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Surname + page number

Lee 1

Student's Name

Jordan Lee

Instructor's Name

Professor Elena Martinez

Course Number

ENG 102: Academic Writing

Date

July 20, 2024

Title
Centered, plain text;
italicize only the
long work's title
inside it**Structural Locator**
No stable page
numbers: cite
volume and chapter
instead**Thesis**
Debatable,
qualified, and
predictive: states
the claim and the
logic**Introduction**Opens with a
specific interpretive
tension, not a broad
claim**What Makes a Monster? Responsibility, Isolation, and Human Recognition in *Frankenstein***

Victor Frankenstein judges his creation monstrous before the creature has done anything monstrous. The judgment begins with appearance: Victor recoils from the body he has assembled and abandons the being whose life he deliberately brought into the world (Shelley, vol. 1, ch. 4). Shelley therefore introduces monstrosity first as a category imposed on the creature rather than as a behavior he has demonstrated. That distinction becomes harder to ignore as the creature learns language, admires human affection, performs acts of kindness, and longs to belong before repeated rejection changes how he understands himself and other people. Recent criticism likewise treats his development through questions of identity, exclusion, ethics, and responsibility rather than reducing his monstrosity to physical difference alone. Shalghin examines how rejection and social judgment shape the creature's search for identity, while Caudill reads Victor's scientific ambition through the ethical responsibilities that accompany creation (Shalghin 164; Caudill 2). In *Frankenstein*, Mary Shelley does not excuse the creature's violence, but she complicates the idea that monstrosity is innate: Victor's abandonment, repeated social rejection, and the creature's denied claims to recognition gradually transform an initially relational being into an agent of revenge, revealing monstrosity as the product of both personal choice and failed responsibility.

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Victor's first failure is therefore not simply that his experiment succeeds but that he refuses responsibility once it does. His horror begins immediately after animation, before the

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creature has spoken, injured anyone, or had an opportunity to establish a moral character. Victor converts physical difference into a judgment about the being itself. The creature later challenges that judgment by insisting that he did not begin as Victor now sees him: “I was benevolent and good; misery made me a fiend” (Shelley, vol. 2, ch. 2). The statement does not excuse what he later does. Instead, it asks the reader to distinguish origin from outcome. The creature claims that his violence has a history, and that history begins with rejection by the person who chose to create him. Caudill reads Victor’s ambition and “ruthless pursuit of knowledge” as an enduring image of science out of control and of the need for ethical limits on scientific progress (2). That ethical frame sharpens Shelley’s contrast between Victor’s eagerness to achieve creation and his refusal to confront what follows from it. Victor repeatedly behaves as though producing life and caring for life are separate questions, but Shelley makes the consequences of that separation central to the tragedy.

Victor’s abandonment establishes the creature’s first experience of rejection; his later encounters show how that private failure becomes a broader social pattern. While secretly observing the De Lacey family, the creature clears snow from their path, studies their language, admires their affection for one another, and imagines that patient, gentle conduct might eventually win their acceptance (Shelley, vol. 2, chs. 4, 7). His hope collapses when Felix returns to the cottage, sees him with the blind De Lacey, and attacks him before learning who he is or what he has done. Lewis and Shapiro describe Frankenstein through the “tyranny of normative aesthetics” and the ethics of care and care-denial, a framework that helps explain why being seen repeatedly precedes being known (267). Shalghin similarly argues that Victor’s creation is treated as an outsider whose creator nevertheless has obligations toward him (164). The creature’s body thus becomes evidence against him before his intentions can be considered. This

Short Quotation

Fewer than five lines stays in the paragraph, keeps quotation marks

Embedded Quotation

A short phrase is integrated grammatically into the writer’s sentence

Multiple Chapters

“chs.” cites more than one chapter in the same locator

Page Locator

A paginated source should include the page that supports the claim

Transition by Logic

The next paragraph grows from this private rejection

Two Authors

In prose: “Lewis and Shapiro”; in parentheses, both surnames

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recurring pattern does more than hurt him; it gives him a social identity that conflicts with the identity he had hoped to construct for himself.

That pattern also explains why Shelley makes the creature morally reflective rather than merely dangerous. Before the cottage episode ends, he has learned to distinguish virtue from vice, admires peaceful lawgivers over conquerors, and interprets his own condition through the books he reads (Shelley, vol. 2, ch. 7). Cambra-Badii et al. argue that *Frankenstein* remains valuable for examining ethical reflection, compassion, and scientists' responsibility for their creations (1). Their argument helps clarify why Shelley refuses an easy division between innocent creator and evil creation. The creature's capacity for moral judgment makes his later violence more, not less, significant: he understands ethical distinctions even as he begins to violate them. The difficult question is therefore not whether the creature bears responsibility – he does – but how that responsibility should be understood after the novel has shown the relationships in which his moral development occurs.

