youth. We can talk about *narcissism*, a term which means to love yourself in a 'sick' way (it could be both, to love too much our physical appearance or our mental capacity and attributes). This is a kind of arrogant pride that comes from Greek mythology. This way of thinking is all the influence by Lord Henry and the French novel he gives Dorian. We can talk, once we reach this point, about society idleness: youth and beauty.

Lord Henry defends a way of living dedicated to pleasure, passions and temptations, together with Hedonism which promotes pleasure as the only aim. He considers Beauty as the "wonder of wonders", the one thing worthwhile in the world:

Beauty is a form of Genius,—is higher, indeed, than Genius, as it needs no explanation. [...] To me, Beauty is the wonder of wonders. [...] The true mystery of the world is the visible, not the

¹² Foldy, M. S. *The Trials of Oscar Wilde: Deviance, Morality, and Late-Victorian Society*. New Haven ; London: Yale University Press, 1997: Page 89

invisible. [...] When your youth goes, your beauty will go with it, and then you will suddenly discover that there are no triumphs left for you, or have to content yourself with those mean triumphs that the memory of your past will make more bitter than defeats. (21)

Lord Henry claims that the real mystery of the world resides in the visible things. He shows Dorian Gray the importance of having and preserving beauty. But, what remains once you lose your beauty and youth? Beauty is presented in the novel from two different points of view according to the different characters that appear in the novel, Lord Henry or Gladys:

Lord Henry: "I never tilt against Beauty," he said, with a wave of his hand.

Gladys: "That's your error, Harry, believe me. You value beauty far too much."

Lord Henry: "How can you said that? I admit that I think that it is better to be beautiful than to be good. But on the other hand no one is more ready than I am to acknowledge that it is better to be good than to be ugly." (154)

According to Lord Henry, beauty is not eternal and preserving it is important because once lost, life diminishes its meaning. Here he shows the common way of thinking proper in the Victorian society. What matters is not personality but physical appearance, as in the case of Dorian, who becomes a monster "with no principles" (11) but with an angelical face. The fact that he preserves his youth and beauty exempts him from living a life style full of sins and vices for years. Dorian is the one who knows the corruption of his soul but through other people's eyes he is considered the perfect man. However, Gladys makes an opposite affirmation about men and love: "We women [...] love with our ears, just as you men love with your eyes" (155). Gladys states that men are superficial, and they love by means of the physical appearance. So if a woman has a high level of beauty, she will succeed in love, but if not, she will not and will find problems to get a lover. On the other hand, she affirms that women go beyond that superficial way of conceiving love and care about the inner qualities of a man, they love with their ears, which means that they love depending on the way in which a man expresses the love he feels towards her. Lord Henry differs from the point of view of Gladys and he replies her by saying: "My dear Gladys! [...] How can you say that? Romance lives by repetition, and repetition converts an appetite into an art" (155). He claims that in life we can have an unique experience and that the secret of life is to repeat it as much times as possible. In other words, it is more important the love of life than the love of a woman. From my point of view, this character considers beauty as the machine that moves the world, and if you have youth and beauty you do not need anything else. By having both privileges, you can satisfy all your pleasures and desires.

As I have observed, in the book there are many references to flowers. In a certain way, I think that the author has been introducing the idea of youth and beauty from the very beginning, persuading the reader to understand the point of view that finally reaches Dorian better. He is not only influenced by Lord Henry but also by society and all what surrounds him.

The common hill-flowers wither, but they blossom again. The laburnum will be as yellow next June as it is now. In a month there will be purple stars on the clematis, and year after year the green night of its leaves will hold its purple stars. But we never get back our youth. The pulse of joy that beats in us at twenty becomes sluggish. Our limbs fail, our senses rot. We degenerate into hideous puppets, haunted by the memory of the passions of which we were too much afraid, and the exquisite temptations that we had not the courage to yield to. Youth! Youth! There is absolutely nothing in the world but youth! (22)

