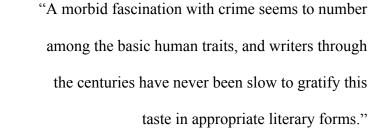**A Portrait of the Monster as Criminal, or the Criminal as Outcast: Opposing Ætiologies of Crime in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein***

Marie Léger-St-Jean

University of Cambridge

Abstract

This article offers a criminological reading of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* based on the 1831 edition. It discusses the opposition between Dr. Victor Frankenstein's physiognomic prejudice and the creature's discourse designating social exclusion as the cause of its mischief. Frankenstein's accusations rely mostly on its creation's appearance, borrowing from Johann Kaspar Lavater's principles. The monstrous creature counteracts its maker's presumptions by interpreting its own criminal behaviour similarly to Christian Wolf's self-analysis in Schiller's short story "Der Verbrecher aus Verlorene Ehre." A close reading of the circumstances of each of the monster's four crimes demonstrates how deeply its criminality is interlocked with social rejection caused by its own external deformity. Both perspectives adapt tropes that can be found in criminal biographies still reprinted in the 1810s. Though both positions are credible, I argue that the storyline supports the creature's view that the criminal might be a monster, but created by those it vengefully hurts. Throughout, I indicate when changes to Shelley's 1816-1817 draft were made to arrive to the 1831 wording, paying also attention to who effected them.

> "A morbid fascination with crime seems to number among the basic human traits, and writers through the centuries have never been slow to gratify this taste in appropriate literary forms."
>
> Theodore Ziolkowski, "A Portrait of the Artist as Criminal"
>
> "All men had offended me, for all were better and happier than me. [...] much was promised to my hunger for revenge."
>
> Friedrich Schiller, *The Criminal from Lost Honour*

Guilty of setting a cottage ablaze as well as killing a child, a man, and a woman, Frankenstein's creature is a recidivist criminal. Startlingly, literary critics have payed very little attention to this simple fact. Consequently, there seems to be a total lack of criticism regarding the criminological implications of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. Scholars have amply discussed the creature's monstrosity – in relation to humanity (McLane) and ugliness (Gigante) as well as in both political (Baldick and Botting) and psychoanalytical (Brooks) terms – yet they have not touched upon its criminal behaviour. When literary critics incorporate crime into their main argument, they address it in relation to law: Sayres discusses Justine Moritz's accusation whilst Grossman engages more broadly with the legal implications of *Frankenstein*.

This article will discuss early criminology in relation to conceptualizations of human nature before examining the conception of criminality voiced by the two protagonists. I will also investigate the novel's narrative structure to determine which is preponderant. Attention shall be directed to two specific credences: the criminal as Other, known in penology and criminology as the notion of *homo criminalis*, and the ugly as evil, pseudo-scientifically studied as physiognomy. The following questions shall guide my analysis: (1) how does physiognomy intervene in the understanding of the criminal? (2) how is the criminal Other than human? (3) why does this character kill? Possible origins available to the author shall be retraced in earlier texts for each ætiology.

I will start with the second question. Shelley introduces a murderer treated as distinctly different from human beings, which is why I chose to treat it as neutral, though the text considers it masculine. The current eagerness to underscore the criminal's Otherness contrasts sharply with the prevalent view in eighteenth-century England, according to which universal human depravity caused crime. It comes as quite a surprise to twenty-first century readers, habitually presented

with criminals fairly different from them, to be warned against a viciousness which slumbers in each and everyone. Yet convicts displayed on the gallows as examples were understood at that time to be but the unfortunate victims of this invisible yet omnipresent danger. Three hundred years ago, social discourse held human nature – in all its fallibility, not its anomalies – responsible for criminality.

The Genevese philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau's challenge to the prevailing pessimism regarding human nature retains the universal criterion: all human beings are born good, society corrupts them. A number of Romantics adopted and expressed his perspective, from the German Friedrich Schiller in his short story *Der Verbrecher aus verlorner Ehre* (1786) [*The Criminal from Lost Honour*] to the Frenchman Victor Hugo in his voluminous masterpiece *Les Misérables* (1862). They address deviance from a socio-psychological point of view, dissecting the criminal mind: a paramount example of the approach being the Russian Fyodor Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment* (1866). The second epigraph to this essay presents the vengeful sentiments ostracism brewed in Christian Wolf, the protagonist from Schiller's aforementioned novella, in words very similar to those Mary Shelley's monster utters: the creature interprets its own behaviour and adopts the Romantic perspective.

I will discuss the opposition between Dr. Victor Frankenstein's physiognomic prejudice and his creature's discourse designating social exclusion as the cause of its mischief. Chris Baldick rightly relates Frankenstein to the Jacobin novel, a genre Shelley's parents and their circle fashioned.i I wish to add sources to the genealogy (16-17). The perspectives of both protagonists adapt tropes that can be found in criminal biographies still reprinted in the 1810s, though offering a different take on the relationship between human nature and criminality. Frankenstein's accusations rely mostly on its creation's appearance, borrowing from Johann

Kaspar Lavater's principles. The monstrous creature counteracts its maker's presumptions by interpreting its own criminal behaviour similarly to Christian Wolf's self-analysis in Schiller's short story "Der Verbrecher aus Verlorene Ehre." *Frankenstein* thence showcases two competing discourses on criminality, foreshadowing the nature vs. nurture debate that still endures today.

Through all ages, criminality creates anxiety in society to varying degrees. Any phenomenon to which no cause can be ascribed breeds worry. Disquiet cannot be endured: an explanation must be provided. Rationality identifies causal relations to make sense of the world's apparent and distressful chaos. Society can hopefully manage collectively to bridle the circumstances from which the phenomenon emanates once they are pinpointed. In the nineteenth century, Western societies' ability to explain the physical world seemed quite satisfactory and encouraging. However, confidence waned as social relations and the metaphysics of the mind failed to yield effective laws to positivism's enquiries.

Criminal ætiologies – from the Greek *αἰτία*, "cause, reason" – participate in the soothing search for meaning ("aetiology | etiology, *n.*", OED). Today, we are acquainted with representations of the criminal as Other – the poor, the uneducated, the immigrant – a very comforting view for those who escape stigmatization: they need not fear to turn one day into a threatening criminal. Nevertheless, creating Others as scapegoats does not dispel anxiety, but simply shifts it to a wariness of those targeted.

