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What Makes a Monster and What Makes a Man? Exploring the Relationship between the Creator and the Creation in Three Gothic Novels

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Abstract

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, and Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* all tell tales of both men and monsters. Identifying which characters fit into which category, however, requires further analysis. Each story presents its own interpretation of the creation process pursued by very different creators and yielding very different creations. Victor Frankenstein is motivated by pride, scientific curiosity, and the hope of healing the human faults to build a huge creature out of corpse parts that becomes so ugly in life that no one can treat this monster with anything but fear and rage. Henry Jekyll is driven to resolve his inner spiritual conflict between the good and evil halves of his soul, and that leads him to unleash upon the world a being of pure, demoniacal malevolence. Artist Basil Hallward and philosopher Lord Henry Wotton take under their wing the young, beautiful Dorian Gray and influence him so strongly with their love and moral curiosity that he turns to a life of inescapable and damnable immorality. Can these creations be fully blamed for their actions? In each case, these monsters come from highly faulted creators that will not or cannot take the necessary action to see their creations through to success. These creations become monsters because they have no choice, yet if the creators are truly responsible for the beings to which they give life, does that not make *them* the monsters? The works of Shelley, Stevenson, and Wilde function as a clear warning. If a creator fails to provide his creation with the responsibilities called for by the creation process, the creature will fail. And, if the creation fails, so does the creator.

Keywords

British Literature, Gothic literature, monsters, creator, creation, Frankenstein, Jekyll & Hyde, Dorian Gray

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WHAT MAKES A MONSTER *and*

WHAT MAKES A MAN?

*Exploring the Relationship between the Creator
and the Creation in Three Gothic Novels*



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2013 Senior Honors Thesis
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What Makes a Monster and What Makes a Man?

Exploring the Relationship between the Creator and the Creation in Three Gothic Novels

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Introduction

The relationship between creator and creature is one that has been explored in the literary world for hundreds of years. Mary Shelley, Robert Louis Stevenson, and Oscar Wilde have contributed their own pieces of Gothic fiction to this area of study, presenting in one century three varied and intriguing interpretations of the creation process. Their stories have become monster classics and are known today throughout much of the literary world. *Frankenstein* tells the tale of an arrogant scientist with good intentions who creates a monster too terrible to love. *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* is a story about a conflicted doctor and philosopher who takes a risk and unleashes the physical embodiment of evil upon himself and the world. *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is the story of two middle-aged men, one blindly in love and the other morally curious, who guide a highly impressionable younger man to a place of permanent and unchangeable immorality. These three novels tell the stories of creators who, unable to carry out the responsibilities of the creation process, construct and animate beings that cannot cope with the world around them and ultimately fail. These creatures are judged and hated and learn to treat others the same way. Regardless of the intentions of the creator, should he fail to provide the necessary support for his creation, that being will undoubtedly become a monster.

Monster stories have thrilled readers since their genesis, but the definition of a monster is complex and vague. Monsters often elicit fear and anger stemming from their looks alone. That tendency, however, sheds no light on the true nature of these creations-turned-evil. Understanding what makes a monster requires studying the creature's genesis in the mind of his creator. *Frankenstein*, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* are works of fiction, but their authors, their creators, based these stories on not just nightmares but nightmares that are applicable regardless of their fictional elements and

undeniably human. Shelley, Stevenson, and Wilde saw these monsters in the humanity around them¹. These writers recognized true fear: of science, of moral transgression, of parasitism, of duality, and of the crisis of determining one's identity. They saw the horror buried in the human condition and sought to deliver a lesson, a lesson that warns creators to support their creations or risk releasing a monster. If a creator cannot maintain the responsibilities associated with the creation process, his creature will fail. If the creation fails, ultimately, so does the creator.

Background on Novels

Completed in 1818, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus* was started in 1816, on a working vacation for then 19-year-old Mary and her husband Percy Shelley to visit Lord Byron and his personal physician, John Polidori, in Geneva. One night the group gathered together over a collection of German ghost stories and the seed was planted. Byron suggested each write his or her own supernatural tale, and that night Mary Shelley had the dream in which the story of Victor Frankenstein and his creature was conceived (*The Annotated Frankenstein* 21).

As a creator in her own right, Mary Shelley had a difficult life. She was in a constant battle with her father William Godwin, often feeling as though he cared very little for her and blamed her for her mother's death by septic poisoning in 1797, only ten days after Mary's birth (*The Annotated Frankenstein* 6). Though Godwin made some valid attempts at parenthood, when he remarried, the introduction of a stepmother and stepsiblings interrupted Mary's happiness. Percy Shelley actually became acquainted with the Godwin family through his near worship of

¹ Hogle theorizes that these fears regarding changes in humanity stem from the time. He speculates that turns of the centuries have a serious impact on thinking ("The Gothic at our turn of the century: our culture of simulation and the return of the body," *Essays and Studies*. 2001).

William's writing but by 1814, Mary's enchanting, 16-year-old persona had stolen the young student's affections (*The Annotated Frankenstein* 8). Later that summer the two announced their affair and eloped, leaving behind Percy's then wife, Harriet Westbrook, and all of Godwin's family except stepsister Claire Clairmont (*The Annotated Frankenstein* 9). Percy's first wife committed suicide after becoming pregnant with another man's child in 1816, freeing Percy to marry the bright-eyed, aspiring writer Mary. That same year Mary, with her husband's help, began the novel that would eventually become *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus*². While the novel was popular enough during the time, it did not hold enough power to keep tragedy out of its author's life. Mary and Percy lost their first child in 1815, one in 1816, another in 1818, and struggled through multiple miscarriages by 1822 (*The Annotated Frankenstein* 12).

Mary Shelley and her husband may have struggled to create human life, but her story of Dr. Frankenstein and his experiment has survived longer than any living child ever could. As the novel is formatted in concentric circles of narration the reader must pick through the stories of seaman Robert Walton, scientist Frankenstein, and his living behemoth before all three mesh together in the final chapter of the novel. As an author and creator, Mary weaves a complicated creation story of her own; tinted with references to Milton's *Paradise Lost*, her novel presents a new interpretation of the story of Adam and God choosing instead to add a level of tragedy by leaving Frankenstein's being nameless and forever alone. Shelley's tale is one of monsters and men, but she delicately leaves it to the reader to navigate the multiple, layered narrations and decide which characters fall into which category.

² As Heffernan clarifies, this reference to Prometheus comes from Victor's experimentation with the spark of life and the resulting fire of destruction. (Heffernan, James A. W. "Looking at the Monster: 'Frankenstein' and Film," *Critical Inquiry*. Vol. 24. No. 1. 1997.)

Robert Louis Stevenson's shorter tale *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* has garnered nearly as much fame in the last hundred years as its predecessor, *Frankenstein*. Like Shelley, a sickly Stevenson also claims his exploration of physical evil stems from a dream sequence, his in 1885. After being woken by her husband's cries, wife Fanny jolted Stevenson awake and the creation of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* began. In three days Stevenson had drafted a first version that he put before his wife. After being told he missed the allegory he returned to his desk where he promptly tossed the first draft into the fire. In three more days he completed a second draft that was published in 1886 (*The Essential Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* 5-6).

With a style comparable to Shelley's narrative form, Stevenson also uses a more complex style that purposefully leaves a reader making conjectures, until the true natures of Dr. Jekyll and the devious Mr. Hyde are revealed by the doctor's hidden journal at the end of the story. Stevenson suffered greatly throughout his life, constantly battling severe illness, yet in the midst of his own darkness he was able to create a huge wealth of writings while maintaining what many considered to be a cheerful attitude. David Daiches suggests that this perseverance stemmed not from optimism but from an "acceptance of the inexplicable contradictions of life and the inevitability of extinction at death" (*The Essential Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* 9). And this deeper, more likely explanation rings true in Stevenson's study of duality. A third similarity between Stevenson and Shelley is that they both had rocky relationships with their fathers. What began for Stevenson as unadulterated adoration for his father, became atheistic rebellion against him, and eventually culminated in the writer being forbidden, because of illness, from attending his father's funeral, one year after *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. The author faced his sickness every day, coming close to death multiple times, but continued steadily writing until 1894 when he passed away in Vailima, Samoa.

Four years later, Oscar Wilde was weaving his way through his own monster story that studied not just duality and evil, but also more openly tackled issues in contemporary Victorian society. The struggles in Wilde's life have never been successfully kept secret and many of them come into play in 1890, in his only novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. The edition of the novel sent to publishers in both England and America in 1890 was edited heavily in both nations, before being released, on grounds of obscenity (*The Picture of Dorian Gray* 4). Revisions were so thorough that in many instances vital moments were changed and altered; it was not until recently that Wilde's original manuscript was published. *Dorian Gray* is heralded as one of Wilde's most personal creations and is also considered, by some, to be a premonition of his own downfall. The main trio of characters and their undeniable homosexuality upset some of the more powerful citizens of England, even with thorough editing, leading directly to Wilde's accusation, conviction, prison sentence, and death in 1900.

Wilde's first affair with another man is said to have occurred in the year 1886 when the aesthete was 32 years of age. His double life continued unbeknownst to his wife or children until around 1889 or 1890 when Wilde took up with Lord Alfred Douglas (*The Picture of Dorian Gray* 13). Douglas's father, John Douglas the 9th Marquis of Queensberry, first began a series of public accusations against Wilde on the opening night of *The Importance of Being Earnest* in 1895. After receiving a note calling him a "sodomite" later that week, Wilde, encouraged by Douglas, decided to prosecute the Marquis for criminal libel (*The Picture of Dorian Gray* 15). The evidence against Wilde led to charges against him of "Gross Indecency," of which he was convicted later that year. Publications of certain especially graphic passages from *Dorian Gray* were used as evidence against the author (*The Picture of Dorian Gray* 20). Even if it played a part in his conviction, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is a work of art that studies both the secrets of

man and the dangers of indulging in those temptations³. Though *Dorian Gray* marks the beginning of the end for Oscar Wilde, he is unashamed to say that the novel “contains much of [him] in it” (*The Picture of Dorian Gray* 14) and it certainly succeeds in creating a colorful image of Victorian society and the murky truth lying beneath its brightly painted façade.

The Mind of the Creator

In the relationship between any creator and his creation, the creation process, beginning with developing a thorough awareness of the mind of the creator, is vitally important. Each novel functions as a creation story, but is also a creation of its own, where the author serves as the parent figure. Interestingly, while each of the three novels is a creation story, each also tells a creation story. The creation theme functions to explore not just scientifically but medically, mentally, emotionally, and physically. Each of these three novels tells the story of one or multiple creators driven by a myriad of forces to step beyond the typical human manner of procreation and, using science or social manipulation, create a being strongly disfigured or corrupt and heralded universally as a villain. In order to comprehend why this is a common chain of events, one might usefully start at the beginning, in the mind of the creator.

Victor Frankenstein was born into a relatively upper class home in Switzerland. He was raised in an area rich in natural beauty that provided a lifelong comfort and escape for him. While readers are not given the name “Frankenstein” until the middle of chapter four, after he has already begun his fated scientific experiment, it is announced in the first paragraph that the

³ Linda Dryden argues that while *Dorian Gray* is the first of many studies by Wilde into the world of duality, this novel is the only one that approaches it with a tone of seriousness. Other works with a similar theme have a comedic irony that is not present in *Dorian Gray*. (“Oscar Wilde: Gothic Ironies and Terrible Dualities,” *Short Story Criticism*. Vol. 77. Detroit: Gale, 2005.)

family is well respected and thought of highly in the Geneva. Upon the birth of their first son, Victor, the Frankenstein parents turned away from the public world to focus on raising their family. As a narrator, Victor admits that no “creature could have more tender parents” (*The Annotated Frankenstein* 88)⁴, but as time passes he must confront his first tragedy in the form of the death of his mother, hearkening back to the story of Mary Shelley herself.