Flowers symbolize beauty and youth. Youth is related to beauty because as people grow, they become older, so that means that youth and beauty are lost forever. It is because of this fact that there are many comparisons of people with flowers. There are two terms that refer to Greek mythology which have called my attention; one of them is the concept of *Adonis* and the other one is the concept of *Narcissus*:

I really can't see any resemblance between you, with your rugged strong face and your coal-black hair, and this young Adonis, who looks as if he was made out of ivory and rose-leaves. Why, my dear Basil, he is a Narcissus, and you-- well, of course you have an intellectual expression and all that. (6)

In both myths the principal character is transformed into a flower (references to *Metamorphoses* by Ovid). A flower, during Summer, is beauty and, with the arrival of winter, the flower loses it, but the next year it recovers its splendour. However, the ephemeral nature of beauty does not diminishes its value, but adds to it. As Freud affirms:

Transience value is scarcity value in time [...] since the value of all this beauty and perfection is determined only by its significance for our emotional lives; it has no need to survive us and is therefore independent in duration. (Freud, 1916: 306)

In the case of people, they never rescue their youth from the past because it is not eternal. We can talk about the topic of *carpe diem*, to enjoy the moment and forget all the problems satisfying ourselves. Time passes and we cannot even be aware of it. Lord Henry considers that it is essential to make the most of our lives:

Live! Live the wonderful life that is in you! Let nothing be lost upon you. Be always searching for new sensations. Be afraid of nothing... A new Hedonism - that is what our century wants. You might be its visible symbol. With your personality there is nothing you could not do. The world belongs to you for a season. (21)

Beauty in *Frankenstein* is exposed in a similar way: it determines one's personality and happiness. There are two examples which support this assertion. On the one hand, the creature, rejected by its creator and society because of its hideous physical aspect would be a clear one, and this character is shown as a misunderstood being because people tend to be afraid of the unknown, that which transgresses the limits of the accepted or the familiar. The reader is able to know the feelings of the creature up to the point of putting oneself in its place and understand it as a new being forced to have control over its feelings, thoughts and body. It feels abandoned and lost, as it reveals:

A strange multiplicity of sensations seized me, and I saw, felt, heard, and smelt at the same time; and it was, indeed, a long time since I learned to distinguish between the operations of my various senses. [...] It was dark when I awoke; I felt cold also, and half frightened, as it were, indistinctly, finding myself so desolate. (105)

The wandering being finds a shelter near a small house inhabited by a humble family where it settles down to learn and observe everything it can from them. It could not be seen because of the fear of being once more rejected by someone else:

I longed to join them, but dared not. I remembered too well the treatment I had suffered from the barbarous villagers, [so] I would remain quietly in my hovel, watching and endeavouring to discover the motives which influenced their actions. (113)

In this family, the creature finds the person, an old man, who is not terrified because of its appearance, although this could be a consequence of his blindness. It could strike up a short conversation until the cottagers appear and it runs away:

[The] cottage door was opened, and Felix, Safie, and Agatha entered. [...] Felix darted forward, and [...] tore me from his father, to whose knees I clung, in a transport of fury, he dashed me to the ground and struck me violently with a stick. [My] heart sank within me as with bitter sickness, and [...] I quitted the cottage, and in the general tumult escaped unperceived to my hovel. (137)

It is the only moment of its life in which it feels accepted, but, how would react the old man if he were not blind? Maybe in the same way as the rest of people. Blindness in the novel represents moral blindness and the loss of sensitivity in society. This moral blindness also symbolizes the loss of empathy for others, and personal relationships are uncertain and

volatile, giving importance to physical beauty¹³, and, as a consequence, the creature is isolated from society because of its hideous aspect, as it says: “I am an outcast in the world forever.” (136)

On the other hand, talking about this poor family, according to society, they would be miserable because they lack money and live away from the society which “deprived them of their fortune and condemned them to a perpetual exile from their native country” (128). However this family is ‘rich in love’ because they look after themselves and do not need to live a life full of appearances. The creature, on the contrary, needs to be accepted in society to feel pleased and create an own identity.

