The Concepts of Beauty and Love in Oscar Wilde's The Picture of Dorian Gray and Mary Shelley's Frankenstein

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Mentorica: izv. prof. dr. sc. Biljana Oklopčić

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Abstract

This paper explores Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, particularly the themes of beauty, love, lost innocence, and prejudice that both novels have in common. After a short insight into the theoretical background of the paper, the paper revolves around the question to what extent beauty and love impact various characters in the novels. In the second chapter, the concepts of beauty in Oscar Wilde's work are discussed by focusing on Dorian Gray's physical attractiveness and his mortality, the painting of the main character and the aesthetic philosophy that is linked to it, and the ideas of hedonism that are interspersed throughout the whole novel. Additionally, the relationship between Dorian Gray and Sybil Vane is put under a magnifying glass. The third chapter deals with the concepts of love that can be found in Dorian's life and his relationship with other characters. The paper further analyzes the ugly and the sublime in Frankenstein's creature as well as beauty standards in Shelley's female characters. The fifth chapter focuses on the creature's mental mindset and his relationship with Victor Frankenstein, its creator. The aim of this paper is thus to define how much beauty and love, or their lack, influence Wilde's and Shelley's characters' lives and their surroundings.

Key words: *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, *Frankenstein*, beauty, love, Dorian Gray, the creature

Contents

Introduction

Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is a novel attempting to answer the question what beauty is and what prejudices it can be connected to. It is also a reflection on the world in which people's judgement is solely based on appearance. As the main character is admired for his striking beauty, he gets away with many wrongdoings his surrounding just blindly decides to ignore. Thus, the stereotype of beauty being the embodiment of goodness lingers throughout Dorian's life. His portrait tackles other standard ideas of beauty, mainly those of time and mortality. To understand Wilde's characters' mindsets, we should also take into consideration his aesthetic philosophy that posits that the purpose of art is simply being beautiful. The purpose of Aestheticism in the narrative is not only reaching the premises of art but life itself, promoting a lifestyle that Dorian is influenced into. The paper will also discuss hedonism with its connection to the nature of aesthetics as a major aspect of the concept of beauty in the novel. Lastly, the inner turmoil Dorian Gray goes through and his love for himself, which persistently stays shallow and narcisstic, will be analyzed as well as his relationships with Lord Henry Wotton, Basil Hallward, and his lover Sybil Vane.

A quite different approach to the depiction of beauty can be found in Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*. The blissful life of Victor Frankenstein is ruined by his own mind and his avoidance to take responsibility for the birth of a being he himself created in an attempt to play God. The creature being everything but not beautiful in society's eyes shows the prejudices people are capable of. The existence of the creature depicts the struggle of not finding a desirable category to fit in, which is why the paper in particular questions the categories of the ugly and the sublime. Equally important, Shelley's portrayal of beauty standards in *Frankenstein*'s women characters shows how different life was for women back in the Victorian era in regards to what was expected from them and how they were seen in general. To illustrate the concepts of love in the narrative, the thesis will focus on the acceptance the creature so longingly seeks and never gets and his character development as a consequence of it. Finally, the relationship between the creature and its creator Victor Frankenstein is analyzed as well as the creature's only encounter of brief acceptance with the blind man De Lacey.

The analyzed novels offer different portrayals of beauty and love: Dorian Gray is adored by many for his astonishing looks; the creature is ostracized and rejected by human

society for its ugliness. The relationships the characters have formed are differently woven as well. With the paper's focus on the prejudices people face when encountered with beauty or its lack, it will establish the extent of power such prejudices can have on an individual.

1. Gothic-Philosophical Fiction

Gothic-philosophical fiction is a combination of two separate genres – Gothic and philosophical. Gothic fiction is a genre in which a "representation of extreme circumstances of terror, oppression and persecution, darkness and obscurity of setting, and innocence betrayed" (Lloyd-Smith 3) can be seen. The genre originates from the novel *The Castle of Otranto*, first published in 1764, by English writer Horace Walpole. The novel combines fear and medieval life in its plot, telling the story of Lord Manfred and his obsession to keep his family line ongoing. Another important contributor to Gothic literature is Ann Radcliffe, with her novels *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, written in 1794, and *The Italian,* written in 1797. Other contributing authors include Clara Reeve, William Thomas Beckford, and Matthew Lewis. Many famous authors like Mary Shelley, Oscar Wilde, Edgar Allan Poe, Charles Dickens, and Bram Stoker wrote classics using Gothic elements. Those particular elements are mystery and fright, some form of monster, eerie surroundings, protagonists that are suffering, which ultimately creates anti-heroes, and death. Gothic novels are also characterized by the experience of the Sublime, which is defined in the following way:

> whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain and danger; that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the sublime; that is, it is the productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling. (Burke 20)

Philosophical fiction, on the other hand, describes works that attempt to answer the questions of life and its end, the questions about the role of society, morals and ethics, reason and knowledge. Philosophical fiction is also called *novel of ideas*. Early works that can be considered philosophical fiction are St. Augustine's *De Magistro* written in the fourth century, and Abelard's *Dialogue of a Philosopher with a Jew and a Christian* from the twelfth century. Other famous authors that wrote in that field are Voltaire, Dostoyevsky, Nietzsche, and Kafka.

Many seventeenth and eighteenth century works contributed to the development of the Gothic-philosophical genre. William Shakespeare's plays *Hamlet* (between 1599 and 1601) and *Macbeth* (1606) feature supernatural elements as well as Matthew Gregory Lewis's *The Monk* (1796) and Charles Robert Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820). Other famous

Romantic poets that played a significant role in the Gothic-philosophical tradition in literature are Samuel Taylor Coleridge with "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" and "Christabel," and John Keats's "La Belle Dame sans Merci" and "Isabella, or the Pot of Basil." The Romantic writer Percy Bysshe Shelley wrote *Zastrozzi* (1810) and the famous poet Lord Byron became an inspiration in his lovers Lady Caroline Lamb's novel *Glenarvon*. Interestingly, Lord Byron himself used to host competitions that involved ghost story telling and in which Percy Bysshe Shelley, Mary Shelley, and John William Polidori were part of. Those gatherings produced the classics we know today: Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), which portrays moral issues caused by a creation made by man, and Polidori's "The Vampyre" (1819), which initiated a separate genre – vampire fiction that is nowadays still popular. The search for identity and the struggle of social alienation are common themes in Gothic-philosophical novels, in which the primary focus lies on characters' inner qualities and their social surrounding that, in turn, affect their psyche.

The effulgence of Gothic-philosophical novels peaks during the Victorian era when writings such as George W. M. Reynolds's trilogy *Faust* (1846), *Wagner der Wehr-wolf* (1857) and *The Necromancer* (1857) become popular, alongside *Varney the Vampire* (1847), which was written anonymously. American writer Edgar Allan Poe, who is best known for his short stories and poetry, innovated the Gothic- philosophical genre to a new level, as he focused more on the psychological profile of his characters. "The Fall of the House of Usher" (1839) addresses the themes of death, madness and mystery, and the characters inner turmoil. Not to forget, Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) utilizes Gothic elements by featuring apparitions and horror, along with the struggles a woman faced against patriarchy. The genre also influenced Charles Dickens whose works *Oliver Twist* (1837-8), *Bleak House* (1854), and *Great Expectations* (1860-61) feature classic Gothic-philosophical elements. Dickens was the first to introduce urban fog in his novels, which later became a common attribute to Gothic-philosophical stories.

Other elements that are characteristic of Gothic-philosophical fiction are the senses of terror and wonder, which produce feelings of suspension and mystery. Besides that, medievalism is a common feature where morbid scenes of decay and death put the characters, as well as the reader, in the states of disbelief and shock. The characters in Gothic-philosophical literature are constructed with psychological overlays that always denote a connection between the specific character and their surroundings.