Murder, in the Frankenstein family's opinion, is not a deed everyone is capable of committing. This consideration arises with Justine's accusation. Ernest, when welcoming home his elder brother Victor and announcing the unfortunate news, exclaims his surprise and dismay at discovering that she had "suddenly become capable of so frightful, so appalling a crime" (64).

If the young man considers the girl as a *person* incapable of such a rash killing, other comments extend this inability to all human beings.

We must pause the burgeoning analysis for a moment and remind ourselves of the text's instability and richness. Three editions of *Frankenstein* were published during Shelley's lifetime. In addition, the Bodleian library is home to a manuscript draft, dating back to 1816-1817 and annotated by Mary's husband Percy Bysshe Shelley, as well as to a small portion of the 1817 manuscript fair copy. The first edition appeared anonymously in 1818. The second, signed and revised by William Godwin, Shelley's father, was released in 1823 to benefit from the success of Richard Brinsley Peake's stage adaption, *Presumption; or The Fate of Frankenstein*, which opened the same year. Shelley revised the novel herself for a third publication in 1831.[ii] Her rewritings intensify the criminological subtext by explicitly using the term 'crime' where it was previously absent. For instance, the quotation in the previous paragraph is taken from the 1831 text: the manuscripts along with the 1818 and 1823 editions all read "all at once become so extremely wicked," a wording less designed for a criminological interpretation.

The nineteenth century saw an increasing awareness of criminality. In her modifications, Shelley might be consciously choosing to update her work in accordance to contemporary social discourse, just as she turns the cousin Elizabeth into an orphan to introduce the very topical Italian Risorgimento, as Nora Crook persuasively argues (5-6). The critical preference for the 1818 text in the last thirty years might therefore be responsible for the scholars's oversight of *Frankenstein*'s discourse on criminality. The 1831 text best illustrates my argument. Therefore, page numbers refer to the 1831 edition. Unless otherwise noted, the wording in the two previous texts is identical.

Closer examination of the manuscripts also reveals some surprisingly non-linear developments due to P.B. Shelley's interventions. In one instance discussed further down, Mary had initially written the word "crime," which her husband changed to "vice". She reverted to the original wording in the third edition. The poet in this case obscured the specifically criminological stance of the text. However, his draft revisions and the liberties he took whilst fair-copying strengthen the physiognomic strand in Frankenstein's assessment of his creature. I will discuss the text's fluidity where it pertains to my argument. In the cases I do not judge it to be pertinent, the reader can refer to the notes, where all variations are recorded. All in all, reflections on criminality, and not only on evil, traverse all of *Frankenstein*'s available incarnations.

Returning to the close reading, Justine herself pushes criminal capability outside of human reach and into the realm of the supernatural. In what might however simply be a figure of speech, she expresses her relief at learning that Elizabeth does not believe her "a creature capable of a crime which none but the devil himself could have perpetrated" (72). The discourse of human incapability to commit crime is also present in Victor's stance. He holds that "Justine, and indeed every human being, was guiltless of this murder," a conviction indeed brought on by his detection of another suspect (65). Nevertheless, neither confession nor irrefutable evidence enables him to incriminate the creature. Therefore, a strong belief in the incapacity of any human being to kill such a sweet child tints, and strengthens, his assurance. Capability is at the heart of the Frankenstein house's discourse on murder. Furthermore, Victor firmly considers criminality, or at least homicide, to emerge from a state of inhumanity, to be the prerogative of beings other than human.

This belief contrasts sharply with the prevalent discourse in eighteenth-century England, according to which universal human depravity caused crime. Criminal biographies, for instance, emphasized common traits between murderers and the rest of the population, as describes Lincoln B. Faller in his sociopoetical analysis of British criminal biographies. Pamphleteers reminded readers of their human condition – shared with criminals – which rendered each and every one capable of the worst atrocities (Faller 54). For instance, Gilbert Burnet records in his *Last Confession, Prayers, and Meditations of Lieutenant John Stern,* that the murderer, condemned in 1682, had previously "thought himself as little capable of committing such a crime, which should bring him to such an end, as any man was" (10). The pamphlet, shelved in the Earl of Oxford's library, was collected into *The Harleian Miscellany,* published in 8 volumes between 1744 and 1746 with a preface by Dr. Samuel Johnson. It was reprinted in 12 volumes in 1808-1811 and reedited by Thomas Park in 10 volumes published between 1808 and 1813. The seventeenth-century popular text was therefore still common currency at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

No one was safe, for depravity lied at the core of every human being. Nevertheless, some individuals did break the law and others did not. What could explain this discrepancy? The contemporary ætiology of crime revolved around criminals' greater indulgence in the universal "propensity to sin" (Faller 61). In the eighteenth century, the population understood that this leniency had, in time, "hardened them emotionally and morally" (61). By starting with seemingly insignificant sins such as breaking Sabbath, people would embark upon a deviant *train de vie* that hardened their hearts, eventually weakening their will, and in the end compromising their mind or judgement (99). Moralist Samuel Richardson also subscribed to this "'domino theory' of human character," wishing the criminal reports would act as deterrents (Herrup 109):

> "Let the *Session-Paper* and the *Dying-Speeches* of unhappy Criminals [...] inform the inconsiderate Youth, by the Confessions of the dying malefactors, how naturally, as it were Step by Step, Swearing, Cursing, Profaneness, Drunkeness, Whoredom, Theft, Robbery, Murder, and the Gallows, succeed one another!" (4).iii

Criminal biographies, however, did not seek to expose such logically causal chain reactions, content with identifying in a murderer's past tell-tale si(g)ns. Ultimately, criminals were neither more nor less depraved than any other individual, but by giving way to sin, they opened their hearts, wills, and minds to illegal mischief.

The assumption at the heart of this ætiology – universal human depravity – did not rule all minds. As mentioned previously, philosophers of the Enlightenment, most notably Rousseau, challenged such a pessimistic view of humanity. By refusing to blame any human for William's murder, Victor Frankenstein participates in this renewed optimism. Nevertheless, stating that humans are born good-natured does not resolve the interrogation about criminality. How do thinkers make sense of criminality in this new configuration?