In terms of beauty, although Dorian is a young man who has “a wonderfully beautiful face” (21), people are not able to see the real aspect of his corrupted soul. His beauty is worshipped while the creature, who only looks for a little of love and understanding, and whose appearance frightens every one, is rejected and even pursued without articulating a word. But the idolatry of beauty is not only a consequence of the morals in society because the role of women is also highlighted as a repressed figure with no rights and benefits.

5.2.2. Misogyny: the feminine figure

Misogyny is present mainly in the sense that the conception is confined to men. It is ironic that although women are attributed the act of birth, in *Frankenstein*, there is no woman to create the new life. Indeed, there is only one creator, Victor Frankenstein, who is able to give birth to a new being in an untraditional way¹⁴ because the creature is not born. Anne K. Mellor states:

By stealing the female’s control over reproduction, Frankenstein has eliminated the female’s primary biological function and source of cultural power. Indeed, [...] Frankenstein has eliminated the necessity to have females at all.¹⁵ (355)

Concurrently, in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* we find that the act of creation is also attributed to men even though in this case it is not related to a new life, but a picture. The act of shaping and influence in this work is carried out also by a man, Lord Henry, focused on

¹³ Urteaga, 2015: 164. < <http://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=11043112014>> Accessed 16 March 2018.

¹⁴ Making reference to the film *Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein* (1994) directed by Kenneth Branagh regarding the act of creation, I should point out the corruption of sexual reproduction. The moment in which Victor is giving birth to his creature is showed as a sexual act between Frankenstein and his tank. Victor climbs up on top of that tank, in a posture that might be interpreted as sexually symbolic. The tank would symbolize the female who is forming a new life inside her which even has an amniotic sac. The conditions are similar to a natural pregnancy. The “birth” follows with the tank tipping over and spilling its contents out onto the floor of the laboratory.

¹⁵ Shelley, 2012: “Possessing Nature: The Female in Frankenstein”

another man, Dorian Gray. I would like to highlight that in both novels the act of creation or shaping, confined to men, has an end-product portrayed by another male. Although the picture cannot be considered a male, the sitter and model of this creation is a man. The act of creation represented by Oscar Wilde and Mary Shelley involves the intervention of men.

Proceeding with the role of women, Victor and Dorian lose the woman they apparently love. In *Frankenstein*, we find the murder of three different female characters: Justine, Elizabeth and the female creature. On the one hand, Justine is unjustly accused as the murderer of William, confessing falsely out of fear of going to hell. She is finally executed despite being considered “the most grateful little creature in the world” (67). Without taking into account the years she has been living with the Frankenstein family, and even when she declares she is innocent, she is blamed with a photograph which William had as the only proof:

“God knows [...] how entirely I am innocent. But I do not pretend that my protestations should acquit me; I rest my innocence on a plain and simple explanation of the facts which have been adduced against me” (84)

Elizabeth, on the other hand, is murdered by the creature as consequence of a disobedient Victor because he has to create a significant other who would share with the creature its physical monstrosity and its lonesomeness. This rejection to accomplish the creature’s desire comes from the fear of creating a more evil being, as he states: “she might become ten thousand times more malignant than her mate and delight, for its own sake, in murder and wretchedness.” (172). The creature, desperate, complains about it: “You have destroyed the work which you began; what is it that you intend? [...] do you dare destroy my hopes?” (172) and then it adds: “I shall be with you on your wedding-night” (173). It achieves his threat against Elizabeth to make Victor feel its own suffering and despondency. The murder of Elizabeth and the female creature are connected, somehow analogous with Victor and his creature, because the life of one depends on the life of the other and if one dies, the other too.