2. The Concepts of Beauty in Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

2.1. Dorian Gray's Physical Beauty and Mortality

The emphasis on beauty, especially physical one, is continuously present throughout the whole novel: Dorian Gray's appearance is adored by many characters whom he meets. From the very beginning, Dorian Gray's beauty is a topic that is talked about between Basil Hallward and Lord Henry Wotton.

> Lord Henry looked at him. Yes, he was certainly wonderfully handsome, with his finely-curved scarlet lips, his frank blue eyes, his crisp gold hair. There was something in his face that made one trust him at once. All the candor of youth was there, as well as all youth's passionate purity. One felt that he had kept himself unspotted from the world. No wonder Basil Hallward worshipped him. He was made to be worshipped. (Wilde 2006, 17)

It is interesting to notice that right after his first impression of Dorian Lord Henry is inclined to add positive traits to his character, even though he had just met him: "You are too charming to go in for philanthropy, Mr. Gray,—far too charming" (Wilde 2006, 17). Lord Henry's behavior proves the assumption that people in general attribute positive characteristics to better looking people and thus they have more advantages in life. Another example of such an assumption can be found in Lord Henry's observation after he sees Dorian smelling flowers he found in the garden: "'Yes,' continued Lord Henry, 'that is one of the great secrets of life,— to cure the soul by means of the senses, and the senses by means of the soul. You are a wonderful creature" (Wilde 2006, 21). Dorian Gray's beauty is mentioned and praised by Lord Henry on quite a few occasions in the short time they have met, him being worried of his complexion as well: "You really must not let yourself become sun burnt. It would be very unbecoming to you" (Wilde 2006, 21). He even goes as far as to compare Dorian's handsomeness with being genial: "You have a wonderfully beautiful face, Mr. Gray. Don't frown. You have. And Beauty is a form of Genius" (Wilde 2006, 22). Furthermore, he considers it even higher than a form of genius as it "cannot be questioned" (Wilde 2006, 22). Besides Lord Henry, the painter Basil, his old friend, sees Dorian Gray's beauty as something that is even worth worshipping:

> "Every day. I couldn't be happy if I didn't see him every day. Of course sometimes it is only for a few minutes. But a few minutes with somebody one worships mean a great deal."
> "But you don't really worship him?"
> "I do."
> "How extraordinary! I thought you would never care for anything but your painting,—your art, I should say. Art sounds better, doesn't it?"
> "He is all my art to me now." (Wilde 1890, 13)

Basil's view of Gray shows that he is not just a pretty boy for him but a piece of art itself, caught in the objectifying process to an extent where Basil does not see him as a person anymore, but a mere thing. Thus, the "beautiful features of Dorian Gray's face, his positive character, and his aura make after all the creation of an extraordinary painting possible" (Gustaffson 18).

Closely connected to the theme of beauty is the mortality of one's life, linking it to Dorian's youth, the importance of it, and the fact that it will, with years, fade:

> Yes, Mr. Gray, the gods have been good to you. But what the gods give they quickly take away. You have only a few years in which really to live. When your youth goes, your beauty will go with it, and then you will suddenly discover that there are no triumphs left for you . . . Time is jealous of you, and wars against your lilies and your roses. You will become sallow, and hollow-cheeked, and dull-eyed. You will suffer horribly. (Wilde 1890, 29)

This passage introduces the image of time ticking away as well as the notion of fear that Lord Henry instills in Dorian's life, thus making him paranoid of losing his youth eventually. The idea of facing death while still being in one's prime seems a better option to Dorian than dying of old age. Dorian's conviction that beauty can only survive if a person stays young is brought to the extreme with the introduction of the portrait. In the scene where Gray sees his portrait for the first time, the reader comprehends that this is the moment when the young boy becomes aware of his looks and the undeniable nature of time:

> When he saw it he drew back, and his cheeks flushed for a moment with pleasure. A look of joy came into his eyes, as if he had recognized himself for the first time . . . The sense of his own beauty came on him like a revelation. He had never felt it before. Basil Hallward's compliments had seemed to him to be merely the charming

> exaggerations of friendship. He had listened to them, laughed at them, forgotten them. They had not influenced his nature. Then had come Lord Henry, with his strange panegyric on youth, his terrible warning of its brevity. (Wilde 1890, 33)

Overcome with this realization, Dorian Gray seems to fall apart in the early pages of the narrative: "a sharp pang of pain [that] struck like a knife across him, and made each delicate fibre of his nature quiver. His eyes deepened into amethyst, and a mist of tears came across them" (Wilde 1890, 33). When Dorian "looks at the painting, he does not see its static surface, but the changing fate it represents. Dorian's impression is mediated by Lord Henry's criticism and his eye has been trained to read the painting as a narrative" (Mendelssohn 156). Dorian's desperation peaks when he perceives the portrait as a mocking reminder of his mortality. It also introduces Dorian's first change of character: firstly, jealousy because of him changing and the painting remaining forever the same, and secondly, his awareness of temporariness and one's inability to hold onto what one wants, thus making beauty and youth something that is to be treasured and obsessed over even more:

> "How sad it is!" murmured Dorian Gray, with his eyes still fixed upon his own portrait. "How sad it is! I shall grow old, and horrid, and dreadful. But this picture will remain always young. It will never be older than this particular day of June . . . If it was only the other way! If it was I who were to be always young, and the picture that were to grow old! For this—for this—I would give everything! Yes, there is nothing in the whole world I would not give! (Wilde 1890, 34)

2.2. The Painting of Dorian Gray and Its Link to Aesthetic Philosophy

The painting of Dorian Gray embodies the principles of the Aesthetic Movement that peaked in Victorian England. The Aesthetic Movement revolves around the idea that "real art takes no part in molding the social or moral identities of society, nor should it. Art should be beautiful and pleasure its observer, but to imply further-reaching influence would be a mistake" (Duggan 61). The movement did not limit itself only to art, but broadened its scope of interest to include English society as well, with Oscar Wilde as "the leader" (Gustafsson 15). Specifically, the Aesthetic Movement

> advocated whatever behavior was likely to maximize the beauty and happiness in one's life, in the tradition of hedonism. To the aesthete, the ideal life mimics art; it is beautiful, but quite useless beyond its beauty, concerned only with the individual living it. (Duggan 61)

If the basic principles of aesthetic philosophy are applied to Basil's portrait, it is clear that Basil attributes to the painting the ability to represent Dorian's soul. Consequently, Dorian clashes with himself because of his desire to maintain his current beauty forever. When Dorian compares himself and the painting, reality and art intervene with one another, resulting in Dorian's illusion that he and the painting are the same:

> "I will stay with the real Dorian," he said, sadly.
>
> "Is it the real Dorian?" cried the original of the portrait, running across to him. "Am I really like that?"
>
> "Yes; you are just like that."
>
> "How wonderful, Basil!" (Wilde 1890, 38)

The "real Dorian" is the prime focus and worry of the main character as he regularly watches the changes the portrait undergoes after every misdeed of his. The same idea of the painting representing Dorian himself is also present when Basil gets upset and grabs a knife to

> rip up the canvas. With a stifled sob [Dorian] leaped from the couch, and, rushing over to Hallward, tore the knife out of his hand, and flung it to the end of the studio. "Don't, Basil, don't!" he cried. "It would be murder!"
>
> "I am glad you appreciate my work at last, Dorian," said Hallward, coldly, when he had recovered from his surprise. "I never thought you would."
>
> "Appreciate it? I am in love with it, Basil. It is part of myself, I feel that."(Wilde 1890, 36)

As depicted in the passage, Dorian feels being an inseparable part of the portrait, not differentiating it anymore as an object but seeing it as something almost sacred. To destroy it would mean killing the most perfect version of himself.