Shelley makes the transition from exclusion to retaliation gradual enough for the reader to see both social pressure and individual choice. After Felix attacks him and the De Laceys abandon the cottage, the creature first experiences despair, then allows “revenge and hatred” to fill him, and finally burns the empty cottage (Shelley, vol. 2, ch. 8). Even then, the novel does not present violence as an automatic reflex. The creature pauses, reflects, changes his mind, and chooses again. That sequence matters because it preserves moral agency within a history of mistreatment. Rejection helps explain the direction of his anger, but Shelley repeatedly represents him as a thinking being who interprets injury and decides what to do with it.

Analysis Outweighs Evidence

The paragraph interprets more than it quotes or summarizes

Paragraph Unity

Each paragraph proves one step and prepares the next

3+ Authors

MLA shortens the in-text name to the first author plus “et al.”

Close Reading

Traces a specific narrative movement, not a summary of the plot

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The creature makes his strongest case when he confronts Victor directly and defines their relationship in terms of obligation. The creature's appeal is important because he does not simply ask Victor to pity him; he frames creation as a relationship that carries duties:

Block Format

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no quotation marks

I am thy creature, and I will be even mild and docile to my natural lord and king, if thou wilt also perform thy part, the which thou owest me. Oh, Frankenstein, be not equitable to every other, and trample upon me alone, to whom thy justice, and even thy clemency and affection, is most due. Remember, that I am thy creature: I ought to be thy Adam; but I am rather the fallen angel, whom thou drivest from joy for no misdeed. Everywhere I see bliss, from which I alone am irrevocably excluded. I was benevolent and good; misery made me a fiend. Make me happy, and I shall again be virtuous. (Shelley, vol. 2, ch. 2)

Block Trigger

A prose quotation over four lines is set off as a block

Punctuation

In a block quote, closing punctuation comes before the citation

The passage condenses the novel's conflict over responsibility. "I am thy creature" is both a statement of origin and a claim about a relationship. The creature understands Victor not merely as the person who caused his existence but as a creator whose voluntary act generated obligations. His comparison with Adam sharpens that demand. Adam enters existence in a relationship with his creator, whereas Shelley's creature is animated and immediately abandoned. The shift to the "fallen angel" marks the creature's developing sense that exclusion, rather than belonging, defines his place in creation. Most importantly, however, his appeal does not make him innocent. The claim that misery "made" him a fiend describes a causal history, but the narrative continues to show him choosing how to respond to that history. Shelley's argument is therefore more demanding than either simple condemnation or simple excuse: the creature remains responsible for his violence, while Victor remains responsible for helping create the conditions from which that violence develops.

Qualification

Strong analysis lets two truths coexist: rejection matters, and agency remains

Victor briefly recognizes this distinction after hearing the creature's account. He acknowledges what the duties of a creator towards his creature were and admits that he ought to consider the creature's happiness before judging only his wickedness (Shelley, vol. 2, ch. 2). The significance of this recognition lies in its source: Victor himself momentarily accepts the relational obligation he had previously denied. He does not cease fearing the creature, nor does Shelley erase the deaths already associated with him. Instead, Victor understands that judgment becomes incomplete when he considers the creature's wrongdoing without considering his own abandonment of the being he created. The tragedy deepens because this insight does not become a durable ethical commitment. Victor repeatedly returns to a model in which the creature is the sole bearer of monstrosity, allowing him to treat his own choices as reactions rather than as part of the chain of responsibility. Shalghin's emphasis on creator obligations is useful here because it identifies the creature's demand not simply as an emotional grievance but as a claim about what creation requires: (164).

Secondary Source Role

Scholarship sharpens the interpretation; it does not replace the novel

Book + Line Numbers

Literary works can use stable divisions instead of page numbers

The creature's understanding of creation and abandonment is also shaped by literature. Shelley signals the importance of *Paradise Lost* before the novel even begins by placing Adam's complaint to his maker in the epigraph: "Did I request thee, Maker, from my clay / To mould me man? Did I solicit thee / From darkness to promote me?" (Milton 10.743–45). The question gives creation an ethical dimension: existence has been imposed rather than requested. Shelley then makes *Paradise Lost* one of the works through which the creature interprets his own condition. The parallel is imperfect, and that imperfection matters. Adam has a creator who recognizes him and a place within creation; the creature understands himself as having a creator who abandons him and a world that refuses him. Song's study of *Frankenstein* and *Paradise Lost* helps complicate this intertext by emphasizing mediation and translation rather than treating Shelley's

Poetry in Prose

Three or fewer verse lines stay in the sentence; mark line breaks with slashes

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Container Source
Article title in
quotation marks;
journal title
italicized in Works
Cited

relationship to Milton as simple borrowing: (Song 513) The creature learns who he might be through inherited stories, but those stories do not provide a stable category for a being who is created like Adam yet excluded like Satan.