Explanations in which the elite could find comfort arise with the search for *homo criminalis*, a delimited group of individuals who indulge in crime and, in more radical theories, must be eradicated. The "criminal class" theory as well as criminological anthropology flourished during the nineteenth century. John Jacob Tobias traces the former concept's appearance back to the end of the 1810s (52). The assumption delineates a proper "*caste*" operating along the lines of its own "peculiar slang, mode of thinking, habits, and arts of living" (Wade 159). Cesare Lombroso best embodies the latter Italian school, which regards criminals not as a distinct class, but as a degenerated and atavistic race, the product of reappearing primitive genes. He wrote a

treatise, *L'Uomo delinquente* (1876), recording precise characteristics regarding the criminal's physical appearance. Hence, after *Frankenstein*'s first publication, scientific ætiologies emerged to explain criminality within the new optimistic paradigm of human nature.iv

I suggest that Mary Shelley's novel also opposes universal human depravity, not in scientific terms, but in a format arguably rooted in criminal biographies. In contrast with these popular texts and the developing criminological theories, *Frankenstein* however contains no single rationalization. The novel provides not one but two discrete ætiologies to replace the religious-laden attempts at explaining crime in the eighteenth century. Indeed, two characters voice their own views on criminality: the creature and Frankenstein, the criminal and its creator.

As the notion that his creation would be William's murderer strikes Victor, he convinces himself of his intuition's truthfulness by asserting that no human being could have committed such a horrible deed. The thought flashes across his mind with the certainty of a revelation: "Could he be (I shuddered at the conception) the murderer of my brother? No sooner did that idea cross my imagination, than I became convinced of its truth" (61). Percy Bysshe Shelley instills a physiognomic emphasis to the section by stressing the physicality of the creature's deformity.

In her draft, Mary followed shortly with "He therefore was the murderer! I could not doubt it I was agonized by the bare probability" (*Original* 296). The second sentence was struck out and Percy Bysshe Shelley added into the left margin the following four sentences, transcribing one of Mary's own (*Original* 101; *Notebooks* Draft: 113): "Nothing in human shape could have destroyed the fair child. *He* was the murderer! I could not doubt it. The mere presence of the idea was an irresistible proof of the fact" (61). It is in this revised state that the passage is often quoted. It offers a crucial key in uncovering the thought process that led Frankenstein to identify the creature as the criminal.

In Victor's mind, certainty is equated with truth. Jules Law explains that such an illumination is a Romantic trope (980). William Blake, in "Proverbs of Hell" (1790-1793), describes it succinctly: "Every thing possible to be believ'd is an image of truth" (l. 38). Ideas move directly from the realm of thought to that of reality in the Romantic conception of creative imagination (Law 980). An important bias nonetheless strengthens the process. Commenting on the above passage from the novel, Scott J. Juengel clarifies:

> "On the one hand, Frankenstein projects wickedness onto the creature based on his disfigured 'shape' and deformed 'aspect,' a verdict that has 'an irresistible proof of the fact,' despite Frankenstein's limited knowledge of his creature's history and temperament; on the other hand, Frankenstein's intuitions prove prescient when the creature later confesses to the crime." (362)

What was first only imagined is eventually verified and proves to be true. Whilst I agree with Juengel's statements, I would like to stress that Percy Bysshe Shelley inserted the words "shape" and "aspect," which he quotes. I thus believe more is at work than creative imagination alone. I would argue that it is prejudice's support that allows the initial suspicion to leap into reality.

Preconceptions regarding appearances play an undeniable role in the perception of criminals. The Oxford English Dictionary traces the term's etymology to *pre-* "before" and *iudicium* "judgement, sentence," hence to judge beforehand, before having confronted the facts and the accused. A very explicit example can be found in Robert Boreman's 1655 account of his first encounter with a fratricide: "I expected to see the head of a Monster, (a Beare or a Tigre) set upon the shoulders of a man" (qtd. in Faller 97).v The mind mostly constructs prejudice around exterior manifestations since they impress it first and enable it to produce a quick, and often arbitrary, judgement.

Whether Frankenstein's truth-laden belief is provoked or simply encouraged by prejudice, a close reading of the 'Could he be' passage reveals that the creature's form – instead of its essence for example – shapes, or confirms at the least, Victor's first apprehensions.vi To describe whom – or that which – could not "have destroyed the fair child" in P.B. Shelley's decisive rewriting, the tortured brother does not choose the words 'no human being' but rather "[n]othing in human shape." What Frankenstein deems a "deformity of its aspect more hideous than belongs to humanity" undoubtedly casts the creature for the part of murderer (61). Again, P.B. Shelley's hand is at work in adding the complement "of its aspect," once more emphasizing the physicality of the creature's deformity (*Original* 100). The creature's hideousness, as Other than a "human shape" in its "aspect" emphasizes the novelist's husband, precipitates its creator's prejudgement and accusation.

Building on the believed truthfulness of its guilt, Victor even finds a motive to support his accusation: its "delight" must lie "in carnage and misery" (62). The draft has a more criminological ring to it as it reads "in murder and wretchedness" (*Original* 101).vii All three editions follow the wording of the above quotation, so the change must have been made in the fair copy. Since the sheets holding this passage are missing, we are left to conjecture who between Mary and Percy changed "murder" into "carnage." The latter is the more likely candidate since in the available portion of the fair copy, the sections he transcribes further depart from the draft than do those under the charge of his wife (Robinson 37n20; *Notebooks* "Introduction" and "Appendix A"). One of Victor's subsequent assumptions, added in the third edition, is clearly unfounded, for none can credit the creature with "rash ignorance" (65). Imagination does not create a transcendental reality, as Romantics claim, it forges one's own along the lines of one's prejudices.

Though a pivotal moment, this encounter is not the first instance of prejudice the maker contrives against his creation. Frankenstein presupposes meanings for his creation's actions from the very beginning of its existence. When the exhausted scientist awakens from his blissful nap after the fatal galvanism, the creature is hovering over him, "one hand was stretched out, seemingly to detain [him]" (44). The adverb "seemingly" does not appear in the draft (*Original* 82). The fair copy for this passage is missing, therefore it remains unknown who introduced the word, but in any case the addition brings to light the assumptive nature of the creator's statement. Victor interprets the gesture violently, though nothing points to that particular reading, apart from his own prejudice concerning what he repeatedly identifies as a "monster." In its creator's eyes, this appellation sums up both the creature's exterior and interior qualities.