According to Wilde, the aim of aesthetic art is to "to reveal art and conceal the artist" (2006, 46), meaning that putting oneself in a position where one becomes too deeply involved in their artistic creations is wrong. This view is illustrated through the character of Basil who, by creating Dorian's painting, puts too much emotion in the process of creating it. Driven by emotions, Basil rejects the idea of giving the portrait away for display:

> "Harry," said Basil Hallward, looking him straight in the face, "every portrait that is painted with feeling is a portrait of the artist, not of the sitter. The sitter is merely the accident, the occasion. It is not he who is revealed by the painter; it is rather the painter who, on the colored canvas, reveals himself. The reason I will not exhibit this picture is that I am afraid that I have shown with it the secret of my own soul." (Wilde 1890, 7)

The changes the portrait undergoes represent Dorian's real self; if linked to the aesthetic art, the portrait depicts the idea that if one comes too close to art, art puts continuously more pressure on the person, resulting in ruination of oneself. Thus, if someone attempts to be a living piece of art himself, this is an impossible task doomed to fail:

> Yet it was watching him, with its beautiful marred face and its cruel smile. Its bright hair gleamed in the early sun light. Its blue eyes met his own. A sense of infinite pity, not for himself, but for the painted image of himself, came over him. It had altered already, and would alter more. Its gold would wither into gray. Its red and white roses would die. For every sin that he committed, a stain would fleck and wreck its fairness. But he would not sin. (Wilde 1890, 82)

The quoted paragraph indicates the first change Dorian notices in the portrait. In order to make up for his mistakes, he decides to not sin anymore, yet this turns out to be a lie as the wrongdoings only add up one after another later in his life. Dorian's picture thus becomes "the visible emblem of conscience and a symbol of the degradation of sin as it looks out at its subject from the canvas and calls him to judgment" (Manganiello 30). With time, the painting deteriorates more and more and Dorian's hope of a new beginning vanishes abruptly. All the sins that were committed throughout the years pile up to create the disfigured soul of his, thus revealing that just as a person cannot reclaim their youth, Dorian is not able to recover his innocent boyhood years: "The thing was still loathsome,—more loathsome, if possible, than before,—and the scarlet dew that spotted the hand seemed brighter, and more like blood

newly spilt" (Wilde 1890, 196). This quote confirms once again the existing connection between the aesthetic nature and the main character: an attempt to be art is unattainable.

2.3. The Links Between Hedonism, Influence, and Beauty

The Picture of Dorian Gray depicts the motif of hedonism throughout the whole narrative, the primary source of it being Lord Henry Wotton. Dorian is influenced by Lord Henry's view of life from the very start, which results in Dorian's wish to pursue pleasure and self-indulgence in life as well. After Lord Henry shows his admiration for Dorian's good looks, he urges him to enjoy the years of his youth as they are the years when one is strongest, most energetic, and most attractive. In Lord Henry's view, the joy for life should be accompanied by pleasure in life: "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" (Wilde 1890, 30). By calling Dorian the symbol of hedonism, Lord Henry asserts that beauty is an essential factor for someone who wants to live a pleasurable life. The term "new hedonism" is mentioned for the second time later in the novel when Dorian thinks about the losses men suffered in history, thus emphasizing the need for a new era where living in the moment is in the focus:

> a new hedonism that was to re-create life, and to save it from that harsh, uncomely puritanism that is having, in our own day, its curious revival . . . Its aim, indeed, was to be experience itself, and not the fruits of experience, sweet or bitter as they might be. Of the asceticism that deadens the senses, as of the vulgar profligacy that dulls them, it was to know nothing. But it was to teach man to concentrate himself upon the moments of a life that is itself but a moment. (Wilde 1890, 131-32)

"For hedonists, pleasure is the most important goal, and this book is a tragedy because of this single-minded pursuit of pleasure. In *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, the most blatant hedonist is Lord Henry" (Watkin 127) who, without doubt, has influenced Dorian's life view so much that he changed Dorian's personality throughout the years, turning him into a man who is slowly corrupting himself by living only for his own gratification. One particular object that

influenced Dorian's lifestyle is the yellow book Henry sent him. The book is about a young Parisian man

> who spent his life trying to realize in the nineteenth century all the passions and modes of thought that belonged to every century except his own . . . One hardly knew at times whether one was reading the spiritual ecstasies of some mediaeval saint or the morbid confessions of a modern sinner. It was a poisonous book. The heavy odor of incense seemed to cling about its pages and to trouble the brain. (Wilde 1890, 125-26)

Being described as "poisonous" is a clear indication of the book's negative influence on Dorian. What is more, Dorian in part identifies with the book's protagonist: "And, indeed, the whole book seemed to him to contain the story of his own life, written before he had lived it" (Wilde 1890, 127).

Just as Lord Henry Wotton has influenced Dorian, so does Dorian influence others around him with the power of his beauty, deceiving them on many accounts. One of the scenes exemplifying this is when Dorian asks Lord Henry what he would say if he told him he killed Basil:

> It is not in you Dorian to commit a murder. I am sorry if I hurt your vanity by saying so, but I assure you it is true. Crime belongs exclusively to the lower orders. I don't blame them in the smallest degree. I should fancy that crime was to them what art is to us, simply a method of procuring extraordinary sensations. (Wilde 2006, 203)

Dorian's physical attributes save him from negative judgment as the stereotype of innocent looks is equaled with innocent behavior. Furthermore, Lord Henry's opinion of upper classes being unable to commit crime is another prejudice as a form of vulgarity is, according to him, needed to commit crimes, which makes Dorian's reputation untouchable as he is not capable of being vulgar. Another instance of beauty having impact on personal judgement occurs when Dorian reminisces how he told the truth of his inner self to a past lover but she did not believe him: "He had told her once that he was wicked, and she had laughed at him, and answered that wicked people were always very old and very ugly. What a laugh she had!" (Wilde 2006, 226). A corresponding reaction to the impact beauty can have is visible in the following quote as well where the situation is changed to the public's perspective:

> Even those who had heard the most evil things against him . . . could not believe anything to his dishonor when they saw him. He had always the look of one who had kept himself unspotted from the world. Men who talked grossly became silent when Dorian Gray entered the room. There was something in the purity of his face that rebuked them. His mere presence seemed to recall to them the innocence that they had tarnished. They wondered how one so charming and graceful as he was could have escaped the stain of an age that was at once sordid and sensuous. (Wilde 1890, 128)

To keep up the appearances, Dorian does not rely on his handsomeness alone, he makes sure that no one becomes suspicious of his misdeeds by gaining the townspeople to his favor: "Once or twice every month during the winter, and on each Wednesday evening while the season lasted, he would throw open to the world his beautiful house and have the most celebrated musicians of the day to charm his guests with the wonders of their art" (Wilde 1890, 129). By doing this, he hopes, even for a little while, to ease the pain of sleepless nights and the destruction he has instilled into his soul.