As a further sign of their kindness, Caroline and Alphonse Frankenstein adopted Elizabeth Lavenza, a first cousin of Victor, and they were raised together as playmates and intended spouses. Victor and Elizabeth spent much of their childhood close and that blossomed into a close friendship in early adulthood. She was “docile and good tempered,” but her feelings were “strong and deep” (*The Annotated Frankenstein* 89). Her grace and imagination appealed deeply to Victor, but she still struck him as “the most fragile creature in the world” (*The Annotated Frankenstein* 90); yet, in that dissimilarity there was also appeal. The other people surrounding Victor in his life at Geneva were Henry Clerval, boyhood friend and schoolmate, and younger brothers Ernest and William. In the midst of a happy childhood, Victor was given the opportunity to pursue what interested him most, and it was at an early age that “natural philosophy [...] regulated [his] fate” (*The Annotated Frankenstein* 91). At thirteen, he stumbled upon the mystical theory of Cornelius Agrippa and became markedly changed by the “new light” and “joy” (*The Annotated Frankenstein* 92) he discovered there. The seed was planted, and even though his father shunned Victor’s newfound interest, the boy failed to understand that Agrippa’s scientific theory had long been exploded.

⁴ It is interesting to note that Victor so thoroughly eulogizes his own wonderful childhood surrounded by loving family and then goes on to deny his creature the same comforts. (Bissonette, Melissa Bloom. “Teaching the Monster: *Frankenstein* and Critical Thinking,” *College Literature*. Vol. 37. No. 3. 2010.)

Victor held on to his interest in occult scientific theory and, in part, blamed his father for not explaining the faults with the theories when he was a boy. His teenage “dreams were therefore undisturbed by reality” (*The Annotated Frankenstein* 93), however, and he entered with fervor into the study of the philosopher’s stone and the elixir of life, in hopes of discovering these wonders and achieving glory and renown. From a young age, Victor developed lofty goals and dreamt of accomplishing great deeds, much like the novel’s outermost narrator, Robert Walton, and held so strongly to these passions that they translated directly into his adult pursuits as well. The young Frankenstein longed to cure the human form of disease, raise ghosts and devils, and experiment with the powers of electricity, and though his father and professors scoffed at him, the opposition developed into his steadfast stubbornness.

It was at the same time that Victor planned to leave for university, at age 17, when his mother’s death brought him his “first misfortune” and “omen [...] of future misery” (*The Annotated Frankenstein* 99). He was already seriously interested in science, but this tragedy interrupted his studies. His mother’s dying wish was for his unity with companion Elizabeth, and the fierce familial love behind this request was regarded with utmost respect. Elizabeth was changed by the death of her aunt as well and, without losing her bright presence, strived to step up, embrace duty, and help her family heal. Even with this help and comfort, Victor undoubtedly carried some of this sadness to university with him, where he first became aware of the pains of loneliness. He was forced to find new companions and become his own protector (*The Annotated Frankenstein* 101). While he had moments of longing for Elizabeth and Clerval, Victor did find some measure of comfort in his drive for the acquisition of knowledge. In the first weeks of his university life, however, his “chimeras of boundless grandeur” (*The Annotated Frankenstein* 103), in regards to the science of immortality, were encouraged by his professors to instead be

changed to realities that held little worth for Victor. Not until Waldman reintroduces the magic of natural philosophy to Victor, through chemistry, is he able to find his niche at the university and begin the journey that will ultimately lead to his destruction.

Victor Frankenstein's childhood and upbringing are remarkably normal. He is sheltered from much of the evil in the world because of his societal status and loving family, but he is not kept from experiencing the realities of tragedy as well. Given the freedom to explore and learn in a safe and supportive environment allows Victor to choose his own fate, the death of his own mother likely influencing his interest in the science and limits of the human body. He has a tendency to be stubborn when challenged, an attribute he also carries into his adulthood and his interaction with his yet to be conceived creature. Given his childhood, one can assert that nothing in Victor's life is especially dark or evil; the only serious indicator of his future experimentation and the resulting tragedies is his interest in science. Is Mary Shelley implying that within the life of the young man, science is the key factor that inspires him toward non-traditional creation and ultimately leads to the birth of the monster? Looking at the facts, recognizing that a passion for science is Victor's only remarkable characteristic, this implication is certainly a viable possibility. Chemistry and the study of electricity are definite, primary elements in establishing Victor Frankenstein's eventual failure as both a man and a creator.

Jekyll has an equally enthusiastic interest in the world of science and medicine⁵. Whereas in *Frankenstein* the reader hears Victor's own report of his life through Walton, in *Jekyll and Hyde*, the reader discovers Jekyll's background and frame of mind through the narration of Mr. Utterson, a lawyer who has been friends with the doctor and in charge of his legal affairs. The

⁵ Some may argue that because Jekyll and Hyde technically share a body, that they cannot be separated out into creator and creation. Joyce Carol Oates believes they can and that the creator-creation relationship rings just as true in *Jekyll and Hyde* as it does in *Frankenstein* and *Dracula*. ("Jekyll/Hyde," *Novels for Students*. Vol. 11. Detroit: Gale, 2001.)

full story of Jekyll and Hyde is not disclosed until the very end of the narrative. Initially, there is no family background provided for Jekyll, but it is mentioned that he is wealthy enough to live in a spacious home with multiple rooms, including space for a garden area or courtyard and a fully equipped laboratory. He also has a full staff of servants at his dispose who eventually play an important role in uncovering the truth of Dr. Jekyll's relation to Mr. Hyde and their subsequent, mutual demise. Though the reader technically meets Mr. Hyde before Dr. Jekyll, as early as chapter two it is made obvious through Utterson's study of Jekyll's will that he has no family close enough to him to be included in any part of the inheritance upon the doctor's death.

Utterson is unnerved by Jekyll's decision to include Hyde alone in his will. When the lawyer first encounters Mr. Hyde, he is struck by the evil he senses in the character and jumps to the conclusion that Jekyll has been pressured by the monster to take such drastic action in Hyde's favor. Even though there is vague and scattered description of Jekyll prior to his own final account, one can tell from the certainty of Utterson's conclusion, that he believes Jekyll to be an outstanding man, incapable of willingly cavorting with someone of Hyde's nature. The lawyer recognizes that his friend was "wild when he was young" (*The Essential Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* 52) and also conjectures that perhaps Jekyll is paying for some "ghost of old sin" (*The Essential Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* 53). Even with his speculation, Utterson's concern continues to grow as he is completely unwilling to see the doctor as anything other than a fairly blameless man who was humbled by his own misdeeds and rose from a rowdy childhood into a sober and grateful adulthood.

Utterson's characterization of Stevenson's creator is mainly complimentary. He is reluctant to put any measure of blame or responsibility on Jekyll and, by avoiding this truth, ultimately prevents himself from being able to save his friend. Yet Jekyll's intuitive curiosity and

interest in the multiple personas within the human body are to blame for the creation of Hyde. He did, as Utterson projects, begin his experimentation with benevolent motivations. His scientific curiosity is similar to Victor Frankenstein's. The interest alone, however, is not solely to blame, for curiosity does not necessarily lead to action. If one were to stop and weigh the possible outcomes or consequences, this curiosity may be assuaged before any hasty and possibly dangerous decisions could be made. Jekyll and Frankenstein are victims of curiosity, but are also lacking in forethought, the ultimate reason each does something evil.

When the reader finally comes to the last chapter, Jekyll's account of his experimentation, a more complete presentation of the creator's mind is provided for the reader⁶. Jekyll opens his statement by claiming a large fortune and specifying that from his birth he was guaranteed an "honorable and distinguished future." He also admits to the "impatient gaiety" that Utterson mentions with concern in his own account of Jekyll's persona. During his youth, he adopted the tendency to wear a grave countenance before the public and conceal his pleasures. This duplicity continued to grow, and as Dr. Jekyll aged, he began to reflect on these irregularities and came to hide and regard his secret pleasures with "an almost morbid sense of shame (*The Essential Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* 115). His own feelings eventually blossomed into a more complex study of the existence of man and the two parts buried within him, one of good, the other evil⁷. Jekyll considered man's compound nature to be universal and unavoidable, the root of most inner conflict in each human being. The friction of recognizing that one can be

⁶ Importantly, psychology was still in its early stages. While cases of split personality had been reported, there was still mass panic about the scientific study of the human mind. ("Introduction," *The Definitive "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" Companion*. Garland Publishing, Inc., 1983)

⁷ Oates views this separation to be between ego and instinct or civilization and "nature," rather than between good and evil. (Oates, Joyce Carol. "Jekyll/Hyde," *Novels for Students*. Vol. 11. Detroit: Gale, 2001.)

completely himself in both the evil and good forms leads to a serious tension, especially considering these forces, though at work together in each human, are also in constant opposition.

Jekyll eventually lands on the discovery that “man is not truly one, but truly two” (*The Essential Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* 116), with no room for gradation in between⁸. He considered this duality of good and evil to be both natural and primitive and reasoned that if one “could rightly be said to be either, it was only because [one] was radically both.” Upon determining the extent of these good and evil halves, Jekyll sought to eliminate the conflict between the two by physically separating them from their mutual containment in one body (*The Essential Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* 117). This conflict, this strict separation of pleasure and societal expectations, was a constant torture to the young doctor. He was haunted by his shame, but only found relief by continuing to feed both good and evil sides of his person. Because Jekyll felt conflict within himself, he supposed that translated directly to the mechanics of the soul, and believed the only resolution to this relentless and cyclic shame and frustration was to fully separate both halves into their own pure essences⁹. It is from this conclusion that Jekyll launches his full scientific exploration and experimentation upon himself that eventually leads to the creation of Mr. Hyde.

Taking a step away from scientific curiosity and entering a more socially focused atmosphere, the exploration of the creators in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* calls for a very different kind of study. Actually pinpointing the characters one could accurately name as creators in the novel is a challenge on its own. Basil Hallward and Lord Henry Wotton are undeniably creators, the first of the fated painting and the second of Dorian Gray himself. However, because

⁸ This gradient discussion is made in John Herdman’s article “The Double in Decline” in *Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism* Volume 192 (Detroit: Gale, 2008).

⁹ Stevenson’s *Jekyll and Hyde* predates most of Freud’s publications but as Geduld points out, the most common reading of Hyde is still based on Freud’s theory of the impulsive id. (“Introduction,” *The Definitive “Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.”* Garland Publishing, Inc., 1983)

Gray exists as his own character separate from the other two, his decisions to pursue Wotton's extravagant suggestions puts some of the blame on himself. While they all play very different roles, Hallward, Wotton, and Gray are each responsible for the resulting monsters—man and painting. Seeing as all three cannot be equally lumped into the same category vaguely titled “Creators,” individual study of the three men is required to determine their independent roles in the thorough corruption of Dorian Gray.

Basil Hallward has perhaps the most distinct claim to Dorian's creation, as he is the artist who paints the masterpiece that so enchants his beautiful, young subject. Basil is a bachelor, living in relative wealth, but functioning in an equally solitary lifestyle, and finds both wonder and comfort in his art. The narrative opens to the painting already nearly complete and Basil is already quick to recognize it as one of his best paintings. The reason for this, he says to Lord Henry, is that he has put too much of himself into it (*The Picture of Dorian Gray* 72). To some extent, Basil is already claiming his own creator-hood by delivering this simple line. When making a study of creators and their resulting creations, this sharing of personality is impossible to be avoided. How can one create something without including at least faint hints of himself? Already in chapter one, Basil is highlighting one of the most dangerous risks for any creator, and in effect foreshadows his own downfall. By opening the novel midway through the completion of the painting, Wilde invites readers into the heart of the creation process, but has already placed some responsibility on Basil, whether or not the painter realizes it then.