Presenting "unearthly ugliness" as a stigma of a devilishly evil nature consists in an extreme form of physiognomic argument (83).[viii] In a chapter entitled "Von der Harmonie der moralischen und körperlichen Schönheit" of the first volume of his *Physiognomische Fragmente zur Beförderung der Menschenkenntnis und Menschenliebe* (1775),[ix] Lavater sets out to prove the existence of a consonance between moral and physical attributes using a *reductio ad absurdum* based on divine principles. God, Who is perfect, would not allow discrepancy between moral and corporeal beauty. This perspective is epitomized, both conceptually and linguistically, in Frankenstein's warning to the geographer who rescues him, Robert Walton: "[Its] soul is as hellish as [its] form" (188). Emphasizing physicality as in earlier passages, P.B. Shelley added the phrase "as his form" into the draft (*Original* 231). Physiognomic belief in adequacy between interior and exterior beauty or ugliness forges Victor's prejudice.

The Shelleys must have been acquainted with Lavater's theories since they were circulated in the radical circle of Mary's parents. Her mother, Mary Wollstonecraft, was

infatuated for half a decade with the Swiss-born painter Henry Fuseli, who was a friend of Lavater (Weinglass). She "made an abridgment of Lavater's *Physiognomy*" which was never published (Godwin 65). There is no record of the Shelleys having read it, but Percy did read aloud *Letters written during a short residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark* (1796) during their elopement in August 1814 (*Journals* I: 23). In her travel narrative, the elder Mary mentions Lavater's visit to the Danish minister Count Bernstorff and jocularly suggests the theologian must have given a favourable reading of the Count's features since they held similar views on the French Revolution (332). As a child, the young had been subject to a "precautionary 'reading,'" as Juengel terms it, by an amateur phrenologist, neighbour of Godwin (355n; *Letters* II: 123n3; Grylls 10-11). In addition, Thomas Holcroft, Godwin's closest friend, translated the *Essays on Physiognomy* in 1789, but there is no recording of the Shelleys having read it.[x] It can nevertheless be reasonably assumed that the young couple knew the Lavatarian principles through their connection with the radical circle of London-based writers.

Physiognomy in *Frankenstein* becomes central as it dissolves the criminal's defence. The vision of a "filthy mass" which rekindles both "horror and hatred" constantly stiffens Frankenstein's compassionate feelings (128). On each encounter, Frankenstein reads wickedness in its "countenance": before hearing its autobiography on Montanvert, he speaks of its "bitter anguish, combined with disdain and malignity" while as they meet in Scotland he remarks upon its "utmost extent of malice and treachery" (83, 147).[xi] Physiognomic principles no longer simply serve as a basis for prejudice, but Victor naturalizes them into an ideology on which he grounds his ruling. Indeed, the unproven assumptions endure, though contradicted by the Other's discourse once the dominant party allows it to express itself.

The scientist even questions his creation's own subjectivity by claiming he has "endued [it] with the mockery of a soul still more monstrous" than its "monstrous Image" in a passage added in the third edition (163). Crook points out that "soul" was "a word of unstable meaning in the early nineteenth century," listing four possibilities: "'self', 'principle of life', 'seat of the emotions' as well as 'immortal spirit'" (9). Following the first meaning, Frankenstein would be suggesting that by having but "the mockery of a soul," the creature has no true self. Physiognomy dismisses all the criminal's possibilities of asserting itself and constructs it into a truly voracious being.

Edmund Burke offers a similarly prejudiced depiction the "[f]erocious" "citizens of Paris" and their "cannibal appetites" in his 1790 *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (312). Baldick argues that Shelley's "story of the creation of a monster emerges from her parents' debate with Burke over the great monstrosity of the modern age, the French Revolution" (27). The debate, as the literary critic sketches it out, revolves around the true identity of the monstrous parent: democracy or aristocracy. In response to Burke, Godwin and Wollstonecraft blame the aristocracy for creating the mob, respectively in *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793) and *An Historical and Moral View of the Origin and Progress of the French Revolution* (1794). It is not only the "story of the creation of a monster" that emerges from the debate, but also the shape of the confrontation between monster and creator. Indeed, their daughter's novel revisits the argument, with Frankenstein cursing the monster for the crimes it committed and the latter blaming its maker for creating the conditions which led it to crime.xii Violence is first blamed upon its perpetrators (the revolutionaries, the creature), but a counter-argument emerges presenting the victims (the aristocracy, Frankenstein) as guilty of a more subtle form of violence which caused the later outburst.

Another element distinguishes Victor's treatment of criminality from his creation's discourse: he focuses on the criminal acts, not the offender. The first time he confronts the creature, he accuses it of multiple murders (83). Yet, he is disposed to hear its story, out of a curiosity blended with compassion, hoping to learn whether his suspicions were founded or not. Once the creature has reached the conclusion of its tale, its maker concentrates again on the last events recounted, most notably William's assassination and the framing of Justine as the culprit. Suggesting the trait is shared by the entire society, Victor perceives the audience in the Genovese courtroom to be fixed upon "the imagination of the enormity she [Justine] was supposed to have committed," echoing his own repeated concern with the act rather than the accused (66).xiii The entire society would therefore share in the fixation with the crime rather than the criminal's mind.

In *Surveiller et punir : la naissance des prisons*, Michel Foucault considers that judging the criminal's person rather than his or her act is one of the multiple dangerous drifts of the disciplinary society, which replaces the "infracteur [offender]" by the "délinquant [delinquent]" (258 [254]). He is especially distrustful of criminology's consequent construction of a "connaissance « positive » des délinquants et de leurs espèces ['positive' knowledge of the delinquents and their species]" (258 [254]). Indeed, with Foucault, "savoir [knowledge]" is relentlessly suspicious, for it undeniably rhymes with "pouvoir [power]" (27 [23]). In contrast, I argue that psychological readings of criminality can equally redistribute blame onto the entire social body or essentialize. Ultimately, Frankenstein forges his interpretation of the criminal in relation to its actions and appearance, a rather simplistic approach denying it any psychological development and, consequently, evading his own responsibility concerning its evil turn.