The influence that beauty holds and the indulgence to live in the moment and to do what one desires – the pursuit of hedonism – is also depicted in the consequences it holds, namely having people who start to admire you. Dorian does not become a person that is just good looking, he ascends to an idol as people attempt to reach Dorian's charm and fashion sense by copying it:

> His mode of dressing, and the particular styles that he affected from time to time, had their marked influence on the young exquisites of the Mayfair balls and Pall Mall club windows, who copied him in everything that he did, and tried to reproduce the accidental charm of his graceful, though to him only half-serious, fopperies. (Wilde 1890, 130)

2.4. The Concepts of Beauty in Sybil Vane's and Dorian Gray's Relationship

The relationship of Dorian and Sybil is, at first glance, one that is based on admiration and infatuation, only to be revealed as "overtly superficial, as evidenced by Dorian's own description of his infatuation with Sibyl" (Duggan 64) – the infatuation that was driven by the idealized beauty and the imitation of art. Dorian's first impression of the young actress is as follows:

> Harry, imagine a girl, hardly seventeen years of age, with a little flower-like face, a small Greek head with plaited coils of dark-brown hair, eyes that were violet wells of passion, lips that were like the petals of a rose. She was the loveliest thing I had ever seen in my life. You said to me once that pathos left you unmoved, but that beauty, mere beauty, could fill your eyes with tears. I tell you, Harry, I could hardly see this girl for the mist of tears that came across me. And her voice—I never heard such a voice. (Wilde 2006, 45)

The reader quickly realizes that Dorian in fact admires Sybil's acting and the historic figures she presents to the viewers in the theater. By admiring her only for the roles she plays, Dorian dismisses Sybil as a person and an individual and actually loves the illusion of various great heroines she interprets:

> One evening she is Rosalind, and the next evening she is Imogen. I have seen her die in the gloom of an Italian tomb, sucking the poison from her lover's lips. I have watched her wandering through the forest of Arden, disguised as a pretty boy in hose and doublet and dainty cap . . . I have seen her in every age and in every costume. (Wilde 2006, 45-46)

What Dorian Gray loves in Sybil is the mystery surrounding the heroines she plays; he could never love ordinary women as "ordinary women never appeal to one's imagination" (Wilde 2006, 46) – they are stuck in now and here whereas Sybil's profession helps her transcend everyday life. The importance of time in their relationship is not only visible in Sybil's power to escape it, but also in Dorian's fixation at escaping it himself by attempting to stay young forever.

According to Watkin, "Sibyl is undeveloped—more like a backdrop against which Dorian's life and personality is revealed" (121). Sybil sees Dorian as an object worthy of fascination, calls him "Prince Charming," and does not really show the need to know his actual name or his history: "Her prince, Prince Charming, was with her. She had called on

Memory to remake him. She had sent her soul to search for him, and it had brought him back" (Wilde 2006, 54). Sybil's view on love is idealistic as she perceives Dorian as the manifestation of "Prince Charming," she does not see him as a real person, but a boy who superficially represents what love idealistically should be – charming, kind, and beautiful. Furthermore, Sybil's presence in Dorian's life makes him, if only for a short time, reject Lord Henry's hedonistic lifestyle: "I am changed, and the mere touch of Sybil Vane's hand makes me forget you and all your wrong, fascinating, poisonous, delightful theories" (Wilde 2006, 67).

The crucial moment in their relationship occurs when Dorian brings Lord Henry and Basil to watch Sybil perform in *Romeo and Juliet.* Watching her bad performance, Dorian breaks down in tears: "'Go away, Harry,' cried the lad. 'I want to be alone. Basil, you must go. Ah! can't you see that my heart is breaking?'" (Wilde 2006, 73). Sybil, however, has a different opinion. Even though she is aware of her bad performance, she reasons that, after finding true love, the stage is not her world anymore, so the characters she plays lose its appeal and magic: "The painted scenes were my world. I knew nothing but shadows, and I thought them real. You came—oh, my beautiful love!—and you freed my soul from prison. You taught me what reality really is" (Wilde 2006, 74). What Wilde emphasizes in their relationship is the difference between art and reality. On the one hand, there is Dorian who idealizes art and, on the other, there is Sybil who sees it as a means to escape reality and, unsurprisingly, abandons it after finding a reality that is better than escape. Ann Margaret Daniel notes as well that "Sibyl Vane, in her 'prison of passion,' loses her ability to be Shakespeare's heroines because of her 'Prince Charming! Prince of life!', and for her mistake suffers under Dorian's pronouncement" (51).

When Dorian decides to abandon Sybil because she cannot represent the art he so loved about her, he blames her for the failed relationship, not thinking about his own flawed mindset:

> "Yes," he cried, "you have killed my love. You used to stir my imagination. Now you don't even stir my curiosity. You simply produce no effect. I loved you because you were marvellous, because you had genius and intellect, because you realized the dreams of great poets and gave shape and substance to the shadows of art. You have thrown it all away. You are shallow and stupid." (Wilde 2006, 75)

Dorian's selection of words shows his disgust and disappointment; he is not moved by her crying and desperate pleas not to leave her:

> She crouched on the floor like a wounded thing, and Dorian Gray, with his beautiful eyes, looked down at her, and his chiselled lips curled in exquisite disdain. There is always something ridiculous about the emotions of people whom one has ceased to love. Sibyl Vane seemed to him to be absurdly melodramatic. Her tears and sobs annoyed him. (Wilde 2006, 76)

Only after the portrait changes, showing his cruel soul, does Dorian comprehend how cruel he was to Sybil and decides to marry her to amend for what he did. Dorian's lack of compassion makes him a selfish character who only feels regret when he experiences the negative outcomes on his own skin. His grief and guilt do not last long after Sybil commits suicide by poisoning herself, which once again shows how desensitized Dorian actually is: "'So I have murdered Sibyl Vane,' said Dorian Gray, half to himself—'murdered her as surely as if I had cut her little throat with a knife. Yet the roses are not less lovely for all that. The birds sing just as happily in my garden" (Wilde 2006, 85). This passage also contrasts Dorian's corruption and Sybil's innocent view of life.

In addition, even though he was firstly shocked to hear about her suicide, Dorian cannot help but realize that nothing will actually change after all. "Here, the adverse consequences of aestheticism surface in Dorian's life. In his pursuit of his own pleasures, a distinctly narcissistic attitude emerges, and the incompatibility of morality and unconditional aestheticism becomes all the more apparent" (Duggan 64). The failed relationship exposes Dorian as a character who "will always be in love with love itself" (Manganiello 29). Similarly, Lord Henry's attempt to euphemize Sybil's death by saying that "the girl never really lived, and so she has never really died" (Wilde 2006, 89) allows Dorian to see her death as nothing tragic but as art. So, just as fast as Dorian rejected Henry at the beginning of his romance with Sybil, so quickly does Henry return into the young man's mind with his beliefs that art is greater than life itself.

3. The Concepts of Love in Oscar Willde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

3.1. Dorian Gray's Narcissistic Self-Love

Dorian's self-love is at the beginning of the narrative innocent as he seems to be not aware of his own beauty until he sees the painting of himself. From that point onwards, a visible change is present in Dorian's personality, which other characters notice as well:

> "You like your art better than your friends. I am no more to you than a green bronze figure. Hardly as much, I dare say." Hallward stared in amazement. It was so unlike Dorian to speak like that. What had happened? He seemed almost angry. His face was flushed and his cheeks burning. "Yes," he continued, "I am less to you than your ivory Hermes or your silver Faun. You will like them always. How long will you like me?" "Till I have my first wrinkle, I suppose." (Wilde 1890, 34)

Immediately after his dreadful realization that he will lose his beauty with time, Dorian becomes aware of people's admiration for his looks, Basil being one of them. A streak of jealousy is depicted in Dorian's words while he compares himself to various art forms – bronze figures, an ivory Hermes, and a silver Faun. He even realizes that his appearance is what people only notice about him and compliment him on, thus his yearning for staying young and handsome does not come off as too surprising.

Dorian's innocence is prevalent throughout the first half of the novel until he breaks off the engagement with Sybil and finds out about her death. By rejecting her love, Dorian shows that he only cared for Sybil as someone who could portray timeless heroines. In his mind, she gained in worth with that ability as she too, even for a short while, froze in time to present the timeless historicalheroines. Therefore, her incompetence to perform well disappoints him greatly: "'Horribly!' he answered, gazing at her in amazement,—'horribly! It was dreadful. Are you ill? You have no idea what it was. You have no idea what I suffered'" (Wilde 1890, 75). And even though Sybil's death touched him, Dorian does not need a lot of time to gain his composure again. With Henry being the continuous source of hedonism in his life, Dorian ends up becoming the person Henry himself dreams of being.