Each novel presents a different staging for very similar stories. The skeleton of all three novels tells the same tale of a lonely man or men, stepping beyond the realm of typical human behavior, and consequently creating something morally broken and ugly. *Frankenstein* shows readers the whole process, beginning long before Victor starts experimenting with electricity and

bodily reanimation. *Jekyll and Hyde* opens after the creation process is already complete, the first scene that takes place demonstrates the evil of the creature. In *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, a third and more complex look at the story of creation is presented by dropping readers into a story that has already begun, with multiple creators already tied up in the responsibility for a creation that has not yet been fully developed. When studying the minds of Wilde's creators, it is important to note that when the novel opens Basil is already semi-responsible for Dorian's eventual corruption but the artist does not actually claim any kind of responsibility, much like Frankenstein, until it is too late for redemption. However, where Frankenstein is disgusted by his creation, Basil Hallward is blinded by the exact opposite. He sees, both in Gray and his painting, only love and beauty, and it allows for Basil to deny his subject's evil ways for years. Even if he occasionally questions Dorian's character, beginning after Sibyl's death, ultimately he pushes these questions aside to continue loving and supporting his pupil.

Lord Henry Wotton is more of a creator like Jekyll and Frankenstein in that he builds Dorian's character by experimentation. The only main difference is that his process is social and philosophical, rather than scientific. Lord Henry is cynical and curious, stuck in a marriage he continually scoffs at, and he is, stated simply, bored. Hallward even calls him out in the first scene in the novel, clarifying that while Lord Henry never preaches a moral thing, he never actively does anything wrong (*The Picture of Dorian Gray* 76). Wotton is attracted to Dorian's beauty because he equates it with youth and "passionate purity" (*The Picture of Dorian Gray* 90), much like Wilde himself. When confronted with Dorian Gray's clean slate, Henry recognizes the opportunity for his philosophy to translate into action, unlike it has in his own life. Wotton is a firm believer in the concept of self, thus proving his hypocrisy. He preaches to Dorian during their first meeting that any influence on a person by another is immoral because it

inhibits the receiver from acting on their own natural inclinations. Lord Henry claims the “aim of life is self-development” (*The Picture of Dorian Gray* 94), but that opinion certainly does not prevent the man from exerting all of his influence on Dorian’s fertile mind. Somehow, neither of these facts seems to fully enter into Lord Henry’s consciousness either because he, like Hallward, spends the entire story completely oblivious to the dangers of the impact he has had on Dorian.

Unlike Hallward, however, Lord Henry Wotton does not deny the influence¹⁰. He has no grounds to do so; for as the story plays out, the more time Dorian spends in Henry’s company, the more corrupt he becomes. It is Wotton who introduces not just thoughts, but actions as well, particularly in the wake of Sybil Vane’s death. Part of what makes Henry Wotton such a thorough creator is that he is constantly cultivating Dorian’s awareness long after he has already witnessed the first evil changes in his painting. That is not to say, however, that Wotton is wholly responsible for Dorian’s actions. This is where Dorian’s own hand in his creation enters the scene. His perception was strongly altered by Henry’s talk of the impermanence of youth and its subsequent pricelessness, and in the wake of Wotton’s lecture the boy’s life “suddenly became fiery-coloured” (*The Picture of Dorian Gray* 96). The fated wish made by Dorian, however, is an action taken by himself alone. Where Wotton understands the mortality of youth and therefore encourages Gray to appreciate it while he still has it, it is Dorian’s own arrogance and grandeur that leads him to beg the universe for the painting to age in place of his body. Is it possible this decision is hastened by Wotton’s influence and Dorian’s own confusion regarding the abrupt

¹⁰ As Miller highlights, one can tell Wilde supports Henry’s philosophy because he gives it the power to alter Dorian’s life. He also, however, recognizes the danger because of how thoroughly he details the negative effects of this influence. (Miller, Karl. “Queer Fellows,” *Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism*. Vol. 192. Detroit: Gale, 2008.)

change in his perception? Yes, of course; but, separate from any thought processes, the actions taken by Dorian begin as and continue to be solely his own.

Determining the extent of the mind of the creator prior to creation is most straightforward in the context of *Frankenstein*. While Walton narrates the entire novel, Victor Frankenstein begins his story at his birth and before the reader has formed any complex or detailed opinions regarding him or his creation. By doing so, Shelley presents the most complete and chronological interpretation of the creation process, even if it is twisted into multiple narrations. Predicting the genesis of the mind of the creator in *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* is nearly impossible because the reader does not have access to Jekyll's first hand account until the final pages of the tale. In this sense, one is forced to make assumptions about Jekyll's mindset and motives based on Utterson's descriptions and concerns. This helps build tension within the story, but leaves the image of the creator incomplete until the conclusion of the novel. *The Picture of Dorian Gray* introduces even more complexity in regards to the creation process because the novel drops readers into the middle of a scene and, one could argue, the creation process itself is not complete until very late in the novel. Even after Dorian's climactic crime, murdering his former friend and creator Basil Hallward, Lord Henry continues to influence Dorian's mind and actions. In this way, the boundaries of Dorian's creation are continually blurred, aided as well by the implication of Dorian as his own creator.

Providing such detailed background for each creator is vital in understanding just what encouraged these conflicted men to step beyond typical human nature and extend instead, into the supernatural. Their stories are considered 'monster' tales and are treated as samples of grotesque fantasy, yet they have climbed the literary ladder to become some of the most highly reproduced stories in the entertainment world of today. No one can deny that the stories of

Frankenstein, Dracula, Dorian Gray, Jekyll, and Hyde have been and are continuing to be fan favorites. This timeless quality, this cult-like interest, obsession even, speaks to a deeper relatability buried in the monstrous words of each of these novels. In order to grasp the true value behind each novel one must fully explore the creation process, how the thought in the mind of the creator grows into a creation and how the resulting actions and consequences dictate the fates of all involved. With the stage being set and the mind of the creator being introduced, the next step in the journey to understanding requires tackling the motivations for creation and the physical process that leads to the births of Frankenstein's Monster, Mr. Hyde, and Dorian Gray.

The Reason for Creation and The Creation Process

It is naïve to assume that the desire to create is shared and similar. In *Frankenstein*, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* each man deemed "The Creator" is motivated by different means, living in different scenarios, and undertaking different creative processes to ultimately produce very different creations. While, there are elements that unite each creator, making generalizations about the conceptualization of these very different monsters can lead to questionable results. Victor Frankenstein is driven by a scientific curiosity that is enabled by his family's financial comfort and facilitated by their wealth. While one could argue Jekyll is also driven by scientific curiosity, his stems from a completely different place. Jekyll feels forced to hide his life of pleasure from the world and believes the only solution to the conflict boiling constantly within is to physically separate both halves of his persona. His actions may be scientifically similar to Frankenstein's but his social motivation and inner struggle make Henry Jekyll the perfect bridge between *Frankenstein* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Wilde's novel strays even further from scientific study but includes

an equally strong curiosity factor. Basil may be more driven by art, but Henry Wotton inflicts so much of his philosophy on Dorian solely because he wants to watch these devilish thoughts take place and bloom into action. Where *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* combines scientific curiosity with vague references to violating societal norms, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is a marriage of curiosity, moral fascination, and the glaring societal judgment of personal pleasure.

A close study of Victor Frankenstein exposes his interest in natural philosophy as one of benevolent roots. He's motivated to study science because of an interest in electricity and the supernatural, yes, but also by the appeal of remedying the frailties and shortcomings of the human body. After watching his mother succumb to scarlet fever it is no wonder why he was driving to explore the medical miracles of the human body. That, paired with a heavy exposure to mythological theory of the supernatural, led to Victor's initial experimentation with reanimation of the human body. Studying chemistry and the composition of the human form, aided by access to texts and diagrams, enabled Frankenstein to begin outlining his plan for re-creation. As he states multiple times in just a few pages, he spent the bulk of his time at university in solitude. Eventually all of his idle thinking, bolstered by curiosity, led Frankenstein to the lab of a science professor and once he had mastered the machinery, his efforts began in full.

Frankenstein devoted two full and undisturbed years to his research. An obsession in the mind is one thing, but an obsession taken and so thoroughly acted upon makes it something of a different caliber. As his scientific awareness improved rapidly, so did his manner of thinking and his skill in the laboratory. Frankenstein was engaged, heart and soul, in a scientific pursuit with constant food for discovery and wonder (*The Annotated Frankenstein* 107) that blossomed into

new discoveries in scientific equipment and new questions regarding the genesis of life. He recognizes that his curiosity regarding the mystery of human animation is bold; however, in order to make earth-shattering discoveries, there is no choice but to rise above cowardice and carelessness. He continues in his studies, determined to delve as deeply as he can into human physiology. It is in his acquaintance with anatomy that he becomes consciously aware of his disgust with human shortcomings. Disturbed by the corruption of death upon the human form, Frankenstein focuses his study on the causation exemplified in the change from life to death and vice versa (*The Annotated Frankenstein* 108). It is in the minutiae, here, where he eventually comes upon his discovery. Frankenstein's initial obsession has finally borne fruit, fruit that will spur him forward into an area of science so far unexplored.

After sleepless days and nights Frankenstein comes upon the cornerstone of his success; he learns not just the cause of generation and life but more importantly becomes "capable of bestowing animation upon lifeless matter" (*The Annotated Frankenstein* 109). Mary Shelley is, of course, careful enough to hide this wonder from the reader, disguising it under Frankenstein's unwillingness to invite his listener Walton to suffer the same fate. Where he was an eager student, Frankenstein now warns that the acquisition of knowledge can be dangerous and that a man who aspires beyond his natural place in the world will likely confront a life of constant struggle (*The Annotated Frankenstein* 109). Though the first and key step in reanimation now belonged to Frankenstein, he hesitated before moving further. His imagination, augmented by his prior successes, and his ego, swollen by his new discovery lead before long, to Frankenstein's decision to attempt a human reanimation. His initial plan to create a "human being" (*The Annotated Frankenstein* 109) was truncated quickly because he found it difficult to work in that

scale. He instead, making a fatal mistake, chooses to create an enormous being, eight feet in height and proportionally accurate.

While this may have eased the creation, it certainly has a powerfully detrimental impact on the outcome of both creator and creature. Though Victor is quick to boast about his accelerated learning and great improvement over the two years he spends at university, his lack of forethought first becomes noticeably detrimental in the initial steps he takes in his animation experimentation. Frankenstein chooses to make his being huge in order to build a more accurate frame, raising the possibility of reanimation success; however, at no point in the story does he ever seem to look ahead and reason what his being would realistically look like when fully animated. Making an eight-foot-tall being in a world where the average height of a grown man was less than six feet would contain its own set of problems even if the creature were to have the most generous and loving personality, and Frankenstein plainly does not comprehend this fact. Frankenstein measures his success by whether or not he can give a creature life, spending no time contemplating what that life could then become. His thought process ends with a beating heart, not recognizing that if he achieves what he calls success he will loose a literal giant among men. It is realistic to assume that no one could have truly predicted the story still to come of Frankenstein and his monster, but had the scientist spent some time contemplating the consequences of even his first choices in the creation process he could have prevented some of the torture he was destined to receive.

If one considers the size of Frankenstein's creation to be his first mistake, the others seem to grow from there. Many of these go completely unnoticed by the doctor until after his creature is already living and on the run. The sense that "a new species would bless [him] as its creator and source" continued to drive Victor onward, unaware of the possible danger within his actions.

