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## **“My Own Vampire”: The Fate of Those Let Loose from the Grave**

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This essay discusses the fates of the literary doubles in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus* treating doubling as a process and exploring its mechanisms. In doing so it discovers that doubling is an inherently destructive process that will result in the death of the original self of everyone who cannot exit it before it runs its course.

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### **The Concept of the Double**

In literary criticism the term double is almost as vague as it is common as, as Hallam (1981) puts it, “almost any dual, and in some cases even multiple, structure in the text” can be interpreted as a case of the double, a phenomenon which he traces back to the folkloric origins of the concept (5). Taking even a cursory glance at those origins can make the confusion quite understandable. “Werewolves, wraiths, vampires [...] can be understood as dark personae of the Double” (8), but even something as ordinary and natural as a shadow is viewed as a double in some cultures (Rank 1971, 49). Furthermore, superstition holds in some places that a living person can be a double as well. One form of that belief documented by Frazer (1913) being that the soul of the still living father can be reborn in a child of striking similarity (quoted in Rank 1971, 53), which naturally foreshadows the looming death of the father, “since the child has adopted his image” (Rank 1971, 53). The deadly nature of having and encountering one's double signals “imminent death” in European culture as well, a myth that largely influenced the nineteenth century gothic writers (Slethaug 1994, 101).

Rank (1971) analysed the works of many such authors, mainly German, and he established two primary categories of the double in literature. One of them is the “independent and visible cleavage of the ego” usually portrayed as a separated shadow or reflection that came to life, while the other one is a “real and physical [person] of unusual external similarity” (12). However, given the fluid nature of the concept of the double, this definition alone is not sufficient to cover all cases, which is why it does well to employ another one, the idea of the composite self

introduced by Rogers (1970). The concept identifies the double not through similarities, but through function. It proposes that there are some characters that are written to be incomplete personalities and that if two, or in some cases multiple, of these characters moulded together would make a unified personality then they can be considered to be doubles (quoted in Hallam 1981, 5).

The double has functionality outside of the composite self as well. Rank (1971) identified several tendencies in the cases he examined, such as the double working against the “prototype” and the negative effect of this conflict being located “in the relationship with a woman” (33). Another common theme is the “impulse to rid oneself” of the double “in a violent manner” (16) and that acting upon such impulses result in “suicide by way of the death intended for the irksome persecutor” (33).

These patterns and themes also appear in *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus* written by Mary Shelley ([1831] 2003)<sup>1</sup>. It is practically a truism in *Frankenstein* criticism that Victor Frankenstein and his Creature are doubles (Levine [1973] 1996, 209) but all other major and minor characters seem to double each other as well in acting out similar narratives to each other (211). In Mary Shelley’s novel, too, the double appears in its dark aspect, but the way she utilises the concept has marked differences compared to what Rank observed in the works of the German writers. While the Creature certainly fits the archetype of the unkillable double, at many other times Shelley breaks away from the convention and kills off other, perhaps lesser, doubles, often by the hands of the one they double. Furthermore, in the case of those who die, them being doubles seems to play a major, if not primary role in their deaths. Indeed, it can be argued that every character who dies is a double in some way and only those who are not seen as a double can survive. This oddity can be read as a statement about the inherently destructive nature of doubles and how their very existence demands the life of their originals.

The deaths of the doubles of *Frankenstein* is peculiar and is perhaps best understood when the focus is not on the mere existence of the doubles, but on the process of their becoming and what it means within the context of the novel. When looking at doubles in this light one has to always remember the structure of the novel: three first person narratives are folded into each other like a Russian doll and presented as letters written for a fourth person outside the bounds of the novel. Of all the characters only three get the privilege to speak for themselves: Robert Walton, Victor Frankenstein and the Creature. All others are described only as defined by the interpretation of one of the narrators. This means, that when one

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<sup>1</sup> From here on all quotations and page numbers refer to this work and edition unless otherwise indicated.

notices the markings of the double on a character it is because one of the narrators instinctively recognised that person as their double in some regard.

One of the ways to understand the nature of the doubles in *Frankenstein* is to define them along the lines of what Mellor ([1988] 1996) describes as the “rigid division of sex roles” (274). She details how public and intellectual activities are all coded as masculine and domestic affairs and emotional activities as feminine to the point where one can even speak of the masculine and feminine as separate spheres of life and even as separate states of being. Keeping this gender division in mind when interpreting the doubles in the narrative is crucial because they are mainly regarded through the eyes of Victor Frankenstein, in whom this separation is so great that he “cannot love and work at the same time” (275), leaving him eternally lacking. Because of this lack, it is the most efficient to establish the two types of doubles along the gender lines. Those characters who are doubles because they represent an aspect of one of the narrators can be considered to be more traditional, Rankian doubles and be referred to as masculine doubles. Those who represent aspects that the narrators lack and function as composite characters, are to be referred to as feminine doubles.

However, since merely dividing the characters into these types would only focus on the double as a state and not as a process, it could not appropriately account for and describe the fates of the characters. Therefore additional categories need to be established and the already existing ones slightly reinterpreted to represent the process and its stages.