In the work by Mary Shelley, the result of these deaths is provoked by the creation, as in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* in which Dorian’s beloved, Sibyl Vane, kills herself after being completely rejected by Dorian. With her suicide, Dorian shows a new face that allows to see the seeds of the influence by Lord Henry, but this already modelled young man, as the creature in *Frankenstein*, is the originator of the death of this female character. While Dorian

loves Sybil blindly, Lord Henry turns this feeling into snub and disinterest, making Dorian reprimand her: "You have killed my love. You used to stir my imagination. Now you don't even stir my curiosity" (71). He shows no mercy, but Dorian does not know that every word he discloses that night will determine her fate, whose dagger is his behaviour towards her. Although he does not commit the crime, he considers himself the murderer: "So I have murdered Sibyl Vane, [...] murdered her as surely as if I had cut her little throat with a knife" (80)

As for Lord Henry, I have to deal with the conception that he has about his marriage. He says: "I can't help detesting my relations. I suppose it comes from the fact that none of us can stand other people having the same faults as ourselves" (11). He defends why he detests his marriage claiming that he cannot stand the faults that he has in another person who gets along with him. This point of view is remembered along the story when he says: "Never marry at all, Dorian. Men marry because they are tired; women, because they are curious: both are disappointed." (40). We could guess by his words that he is not happy at all with his marriage, but he continues with his wife, in spite of the fact that their relation is similar to that of house mates. Basil answers him and concludes that Lord Henry praises a philosophy of life in which he gives advices about the Hellenic ideal and the importance of being moved by our feelings, out of a life of marriage tied to another person, but he does not follow it, and says to Harry: "Your cynicism is simply a pose." (7). This is the pattern that he adopts with Dorian, making a mess in his mind, filling him with all types of advices but, in fact, he does not follow his own way of living. To sum up, Lord Henry convinces Dorian to live the life that he always wanted to live. These warns about marriage come after the confession of love by Dorian to Sybil Vane. Sybil represents Rosalind, Imogen, Juliet each night. As Dorian says "She is all the great heroines of the world in one. She is more than an individual" (45). However there is a conversation between Harry and Dorian in the book that makes us wonder whether Dorian is in love with Sybil or with the heroines of literature:

Dorian: "Tonight she is Imogen," he answered, "and tomorrow night she will be Juliet."

Lord Henry: "When is she Sibyl Vane?"

Dorian: "Never."

Lord Henry: "I congratulate you." (45)

In this perspective, Art is more important to him than love because once Sibyl cannot act, he loses his interest in her. Art, for Lord Henry, is "simply a method of procuring extraordinary sensations" (169). Hence, when Sibyl Vane is not acting, she is nothing more

than another woman, declaring that "a man can be happy with any woman, as long as he does not love her" (143).

The death of the female characters in both novels marks a key point in the shaping of the personalities of the creations, Dorian and the creature, appearing the dark inner side of them. In this case, the female figure would help to moderate the decadence of the mindset. Moreover, the woman is presented in *Frankenstein* as an oppressed figure with no value, blamed of a crime, and who cedes the power of conception to men. In *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, the man leverages this oppression to empower his own identity in society, giving rise to a narcissist and free will man.

5.2.3. Dandyism

Victorian society emphasises the free soul and moral rebellion as opposed to the classical Victorian Puritanism. The figure of the dandy is emphasised in Lord Henry and Dorian. Although the Dandy can be seen from different points of view, all of them share the manipulation of identity to create a public image and make an innovation inside the social conventions:

La manipulación calculada de la propia presencia como provocación, aunque tras esa actitud provocativa se oculte una secreta aceptación de las convenciones sociales. [...] La dependencia se traduce en una pérdida de la autonomía por parte del dandi en la creación de su imagen pública. (Martínez Victorio, 1989: 109).

The subject is understood as a work of art and Lord Henry considers Art as a way of living because he praises that a person should be moved by his own feelings and not by the canons and what is considered to be correct in society. The constant presence of Lord Henry along the story is essential to carry out his influence. This novel reflects the double life and double identity of the Victorian period in which fake personality prevailed¹⁶, represented by Dorian, over the true one, which is the picture and the reflection of his sins.