Any doubts in the mind of Frankenstein were washed away by the comfort that should he obtain success, “no father could claim the gratitude of his child so completely as [he] should deserve theirs” (*The Annotated Frankenstein* 110). Victor’s unadulterated pride, consistently throughout his whole life but exemplified here in the creation process, is perhaps his tragic character flaw. Without his pride, however, he likely would have never entered into the field of reanimation science. So, while his pride unquestionably aids in his downfall it is also a pivotal factor in the elements that could be considered his successes as well. As Victor moves along, building an enormous creature from remains he scavenges from local graveyards, it is his pride that drives him to continue, “an almost frantic impulse [that] urged [him] forward.” Weeks became months and summer passed on as Frankenstein labored in the creation trance, losing all soul and sensation except for his one pursuit (*The Annotated Frankenstein* 111).

Frankenstein continued to fade more and more out of the world around him and into his own science. His family became disquieted by his lack of communication, his father naturally assumed he was neglecting other duties and became further frustrated by that. He missed the natural beauty of the summer months, the former comforts of nature drifted out of his life, and while the young man was aware of these changes and of his complacency for all but his work he did not or could not make an effort to change them. Regardless of his separation from nature and his family and friends, he “could not tear himself away from [his] employment [...] which had taken an irresistible hold of [his] imagination.” After being consumed by the process for months Victor even refers to it as “loathsome” but that does not stop his forward progress; he knows that he will only find comfort and relief when the “great object, which swallowed up every habit of [his] nature, should be completed.” At the time of his obsessive drive to finish his experimentation, Victor felt as if his withdrawal from everything else was perfectly acceptable.

In retrospect, however, he warns Walton that if one becomes so thoroughly devoted to a study that it consequently weakens one's affections and destroys one's taste for simple pleasures, that study is "certainly unlawful, that is to say, not befitting the human mind" (*The Annotated Frankenstein* 112).

While retrospection may be valuable for generations to come, it certainly could not save any part of Frankenstein's already tragic tale. Collectively Victor spends nine months separate from the rest of the world in the process of building his being. He spent winter, spring and summer in his laboratory, his family wondering and worried from miles away and each blossom and leaf outside going completely unnoticed. Things that made Victor happiest for the majority of his life no longer cracked his awareness, "so deeply was [he] engrossed in [his] occupation." He could not, however, mask his occasional anxiety and while his enthusiasm continued to drive him forward he became more like one "doomed by slavery to toil in the mines [...] than an artist occupied by his favorite employment" (*The Annotated Frankenstein* 113). Victor's nights became sleepless, he grew more sick and pale with every day, but still he toiled on stuck in his all-consuming experiment, longing for the success that could release him from his trance.

It was on a gloomy November night that Victor's toils finally came to a head. Battling "an anxiety that almost amounted to agony," the scientist set his final stage, gathered his instruments, and prepared to administer the spark he theorized would animate the lifeless being he created from human remains. It was past midnight when, the sound of falling rain the only interruption of the stillness in the laboratory, Victor Frankenstein beheld for the first time his own living creation. Through the haze of his dimly lit room, the father sees his son breathe hard with yellow eyes open and jerk his cold limbs into life. However, unlike the joy first time fathers often feel, Victor is jarred into disgust, first describing his creation as a "catastrophe." There is

no moment of happiness for creator and creature; instead the scientist dives into terrified anguish at the sight of his efforts made flesh, mortified by how something meant to be so beautiful produced instead a horrid wretch. The pearly whiteness of his teeth, his toned and flexing muscles, his long black hair birthed not beauty but monstrosity. Victor's proud and confident experimentation, his school success and his blind but admirable perseverance culminated not in a wonder but in an over-sized and watery-eyed mistake (*The Annotated Frankenstein* 114).

While Victor Frankenstein's reaction to his creature is plain enough, it is not evident whether he recognizes any error in his ways or, for that matter, claims any responsibility for the resulting monster. The process is simple enough; Victor believed in something, set out to make it happen, and did in fact make it happen. Once the creation is complete, however, Frankenstein instantly subtracts himself from the equation by becoming appalled at his creation with total disconnection from the process. Victor never stops to think of how monstrous the whole science of reanimation is; rather he mourns how his dream could go so unexpectedly awry. His good intentions became an obsessive hunt for scientific discovery and success, which led not to beauty but to an ugliness directly translated by Victor as wretched. Frankenstein offers no comfort to his newly alive son of sorts, but is instead so taken aback by his creation's staggering appearance, his "demoniacal corpse" (*The Annotated Frankenstein* 116), that he instantly deems his entire experimentation a miserable failure¹¹. Knowing that Victor Frankenstein did, in fact, succeed in bringing the spark of life to unanimated flesh, one cannot conclude the story there. Whether or not Victor claims responsibility for his creation, because it continues to live, so does his sordid tale.

¹¹ From this point forward readers are often sympathetic toward the creation than the creator because Frankenstein's monster is admittedly more sensitive, kind, loving, and poetic than Frankenstein himself. (Bissonette, Melissa Bloom. "Teaching the Monster: *Frankenstein* and Critical Thinking," *College Literature*. Vol. 37. No. 3. 2010.)

Whereas when Victor Frankenstein was studying science it was regularly referred to as natural philosophy, he was focused on chemistry, electricity, and anatomy much more than anything that fits under the modern umbrella of philosophy. Dr. Henry Jekyll, on the other hand, was consumed by something that can most accurately be described as natural philosophy. He had the medical and scientific background but was more passionately driven to experimentation by his theories regarding the composition of the human soul, not his physical body. His particular obsession was a much more balanced marriage between uniting spiritual and physical elements and experimenting with separating out the physical manifestations of the good and evil halves of man. Jekyll's procedure certainly fits more into the natural philosophy vein, but does ultimately lead both creature and creator to a very similar place as Frankenstein and his monster.

Dr. Jekyll, after years of study in his own life, set out to separate the two polar twins continually struggling at the core of every man, completely disregarding any balance that constant tension may create (*The Essential Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* 117). Like Mary Shelley, Stevenson also protects his readers from the creator's scientific detail and leaves Jekyll's scientific exploration completely undisclosed. In a similarly placed moment of retrospection, however, one can note that Jekyll does not consider the outcome of his experimentation to be nearly as mysterious as Frankenstein does. Through his spiritual and scientific explanation and his eventual creation Jekyll warns that he keeps the secrets of his success because man deserves the burden of that constant suffering. He even takes it a step beyond that understanding and, doing something Frankenstein never does, takes responsibility for his incomplete theory that leads to such a tragic outcome. Jekyll's creation process, as stated simply in the final chapter of the story, is the discovery of a chemical compound or drug that eliminates or interrupts the

power keeping the two-part soul in unity, therefore creating a “second form and countenance [...] of lower elements of [the] soul” (*The Essential Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* 118).

Having developed his idea as fully as he thought he needed to, Jekyll still hesitates with undertaking the creation process itself. He knows before he begins that he risks death, something else that Frankenstein did not stop to consider, but continues forward with his plans to form a drug that would “so potently [control and shake] the very fortress of identity” (*The Essential Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* 118). Though their stories are in many ways different, the one similar characteristic that plays such a pivotal part in both stories is that Jekyll is also driven beyond any anxiety by a scientific and philosophical curiosity as well as the promise and temptation of creating¹². Both Frankenstein and Jekyll begin their research to ultimately solve a human problem. Victor aims to make progress in the field of human limitations, extending the scientific understanding of animation. He wants to prevent illness; he wants to improve man’s physical form. Henry Jekyll, with equally admirable intentions, seeks to finally end the battle he believes all men face between the good and evil forces of their souls¹³. Neither of these men, however, gives much thought to his doubts and concerns and this consequently leads to the setbacks they both confront. Unfortunately, because these anxieties go unstudied, neither creator is able to foresee the possible disaster until after their experiments are complete.

Just as with Victor Frankenstein, eventually the “temptation of a discovery so singular and profound” (*The Essential Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* 118) overcomes Henry Jekyll as well and he collects the ingredients necessary for his compound and, upon mixing them, drinks the

¹² Herdman argues this connection between creators is pride, not scientific curiosity or temptation (“The Double in Decline,” *Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism*. Vol. 192. Detroit: Gale. 2008).

¹³ Joyce Carol Oates believes the genesis of Jekyll’s decision to create comes not just from scientific curiosity but an equally influential indulgence of his less moral appetites. (“Jekyll/Hyde,” *Novels for Students*. Vol. 11. Detroit: Gale, 2001.)

resulting potion with a “strong glow of courage” (*The Essential Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* 119). Though, technically, at this point in Jekyll’s story the final switch has been thrown, the creation process is not complete. By choosing himself as the center of his own experiment he exposes himself to both physical and spiritual pain when his soul rifts and his body takes new form. This feeling of sickness passes quickly, however, and he awakes from his identity schism into the new and sweet awareness of Mr. Hyde for the first time. This creation is not as straightforward as that of Victor Frankenstein, however, for though Hyde does not contain and is a separate creature from Jekyll, Jekyll always contains and continues to be influenced by Hyde. At the conclusion of Jekyll’s creation process he has indeed produced a being, but it is not fully what he intended. Rather than successfully separating the good and the evil, he created a form for the evil portion of his soul without actually removing that element from his own persona.

Surprise at the resulting creature after calmly calculated experimentation is a shared characteristic between both the Henry Jekyll and Victor Frankenstein stories, but *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is an even more complex creation tale. Basil Hallward is equally unaware of his influence over his creation, but Lord Henry is more than just responsible for Dorian Gray. He takes pleasure in infiltrating his thought processes and purposefully plants immoral concepts in the head of his pupil. In order to grasp the inner workings of Dorian’s three part creation one might assess each creator’s reason for creation as well as the route that individual chooses to take. In the case of Basil Hallward this is relatively basic and plainly stated. Hallward creates with paint and canvas for his living. His painting of Dorian, however, is unique in that it is the artist’s masterpiece, admitted not just by Henry but even by Hallward himself. Furthermore, the painting is considered so powerfully moving because Basil painted his very soul onto the canvas. What is important to note in that action is that it is because the middle-aged painter has in fact

given his soul to Dorian (*The Picture of Dorian Gray* 85), and his affection for the boy is what so strongly bleeds through in the strokes of the beautiful, young man's portrait.

It is this love, this genuine caring that is the primary force moving Basil Hallward as a creator. He puts paint to canvas to create the image that eventually becomes imbued with Dorian's sinful soul, but the less literal role that the artist plays in Dorian's life is just as elemental in his creation. Blinded by Dorian's charm and lost in the boy's power as the painter's muse, Hallward falls into a pattern of constant support for Gray regardless of his actions or choices. While one can eventually trace this pattern to Basil's death, it plays a stronger part in Dorian's life during what can be considered his creation process. Hallward hears plenty of rumors about Gray's risqué and inappropriate actions for years and constantly justifies them to the gossipers, allowing the young sinner to continue on his path of immoral exploration. Though Basil warns Lord Henry repeatedly not to influence Dorian, not to "spoil him" (*The Picture of Dorian Gray* 87), even after Wotton has completely abducted Dorian's way of thinking Basil is unable to or refuses to acknowledge this loss. It is not only Basil Hallward's completion of the painting but also his tendency to enable Dorian's sin that makes him, undeniably, one of Gray's creators. Though he did not create a drug or discover a way to administer the spark of life, Basil Hallward is just as responsible for the monster that Dorian Gray becomes as both Jekyll and Frankenstein are responsible for their creations.