After noticing the changes in the painting, Dorian blames Sybil first, but realizes eventually that the changes in the portrait are his own doings. The pattern of blaming others

occurs frequently in the novel as Dorian always inclines to blame someone else rather than himself: “Cruelty! Had he been cruel? It was the girl’s fault, not his. He had dreamed of her as a great artist, had given his love to her because he had thought her great. Then she had disappointed him. She had been shallow and unworthy” (Wilde 1890, 81). He also puts the blame on Basil, saying that if he had not created the painting, Dorian’s soul would still be safe:

> Dorian Gray glanced at the picture, and suddenly an uncontrollable feeling of hatred for Basil Hallward came over him. The mad passions of a hunted animal stirred within him, and he loathed the man who was seated at the table, more than he had ever loathed anything in his whole life. (Wilde 1890, 165)

Dorian Gray’s self-love can thus be compared with that of Narcissus’s as both characters share a number of similarities. Both of them are overly in love with themselves and hold pride in their beauty:

> Once, in boyish mockery of Narcissus, he had kissed, or feigned to kiss, those painted lips that now smiled so cruelly at him. Morning after morning he had sat before the portrait wondering at its beauty, almost enamoured of it, as it seemed to him at times. Was it to alter now with every mood to which he yielded? Was it to become a monstrous and loathsome thing, to be hidden away in a locked room, to be shut out from the sunlight that had so often touched to brighter gold the waving wonder of its hair? The pity of it!! (Wilde 2006, 90-91)

In Greek mythology, Narcissus,

> upon catching a glimpse of his reflection in a pool, becomes so enraptured by it that he stood and admired it endlessly, unmoving for the rest of his life. As Craft notes, this self-absorption “is a commitment that, like Dorian’s, graduates fully until death.” (Duggan 65)

In the novel, the author compares Dorian Gray with Narcissus himself as both are in love with their reflections: Dorian’s reflection being his portrait and Narcissus’s his face reflected in the water. Another similarity both characters share is the way how they end their lives: they kill themselves. Narcissus kills himself because he cannot obtain the object of his desire; Dorian because of his obsession with the painting. Manganiello notes Dorian’s similarity with the mythological character as well:

> Wilde focuses constantly on art as a mirror to false and true images of the self. A modern day Narcissus, Dorian exchanges his "original self" or soul for the reflection he grows increasingly enarmoured of, becoming, in Blake's phrase, "idolatrous to his own shadow." (30)

Furthermore, the yellow book that Lord Henry gives Dorian not only stays with him for years, as he re-reads it many times throughout his life, but it also symbolizes Henry's "narcissistic perspective on art and life" (Manganiello 29), which Dorian gets influenced by and drawn into. Identifying himself with the adventurous Parisian, Dorian reads with delight the part where the character loses his beauty, which allows him to enjoy even more the feeling of pride for staying young forever:

> It was with an almost cruel joy—and perhaps in nearly every joy, as certainly in every pleasure, cruelty has its place—that he used to read the latter part of the book, with its really tragic, if somewhat over-emphasized, account of the sorrow and despair of one who had himself lost what in others, and in the world, he had most valued. (Wilde 1890, 127-28)

In addition, Dorian's self-centeredness and narcisstic self-love resurface again in the scene of Basil's death. He is not horrified, or emotionally shaken, at all by the sight of Basil's dead body; what horrifies him are the changes the painting underwent. He even refers to Basil's corpse as a "thing": "There was a horrible smell of nitric acid in the room. But the thing that had been sitting at the table was gone" (Wilde 2006, 147). By the end of the novel, with his innocence lost, Dorian resents his youth and starts perceiving it as negative and repulsive: "His beauty had been to him but a mask, his youth but a mockery. What was youth at best? A green, unripe time, a time of shallow moods and sickly thoughts. Why had he worn its livery? Youth had spoiled him" (Wilde 2006, 185).

All in all, Dorian Gray's self-love is based on his narcissism that

> ultimately proves fatal because it provides at once an image of the self and all that the self is not; it distorts as it reflects . . . His attempt to annihilate his true image and its visible emblem results in his own annihilation, a cracked looking glass of the self. (Manganiello 31)

3.2. Dorian Gray's Relationships with Other Characters

Dorian Gray's relationships with Basil Hallward, Lord Henry Wotton, and James Vane are quite different, yet each and every one of them has had a deep impact on Dorian's personality and life. Basil Hallward's and Dorian Gray's relationship is superficial: Basil seeing in the young boy his new inspiration. Dorian's beauty and innocence made him Basil's new muse: "He is all my art to me now" (Wilde 1890, 13), which is emphasized even more by the dramatic language used in the novel, creating the impression of Dorian being "larger than life." Basil's interest in Dorian could be of homosexual nature as well: "It is quite true that I have worshipped you with far more romance of feeling than a man usually gives to a friend. Somehow, I had never loved a woman. I suppose I never had time" (Wilde 1890, 110). In fact, Basil's feelings for Dorian can be seen as both artistic and sexual:

> Well, from the moment I met you, your personality had the most extraordinary influence over me. I quite admit that I adored you madly, extravagantly, absurdly. I was jealous of every one to whom you spoke. I wanted to have you all to myself. I was only happy when I was with you. When I was away from you, you were still present in my art. (Wilde, 1890, 110-11)

Yet, according to Ann Margaret Daniel,

> to enact this romance with Dorian in physical terms, in real life, would have meant jail time for Basil since 1885. And he does enact it in physical terms. He "takes" Dorian, not his likeness, and sets him into his own canvas. . . . Basil finally feels his triumph, and brands his Dorian by giving him, like a married woman, his own "name in long vermilion letters." (50)

The second relationship Dorian Gray enters is the one with Lord Henry Wotton. "Lord Henry Wotton, brilliant, autobiographic, the monocled Mephisto of an ineffectual Faust, may alone be said to live, and at times the reader finds him more lively than alive" (Shanks 68). Lord Henry instructs Dorian Gray to "[l]ive the wonderful life that is in you! Let nothing be lost upon you. Be always searching for new sensations" (Wilde 2006, 22). Besides his influential hedonistic philosophy, Henry infuses Dorian with the idea of beauty and youth being the most important factors in life. Lord Henry teaches Dorian that "people who would not follow their feelings, impulses or dreams lived in self-denial and felt trapped, and thereby

he proposes that the only way not to have unbecoming body temptations is to yield to them" (Gustafsson 15). In addition, Lord Henry's interest in their relationship is based on his curiosity to see how much he can control Dorian's life: he finds "exquisite pleasure in playing on the lad's unconscious egotism" (Wilde 2006, 86). What is more, "Lord Henry Wotton seeks to be merely the spectator of life. He finds that those who reject the battle are more deeply wounded than those who take part in it" (Wilde qtd. in O'Malley 182). Even after Dorian realizes Lord Henry's negative impact on his life, he never succeeds in completely distancing him. The first time the reader sees Dorian being critical towards Lord Henry's life philosophy is after Dorian feels fear of his sins coming back to him: "You would sacrifice anybody, Harry, for the sake of an epigram" (Wilde 2006, 172). The development of moral conscience in Dorian shows his regret for living a life without any thought of somebody else's wellbeing. Lord Henry's corruption involves misogyny and sexism as well: "My dear boy, no woman is a genius: women are a decorative sex. They never have anything to say, but they say it charmingly. They represent the triumph of matter over mind, just as we men represent the triumph of mind over morals" (Wilde 1890, 45). Lord Henry Wotton thus speaks "the most misogynistic lines in the novel, a series of generalizations about the practicality, materiality, grossness, and immanence of women, who 'represent the triumph of matter over mind'" (Stetz 231). As a result, Dorian imbibes his views and sees Sybil not as a human being but as a form of art that he likes to watch and be amazed by its beauty.