The creature also retraces the cause of its rejection to its appearance. As it tells its maker: "I had sagacity enough to discover that the unnatural hideousness of my person was the chief

object of horror with those who had formerly beheld me," for "a fatal prejudice clouds their eyes" (114, 116). It thus forms the plan to enter society through "the good-will and mediation" of two beings it believes will not demonstrate the same prejudice: a blind man and a child (114). The creature reasons that its physical aspect will be kept hidden from the former's conscience, countering all possible influence, while the later would not have yet integrated, due to his young age, the cultural physiognomic prejudice. The addition of "mediation" – the draft reads only "goodwill" – emphasizes these beings' role as go-betweens, as interceders called upon to plead in favor of the creature (*Original* 157). The fair copy for this passage is missing, which leaves the attribution of this change open to speculation.

On the earliest occasion, the idea proves successful, since old De Lacey is willing to help what he understands to be "a human creature" (116).[xiv] Still more generously, he promises not to reject him "even if [he] were really criminal; for that can only drive [him] to desperation, and not instigate [him] to virtue" (117). Unfortunately, the three younger cottagers return, interrupt the conversation, and drive the visitor away. Yet, the plan seemed promising enough for the creature to eventually return to the cottage, hoping, with more time, to effectively win the father's heart. Disappointed by Felix's desire to flee, it however burns the house down, committing its first crime. The intervention of a prejudiced individual thwarted its initial experiment to enter society by approaching one that was not.

Afterwards, the creature conceives of a new arrangement upon seeing a child wandering in the woods. It expects that "this little creature [is] unprejudiced, and [has] lived too short a time to have imbibed a horror of deformity," and thus purports to "educate him as [its] companion and friend" (124). Solitude would then be a long past nightmare, and the creature could conceivably aspire to integrate society through its pupil's mediation. Regrettably, its calculations were

inexact, for fairy tales inculcate the "horror of deformity" at a very early age, as demonstrates William's belief that he is confronted with "an ogre" (124). When the youngster invokes his father's name, the abandoned creation's resentment against its maker explodes into its second crime and first murder. Retrospectively, its two experiments to incorporate human society end in a frustration causing criminal acts.

The creature's quest to ease its pain and loneliness continues, though it no longer expects to join in the human fellowship. It therefore turns to its creator, asking, as did Adam in *Paradise Lost*, to make another like itself but from the other sex (8.379-411). The unfortunate being claims it should then be content and leave the sight of human eyes forever. When the scientist destroys the creature's half-finished hopes of happiness, it responds once more in a burst of rage, culminating with Henry Clerval's murder, framed on Victor himself.

After this incident, the creature is "heart-broken and overcome" (198). Its feelings of revenge have died out, leaving only pity regarding Victor and abhorrence towards itself. Learning that "he, the author at once of [its] existence and of its unspeakable torments," is planning his wedding nevertheless rekindles the creature's thirst for reprisal (198).[xv] The injustice is too poignant: "he sought his own enjoyment," explains the indignant being, "in feelings and passions from the indulgence of which I was for ever barred" (198). Elizabeth's death in its hands evens the injury of seeing one's mate being destroyed.

The circumstances of each of these four crimes demonstrate how deeply the creature's criminality is interlocked with social rejection caused by its own external deformity. It feels the victim of extreme injustice – "Shall each man [...] find a wife for his bosom, and each beast have his mate, and I be alone?" – which it hopes to atone by securing the mediation of a human companion, but all its efforts prove useless (148).[xvi] Striving to prove itself worthy of living in a

community even becomes counterproductive when it saves the drowning young girl and is thanked by being shot. Injured both physically and emotionally by society, the desperate being engages in a vendetta against its maker, responsible, initially, of having brought it into an inhospitable world, but chiefly, of having abandoned it. In its closing confession, it asks Walton: "Am I to be thought the only criminal, when all human kind sinned against me?" (200).xvii The creature redistributes blame onto the entire human society.

Frankenstein's focus lied on physical appearances and mischievous deeds. By bringing attention to the workings of its own criminal mind, the creature suggests a representation akin to the first type of literary criminal introduced by comparatist Theodore Ziolkowski: the criminal as Titan. In a chapter entitled "A Portrait of the Artist as a Criminal," the critic elaborates a history of criminal narratives in which three concurring representations of the criminal emerge one after the other (chronologically) to then coexist in twentieth-century literature. He argues that the criminal can operate 1) as a titanic object whose mind is studied, 2) as a specific metaphor for the artist's immorality, and 3) as a general symbol for the entire society's guilt. These figures however only play out "on a literary level" (295). Before introducing this typology, Ziolkowski briefly presents the path criminal narratives followed within popular culture. He describes how British criminal biographies and their descendants, the Newgate novels, presented the titanic criminal hero and his deeds favourably. Sympathy then shifted from the criminal to the detective around 1830, as authors gradually displaced the Titan-like character from one to the other.

Some fictional criminals still retained a titanic quality afterwards. To explain why, Ziolkowski inserts this tentative assertion:

> It is perhaps not going too far to suggest that the titanism of evil, continued in the *Volksbücher*, the shilling pamphlets, and the penny dreadfuls of the nineteenth

century, was deflected into the genre of horror fiction, which manifested itself on a

literary level in *Frankenstein*, *Dracula*, or *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. (294)

This sentence prompts two remarks. First, Ziolkowski's three samples of 'literary horror' all hail from Great Britain. They contrast with nineteenth-century continental Europe Romantic narratives of criminality. To return to previously cited works, Hugo and Dostoyevsky narrate Jean Valjean and Raskolnikoff's psychological evolution, linking their infractions to social injustice. These authors vividly represent criminals, even murderers, as human. During the same century, both before and after, British writers have offered Gothic renderings of criminality, situating it outside or on the borderland of humanity.