Though unscientific, Lord Henry is just as experimental with his pupil as either of the creators in *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and *Frankenstein*. Regardless of whether or not Hallward has accused Henry of boasting and preaching a philosophy he does not actually live, that does not stop the man from spouting his own philosophy from the first moment he shares with the impressionable Gray. Lord Henry speaks of a way of life that works to give

“form to every feeling, expression to every thought, [and] reality to every dream,” in order to achieve “something finer and richer” (*The Picture of Dorian Gray* 94) in life¹⁴. Lord Henry’s purpose in the creation process of Dorian Gray is slow, constant and deliberate. He fills his head with concepts about the “recollection of a pleasure” as opposed to “the luxury of a regret,” telling him that while sin is an action, once a person gives in this action works almost like a purification. In their first meeting alone Henry introduces the theories that will ultimately decide Dorian’s destiny, promising that the “only way to get rid of a temptation is to yield to it” and that if one were to resist one’s soul would consequently “grow sick with longing [... and...] desire” (*The Picture of Dorian Gray* 96). Even if Basil’s accusations of Lord Henry’s hypocrisy are accurate, Dorian takes these philosophies to heart and does not just dwell upon the fascinating words he hears but boldly applies them to his actions as well.

Lord Henry’s combination of intellectual detachment and pleasure does not stop after Dorian’s first villainous act. Though he is bombarded with Lord Henry’s forceful theories that youth is the only thing truly worth having (*The Picture of Dorian Gray* 99), he is also told to fear nothing. It is Dorian’s determination to hang on to his youth that ultimately leads to him selling his soul for eternal beauty, but this lack of fear is perhaps equally detrimental. Fear itself is a curious element in the creation process and plays a major role in the story of Dorian but also in the stories of Jekyll and Frankenstein. If any of these men had learned to fear perhaps they would have been less blindly led forward by their hunger for success. With no fear there is no room for second-guessing. Though fear can be just as paralyzing as stubborn arrogance or obsession, it forces people to take stock of their situation and to think things through. Had Dorian considered

¹⁴ Clausson calls this speech of Lord Henry’s an outspoken attack by Wilde on the oppressive sexual act laws of the Victorian culture. (Clausson, Nils. “‘Culture and Corruption’: Paterian self-development versus Gothic degeneration in Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray*,” *Papers on Language & Literature*. Vol. 39. No. 4. 2003.)

his actions before taking them perhaps he would have been able to recognize Sybil's delicacy and the possible consequences of living a risqué life while refusing to take into account the effect he may have on others.

The Sybil Vane experience is one plot point in the novel that helps define just what part each of the three men play in Dorian Gray's joint creation. The young man first turns to Lord Henry to share his new found love and is absolutely glowing. He calls the young actress a genius, and while Lord Henry does not seem particularly enthused, Dorian does say that it is Henry who has instilled in him "a wild desire to know everything about life" with a "mad curiosity" to study the lives of the people around him. Already it is clear that Henry is partially responsible for altering the way Dorian sees the world, thus influencing his actions as well. In his first misadventure under Henry's influence, the pupil is already demonstrating his fascination with "splendid sinners and [...] sordid sins" (*The Picture of Dorian Gray* 115) by wandering around the seedier theatrical slums of London falling in love at first sight with poor, impressionable actresses. In the same discussion, however, Dorian recognizes that Sybil's influence on him is in opposition to Lord Henry's, and through his mentor's warnings decides to pursue the girl. Henry trusts that Dorian will always confide in him even if he does occasionally make his own decisions, and it is this mutually acknowledged leash that ties the two men together as mentor and pupil for Dorian's entire life.

The two men were united under the philosophy that "one could never pay too high a price for any sensation," yet Dorian much more actively tested this theory. He had been set on fire by Lord Henry and longed to uncover the mysteries of the world, leading him to dark and socially

unacceptable places on occasion¹⁵. As early as their first discussion regarding Sybil, Wotton concedes that Dorian is in part his own creation. Though the older man marvels at seeing his philosophy taken so seriously, he still recognizes that ultimately Dorian's actions are his own. However distant he tries to make himself, Henry is a constant factor in Gray's life. He treats his pupil with a lukewarm consistency that provides for regular reinforcement, never getting angry but never overwhelmingly supporting him either. Basil's extreme support and extreme opposition both come from his love for Dorian but are much less reliable from his perspective. Having both Basil and Henry in his life, with their different ways of handling Dorian, he is able to constantly find support or encouragement from one of his mentors. Lord Henry's occasional neglect motivates and challenges Dorian just as much as Basil's unwavering affection. Dorian's creation is a complex journey with a noticeable snowball effect. He makes one immoral decision, is encouraged by Harry and supported by Basil, and thus feels comfortable enough to continue doing whatever he pleases with complete disregard for social custom or the well-being of those who love him.

The Creature

Working through the psychology of the creator and the details of the creation process invariably leads to the study of the creation itself. While the creator occasionally has a strong and unexpected impact on his creation, a study of the experimenter alone does not fully reveal the identity of the experiment. Just as the creation process undoubtedly sheds some light onto why

¹⁵ Based on Dorian's family background and Wilde's life, Clausson argues that Gray may have had a predisposition for such immorality and that his decline is not solely due to Wotton's influence. (Clausson, Nils. "'Culture and Corruption': Paterian self-development versus Gothic degeneration in Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*," *Papers on Language & Literature*. Vol. 39. No. 4. 2003.)

the creature's nature is as it is, experiences after the being's birth also contribute to its eventual character. In the cases of *Frankenstein*, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* the primary source of appeal is not the creator or the process but the monster that results. The being made by Victor Frankenstein is one that is staggeringly visually unattractive and disturbing. A similar phenomenon has occurred with the stories of Jekyll and Hyde. Though not as hulking as Frankenstein's creature, Hyde is also marked by an undeniable ugliness that disturbs all who view him. The thing that makes Dorian Gray markedly different from his fellow creations is that it is not his ugliness but his eerie, permanent beauty that has made him a monster. As the novels reveal, however, these creation's true natures and physical appearances go much deeper than the monstrous sensationalism that has been causing audiences to gasp and scream for the last century.

The Frankenstein monster is, based on the literary description, the most gruesome of these three monsters. The creation was built to be beautiful, but in life he is visually arresting¹⁶, with yellow skin that "scarcely covered the work of muscles" and long, black hair accompanied by unnaturally white teeth and pale, watery eyes. His skin is shriveled, as one could expect from a being composed primarily out of pieces of unearthed corpses¹⁷, and his complexion is "dun" colored accented by his grave-black lips (*The Annotated Frankenstein* 114)¹⁸. In a scene that

¹⁶ Barbara Johnson also believes that the creature's ugliness is the only miscalculation made by Frankenstein and one that figures greatly in the creation's utter neglect by both his creator and the world. ("The Last Man," *The Other Mary Shelley: Beyond Frankenstein*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

¹⁷ Lancaster believes this inescapable connection to death is a stigma that dooms the creation to be forever tied to death and trauma ("From Frankenstein's Monster to Lester Ballard: The Evolving Gothic Monster," *The Midwest Quarterly*. Vol. 49. No. 2. 2008).

¹⁸ Melissa Bloom Bissonette believes that because this is Shelley's only physical description of Frankenstein's monster, what builds his overall horror is not how he actually looks as much as it is how people are frightened by how he looks. ("Teaching the Monster: *Frankenstein* and Critical Thinking," *College Literature*. Vol. 37. No. 3. 2010.)

strongly mirrors Mary Shelley's own tale of the novel's creation, Frankenstein perceives his "miserable monster" in the moonlight and is overcome by disgust and horror at the face of the "demoniacal corpse" (*The Annotated Frankenstein* 116) he has created, recognizing instantly that "no mortal could support the horror of that countenance" (*The Annotated Frankenstein* 117). In his terror, Frankenstein refuses to give his creature a name¹⁹. This and his appearance are inescapable curses that Frankenstein's creature must carry with him, a constant burden and barrier between the monster and any sense of companionship.

While witnessing the product of his experimentation launches Victor into a very serious illness from which he must be rescued by Clerval, the reader eventually comes to know of the monster's own simultaneous and tragic adventures across Europe. Two years pass before Frankenstein and his creation cross paths again and while for Victor they are filled with slow recovery and recurring waking nightmares about "the filthy daemon to whom [he] had given life," the creature is trying desperately to piece together his existence without the aid of the father who brought him life. Victor is jolted to reality when his creation returns to Geneva and kills the youngest Frankenstein, William. In order to understand the motivation for this action, however, one must take into account those two years from the perspective of the abandoned and confused creature. For the sake of developing a chronological understanding of Frankenstein and his creation, one must look ahead to the monster's own telling of his story which happens months after William's death and Justine's conviction for the crime when creator and creature are united for the first time since that fateful November night.

As an adult coming alive the creature first recounts the uncomfortable confusion of all of his senses engaging at once. He begins to explore movement, and upon finding that there are no

¹⁹ Lancaster argues that this absence of a name is a serious factor in the monster's lack of identity and failure to connect with society (*The Midwest Quarterly*. Vol. 49. No. 2. 2008).

obstacles he needs to surmount or avoid, he flees Frankenstein's laboratory for the safety of the woods. The creature thought to oppose cold by grabbing a cloak but that does not keep the weather from affecting him and he spends a damp and frigid November night alone and grasping desperately for some understanding. Even that early in his life he knows he is "a poor, helpless, miserable wretch" and he could "distinguish nothing [...] but feeling pain invade" him. Even a self-proclaimed wretch can, however, appreciate the natural beauty of a sunrise and as day dawns the monster finds some joy and wonder in learning about his surroundings. He learns to eat and drink and take shelter under the trees and marvels at the little birds in the wood and their songs. Still unable to articulate his own moods, however, he returns to angry disappointment at the frightening and uncouth sounds that break from his mouth (*The Annotated Frankenstein* 177). A few days pass as the monster continues to explore his forest habitat, simultaneously attempting to battle the oppressive cold. His first big triumph comes, naturally, when he discovers fire and all the benefits it provides. Finally able to achieve heat, cooking, and the light from the flame, the monster has come to a pivotal point in the evolution of man. With food becoming more and more scarce, however, he is forced into the first human interaction since his genesis.

The first snow, though the creature only recognizes it as a painfully cold white substance, made the need for food and shelter even more critical. The creature then happens to stumble upon a small hut that he examines carefully and upon finding the door open, he enters. The old man within shrieks when he sees Frankenstein's monster and flees the hut. In the still childlike mind of the creature the sight of his first human, besides his creator, and that man's subsequent flight both came as a surprise. That does not stop the being, however, from recognizing happily that within the hut he is protected from the snow and rain and is much more easily kept warm and dry. As he moves about the monster is faced with similar reactions; some villagers attacked

him and chased him away by throwing stones and other objects. Frankenstein's creature is no more than a few weeks old, is alone in the frozen wild, and has already learned how human beings feel about him, whether they show terror or active hatred. His development is comparable to that of a human child yet he receives no love or lessons or instruction or aid. He is miserable and confused and quickly being made aware of the "barbarity of man" (*The Annotated Frankenstein* 180).

Just as the creature's appearance is the factor that causes so much fear and disgust²⁰, the creature is first attracted to Felix and his family by their approachable and gentle countenances. It is in their yard that the creature finds a space that can be considered his first true home. Their cottage in the country is where the creature learns his most valuable lessons that build his character into something naturally good. He begins to explore family love and kindness and help and also understands to give rather than to take. He learns of struggle and hardship but also perseverance and patience and fortitude. He grows to understand that pleasure is had in company and before long yearns to make these beautiful people, whom he knows from hours of intent watching, his actual friends. The creature witnesses the changing of seasons and the full beauty of the earth, but is ever haunted by his knowledge of those who have treated him harshly in the past. Even before he is able to form coherent sentences he compares his own hulking form to that of the delicate cottagers and his size and build compacted with his viewer's perceived terror convinces him that he is in fact a monster (*The Annotated Frankenstein* 190). He becomes

²⁰ The monster's ugliness blinds Frankenstein to the beauty of his soul. A problem the monster faces with every man he comes into contact with. (Heffernan, James A. W. "Looking at the Monster: 'Frankenstein' and Film," *Critical Inquiry*. Vol. 24. No. 1. 1997.)

enraptured by the beauty of his cottagers²¹, but ultimately that only produces an enhanced sense of mortification.