Even though James Vane is a minor character in the novel, he still impacts Dorian's life. His desire for revenging his sister haunts Dorian for years. His death instills in Dorian a short-lived panic: "If the tapestry did but tremble in the wind, he shook. The dead leaves that were blown against the leaded panes seemed to him like his own wasted resolutions and wild regrets"(Wilde 2006, 168). James Vane is portrayed as one who wants only the best for his sister. He is a character of justice and good nature, which ironically misguides him from killing Dorian: "'He is not the man I am looking for,' he answered, 'and I want no man's money. I want a man's life. The man whose life I want must be nearly forty now. This one is little more than a boy. Thank God, I have not got his blood upon my hands'" (Wilde 2006, 162). James's hunting of Dorian symbolizes Dorian's realization that destruction can work both ways: if he destroys someone, he cannot expect anything less for himself.

4. The Concepts of Beauty in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*

4.1. The Ugly and the Sublime in the Creature

In Mary Shelly's *Frankenstein*, the concept of ugliness is introduced when Victor sees the creature for the first time, evidently being appalled by him:

> His limbs were in proportion, and I had selected his features as beautiful. Beautiful!—Great God! His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath; his hair was of a lustrous black, and flowing; his teeth of a pearly whiteness; but these luxuriances only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes, that seemed almost of the same colour as the dun white sockets in which they were set, his shrivelled complexion and straight black lips. (Shelley 66)

When he was creating the creature, Victor intended him to be beautiful, which he failed at. Yet, what makes the creature ugly in the eyes of the characters and society itself? The lack of chance to fit in as his looks differ far too much from theirs:

> In Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, ugliness disrupts social categorization. The stigmatized creature's ugly body is a body excluded from respective social categories. The creature's body is unable to be classified into a social category; consequently, the creature comes to realize his exclusion after being rejected by numerous characters. (Huff-Oelberg 2)

The creature's wish to gain social acceptance is thus impossible as the body standards of the human world differ too much from his physical form.[1] And even though the creature's features when looked at separately are beautiful – "his hair was of a lustrous black, and flowing" (Shelley 66), when observed as a unit, they highlight the ugliness of the creature's overall appearance even more. Comparing himself to Caroline, the creature becomes aware of his ugliness; he realizes for the first time the difference between beauty and ugliness:

> For a few moments I gazed with delight on her dark eyes, fringed by deep lashes, and her lovely lips; but presently my rage returned; I remembered that I was forever deprived of the delights that such beautiful creatures could bestow and that she

[1] Maybe it could also be claimed that the "Monster is, on the deepest and most personal level, a projection of Mary Shelley's feelings of isolation and hatred" (Tropp 14) toward the society she lived in.

> whose resemblance I contemplated would, in regarding me, have changed that air of divine benignity to one or expressive of disgust and affright. (Shelley 138)

The creature realizes the value that beauty holds in the world, that people usually benefit from it, and that he will never possess it himself. When he says that he is "forever deprived of the delights that such beautiful creatures could bestow" (Shelley 138), the creature once again realizes that his own existence is reduced to solitary dwelling and that he is forced to isolate himself from others and live in exclusion.

Another term that can help us understand the concept of beauty in Shelley's *Frankenstein* is the sublime. The sublime is often defined as one "of the strongest emotions which the mind is capable of feeling" (Burke 20), producing "a sort of delightful horror, a sort of tranquility tinged with terror; which, as it belongs to self-preservation, is one of the strongest of all the passions" (Burke 121-22). As the creature does not elicit such emotions from others, he starts to question his place in the world: "My person was hideous and my stature gigantic: what did this mean? Who was I? What was I? Whence did I come? What was my destination? These questions continually recurred, but I was unable to solve them" (Shelley 89). While the creature "should be in all accounts sublime due to his size and apparent capacity to produce awe or even admiration, he actually produces horror and disgust; therefore, the creature's social placement continues to be a question" (Huff-Oelberg 12). The sublimity is not reached as his ugliness is too blinding, resulting in the inability to classify the creature into a group. Furthermore, sublimity includes sympathy – "that we are moved as they are moved, and are never suffered to be indifferent spectators. . . . For sympathy must be considered as a sort of substitution, by which we are put into the place of another man, and affected in many respects as he is affected" (Burke 26). The categories of the sublime that Burke describes do not correspond with the creature's character: the "monster is male, gigantic, rough-hewn, and unfinished; however, taken as a sublime figure, he would be bearable, even admirable, which contradicts his treatment throughout the novel" (Huff-Oelberg 13). Not being able to fit into the category of the sublime, the creature is forced into the repelling one, the ugly one, to live as an outcast. Believing that humans are bound to make prejudices based on another person's appearance, the creature knows that he could never be accepted the way he is:

> Shall I respect, when he contemns me? Let him live with me in the interchange of kindness, and instead of injury, I would bestow every benefit upon him with tears of

> gratitude at his acceptance. But that cannot be; the human senses are insurmountable barriers to our union. (Shelley 102)

The ability to criticize social constructions made by humans shows that the creature's intellectual level is the same as, or at least similar to, that of humans, which ultimately doubles the pain of his knowledge of societal injustice. Moreover,

> the creature turns into an example of how ugliness is treated in a society defined by beauty. However, the creature belongs in a new category only defined by himself because he is unclassifiable. While the beautiful and sublime categories work together, the creature does not meet the qualifications to be included in either category. (Huff-Oelberg 5)

4.2. The Concepts of Beauty and *Frankenstein's* Women Characters

The women characters portrayed in *Frankenstein* are the products of the gazes of male characters who see them as pretty objects rather than human beings. The value accorded to beauty is evident in the description as well as in the actions of the female characters and results from "patriarchal preferences regarding the physical appearance of women . . . that 'females must be beautiful, sweet, and young if they are to be worthy of romantic admiration'" (Hillerström 4). Elizabeth Lavenza, Caroline Frankenstein, and Justine fulfil those preferences. One of the instances depicting the afore-mentioned stance occurs when Caroline, Victor's mother, tells him that she has a "pretty possession" for him – Elizabeth. Consequently, Victor sees Elizabeth as a kind of pet:

> I looked upon Elizabeth as mine—mine to protect, love, and cherish. All praises bestowed on her, I received as made to a possession of my own . . . No word, no expression could body forth the kind of relation in which she stood to me—my more than sister, since till death she was to be mine. (Shelley 36)

Domestic gender roles are equally important concepts that the women characters in *Frankenstein* follow, for example, the ability to take care of family and perform household chores, which, consequently, marginalizes woman's needs. This is best illustrated through

Elizabeth's position: "The saintly soul of Elizabeth shone like a shrine-dedicated lamp in our peaceful home. Her sympathy was ours; her smile, her soft voice, the sweet glance of her celestial eyes, were ever there to bless and animate us" (Shelley 39). The ability of "domestic affections" (Shelley 40) is the ultimate role a woman needs to fulfil. Thus, after Caroline's death, Elizabeth becomes Caroline in a way, being put in her position as Victor's future wife. "Her ability to be subjugated and fit the beauty standard carries more importance than anything else. Caroline recognizes that Elizabeth conforms to these beautiful standards and will make a respectable wife for Victor" (Huff-Oelberg 8).