Second and more important remark, Ziolkowski ousts without any solid justification the three British classics from his criminal narratives literary history to coop them up in "the genre of horror fiction." Granted, the last two do not fit his typology: Stevenson and Stoker's works showcase no criminal born good but corrupted by society, perhaps because in both novels the evil character is not given a narrative voice. However, the analysis presented in this article, I humbly hope, challenges his classification and rescues Mary Shelley's creation from the limited categorization of horror fiction by offering a broader study of the unnamed demon. The scientist may engender a being he firmly believes to be evil at the core, but it argues it is led to crime because society rejects it on physiognomic grounds for its inhuman nature.

Ziolkowski identifies a number of characteristics gradually appearing in literary texts, each offering a more precise image of the criminal. In the first sample work, *Le Neveu de Rameau* (1762), Denis Diderot depicts the criminal, a titanic figure, with an objective detachment focused on his mind. In the second, *Der Verbrecher aus verlorner Ehre* (1786), Schiller has added two crucial characteristics to the titanic criminal's representation: 1) born good as all

human beings, society corrupts him, yet 2) once driven to crime, he wilfully chooses his evil doings. These characteristics form the basis of a literary manifestation of the criminal that will culminate with Jean Genet in the mid-twentieth century.

Though subsequent works will follow in Schiller's footsteps, his conception of criminality will not stand all together unchallenged. The first of two novelties he incorporated will undergo a transformation in the 1810s with Romantics such as Clemens Brentano and E.T.A. Hoffmann. Under the influence of Rousseau and the *Sturm und Drang*, Schiller had placed responsibility for criminality on society, but Romantic *Naturphilosophie* shifts it to nature, giving the criminal representation a psychoanalytical twist *avant la lettre*. *Frankenstein*, however, does not seem to follow this path; the creature's claim that ostracism is responsible for its criminal career stands much closer to *Der Verbrecher*. It thus seems safe to assume ancestry must be looked for in Schiller's novella and not in Brentano's or Hoffmann's works, though temporally closer.

Interestingly, that precise story has been examined as a possible literary source for Mary Shelley's novel. In an article published in 1915, Geoffrey Buyers called attention to similarities between the creature and Christian Wolf, Schiller's *Verbrecher*. His proof however lacked a determining element: how could Mary Shelley have been acquainted with the German story, if she could not read it in the original language? Syndy McMillen Conger dusts off the hypothesis in 1980 and further supports the argument by indicating three translations, since then uncovered, that were available in England before the penning down of *Frankenstein*. Indeed, Schiller's tale is embedded in Peter Teuthold's *The Necromancer* (1794), for the most part a translation of Karl Friedrich Kahlert's *Der Geisterbanner* (1792). It was also published on its own in two periodicals: as "The Criminal" in *The German Museum* (1800) and as "The Criminal from Lost Honour" in *Universal Magazine* (1809-1810). Mary Shelley could thus have had access to

Schiller's short story in English and used it as an inspiration for the treatment of criminality in her work.

Conger posits three potential mediations through which the writer could have heard of the story: by Matthew Gregory Lewis, author of *The Monk*; by Percy Bysshe Shelley, her soon-to-become husband; and by William Godwin, her father. The former visited the Shelleys at Lake Leman in 1816 and told many tales, one of which Mary transcribed in her journal (*Journals* 127-130). *Der Verbrecher aus verlorner Ehre* might have been one of the others. Additionally, P.B. Shelley owned a copy of *The Necromancer* which she could have read. Finally, Godwin consulted Teuthold's book in 1795, and could have been interested in periodicals such as *The German Museum* and *Universal Magazine*, rendering Schiller's story available for his daughter during her childhood. These are all plausible hypotheses concerning Shelley's acquaintance with the German tale.

To sustain his argument, Geoffrey Buyers dwells on semiotic similarities. Conger successfully demonstrates their frailty. She rather draws attention to three situational resemblances and to correspondence in both form and general thematic. Though the former are mildly convincing,xviii the latter are much more promising. They shall be addressed in the course of the remainder of this essay along with the creature's will to crime. This last element is the remaining piece of evidence required to incorporate *Frankenstein* in Ziolkowski's theorization of the criminal as Titan. The previous section has amply demonstrated that within its discourse, the creature presents itself as a good soul condemned to rejection – thus corrupted – by both its 'father' and humanity as a whole.

Pointing out a formal similarity, Conger remarks on the fact that both Schiller's and Shelley's stories encompass "criminal autobiographies" presented as "speeches aimed at attaining

forgiveness" (225). This form draws its origins from seventeenth- and eighteenth-century English criminal biographies, collected in *The Newgate Calendar: The Malefactors' Bloody Register* starting in the mid-eighteenth century. Adaptation of criminal biography tropes in *Frankenstein* episodes can be more convincingly argued than resemblances with Schiller's short story. I shall examine three such similarities.

Justine's accusation includes two frequent scenes leading to condemnation in criminal biographies. First comes a convenient discovery of evidence, such as finding in the young girl's pocket the picture William was wearing on the night of his death.[xix] In criminal biographies, such "admirable discoveries" (qtd. in Faller 74)[xx] would be accounted for as divine interventions. Nevertheless, Faller points out that, gradually, as the population moved away from superstition, His workings seemed less miraculous, more invisible (75). Hence, God's absence in the *Frankenstein* episode does not contradict the possibility of it adapting a frequent criminal biography trope.

The second such instance can be found in the state of confusion Justine enters immediately after being presented with the evidence: "On being charged with the fact, the poor girl confirmed the suspicion in a great measure by her extreme confusion of manner" (64).[xxi] In criminal biographies, this was also understood as a direct implication of the accused's guilt, but specifically sent down from Heaven. Faller puts it nicely: "God had no need to point a supernatural finger […] at most murderers, so easily could He indict them by disordering their minds, spreading them over with confusion and fear" (76). Again, the lack for divine reference in *Frankenstein* does not diminish the possible connection. Faller speculates further on the possible cultural programming to which this belief could lead. Indeed, it might have increased the murderer's nervousness at being betrayed by that very nervousness (78). Justine indeed

understands her confusion worked against her case and strives during her trial, to seem calmer (66). Though significant, the two resemblances – in the evidence's discovery and the accused's state of confusion – might gesture toward a common social discourse disseminating the belief that culprits are doomed to be caught.