As Frankenstein's creation continues to mature, he also continues to collect more experiences. But, through them all, man's mistreatment and his own ugliness are severely reinforced again and again. The creature's patience at watching the cottagers eventually affords him the opportunity to learn how to speak and to be taught some about literature and history and geography but even the love he develops for De Lacey, Felix, Agatha and Safie does not protect him from their eventual betrayal and abandonment²². Though he has seen his own countenance and body reflected in a pool and registers it as ugly, especially in comparison to the cottagers, before he interacts with the family the creature genuinely believes that any "gentle ass whose intentions were affectionate, although his manners were rude, deserve[s] better treatment than blows and execration" (*The Annotated Frankenstein* 193). As one can plainly draw from Victor's experiences, good intentions do not necessarily mean good outcomes²³. When he set out to reanimate flesh, the young scientist had undeniable good intentions. These were imbued with a certain level of arrogance, but that did not directly affect the nobility of Victor's intentions. His creature's natural character and intentions are equally good, if not more so, considering they lack

²¹ The relationship between the monster and the DeLacey family is broken down further in Lancaster's article "From Frankenstein's Monster to Lester Ballard: The Evolving Gothic Monster" (*The Midwest Quarterly*. Vol. 49. No. 2. 2008).

²² Johnson presents the monster as fully intelligent and functional. He is almost hyper human in his mastery of the knowledge of man but his exterior functions as his continuous downfall. (Johnson, Barbara. "The Last Man," *The Other Mary Shelley: Beyond Frankenstein*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

²³ Johnson studies this more closely, recognizing that Frankenstein's intentions were good but he doomed himself with his inability to predict the outcome of his creation. (Johnson, Barbara. "The Last Man," *The Other Mary Shelley: Beyond Frankenstein*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.)

their creator's blind egotism, but are comparably impure because they are instead imbued with naïveté.

Marked by the creature himself as being the event responsible for making him who he is, his unfortunate confrontation with the De Lacey family is the final straw and the fatal blow to any hope he had for being accepted or loved in return (*The Annotated Frankenstein* 194). Though Safie's gentle lessons and the cottagers constant kindness bring him to question if man can indeed be powerful, virtuous, and magnificent while being vicious and base (*The Annotated Frankenstein* 198), the creature's "sorrow only increased with knowledge" (*The Annotated Frankenstein* 199). The beauty he witnesses cannot erase the facts. Frankenstein's creation was ignorant of his creation and creator and possessed no money, property, or friends. Each good moment eventually comes back to his painful awareness that he is nothing but a "monster, a blot upon the earth, from which all men fled, and whom all men disowned" (*The Annotated Frankenstein* 198). The more he learns of family, the more the creature is aware of the things he lacks, and the only definition for himself that he can gather from others is one of ugliness, hurt, and evil.

Just as Frankenstein first falls in love with science by reading, the monster develops a more thorough definition of himself the same way. He relates to Milton's Adam²⁴ except that he is "dependent on none, and related to none" (*The Annotated Frankenstein* 208) and refused the protection and care of his creator. He eventually admits to finding Satan a more applicable symbol for his existence and turns violently against his creator, with justified blame for forming a monster so hideous that not just man but the creator himself turns away in disgust. Even Satan

²⁴ Heffernan takes a detailed look at the relationship between Milton's *Paradise Lost* and Mary Shelley's monster in *Frankenstein*. (Heffernan, James A. W. "Looking at the Monster: 'Frankenstein' and Film," *Critical Inquiry*. Vol. 24. No. 1. 1997.)

has a family and companions, however, while Frankenstein's creation is forced to remain "solitary and detested" (*The Annotated Frankenstein* 210). Every fleeting hope was quickly chased away by the pain brought with increased knowledge and daily the creature's bitterness towards his creator grew. Though the creation, like any being, "required kindness and sympathy," where his human counterparts constantly treat him like a villain, the creature never imagined himself being unworthy of good, fair treatment (*The Annotated Frankenstein* 212). Though the creature finds brief but blessed moments of kindness from old, blind De Lacey, that is quickly shattered by the return of Felix and the creature's banishment forever from the cottage he called home for two full years.

The resulting anguish, mixed with uncontrollable feelings of rage and revenge created a hell within him (*The Annotated Frankenstein* 217). In that moment the creature finally reaches the summit of his solitude and crumbles under the weight of his "unsympathized" and abandoned life. He wants to uproot the cottage and the forest and sit upon the fiery ruins, a perfect symbol for the havoc in his soul. This is the final straw that sets the monster's plans for revenge in motion. He has spent too long learning man's hatred and has consequently been dealt such a healthy dose of self-loathing that he cannot hang on to even a meager amount of hope any longer. With the neglect of the De Lacey's the creature's final link that held him to the world had broken (*The Annotated Frankenstein* 219). Where some may argue that the monster knowingly takes up the evil or immoral mantle of revenge, because he has been abandoned by everyone and treated so poorly one could also argue he has little responsibility to maintain what those who so openly hate him refer to as good morals. Frankenstein's creature finally succumbs to feelings of revenge and hatred and bends his mind toward injury and death. He is forced by his mistreatment

and circumstance into a place of destitute solitude and has every right to feel betrayed. He was born into a humanity that refused him.

This moment, before the creature has actually taken any vengeful action, marks the completion of his development. He has become what those around him have dictated, a monster driven by an unadulterated loathing of man. He was taught to love and then forbidden from being treated with kindness; he was taught to trust and accept, and was never granted those things in return. He took the necessary effort to understand the beings around him but his appearance and nothing else prevented others from making any effort to understand or care for him. Frankenstein's curse, that of abandonment, haunts his creature to the point of breaking. It is at this tipping point where the creature becomes a monster for the first time; it is not until the betrayal of the De Lacey's when Frankenstein's being embraces a life driven by evil. The evil that drives the creature's revenge, however, is not something innate or natural but rather something taught and therefore he cannot fully be blamed for his actions. The final encounters in the creature's story when he comes back into contact with the Frankenstein family are the final chapters of his life. His revenge has been long building and once the creature's plan is first laid out it begins rolling forward with a momentum no one can stop until the monster at last finds his peace.

Mr. Hyde's disturbing physical appearance makes him Frankenstein's creature's brother, except for one vital difference. Where Shelley's creature learns his anger and spite, Hyde is the natural embodiment of evil by definition, and functions as the essence of impulse and immorality from the moment of his creation²⁵. The "particularly small and particularly wicked-looking"

²⁵ Though Jekyll finds obvious pleasure in becoming Hyde, Karl Miller emphasizes Hyde's evil by pointing out that there is nothing compelling to reader's in the evil creature's cruelty. Stevenson wrote Hyde to be a villain, regardless of whether or not Jekyll finds pleasure in his

(*The Essential Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* 64) man is different from his gothic cousin in many physical regards. Hyde is shorter than the average man and young looking, passing for any average person except for his uncanny tendency to strike sudden and unexplained fear into the hearts of all who lay eyes on him. The small but unsettling gentleman is first seen very early in Stevenson's novel, before the character of Henry Jekyll is even discussed, but Hyde's actions are already notably cruel. Mr. Enfield is in the company of Mr. Utterson when he relates the tale of Hyde trampling the young girl like "some damned Juggernaut" (*The Essential Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* 36) without even a glance back. Enfield calls Hyde back only to note an instant loathing for the man that spread visibly to the other members of the gathered crowd as they pressed upon the criminal. From within the "circle of such hateful faces," Hyde stands with a "sneering coolness" (*The Essential Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* 38) and offers any price to prevent the family of the screaming victim from taking legal action. After settling on a price Hyde proves he is good for the 100 pounds and crosses the square, enters a door using a key, and returns with a check signed, as the reader later learns, by Henry Jekyll.

After confirming the check was good Enfield intimates an early suspicion that Hyde must be blackmailing Jekyll for "some of the capers of his youth" (*The Essential Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* 39) but neither man is willing to make any gesture of blame towards the friendly doctor after noting the disturbing countenance of Mr. Hyde. This tendency is carried through each of Hyde's crimes while every other character refuses to insinuate Jekyll's involvement until his demise and the discovery of his own report. It is again in this final chapter that Mr. Hyde's nature is fully disclosed. From the moment of Hyde's birth, Jekyll refers to the evil counterpart as a facet of himself; but "tenfold more wicked" and a slave to the original, natural evil lurking

in the nature of every man including Henry Jekyll (*The Essential Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* 119). That recognition, of darkness given form, is not disturbing or frightful to the doctor but is invigorating and delightful instead. Jekyll also reasons that the slight, youthful figure of Hyde is due largely to the fact that his evil nature is much less developed because he succumbed to it much less and obeyed his good tendencies more in order to achieve social acceptance. Jekyll is also completely unashamed to remark on how easily even he sees evil, deformity and repugnance in the face of his smaller complement, but the doctor's pleasure at recognizing this as a true component of himself blinds him to any worry or fear. After his first escapade in the form of Edward Hyde, Jekyll observes people's immediate discontent upon seeing his countenance and justifies this very simply by clarifying that while everyone else is an amalgamation of good and evil, Hyde, "alone in the ranks of mankind, was pure evil" (*The Essential Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* 121).

It is during the first night he is split that Jekyll makes some vital conjectures and discoveries. He starts by wondering why Hyde, the evil element, was the resulting physical being but assumes that because the drug is completely neutral, that must reflect something about his own morality. This is no better than an educated guess, and his speculation means little in the grand scheme of things because it does not change the facts. Edward Hyde is "wholly evil" where Henry Jekyll is still an "incongruous compound" (*The Essential Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* 122) suffering from the same interior combat between good and evil parts. With his experimentation blossoming into this outcome Henry Jekyll ultimately makes a move towards the worse. By creating Hyde, Jekyll's only outlet to escape his inner conflict is to disappear into the pure evil, so slowly, day by day, the doctor becomes a slave to his simpler but darker counterpart. Equally disturbing, however, is the safety caused by his escape from Hyde back to

Jekyll. Hyde the super villain is free to roam the city running over little girls and murdering old men and can then, in a moment, cease to exist behind the mask of Henry Jekyll. While Hyde can find safety in Jekyll, there is no temptation to take the form of the morally balanced man. For Hyde, becoming his counterpart and submitting to the power of the good half of man's soul, is an occasional necessity but not a thrill. For Jekyll, submitting to Hyde's pure impulsive evil is pleasurable²⁶. The doctor's escape becomes not just evil but unable to be blamed and uncatchable as well.

The freedom Jekyll finds in the selfish act of shirking his morally responsible form to "spring headlong into the sea of liberty" (*The Essential Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* 123) that is Edward Hyde, blinds him to any harm or injury he may bring to others during his malevolent and guiltless exploits. Seeking pleasure is the doctor's primary intent when he dons the hide of his id-like creation, but these fascinations in the hands of Edward Hyde quickly go from passionate and playful to monstrous. Regardless of the brutality of Hyde's actions, however, when the man stuck between both identities woke as Henry Jekyll any blame or sense of responsibility for his evil actions faded into nothingness, excused by the simple belief that Hyde may be part of Jekyll but they are not wholly congruent forms. Jekyll makes barely any mention of the experience Hyde has with the little girl in the square, as though he feels absolutely no shame or guilt about the ordeal. The doctor instead, skips over Hyde's first crime to relate a more disturbing series of events that begin a few months before Hyde commits his most devastatingly cruel and murderous act.