Because of the Victorian gender ideals, the women characters in *Frankenstein* do not have a chance for development. Elizabeth as well as Caroline and Justine are respected and appreciated for their looks and ideal feminine manners and that is why their community likes them. "Caroline represents the stereotypical patriarchal woman and she is described as fair, soft and father's benevolent and committed to her care" (Hillerström 4). Justine is like Elizabeth, "another Caroline figure" (Huff-Oelberg 9) who helps with household chores and takes care of William, the youngest Frankenstein. During her trial, Elizabeth tries to save her in the court: "it may therefore be judged indecent in me to come forward on this occasion" (Shelley 85). This is yet another example of the self-sacrificial ideals beauty standards hold. All women characters in the novel are ideal beauties who are "domesticated, virtuous, passive, and devoted to others. Due to the fact that [they are beautiful women, they take] on the burden that society deems [they] must" (Huff-Oelberg 9). Their submissiveness and sacrifices serve as a reflection of how difficult life for Victorian women was.

5. The Concepts of Love in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*

5.1. The Society's Rejection of the Creature and Its Consequences

In Shelley's *Frankenstein*, every character views and treats the creature with prejudice. The more the creature attempts to come closer to humans, the further he gets pushed away. The creature's original innocence is stripped away after his creator and other characters reject him. The creature's first encounter with a human other than Victor is with an old man whom he finds in a hut: the old man "turned on hearing a noise; and perceiving me, shrieked loudly, and quitting the hut, ran across the fields with a speed of which his debilitated form hardly appeared capable" (Shelley 18). The innocence of the creature shows itself in his not understanding why the man got scared. The desire to be part of community is strong in the creature's mind, showing that he is a social being:

> How miraculous did this appear! the huts, the neater cottages, and stately houses engaged my admiration by turns. The vegetables in the gardens, the milk and cheese that I saw placed at the windows of some cottages, allured my appetite. One of the best of these I entered; but I had hardly placed my foot within the door before the children shrieked, and one of the women fainted. (Shelley 102)

Evidently, the creature behaves as a newborn would, being fascinated by his surrounding and wanting to establish contact with it.

Another example of society rejecting the creature occurs in the scene when he saves a girl from drowning:

> I rushed from my hiding-place, and, with extreme labour from the force of the current, saved her, and dragged her to shore. She was senseless; and I endeavoured, by every means in my power, to restore animation, when I was suddenly interrupted by the approach of a rustic, who was probably the person from whom she had playfully fled. On seeing me, he darted towards me, and tearing the girl from arms, hastened towards the deeper parts of the wood. I followed speedily, I knew not why; but when the man saw me draw near, he aimed a gun, which he carried, at my body, and fired. (Shelley 136)

As Webster notes, the man aimed and fired the gun at "his" body, which implies that the creature realized the effect his body has on humans (16) – that of disgust, horror, terror, and gross out, all of which shows the community's rejection of the creature. With the prejudice being too strong for people to look past his looks, the creature resolves to not show himself when the next encounter with humans occurs:

> I remembered too well the treatment I had suffered the night before from the barbarous villagers, and resolved, whatever course of conduct I might remain quietly in my hovel, watching, and endeavouring to discover the motives which influenced their actions. (Shelley 108)

The creature's decision shows not only his level of intelligence but also his desire, expressed through his act of repeated observation, to desperately join the community. "The way that the creature says he 'endeavour[s] to discover the motives which influenced their actions' shows that he is hoping to humanize himself" (Webster 17). With that knowledge, the creature tries once again to befriend people:

> I discovered also another means through which I was enabled to assist their labours I found that the youth spent a great part of each day in collecting wood for the family fire; and, during the night I often took his tools, the use of which I quickly discovered, and brought home firing sufficient for the consumption of several days. (Shelley 109)

As Webster explains,

> we see the creature actually becoming part of the community, even if he does so invisibly. He is joining in everyday activities, and helping other people's lives become better. Even though he is helping, the creature is still forced to do so out of sight. His physical appearance is excluding him. (18)

The creature's attempts, however, fail again as the family rejects his endeavors. The creature sees the last chance to join the community by approaching a child, believing that he cannot yet comprehend the prejudice adults have:

> At this time a slight sleep relieved me from the pain of reflection, which was disturbed by the approach of a beautiful child, who came running into the recess I had chosen, with all the sportiveness of infancy. Suddenly, as I gazed on him, an

> idea seized me that this little creature was unprejudiced, and had lived too short a time to have imbibed a horror of deformity. If, therefore, I could seize him and educate him as my companion and friend, I should not be so desolate in this peopled earth. (Shelley 137)

Desperate, the creature intends to take William as his companion to diminish his isolation; however, the child, being horrified by his appearance like all other people, dissipates once again the hope of companionship.

The turning point in the novel occurs when William mentions the surname Frankenstein. As Victor, the creature's creator, is a Frankenstein, the creature connects all his rejections with the creator himself, thus changing his need for acceptance into revenge. Calling William a "beautiful child" and observing other characters' physical beauty, the creature seems to want to hurt those he perceives as beautiful as he cannot be beautiful or possess beauty himself. Such a scenario occurs when he frames Justine for the child's murder: "[t]he monster means to punish Justine for representing pretty girls everywhere, who, he has learned, would reject him" (Feder 123):

> She was young, not indeed so beautiful as her whose portrait I held, but of an agreeable aspect, and blooming in the loveliness of youth and health. Here, I thought, is one of those whose joy-imparting smiles are bestowed on all but me . . . Thanks to the lessons of Felix, and the sanguinary laws of man, I have learned how to work mischief. (Shelley 138)

The creature's desire to hurt others stems from the resentment of his own creation and as he sees Victor as the source of his suffering, it is natural that the creature seeks revenge on him. And what better way to do it then to deprive his creator of the comfort of having loved ones, of his community.

Furthermore, it has to be emphasized that the creature is a singular species of its own and thus cannot find his place in the world. This alone determines his loneliness: "When I looked around I saw and heard of none like me. Was I, a monster, a blot upon the earth from which all men fled and whom all men disowned?" (Shelley 117). By questioning his identity, the creature starts to realize that he will never be accepted the way he is. "From the beginning it is a *tabula rasa* and is neither evil nor spiteful; it gets beaten and driven off because of its

appearance. It is society and mankind that shapes the creature into a savage" (Brannström 13).

5.2. The Relationship Between Victor and the Creature

Victor Frankenstein's relationship with the creature is from the very beginning unwanted and problematic. Being horrified by his appearance, he flees the scene, leaving the creature by himself. Victor "fails to give him the innate beauty that society expects in order to fit within certain biological parameters and social conventions. Consequently, the creature must figure out that he belongs in a category all to himself" (Huff-Oelberg 16). As Bloom implies, "Victor Frankenstein, though he possesses generous impulses, is nothing less than a moral idiot in regard to the 'monster' he has created" (9). Also, "[i]f Frankenstein's first sin was the hubris in his creation, others followed: too proud to acknowledge his errors, he did nothing until the consequences of his actions became too painful to bear, and even then, he chose poorly" (Dorn 14).