The most telling element adapted from criminal biographies is the final repentance the creature displays in its confession. Robert Walton dismisses it as "superfluous" once the dirty deeds are done (198).[xxii] His opinion is quite contrary to the one expressed in criminal biographies, for which redemption through thorough public confession was a crucial means of reintegrating the criminal in society – albeit before ejecting him or her for eternity (Faller 93). Foucault alternatively reads these public confessions as a confirmation of the trial and the condemnation's worth: "La justice avait besoin que sa victime authentifie en quelque sorte le supplice qu'elle subissait [The law required that its victim should authenticate in some sense the tortures that he had undergone]" (69 [66]). Unsettlingly, chaplains were charged with wringing out confessions by invoking eternal damnation (Faller 88). Justine, for instance, is "besieged" by her confessor who "threatened excommunication and hell fire" (71). Public confession could thus be a very dubious proof of the condemned's culpability and of justice's righteousness.

Contrarily to Justine, the creature's confession is freely offered during its encounter with Walton. Bowed over its maker's remains, it "utter[s] wild and incoherent self-reproaches," unreservedly admitting "That is also my victim!" and asking him to be pardoned (198, 197). Its repentance is manifest and unrestrained, as confessors preferred. For instance, Burnet was satisfied by one of Lieutenant John Stern's accomplices' attitude: he "was free and ingenuous in his confession and expressed great sorrow for what he had done" (9). By demonstrating that murderers could be redeemed, criminal biographies argued that "conscience was active, at least

potentially in all men" (Faller 89). It is also active in *Frankenstein*'s criminal, continuously tortured by remorse.

The creature's confession mirrors the exemplary behaviour sought in criminal biographies as well as their figures of speech. Indeed, the unfortunate being states that "crime has degraded [it] beneath the meanest animal" (200).[xxiii] P.B. Shelley struck out "crime" in the draft and added "vice" instead; the latter word was kept until Mary reverted back to the former in the 1831 edition (*Notebooks* Draft: 200). The use of a frequent bestial metaphor can be compared with John Stern's alleged reflection on "what a beast he had been" (10). Though differently than Justine's, the creature's confession also seems to stem from criminal biographies.

Returning to Ziolkowski, the creature's final confession demonstrates the second element identified in Schiller's tale, namely, the will to crime. Though its "heart was fashioned to be susceptible of love and sympathy," it had to adapt to "an element which [it] had *willingly* chosen" (198, 199, emphasis added).[xxiv] Consequently to Elizabeth's death, "[e]vil thenceforth became [its] good" (199). P.B. Shelley introduced whilst fair-copying the last two passages emphasizing the role of free will in the creature's change of values (*Notebooks* 813). Responsibility thus does not uniquely lie on society's side, but also on the individual. Free will is asserted in both Schiller's and Shelley's tales.

Conger perceives that "[e]ach tale dramatizes a monstrous metamorphosis: creatures with the potential for nobility are transformed by fellow humans into fiends" (228). In *Frankenstein*, however, this outlook is limited to the creature's discourse. Hence, Conger's statement takes for granted that the creature's perspective ultimately comes across the entire narrative, bypassing Victor's. This premise has yet to be demonstrated. Crook argues that from Shelley's draft to the 1831 edition, *Frankenstein* is concerned with intensifying "the tension between sympathy and

judgement with respect to the two protagonists," with presenting them as "more deviously manipulative *and* more emotionally engaging" as "to compete for readers' sympathy" (15, 17). Therefore, where others have denounced "confusion", she reads a "crucial" tension and a "dramatization of Victor's self-division" (4, 8). Even after the creature's last words – its only speech free of its maker's commentary – both Walton and the reader are left wondering whether it was telling the truth.

By framing Frankenstein's story in an epistolary novel, the narrative structure allows for the reader to evaluate on a personal basis each of the two 'criminological' theories' credibility. Indeed, the presence of Robert Walton and his sister as mediators opens up a space to better assess the Swiss doctor's subjectivity and to take a critical stance regarding his autobiography. The creature's eloquence induces suspicion in both men, but the same could be applied to Victor's own persuasiveness.

Frankenstein's creature is highly eloquent, but its horrific physique leads his creator to believe it deceitful by exhibiting a Satan-like rhetorical capacity, reminiscent of *Paradise Lost*. Both Victor and Robert acknowledge the creature's eloquence. Indeed, though the former warned the latter that his creation was both "eloquent and persuasive, and once [its] words had even power over [his] heart," the amateur geographer admits he "was at first touched by the expressions of [its] misery" (188, 199). The phrase "at first" from the second quotation, which suggests that his perception changed, was added into the fair copy after P.B. Shelley had transcribed it, either by himself or by an unidentified other person (*Notebooks* Fair Copy: 181). Unfortunately, the being's elegant speech is in direct conflict with its physiognomy, thus its words are worthless when directed to one who can look upon him.

As the novel draws to a close, the explorer's comments on his new found friend's eloquence offer an interesting parallel with the exact quality he warns the creature will exalt. "He spoke this with a voice so modulated to the different feelings expressed in his speech," writes Walton, "with an eye so full of lofty design and heroism, that can you wonder that these men were moved" (194).[xxv] Is this ability to convey emotion to one's audience not as dangerous as the hideous being's "powers of eloquence and persuasion" (199)?[xxvi] I believe the Englishman involuntarily suggests to his sister that the same caution should be applied with regards to Frankenstein's discourse.

In the battle of subjectivities, the fact that Victor created the alleged monster actually tips the balance toward the latter's criminological views. Indeed, the scientist defends physiognomic considerations while the creature argues that same prejudice induced its solitude – which in turn gave rise to a criminal rage and despair. The argument follows the shape of that between Burke and the Jacobins, as pointed out earlier. Yet, in truth, the scientist *did* create a hideous being. Hence, if Victor Frankenstein symbolizes the ideas for which he stands, the criminal was created by physiognomic prejudice, which summarizes the creature's own conception. Hence, though both positions are credible, the storyline seems to support the creature's view that the criminal might be a monster, but created by those it vengefully hurts.[xxvii]

To conclude, I would like to expand upon another of Conger's statements. She argues that "[l]ike Schiller's tale, Mary Shelley's novel aims to create a revolution in attitudes, to encourage [...] compassion for our less fortunate fellows and humility concerning our own rather overrated superiority to them" (228). One may replace "less fortunate fellows" by 'criminals.' Indeed, Shelley demonstrated her sympathetic views on the condemned in a May 1818 letter to Leigh and Marianne Hunt from Italy. She explains that the sight of criminals condemned to hard labour in

the streets, "heavily ironed", "sallow and dreadfully wretched", "disgusted" her so that the couple left Pisa sooner than they would have hoped (*Letters* I: 67). In the novel she published only a few months before, the criminal is stripped of any congenital inferiority, provided one accepts the creature's version, and acts as any human being would have. This is not unlike criminal biographies.