Without any warning or explanation, the boundary between Henry Jekyll and Edward Hyde begins to blur. One night Jekyll goes to sleep with his own "large, firm, white and comely"

²⁶ Herdman considers this to be Jekyll's ultimate dilemma. ("The Double in Decline," *Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism*. Vol. 192. Detroit: Gale. 2008)

hand on the pillow next to him, but wakes to see instead the “lean, corded, knuckly” hand of Hyde with a “dusky pallor and [...] a swart growth of hair” (*The Essential Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* 125). Up until this moment, Jekyll and Hyde have been completely separate in existence. It is either one or the other. Now, with the transformation process becoming less complex and no longer needing a drug trigger, Jekyll feels a sense of terror for the first time since his creation process began. Hyde’s escape from Jekyll’s bedroom as the man dashed to his laboratory to reclaim the drug that would give him back his natural form did not go unnoticed by the servants, as he would have liked, and becomes a valuable piece of information when Utterson is trying to break down the Jekyll and Hyde mystery. This abrupt and unintentional transformation from Jekyll to Hyde plants a well-deserved seed of worry in the head of the doctor. It could be possible that the more Jekyll gives in and takes the form of Hyde, the stronger Hyde becomes. This is a turning point in Stevenson’s tale as it marks the first moment when Jekyll realizes the power of the forces he is experimenting upon. Should “the power of voluntary change be forfeited” (*The Essential Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* 126), Henry Jekyll could become permanently lost beneath the power of Edward Hyde.

Recognizing that the drug used to complete the transformation has not been particularly reliable confirms that the play between Jekyll and Hyde may not be as stable as the scientist originally thought. He also notes that when he first began taking the form of Hyde, there had been more difficulty to “throw off the body of Jekyll;” yet now, a mere few weeks later, it had become the opposite. Jekyll was noticeably losing hold of his original and “better self, and becoming slowly incorporated with [his] second and worse.” It is in these moments of self-discovery that Jekyll first confronts the true relationship between him as a creator and Hyde as his creation. “Jekyll had more than a father’s interest [while] Hyde had more than a son’s

indifference” (*The Essential Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* 126)²⁷. Yet choosing a side, with these facts known, becomes complicated. Does the father choose to safely avoid his son or does he allow his creation, that which he brought life, to survive instead? Jekyll knows that by putting Hyde away forever he condemns himself to live the same imbalanced and conflicted life as before. It would require subduing “those appetites which [he] had long secretly indulged and had of late begun to pamper.” To cast in with Hyde, however, had equally if not more compelling consequences. Sacrificing his life to “a thousand interests and aspirations” while being forever “despised and friendless” (*The Essential Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* 127) did not hold much appeal for Jekyll either.

Swayed strongly by the desire for companionship, something permanently unachievable for Frankenstein’s monster, Jekyll chooses to tuck away his scientific wonder and put away the drugs that allow him to slip into Hyde’s form. Though he stays firm in this decision for two months he does not destroy Hyde’s clothes or give up his alter ego’s residence in Soho. Eventually time begins to weave her way back into Jekyll’s subconscious and break down his courage, and two months in the doctor “began to be tortured with throes and longings, as of Hyde struggling after freedom.” In what he describes as “an hour of moral weakness” (*The Essential Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* 127), Jekyll takes the transforming draught and once again becomes Hyde. Like Frankenstein’s creature upon the De Lacey’s violent reaction to his presence, Hyde takes over Jekyll’s persona like a “devil that had been long caged [and] came out roaring.” Jekyll admits that in his weakness, in his temptation, lies his failure but that does not stop the “spirit of hell” (*The Essential Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* 128) that awakes and rages

²⁷ Though this quote implies a familial relation, Clausson believes that Stevenson’s duality may suggest homoerotic tendencies like those in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. (Clausson, Nils. “Culture and Corruption”: Paterian self-development versus Gothic degeneration in Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray*,” *Papers on Language & Literature*. Vol. 39. No. 4. 2003.)

forward when he allows Hyde to take control. It is in this crazy, panicked rage-frenzy that Hyde comes upon and attacks Sir Danvers, in what proves to be the climax of his rampant, evil existence.

Once Henry Jekyll recognizes the depth of the evil in Hyde he must face, he can no longer be blindly proud of, his scientific success—his creation. From the body of Hyde during the violent murder one can perceive the true danger in such a creation, for rather than experiencing shock and regret the villain flees the “scene of [his] excesses at once glorying and trembling.” This is not the painful torment of a typical criminal. With Edward Hyde’s “lust of evil gratified and stimulated,” he practically soared with adrenalized joy, his “love of life screwed to the topmost peg” (*The Essential Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* 128). Upon escaping the scene to his home in Soho, Jekyll has barely reclaimed possession of his body before he falls to the ground overcome by tears and remorse. Though Jekyll spent weeks believing himself and Hyde to be separate creatures, were that to be fully true he would have no reason for such strong distress. It takes an act of blood and hatred to shock Jekyll into the awareness of the depth of the connection between himself and his creation. By creating Hyde and removing the balancing effects of the good, moral elements of his soul he has spawned a guiltless monster. Whereas Jekyll may not have utilized the forethought necessary to be warned of this as the possible outcome of his experimentation, Hyde knows he is acting maliciously and revels in it. The worst possible outcome is his unquestioned goal.

Jekyll’s “veil of self-indulgence was rent from head to foot” as the horrors of the evening came pouring down upon his lowered head. It takes this moment of treachery for Jekyll to understand the true nature of his experimentation and upon seeing the pure evil he finally recognizes that he can never again claim the form of Hyde. The body of Jekyll now became the

doctor's "city of refuge," for should Hyde appear for but a moment, "the hands of all men would be raised to take and slay him" (*The Essential Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* 129). While the act of slaying Hyde would be well meant and deserved, should the creation die, the creator must go with him. From the moment he commits himself to keeping Hyde contained, Jekyll initiates what will grow into the end of his dual life. While Jekyll and Hyde have one final battle to wage against each other, Hyde has been fully developed and Jekyll has finally been made to understand the weight of his actions and the impending doom of his creation.

Dorian Gray is a different kind of creature and develops into a different kind of monster. With the aid, intentional or unintentional, of his mentors, Gray quickly finds himself in deep and highly immoral waters²⁸. Where both Frankenstein's monster and Edward Hyde are remarkable because they are evil looking, Dorian is remarkable for the opposite reason. While his soul is literally becoming black with sin, his youthful and enchanting visage continues to guide him smoothly through the outwardly focused twists and turns of Victorian culture. What begins as an innocent affair with Sybil Vane becomes the selfish manipulation of a sweet girl by a young man who cares only for himself. Even Basil Hallward, who is angered and feels betrayed by the young couple's engagement, is so discontent with the arrangement because he is afraid Dorian is tying himself to some "vile creature who might degrade his nature and ruin his intellect." Lord Henry, the more obvious influence on Gray, also fears for the marriage expressly because he believes it makes people unselfish. And unselfish people, after all, are "colorless" and "lack individuality" (*The Picture of Dorian Gray* 132). While they are busy critiquing Gray's choices neither mentor realizes that he is driving the young man to develop into a solely selfish creature.

²⁸ Nils Clausson disagrees that Dorian's immorality is a result of other's influence and theorizes instead that the majority of Gray's beginnings are based instead on the concept of self-development. (*Papers on Language & Literature*. Vol. 39. No. 4. 2003.)

When he first falls for Sybil, Dorian is still innocent enough to believe in love and to act freely without the approval of his moral, or rather immoral, creators. He believes Sybil is what he has been looking for his entire life, and in his excitement and pleasure he becomes flushed and even more handsome. Hallward, entranced by Gray's beauty, relinquishes his side of the argument and concedes the victory to Dorian by wishing him happiness always. While the artist is still disappointed Lord Henry shared the news of Dorian's engagement rather than the boy himself, Hallward continues to and will always raise the young Gray like some kind of angel. No matter his actions, to the artist Dorian is "not like other men [and] would never bring misery upon anyone." Regardless of how apparent Gray's immorality eventually becomes, Basil is a slave to the concept that his pupil's "nature is too fine" (*The Picture of Dorian Gray* 135) for anything less than perfection.

In regards to Sybil, Dorian battles Lord Henry's dismal opinion of marriage, claiming that in his fiancée's presence the young man "regrets all that [Henry has] taught him." Lord Henry's "wrong, fascinating, poisonous, delightful theories" faded in the delight that Dorian found in Sybil's arms. Henry quips back with the realistic retort that Dorian will always feel some fondness for the older man even if they disagree because to the pupil the mentor represents "all the sins [Gray has] never had the courage to commit" (*Picture of Dorian Gray* 136). This remark, though inflammatory, is true. Dorian is enchanted by Lord Henry's philosophy, and his comment becomes perfectly true as Gray begins to further explore his own morality and physical boundaries. With Dorian's marriage still looming on the horizon, Lord Henry's internal battle is much less confident. The "strange sense of loss" he has at losing the reigns on his creation hits him much harder than he expected. This supposition that Dorian "would never again be to [him] all that he had been in the past" is short lived, however, because Dorian's first love proves to be

just the fleeting passion of a silly boy. To Sybil, their connection means enough that when he breaks the engagement after her theatricality dies; she is so heartbroken that she drowns herself. Dorian is young and impassioned but still trying to explore the world, and it is in this selfish pleasure seeking where his easily noted arrogance first begins to damage those who care for him. The monster has begun to develop.

One of the more complex elements of Dorian as both a character and a creation is that he never reaches a character development climax like Frankenstein's monster and Edward Hyde. From the moment his curiosity is no longer piqued by Sybil Vane's onstage performance, from the moment he abandons her and the monster inside him begins to receive nourishment, there is no plateau or arrival. His sin continues to deepen for the rest of the novel and Basil's painting reflects it all. Just as Dorian's lips "curl in exquisite disdain" (*The Picture of Dorian Gray* 146) as he watches Sybil's antics at the end of their relationship, upon inspection when back at home, the painting also seems to reflect this "touch of cruelty in the mouth" (*The Picture of Dorian Gray* 148). While Wilde writes this as a subtle change, it is the first alteration of the painting and is "horribly apparent" (*The Picture of Dorian Gray* 149) to the subject and owner. Dorian's reaction to his eventual understanding of the painting is key in understanding him as a monster. The painting does prevent him from aging and from changing physically as a result of his sin in a way that allows him a sense of freedom that others do not have, but it also provides a readily analyzable display of the consequences of his actions on his soul. The painting presents a true image of the integrity of his inner person, forcing Dorian to acknowledge the weight and effects of his actions. When he first notices the change he tries to argue against it and reason it away, claiming that he suffered also under Sybil's disappointing performances and that he only acted cruelly toward her because of the damage she inflicted on him (*The Picture of Dorian Gray* 150).

After battling with the painting and its purpose he eventually decides to use it as a tool for his betterment, a resolution that does not end up lasting long at all.

After spending a night in moral torture, Dorian takes his new resolution to avoid immoral temptation to heart and writes a long letter of apology to Sybil under the universal guise that “it is the confession, not the priest, that gives [...] absolution” (*The Picture of Dorian Gray* 155). Upon the letter’s completion Dorian is able to sit back and sigh, at least until he learns from Lord Henry that Sybil is dead. The tailspin Dorian then dives into is an even more intense moral battle during which he himself claims plainly to have murdered the girl before abruptly changing course and blaming Sybil instead for her “selfish” suicide. Lord Henry, the constant influence, says nothing to alter this view agreeing that marriage to Sybil would have been an “absolute failure.” Gray is almost instantly over his sense of sadness and, self-centered as always, turns the discussion back to himself by asking confirmation from Lord Henry that he has not in his lack of mourning become heartless. As expected, Henry tells Dorian exactly what he would like to hear. The vanity Dorian develops following the Sybil experience can be seen in his other relationships as well, specifically with Alan Campbell.