After the creature reads Victor's journal, he is overflowed by emotions, resenting his creator for giving him life:

> I sickened as I read. "Hateful day when I received life!" I exclaimed in agony. "Accursed creator! Why did you form a monster so hideous that even *you* turned from me in disgust? God, in pity, made man beautiful and alluring, after his own image; but my form is a filthy type of yours, more horrid even from the very resemblance. Satan had his companions, fellow-devils, to admire and encourage him; but I am solitary and abhorred. (Shelley 127)

Referring to himself as "hideous," "filthy," "horrid," and "detested," the creature diminishes his worth as a living being, comparing himself with men who were made after God's image – "beautiful." Frankenstein's "lack of imaginative identification with his creation, his lack of what Keats would have called 'negative capability,' causes him to make a critical mistake" (Mellor 47). Furthermore,

> Victor repeatedly uses the word "filthy" within the novel to describe the creature: "filthy creation" (34), "filthy daemon" (50), and "filthy mass (103). By applying "filthy" to "type," the creature identifies himself as an unwanted life, but also an abandoned, disfigured creation that is subsequently shunned by his respective community. (Huff-Oelberg 24)

It is then natural that the creature demands from Victor to create another being like himself in order to create his own social category and feel accepted. Thus, "Victor Frankenstein's 'child' is irrevocably linked to its father through its need for completion – its desire for a mate – and sees its salvation only in that provision" (Shaw 84):

> What I ask of you is reasonable and moderate; I demand a creature of another sex, but as hideous as myself: the gratification is small, but it is all that I can receive, and it shall content me. It is true, we shall be monsters, cut off from all the world; but on that account we shall be more attached to one another. Our lives will not be happy, but they will be harmless, and free from the misery I now feel. (Shelley 142)

Saying that he wants a creature "as hideous as [himself]" shows the creature's understanding that "acceptance comes from having people who have similar qualities to you" (Huff-Oelberg 25,26). Additionally,

> [e]ven after the creature reminds Frankenstein of his parental obligation to provide for his child—"I ought to be thy Adam" (95)—Frankenstein still fails to give him the human companionship, the Eve, the female creature, that he needs to achieve some sort of a normal life. (Mellor 47)

Both Victor and the creature vow revenge on each other. The creature succeeds by killing all of Victor's relatives and wife, and Victor kills the creature himself for inflicting him pain. Consequently, both characters transform into monsters that are obsessed with destroying the other.

When Victor learns of William's death, he immediately knows who did it, seeing the silhouette of the creature after a bolt of lightning shapes him. The bolt of lightning has a symbolic meaning: it reveals the truth and points out the creature's (and the creator's) lost innocence:

> 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 demon to whom I had given life. (Shelley 77)

Even though Victor agrees, though reluctantly, to create a female counterpart for the creature, he fails in keeping the promise and destroys his work in progress. As a result, revenge consumes the creature's life as much as Victor feels disgust for him: "You can blast my other passions, but revenge remains—revenge, henceforth dearer than light of food! I may die, but first you, my tyrant and tormentor, shall curse the sun that gazes on your misery" (Shelley 160). With the possibility of happiness gone, the creature threatens to destroy Victor. Through the creature's threat that he will "be with [Victor at his] wedding night" (Shelley 160) and Victor's failure to understand that Elizabeth herself is in danger and not him, Shelley shows Victor's blindness in his attempts to protect himself from the creature: "But, as if possessed of magic powers, the monster had blinded me to his real intentions; and when I thought that I had prepared only my own death, I hastened that of a far dearer victim" (Shelley 180).

Even in the scene of Victor's death, the creature is still described as an "appalling hideousness" (Shelley 204), to which he reacts in the following way: "Was there no injustice in this? Am I to be thought the only criminal, when all human kind sinned against me?" (Shelley 206). The injustice that the creature faced throughout his life does not bother Robert Walton, an explorer who meets Victor during his Arctic journey, who, like all other characters, judges the creature based on his looks. By putting the blame for all the crimes on the creature, the community not only confirms its prejudice but also does him injustice, causing him to lose the little innocence he had possessed. The creature's death is connected with his creator: when the creature cries over his death, his tears indicate that even after everything Victor had done to him, the creature still longed for him to accept him. The creature sees Victor as a father; and although he is aware that Victor was an unloving one, this did not diminish the heartbreak the creature felt upon beholding Victor's dead body.

The creature's and Victor's relationship can be summarized with the creature' words: "I ought to be thy Adam; but I am rather the fallen angel, whom thou drivest from joy for no misdeed" (Shelley 97). In addition, the creature perceives Victor as God as he was the one who gave him life. However, Victor abandons his creature right from the start, which shows

his failure at the role of God as God should never abandon anyone without a reason. God offered Adam paradise and love, whereas Victor did not offer his creature anything but loneliness and suffering. And even during his final moments, Victor never comprehends the creature's perspective but focuses on his mere selfish feelings of hatred: "Alas! the strength I relied on is gone; I feel that I shall soon die, and he, my enemy and persecutor, may still be in being" (Shelley 202). With even his creator uncapable to understand him, the creature remains misunderstood till the end. Victor thus "never once considers whether the creature's 'malignity' might have been prevented, as the creature himself repeatedly insists, by loving care in infancy; he never asks whether he was in any way responsible for the creature's development" (Mellor 48).

5.3. The Creature's Encounter with Love

The only character who accepts the creature the way he is is a blind man, which shows just how much prejudice and fear overcame other characters who saw the creature. The encounter with the blind man also suggests that mankind is indeed blinded by shallow first impressions. One of the things that gets touched upon in their encounter is the creature's background:

> "By your language, stranger, I suppose you are my countryman; -- are you French?"
>
> "No, But I was educated by a French family, and understand that language only. I am now going to claim the protection of some friends, whom I sincerely love, and of whose favour I have some hopes."
>
> "Are they Germans?"
>
> "No, they are French. But let us change the subject." (Shelley 129)

De Lacey's inquiry indicates that he tries to put the creature, as every other human as well, into a category. This occurs because

> [p]eople instinctually distinguish themselves into groups based on similarities. Here the similarity is based on language, and the creature is attempting to make a

> connection based on the language he can now speak. After the creature says he has been educated by a French family, he goes on to explain his desire to meet with people he loves. All De Lacey would like to know in response to this is if the people are German (Webster 20)

With the creature seeking acceptance in a man whose eyes do not function and, therefore, cannot see the creature's unattractive form, Shelley points out that even handicapped men are not spared from prejudice of whatever kind. Further in their conversation, De Lacey asserts: "I am blind and cannot judge of your countenance, but there is something in your words which persuades me that you are sincere. I am poor and an exile, but it will afford me true pleasure to be in any way serviceable to a human creature" (Shelley 130). By using the phrase "human creature," Shelley implies that De Lacey would help another human like himself, which indirectly shows his biased mind. The creature's encounter with the imaginative acceptance of the old man shows how difficult it is for humans to look past differences.

Conclusion

Oscar Wilde's The *Picture of Dorian Gray* and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* are the masterpieces of Western literature that present two different perspectives on physical beauty and its advantages and disadvantages. Dorian Gray and the creature are two polar opposites that showcase how beauty and the lack of it can influence a person's mind and life. The paper also attempted to address the prejudices that are linked to outer beauty and what consequences such prejudices generally have.

Dorian Gray's external good looks made him vain and desperate in the attempts of maintaining his youth forever. The idea of losing his beauty and youth resulted in his narcissistic behavior as well as in his indifference for anybody else's life. The influence of aesthetic philosophy and the pleasure-seeking lifestyle shaped Dorian's potential for ultimate demise. The prejudices of Dorian being unable to commit crimes and the influence he has over people are all linked to his good looks. Contrary to that, Frankenstein's creature was not bestowed with handsomeness, which preconditioned his whole life. Besides the ugliness, he is unable to find a category to fit in and thus resents his creator. The prejudice towards the creature thus shows the shallowness of human society. The same attitude can also be observed in the beauty standards that the female characters have to embody if they want to be perceived as desirable. The most interesting, though, is the relationship between Victor Frankenstein and his "child" as he blatantly rejects the creature out of bias. The conclusion that the creature was destined to live a pathetic life as a consequence of his appearance as much as Dorian was preconditioned to be judged by his surroundings as a pleasing person seems unfair, though quite real. Both characters show how much society is inclined to judge its members by superficial beauty standards, without bothering to examine the deeper parts of their personality.

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