Biographic note

Marie Léger-St-Jean is completing her Ph.D. at the University of Cambridge. She has an upcoming article in the *Journal of Stevenson Studies*. Her doctoral and postdoctoral work concentrates on mid-nineteenth century popular culture in England, France, and the United States, namely penny bloods, *romans-feuilletons*, pamphlets, and the theatre. She has created an online database of penny bloods, *Price One Penny* (http://www.english.cam.ac.uk/pop).

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i   For more on the Jacobin novel, see Miriam L. Wallace's recent *Revolutionary Subjects in the English "Jacobin" Novel, 1790-1805*. Cranbury, NJ: Bucknell UP, 2009.

ii   For a succinct recapitulation of *Frankenstein*'s publishing history, see Robinson's "Introduction" to his edition of the draft, p. 17.

iii A much quoted passage from Ben Jonson's *Eastward Ho* (1605) humorously illustrates the "domino theory": "Of sloth cometh pleasure, of pleasure cometh riot, of riot comes whoring, of whoring comes spending, of spending comes want, of want comes theft, of theft comes hanging" (IV, 2).

iv Given criminality's greater prominence in later social discourse, Victorianists than Romanticists have been quicker to produce criminological readings of literary works. Lombroso in particular has attracted much attention in relation to *fin-de-siècle* writers and writings. Fontana and Ferguson, for instance, have respectively studied *Dracula* and Arthur Conan Doyle in the light of Lombroso.

v See Robert Boreman, *A Mirrour of Mercy and Iudgement, or an exact and true Narrative of the Life and Death of Freeman Sonds*. London: Thomas Dring, 1655. 7.

vi It is unclear if the statement "Nothing in human shape could have destroyed the fair child" comes as an afterthought or the rationale of a previous thought. The question lies in the concordance of chronological and narrative sequence. If Frankenstein's narration adequately renders his thought process, the sentence can be read as the emergence, within the scientist's consciousness, of the unconscious reason for which he accused his creation. Otherwise, if this explanation occurred before its inevitable conclusion, the narrator chose to delay its presentation to maintain the pace and render fully the deadly revelation's instantaneousness.

vii Mary had first started writing "deat[h]", but crossed out the noun before having written the last letter (*Notebooks* Draft: 113).

viii The phrase does not appear in the draft and the fair copy for this passage is missing (*Original* 122).

ix "On the Harmony Between Moral and Corporeal Beauty" in *Essays on Physiognomy*, translated by Thomas Holcroft.

x See Paula R. Feldman and Diana Scott-Kilvert, "The Shelleys' Reading List." *The Journals of Mary Shelley: 1814-1844*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1987. 632-685.

xi P.B. Shelley changed Mary's "barbarity" for "treachery" in the draft (*Notebooks* Draft: 120).

xii Crook even reads Frankenstein's discourse as casting himself as an "imitation of a retributive creator-God who ensouls beings and then places them in circumstances where they will heap crimes on their heads until they deserve eternal punishment". The retributive doctrine of eternal punishment could have been at the back of the minds of readers, but Shelley herself never endorsed it in writing (10, 19n19).

xiii The draft reads "remembrance" instead of "imagination" and the fair copy for this passage is missing (*Original* 106).

xiv P.B. Shelley changed Mary's "fellow" for "human" in the draft (*Notebooks* Draft: 74).

xv P.B. Shelley inserted the interpolated clause during the transcription of the fair copy (*Notebooks* 813).

xvi The draft reads "his equal" instead of "a wife for his bosom" and the fair copy for this passage is missing (*Original* 191).

xvii   P.B. Shelley changed the wording whilst transcribing. The draft reads slightly differently: "And am I the only criminal, while all mankind sinned against me?" (*Notebooks* 815).

xviii   The first concerns both criminals' ugliness. Indeed, Schiller's character was disfigured by a horse kick in his youth. However, Christian's deformity is not as central as the creature's physiognomy, because it is referred to only in the beginning of the story. The second draws a comparison between each criminal's encounter with a child. Conger is right to assert that the two instances are "pivotal episodes," though wrong, in *Frankenstein*, in affirming it "precipitates the causal chain of crimes" (226) . Indeed, as it has been described previously, the creature's first crime is pyromania called upon by the cottagers' desertion. Finally, the connection between Christian's appeal to commute a death sentence into a life in the military and the creature's request for a mate is simply too far fetched (Conger 228).

xix Crook discusses the improvement in the 1831 edition, which has Justine fall asleep in a barn. The previous texts simply have the creature improbably slip the picture in Justine's pocket whilst she is walking (Crook 5, 13).

xx See William Lupton. *A Discourse Of Murther, Preach'd In The Chapel At Lincoln's-Inn*. 1725. 17.

xxi The phrase "of manner" does not appear in the draft and the fair copy for this passage is missing (*Original* 103).

xxii   P.B. Shelley changed "useless" into "superfluous" whilst transcribing (*Notebooks* 812).

xxiii   P.B. Shelley changed "degraded me beneath" into "sunk me below" whilst transcribing (*Notebooks* 814).

xxiv   P.B. Shelley changed "made for" into "was fashioned to be susceptible of" whilst transcribing (*Notebooks* 813).

xxv   Mary Shelley changed "high" into "lofty" and "the" into "these" whilst transcribing (*Notebooks* 809).

xxvi   P.B. Shelley introduced the phrase "powers of" whilst transcribing (*Notebooks* 813).

xxvii   Crook points out that though the author and her husband had anticipated the challenge of drawing sympathy towards the creature, early reviewers took "the side of the monster" (Praed 198; Crook 17).