To be a Dandy is to appreciate the depths of surfaces. It requires a certain amount of detachment to experience the world Aesthetically. Because of this, the Dandy always resides somewhere between seeming and being. The Dandy knows that, to quote Oscar Wilde, 'a mask says much more than a face'. (Ginés, 2004: 124)

The figure of the dandy is exposed in *Frankenstein*, but in a different way. The Dandy involves the fragmentation, copy or the remodelling of other individuals to shape one's

¹⁶ Gubern Román. *Máscaras De La Ficción*. Anagrama, 2002: page 23.

personality, likewise Victor uses parts from different corpses to shape one being. While the dandy makes reference to the personality, the creation of one individual in *Frankenstein* is achieved by means of physical parts of corpses. Furthermore, the role of the *other* is included in this figure, becoming Victor into an spectator of his own monstrosity and the creation its moral representation. Chris Baldick asserts the reason why the creature is hideous:

The parts, in a living being, can only be as beautiful as the animating principle which organizes them, and if this 'spark of life' proceeds, as it does in Victor's reaction, from tormented isolation and guilty secrecy, the resulting assembly will only animate and body forth that condition and display its moral ugliness¹⁷ (175)

The abnegation which Victor feels is a direct denial of the self because the creature represents his *alter ego*. The idea of creating a new *other* as an spectacle of our life and losing our identity, as well as the rejection of the inner part of the self is portrayed by Mary. As a result, in both novels we can see the splitting of the *self* presented in an external figure, as Juan Herrero Cecilia mentions: “El doble subjetivo puede manifestare también adoptando una figura «externa» (opuesta o complementaria) como ocurre, por ejemplo, *El retrato de Dorian Gray* de Wilde.”¹⁸

While the creature is afraid of the society which repudiates it, Victor fears that his inner monster can be disclosed to the world. Similarly, Dorian Gray becomes a mere spectator of the projection of his grotesque personality, and whose picture hides from the society. Lord Henry claims the terror of society as the basis of morals:

The terror of society, which is the basis of morals, the terror of God, which is the secret of religion--these are the two things that govern us. (18)

However, this terror could imply the terror of being rejected by the society but also the terror of showing the real identity. In other words, the fear of being exposed and showing the inner monstrosity to the world. This notion is analysed in the next section “Fear, Degeneration And Final Death: A Mirrored Situation.”

¹⁷ Shelley, 2012: “Assembling Frankenstein”

¹⁸ This quotation belongs to the chapter “Figuras y significaciones del mito del doble en la literatura: teorías explicativas” in *El Mito Del Doble En La Literatura Contemporánea De Lengua Francesa: Figuras y Significados*. Edited by Juan Herrero Cecilia, *Çédille, Revista De Estudios Franceses*, Monografías 2 (2011): 27, <<https://cedille.webs.ull.es/index-M2.htm>>. Accessed 5 April 2018

6. FEAR, DEGENERATION AND FINAL DEATH: A MİRRORED SITUATION

Once we have dealt with the rejection between the creator and the creation and how the society can be decisive in the shaping of an identity, we can talk about the mirrored situation carried out in *Frankenstein* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Both Dorian and Frankenstein are afraid of exposing their creations to the world and this constant worry leads them to degeneration obsessing them up to the point of becoming victims of their own creations.

The Faustian influence is quite important in both novels. This term comes from the Faust legend in *Faust: A Tragedy* by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. Faust was a tired and frustrated doctor who made a devil's bargain to get knowledge, pleasure and power. The pact was made with Mephistopheles, a melancholic devil represented as an aristocratic man with the typical clothes of nobility, a cold and rational head and a high level of logic, used to sway other people's mind. The condition that the devil imposed Faust was to go to hell after twenty four years. Likewise, Dorian sells his soul and he has been corrupted by the influence of Lord Henry, by his beauty and youth, but also by Art, and in particular he feels very attracted by his picture at the point of praying for eternal youth when he sees the work of art of Basil:

I am jealous of the portrait you have painted of me. Why should it keep what I must lose? Every moment that passes takes something from me, and gives something to it. Oh, if it was only the other way! If the picture could change, and I could be always what I am now! (25)

But is he conscious about the consequences that it could result in? In a certain way, Lord Henry is a kind of 'devil' who tries to make Dorian live the life he always wanted to have. He is as Mephistopheles in the myth of Faust. In this sense, the story of Dorian Gray is very similar to this legend. Dorian is influenced by the thoughts of Harry and his philosophy, but it differs from the story of Faust because he is looking for knowledge and Dorian tries to achieve beauty and youth forever. Both stories conclude with the death of the main character alone.