The problem of responsibility also extends beyond Victor. The National Library of Medicine exhibition's "Introduction" describes Frankenstein as posing questions about individual and societal responsibility and connects the novel's scientific context with unchecked power, self-serving ambition, and consequences for the human community: ("Introduction") That institutional reading is especially useful because the creature's exclusion is never purely private. Victor initiates the pattern, but other people reproduce it whenever appearance becomes sufficient reason for fear or violence: Another exhibition page: "Poor, Helpless, Miserable Wretch," describes Shelley's creature as intelligent and sensitive and emphasizes that his turn toward rage and revenge follows his denial of human relationships and social acceptance. Shelley, therefore, turns monstrosity into a relational category: the creature is repeatedly treated as monstrous before observers have evidence of monstrous conduct. The novel does not claim that rejection inevitably produces violence. It shows instead that moral development occurs within relationships and that those relationships can become part of the explanation for what a person later chooses to do.

Yet Shelley's argument loses its force if social rejection becomes a complete excuse. After the De Lacey episode, the creature declares "everlasting war against the species" and directs particular hatred toward Victor (Shelley, vol. 2, ch. 8). The declaration marks a change from suffering exclusion to choosing retaliation. His anger is understandable within the history the novel has constructed, but understanding motive is not the same as suspending moral judgment. By turning injury into a program of revenge, he deliberately reproduces the suffering

Counterpressure
A strong argument
tests its own claim
instead of turning
explanation into
excuse

No Author

The in-text citation:
a quoted short title
fills the author slot

Second No-Author Source

The same publisher
can supply more
than one no-author
entry

Synthesis
Distinguishes
causal explanation
from moral
responsibility

he condemns in others. Failed responsibility helps explain the emergence of monstrosity, but it does not perform the creature's later actions for him. He remains capable of reflection and, therefore, capable of choice.

Adaptation as Evidence
The film is analyzed as an interpretation, not summarized for variety

Branagh's Mary Shelley's Frankenstein makes the novel's conflict over responsibility unusually explicit by staging it as a direct confrontation between creator and creation. The creature challenges Victor to consider what follows from having given him life and then abandoned him, before asking for a companion who might offer the recognition denied to him elsewhere. His appeal shifts between the possibility of affection and the threat of retaliation, preserving the tension Shelley develops between victimhood and agency. The adaptation, therefore, does not simply make the creature more sympathetic. It dramatizes the same moral problem that structures the novel: rejection helps explain his transformation, but his capacity to understand and describe that rejection also reveals a being capable of reflection and choice.

Conclusion
No new evidence:
the paragraph
synthesizes the
paper's established
reasoning

The creature's monstrosity is ultimately neither purely imposed nor innate. Shelley makes Victor responsible for creating life and refusing its obligations; the human world is responsible for converting visible difference into exclusion; and the creature is responsible for the revenge he chooses. These forms of responsibility do not cancel one another. They accumulate. The novel is therefore more unsettling than either a warning about scientific ambition or a defense of an oppressed outsider. Victor's abandonment matters because the creature begins by seeking a relationship. Social rejection matters because it teaches him to expect hostility. His choices matter because suffering does not remove moral agency. Shelley's larger warning is not that rejection automatically creates monsters, but that moral judgment becomes incomplete when it ignores the relationships in which character develops. The creature is responsible for what he becomes, but he is not solely responsible for the conditions under which that becoming occurs.

Final Sentence
Ends on the paper's
larger implication,
not the thesis
restated

Works Cited

Works Cited
Heading

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new page, same
running head and
numbering

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←→ Cambra-Badii, Irene, et al. "Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus: A Classic Novel to Stimulate the Analysis of Complex Contemporary Issues in Biomedical Sciences." *BMC Medical Ethics*, vol. 22, 2021, article 17. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12910-021-00586-7>.

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No-Author Entry

The quoted title
moves into the
author position

Second No-Author
Entry

Same publisher, two
separate title-led
entries

Alphabetical
Order

No-author entries
alphabetize by their
quoted title

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Reconciliation
Every in-text source
appears here, and
every entry is
actually cited

Song, Eric B. "Frankenstein, Paradise Lost, and the Fiction of Translation." *Modern Philology*,
vol. 119, no. 4, 2022, pp. 513–34. <https://doi.org/10.1086/719167>

DOI Preferred
Use a DOI when
available because it
is designed to
remain stable

Sample