One could, justifiably, view Dorian’s acceptance of the painting’s changes as events that do not affect him personally, but these changes, in fact, reflect the evolution of his creation, the climax in his creation process. Once this decision has been made, Dorian sees himself and his soul as being completely separate from both his actions and their consequences, giving him the freedom to do as he pleases. Dorian quickly comes to see himself as “a master” who can “end sorrows as easily he can invent a pleasure” (*The Picture of Dorian Gray* 167) and this is where danger lies. With no consequences, the integrity of an action becomes moot, and Dorian embraces this philosophy and structures his life around the idea that his painting and his soul

have no valuable relation to one another. Just as Jekyll and Frankenstein are driven to overcome moments of anxiety that could have perhaps, if heeded, ultimately saved their lives, Dorian Gray is faced with a similar situation²⁹. For all of the moments when the still moral elements in his soul drive him to mourn the changes in the painting, Dorian justifies these feelings and returns to treating the painting like some circus to be proud of, rather than a shameful picture of the ugliness of his sinful soul.

The Failure of the Creature and The Failure of the Creator

In each of these novels there comes a point when the creation becomes a monster, and another moment follows where the monster becomes a failure, at least in regards to the initial creation process. No story of creation ends the instant the creature is given life, and one could make the argument that the spark of life moment actually marks the midpoint of these novels. It may not happen chronologically, but the creation arc is straightforward. The creator has an idea or curiosity, the creator experiments, the creator creates, and then a creation is born. From there, however, the creature must grow and learn, define its own identity and make an effort to assimilate into the life around it. The three creations in *Frankenstein*, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* ultimately fail. They fail to assimilate into the world and eventually fail to survive, thus generally failing as creations.

Victor Frankenstein's primary fault is commonly perceived to be his unbending arrogance. It is this force that pushes him through all of his doubts and misgivings and ultimately leads to his creation. The fact that he is able to reanimate a dead form, which is precisely what he

²⁹ Herdman again ties these three characters together with pride. He considers Dorian's "self-love" to be responsible for all the boy's errors ("The Double in Decline," *Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism*. Vol. 192. Detroit: Gale. 2008).

sets out to do, could realistically be considered a success. Victor, however, is appalled by his creature and instead considers his experimentation an instant failure, which does in part drive his creation's eventual downfall. Had Victor embraced his creation as a success, it can be assumed that the monster would have had a very different life and would have, perhaps, never become a monster at all. Had he been given love, support, compassion, and most importantly protection, the creature may have never developed his inflamed sense of rage towards man and his subsequent unquenchable desire for revenge against his maker. A creature stands, in part, alone and makes his own decisions, but his creator also has a hand in constructing his fate and Victor provided no life line to his massive and tormented, scientific son.

It is in this neglect³⁰ where the failure of creator and creation can be pinpointed in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. Like most beings, Frankenstein's monster is reactive. He is forced to flee his maker-turned-betrayer and fend for himself with no understanding or protection from outside forces. He learns that men are afraid of and hate him and is gradually and painfully made aware of his extreme solitude. He is provided constant reminders of his loneliness until all hope is gone and he has nothing left but to seek out his creator and either take revenge or establish an alternative solution in the form of a reanimated companion. Frankenstein initially accepts this offer, but is still too blinded by his creation's ugliness to trust the good and honest qualities of his character and destroys this companion before she is given life. This is the final and proverbial nail in Victor's coffin. His inability to see the truth in his creation's simple, human longing for a partner perfectly sets up the monster's checkmate. With no viable options left, the creation, finally being fully abandoned by creator, releases the passionate anger building inside him since

³⁰ Lancaster believes that the lack of a more general human social acceptance is key in the monster's outcome, and does not put all blame on the creator ("From Frankenstein's Monster to Lester Ballard: The Evolving Gothic Monster," *The Midwest Quarterly*. Vol. 49. No. 2. 2008).

the terrible moments following his birth. That is the moment of failure. Victor breaks the bond of responsibility tying any maker to his creation and is forced to face the brutal consequences. The creature, due more to his environment than his nature, is taught that cruelty and murder are the only effective ways to get what he wants. Even if he succeeds in his revenge, Frankenstein's creature ultimately fails as a creation when he leads his creator to death before ending his own purely painful existence in a sea of ice at the top of the world.

Though told out of order, the Jekyll and Hyde story has an even more concrete and simultaneous moment of failure. While the seed is planted when Henry Jekyll mistakenly separates out only the evil half of his soul, the true failure in Robert Louis Stevenson's short story is made complete by the doctor's inability to resist the temptation of taking Hyde's form. Jekyll is plagued by a pleasure-seeking curiosity, and this weakness allows Edward Hyde to take control. Put simply, Jekyll releases the literal embodiment of evil upon the world and subsequently fails to remove it. Rather than quashing his creation the instant he recognized Hyde's true character, Jekyll feeds Hyde's flames and loses his ability to contain his monster. Failure in *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* occurs at their congruent moment of destruction³¹. Henry Jekyll purposefully rifted his own soul and made his inner conflict a physical one that directly caused his death. Where Frankenstein's neglect causes both his and his creation's failure, it is Jekyll's over-indulgence that causes his downfall. Just as Frankenstein has a responsibility to see the true nature of his creature and embrace that, the moment Jekyll understands the depth of Hyde's evil it is his job to undo the mistake he has made. Whether by neglect or fun-loving curiosity, both of these creators shirk the responsibility innately demanded

³¹ This destruction could be a result of the mutual loathing of the two selves. This concept is expounded upon further by Herdman in "The Double in Decline" (*Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism*. Vol. 192. Detroit: Gale. 2008).

by the creation process and consequently give birth to creatures that have no chance to successfully survive in the world around them.

Hyde would have been just as molested and abused by society as Frankenstein's monster, and though people would have actually had more than visual justification for doing so, it would surely have led to an equally dismal bloodbath. A dog that is mistreated bites back, and these creations react no differently. By intuitively reacting negatively to the things that treat them poorly, these creations somehow become monsters. Dorian Gray, a different kind of creation, has a less prominent creation process but an equally noticeable decline into monstrosity. Two mentors, one out of love and the other out of curiosity, develop in him an insatiable appetite for sin and put him on an unstoppable warpath of immorality that spirals downward until it is ineradicable. Unlike Frankenstein's monster, Dorian is anything but lonely. Rather than appreciating this companionship, however, he abuses it by ruining people's reputations, breaking hearts, and more generally dragging others into sin with him. His entire story, from the moment he chooses to act on Lord Henry's influence, is marked by repeated failure. This slippery slope to sin comes to a head in one specific act occurring late in the novel that triggers the failure of himself and both his creators.

When confronted by Basil Hallward about his reputation, Dorian panics and shows the artist what has become of his painting and what has become of the subject's soul. Basil's horrified dismay is truncated abruptly when Gray pulls a knife on and murders his lifelong supporter and mentor. Until the hour of the confrontation Hallward stood stubbornly on Dorian Gray's side, defending his name quite literally until the moment of his death. Though Dorian is haunted at one time by all of his sins, his vanity typically functions to counter that uncertainty and erase any concern. Basil's murder, however, affects the young man much more deeply and

initiates the final slump that leads to Dorian's own death. In the murder scene in the attic Wilde presents the final failure of Basil Hallward. Eventually killed by his own creation like both Victor Frankenstein and Henry Jekyll, the artist is blinded by his love for the sinful boy and neglects his responsibility to keep Dorian safe and healthy. Basil refused to see the bad in Gray and therefore made it impossible for said mentor to protect or save his cherished pupil.

This moment also represents Dorian Gray's impending failure. It is when he commits his most egregious crime, the murder of a man who loved him unconditionally, that this creation sets in stone his fate. He cannot come back from killing Basil and even his last romp in the country does not quiet the gnawing of his conscience at his ever-blackening soul. Dorian returns to the darkened room at the top of his house to gaze one final time at the painting that portrays his broken soul before plunging the knife that murdered Hallward into the stained canvas. At that moment the decay of his sin claims his body and he finally succumbs to the festering consequences of his actions. At this point in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* both creation and one creator have failed. Lord Henry Wotton may be left a mystery at the end of Wilde's moral exploration, but given the knowledge of Wotton's passion for Gray it can be realistically assumed that without his pupil to manipulate and inundate with blasphemous philosophy, old Lord Henry probably did not have much left to live for. Divorced and alone, with no source of entertainment or companionship, he faces a solitude not unlike that of Frankenstein's monster. Without Dorian Gray, Lord Henry lacks not just entertainment but also a purpose. He has failed as a creator as well.

Conclusion

Victor Frankenstein, Henry Jekyll, Basil Hallward, and Lord Henry Wotton ultimately fail their creations leading directly to the downfall of both themselves and the products of their experimentation. Had Frankenstein treated his reanimated being with the love and protection naturally demanded by the creation process³², perhaps his creature would not have become a hateful, revenge driven monster. If Henry Jekyll had instantly recognized Edward Hyde's true nature and destroyed the evil he inadvertently loosed on the world, he and Hyde would not have had the torrid affair that eventually led to their mutual conflict and destruction. Should Basil Hallward have overcome the blinding effects of his love for Dorian Gray, he may have been able to retrieve the boy's soul from the brink of total ruin. If Lord Henry had spent a moment considering the consequences of his influence on Gray, perhaps he also would have been able to take action to save instead of hurt the young man. Shelley, Stevenson, and Wilde use their novels to tell these failed stories of creation because they were compelled by what they saw in the men and women around them³³.

Frankenstein, The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, and The Picture of Dorian Gray are valuable because they present a universally relevant relationship between all creators and their creations. Humanity is constantly pulled between forces of good and evil and must claim responsibility for those things it creates in order to prevent mutual failure. These monster stories are compelling because they can challenge readers to examine their own lives, their own

³² The monster depends on Frankenstein and even after all of the sorrow the creator has caused, the creation remains his slave (Lancaster, "From Frankenstein's Monster to Lester Ballard: The Evolving Gothic Monster," *The Midwest Quarterly*. Vol. 49. No. 2. 2008).

³³ Rather than using the monster motif to express true concern, Hogle conjectures that some writers used the Gothic disguise to avoid facing their fears. ("The Gothic at our turn of the century: our culture of simulation and the return of the body," *Essays and Studies*. 2001.)

creations³⁴. These novels may be considered fiction but that does not make them unrelatable or irrelevant in the greater literary canon³⁵. When the creator fails the creation, the creation fails, also bringing about the downfall of the creator. This cycle is plainly presented in these three novels but is not limited to literature. The writings of Mary Shelley, Robert Louis Stevenson, and Oscar Wilde can stand as a warning to readers for as long as literature exists: creators who do not care for their creatures, or cannot due to some personal flaw, must face the unavoidable failure of their creations and the subsequent consequences, no matter how monstrous.

³⁴ Geduld suggests the primary reason audiences are frightened by Gothic monster stories is not because they are relatable but because they suggest unknown scientific elements that were threatening at the turn of the century (“Introduction,” *The Definitive “Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde” Companion*. Garland Publishing, Inc., 1983).

³⁵ Karl Miller points out that while Stevenson was made famous for studying duality, his own duality was also particularly evident. This stands as further confirmation that these fiction writers were speaking truths about humanity, not just about magic and monsters. (“Queer Fellows,” *Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism*. Vol. 192. Detroit: Gale, 2008.)

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Honor Code: I affirm that I have upheld the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity and did not witness a violation of the Honor Code.