On the other hand, in the novel by Shelley the Faustian influence is less direct, although both, Faust and Victor, share a profession which belongs to the field of science. That is to say, Victor Frankenstein does not sell his soul, but he devotes himself in body and soul to carry out his major experiment. As he says: "I seemed to have lost all soul or sensation but for this one pursuit." (55). Furthermore, his dedication is also related to the myth of Faust

because, by achieving his major experiment, he tries to get an absolute knowledge about the secret or 'spark' of life, the corruption of the body and death. After achieving his purpose, he is conscious of the remorse he feels with his creation, although it would be later when he would suffer its consequences such as a series of deaths in his family, including his beloved Elizabeth: "Why did I not then expire! [...] She was there, lifeless and inanimate, thrown across the bed, her head hanging down and her pale and distorted features half covered by her hair." (199).

In addition, while the creature is exposed as a solely creature, abandoned and misunderstood, and Victor as the evil father and creator, these roles take a turn in which the creature becomes the master and Victor its slave. As the creature exclaims:

Slave, I before reasoned with you, but you have proved yourself unworthy of my condescension. Remember that I have power; you believe yourself miserable, but I can make you so wretched that the light of day will be hateful to you. You are my creator, but I am your master; -- obey! (172)

Here, although the creature accepts Victor as its creator, it reasserts its authority over him as the real master fiercely because the doctor does not recognize it as his creation or son.

The picture is the main element in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. The symbolic meaning of the picture differs from several points of view. I consider that the picture means a different thing to every character in the book. For example, for Basil, it is more than a portrait. In this picture he has captured the most inner part of himself, as he says: "I have put into it some expression of all this curious artistic idolatry" (12). For Dorian, the picture is more than a mere work of art. It is the mirror of his soul through which he can be able to see the corruption and putrefaction of it. The picture is nourished by the hate and pain that Dorian causes to others and he would be consumed by this kind of miracle with the passage of time. Furthermore, he knows that his soul is getting worse, finding a kind of pleasure in its changes. "Eternal youth, infinite passion, pleasures subtle and secret, wild joys and wilder sins,—he was to have all these things" (85). He keeps the picture as a "diary" (122) of his life. However, there is a moment in which Dorian says:

I wish I could love. [...] But I seem to have lost the passion, and forgotten the desire. I am too much concentrated on myself. My own personality has become a burden to me. I want to escape, to go away, to forget. (161-162)

He is finally defeated by the hideous image of his soul. But this statement could be ambiguous. He wants to forget because he has no soul and he wants to recover it, because he

has lived enough passions or because he is finally aware of his sins and the consequences of selling his soul. Lord Henry asks Dorian something interesting: "What does it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose, [...] his own soul?" (170). Dorian has the whole world in his hands, but it is his soul what has destroyed him, as he confesses: "It has destroyed me" (124). As a consequence, Dorian realises that the words by Lord Henry ("to cure the soul by means of the senses, and the senses by means of the soul." (20) in the beginning of the novel do not represent the real secret of life. The young man feeds his soul by means of the senses, having a risqué life, and his soul only increases its hideous and frightening appearance. "Why should he watch the hideous corruption of his soul? He kept his youth,—that was enough." (98). Dorian has to pay price for his wish, he has to see how he becomes into a monster: "It had been like conscience to him. [...] He would destroy it". (126).

Continuing with the self-destruction of the creators, they fall victims to their creations, so this could be considered as a suicide. Basil, as a creator of the inner monster in the young man, is stabbed by a depraved Dorian absorbed by the fault of his corrupted soul. He indirectly blames the painter of his misfortune and kills the creator of the picture because he cannot destroy it:

Dorian Gray glanced at the picture, and suddenly an uncontrollable feeling of hatred for Basil Hallward came over him, as though it had been suggested to him by the image on the canvas, whispered into his ear by those gripping lip. (126).

In the case of Victor, his creation makes him sink in a decadence followed by a constant search of the creature to destroy it, although it would finally destroy him. The desire of destroying their creations is similar in both novels. The creature and the picture can be seen as elements which show their *alter ego* and, therefore, a reflection of their crimes. Dorian and the picture, as Victor and the creature are considered as one, therefore according to Leonor Ruiz-Ayúcar, the death of an *alter ego* involves one's death, as it happens with Basil, it is considered as a suicide:

Generalmente, la separación de un *álter ego* de la personalidad principal implica la muerte de ambos. Cuando se rompe este lazo, esta conexión, también es el momento en el que la verdadera naturaleza de la relación se revela y la personalidad principal trata de retomar las riendas del cuerpo que ambas ansían. (146).

Victor Frankenstein is finally defeated by his own creation because he devotes his last years to accomplish his revenge in a "journey where your sufferings will satisfy [his] everlasting hatred" (209):

Scoffing devil! Again I vow vengeance; I do devote thee, miserable fiend, to torture and death.
Never will I give up my search, until he or I perish (208).

Although Victor finally perishes without finding and killing his creation, he entrusts his wish to his companion Walton: “swear to me, Walton, that he shall not escape; that you seek him, and satisfy my vengeance in his death” (212). However, it is not him but the creature himself who does it and whose existence has no sense now that its father and its *alter ego* is dead. Both commit suicide trying to destroy the *other*:

He sprung from the cabin window, as he said this, upon the ice-craft which lay close to the vessel.
He was soon borne away by the waves, and lost in darkness and distance (225).

Dorian experiences a similar death because the moment in which he stabs the picture automatically he suffers the crime. His *alter ego* is shown in the canvas and he only tries to get rid of his monstrous *other*. However, he is not aware of the fact that, if the picture ages instead of him, then to damage it could imply to hurt himself. He is not able to bear the torture:

As [the knife] had killed the painter, so it would kill the painter's work, and all that that meant. It would kill the past, and when that was dead he would be free. It would kill his monstrous soul-life, and without its hideous warnings, he would be at peace. He seized the thing, and stabbed the picture with it (177).

Fear is another element in the novels. Victor and Dorian do not fear anything in the sense that, while Victor is not afraid of his experiment and the final result because his absorbing work blinds him, Dorian tempts the limits of his corrupted soul, but, at the same time, he is afraid of losing his youth: “Youth is the only thing worth having. When I find that I am growing old, I shall kill myself.” (24). In this novel, fear leads to the idea of death, as Otto Rank claims in his *Don Juan et le Double*:

C'est dans le roman d'Oscar Wilde, *Dorian Gray*, qu'apparaît le mieux le parallélisme entre la crainte et la haine du Double, et l'amour narcissique de sa propre image. «Sa propre beauté se manifeste à lui quand il voit pour la première fois la splendeur de son portrait». En même temps, la peur le saisit de vieillir et de devenir autre, crainte qui provoque immédiatement l'idée de la mort.
(Rank, 1973: 57)¹⁹²⁰

¹⁹ *Don Juan et le Double* (Payot, 1973) is found in the webpage «Les classiques des sciences sociales», translated by S. Lautman, in an electronic version in pdf by Pierre Tremblay: <http://classiques.uqac.ca/classiques/rank_otto/don_juan/don_juan.html. > This is the version quoted.

²⁰ Translation in English: It is in Oscar Wilde's novel, *Dorian Gray*, that the parallelism between the fear and hatred of the Double, and the narcissistic love of his own image, best appears. "His own beauty is manifested to

However, fear forces people to reflect on the results of their acts, and, although before their creations they are not worried, this fear is a consequence of their blindness. Nevertheless, this element is not only important in these novels, but also in *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* written by Robert Louis Stevenson and published in 1886, another novel in which the struggle of the *other* as a reflection of the hideous inner *one* is essential. The plot investigates the creation of a monster based on the doctor himself and whose escape will not be possible. As Faust, Dorian, and Victor, Dr. Jekyll does not have control over the *other* nor over the consequences.²¹ Rosenberg develops this idea:

These writers [Mary Shelley, Robert Louis Stevenson and Oscar Wilde] recognized true fear: of science, of moral transgression, of parasitism, of duality, and of the crisis of determining one's identity. They saw the horror buried in the human condition and sought to deliver a lesson, a lesson that warns creators to support their creations or risk releasing a monster. If a creator cannot maintain the responsibilities associated with the creation process, his creature will fail. If the creation fails, ultimately, so does the creator. (Rosenberg, 2013: 2)

In both novels, we can see the similar feeling of terror which provokes the self-destruction of the creators and their creations. These creators do not blame themselves but accuse their creations of committing all kinds of crimes and sins. In other words, the creators do not maintain the responsibility connected with their creations. It is clear that in *Frankenstein* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* there is a creation as a result, monstrous in the inside or in the outside, but who are to be considered the real monsters in these novels, the creations or the creators? Peter Brook states that: "A monster is that outcome or product of curiosity or epistemophilia pushed to an extreme that results [...] in confusion, blindness, and exile." (387)²² Victor Frankenstein and Dorian Gray challenge the limits of their moral and scientific curiosity, who finally isolate themselves because of the unbearable feeling of guilt about their creations: the creature and the picture. Victor makes the creature responsible for the deaths it commits. Dorian Gray considers that his unhappiness comes from the picture. Both novels share that the experimentation of a life can lead to the death of the self.

him when he sees for the first time the splendour of his portrait." At the same time, fear seizes him to grow old and become other, fear that immediately causes the idea of death.

²¹ Villacañas, Beatriz. "De Doctores y Monstruos: La Ciencia Como Transgresión en Dr. Faustus, Frankenstein y Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde." *Asclepio, Revista de Historia de la Medicina y de la Ciencia*, 53 (2001): pp. 197-211.

²² Shelley, 2012: "What Is a Monster? (According to Frankenstein)"

7. CONCLUSION

As a conclusion, I could say that in both novels every act of creation, although it is carried out as a praise to life, is a challenge to death because each creator is finally defeated by his own creation. There is a dependent relationship between the creators and their creations in both novels because the existence of the former depends on the latter, and vice versa, together with the rejection and the search of acceptance by the other. The creature directly implores his creator to be recognized, opposite to Dorian, who does not need to ask for it. Moreover, I could point out that while the creature learns to use its feelings, the young man, in a certain way, learns to avoid them, as it happens when Sibyl Vane commits suicide.

Concerning the title of the work by Mary Shelley, I want to add that *Frankenstein or The Modern Prometheus* makes reference to the Greek myth Prometheus, who was considered the rescuer of humanity and possessor of the secret of life. Victor, goes beyond the limits and is able to create a new life, although the result is not the one expected. In addition, it could be said that Victor Frankenstein gives his soul, not to the devil but to his creature because, since the moment in which the creature is alive, he lives his life around it.

In relation to the role of society, it exerts a strong influence over the characters. Currently this influence is still present nowadays because people tend to search for the recognition of others. In this case I can include social networks which create a virtual image, not real at all, of us and represented basically by the physical appearance. Here comes into play the 'dark sides of beauty'.

Victor Frankenstein abandons the creature once it is created. He evades the problem and thinks that by avoiding his creation it would be as if it had never existed. However, it comes back and the consequences are even worse. We can also find this case in the work by Oscar Wilde. Dorian hides the picture as a way of avoiding his problem in order to hide how his soul is corrupted by his sins. None of them would have had any problem if they had not gone beyond nature. As Dorian Gray says: "Don't talk about horrid subjects. If one doesn't talk about a thing, it has never happened. It is simply expression, as Harry says, that gives reality to things" (87).

Dorian was eager to be young and beautiful forever; Frankenstein, to get the secret of life, and both were searching for immortality. Nevertheless, they hide their problems because of its ugliness. As Dorian says: "Ugliness that had once been hateful to him because it made

things real, became dear to him now for that very reason. Ugliness was the one reality" (147). Reality can be cruel because we cannot revive our loved ones or preserve our youth until the end of our days, but to challenge the laws of nature can be even more dreadful. For this reason, we should be careful what we wish for because we all have an inner monster and to discover its existence could destroy us.

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