The first step of the process is the act of creating a double. There are several characters who form their own doubles or shape themselves into doubles and die as a result of that. These characters therefore can be categorised as *self-doublers*. There are many more who are merely perceived as a double by one of the narrators, yet are still condemned to death for it. Those are the *masculine and feminine doubles* who will be discussed as two separate categories as, although their fates are ultimately the same, the process and reasoning that leads to it are different. There are some characters who survive the novel, some of them despite the fact that they were perceived as doubles at some point. How they managed to avoid entering into the process of doubling or how they managed to exit it before its completion will be examined in a separate category simply called *survivors*. This categorization will leave only two characters unaccounted for, who leave the novel under uncertain terms, and that do not clearly dictate their fates. Their options will be discussed under the label of *those whose fate is yet undecided*.

Since the interest of this essay is in doubling as a process, each character's path will be closely examined in terms of the process: how they enter it, how they become and become recognised as a double, and how that leads to their deaths. To

illustrate the analysis and the doubling process itself, the first character to be examined will be Justine Moritz, whose transformations are the most fluid of all: she enters the process as a self-doubler, becomes recognised as a feminine double and completes the process via death as a masculine double.

### **Justine Moritz**

The case of Justine Moritz is a unique one and therefore it is best to discuss it separately rather than split it into the three categories it shifts through during the novel. Taking a look at her situation in its whole also yields the added benefit of showcasing the fluidity of personal identity and highlighting the advantages of treating doubling as a process.

Justine enters into the doubling process with the noble intentions of self-betterment. She, who at the tender age of twelve was rescued from an abusive home by Caroline Beaufort and taken in as a servant of the Frankensteins saw her saviour as “the model of all excellence” and out of her admiration for her “endeavoured to imitate her phraseology and manners” (52). She succeeded to the degree that even years after Caroline’s death she often reminds Elizabeth of her. Justine effectively turned herself into Caroline’s double who mimics the actions of the original whenever the possibility arises: When Caroline fell ill attending to Elizabeth’s sickbed, Justine nursed her much the same way Caroline nursed Elizabeth and as a result she, too, fell ill, though unlike Caroline, she recovered. After her recovery, the declining health of her mother, the reason for the sufferings of her youth, forced her to return home where Justine nursed her mother till her death, just like Caroline nursed her father, the man who pushed them into deep poverty, until his death. Upon her return to the Frankenstein household Justine slipped more explicitly into Caroline’s vacated place by acting towards William, Caroline’s youngest child, “like a most affectionate mother” (71).

Reshaping herself into a second Caroline, however, did not bring lasting happiness to Justine. Her excellent character and noble deeds that were modelled on Caroline were all brought up to her defense at her trial, but rather than saving her they only turned the public more against her, “charging her with the blackest of ingratitude” (71). Ultimately she was condemned to death but even while awaiting her execution she held onto the image of her idol by assuming “an air of cheerfulness” (75) and trying to “comfort others and herself” (74) just like Caroline, who in her final days decided to “endeavour to resign myself cheerfully to death” (29).

Her resemblance to Caroline does not only seal her fate in the courtroom, but it is partially what leads her there in the first place. Justine gets framed for the

murder of William by the Creature who accidentally stumbles upon her sleeping form shortly after he takes a miniature portrait of Caroline's from William. Gazing at the miniature of this "most lovely woman" the Creature discovers for the first time the effects the feminine aspect can have on him, "it softened and attracted me" (132). Softening the masculine impulses towards pursuing selfish ambitions and glory and softening the masculine counterpart's temper is a primary function of the feminine as best portrayed by Elizabeth's childhood relationship with Victor and Henry: She "was there to subdue [Victor] to a semblance of her own gentleness" and to unfold to Henry "the real loveliness of beneficence and made the doing good the end and aim of his soaring ambition" (24). In that moment the Creature, the manifestation of masculine ambition, becomes aware of the need for a feminine double for becoming complete at the same time as he realises that he is "forever deprived of the delights such beautiful creature could bestow" (132).

This is what is at the forefront of his mind when he comes across Justine, which prompts the Creature to transfer his newly awakened desire for the feminine onto her, recreating in his mind the sleeping Justine as the living double of Caroline's portrait. Him addressing her as the "fairest" despite privately noting how Justine is "not indeed so beautiful as her whose portrait I held" (132) also helps to create continuity between the two women. However, when Justine stirs and the harmless fantasy of interacting with the feminine becomes a real possibility, the fear and anger at the anticipated rejection reawakens and the Creature decides to punish Justine for it by framing her.

His reasoning is odd: "the murder I have committed because I am forever robbed of all that she could give me, she shall atone. The crime has its source in her; be hers the punishment" (132). Since the Creature found Caroline's miniature only after he murdered William, locating the source of it in the feminine can be understood as an instinctive recognition of his own lacking nature that locks him out of human affection. Another oddity is how he intuitively senses the connection between Caroline and Justine. The true source of the Creature's crimes is Victor's absence as a parent, an absence which can be argued to be the result of Caroline's inadequate mothering, her failure to soften her son's temper. If viewed this way, Caroline is the source of Victor's crimes and thus the Creature's, which is a sin that by becoming Caroline's double Justine unwittingly took upon herself.

This part of the Creature's narrative also exemplifies how he is rarely moved by his own will alone. As Victor's "spirit let loose" (64) it is no coincidence that the first female that attracts him is Victor's mother who must have been on Victor's mind during the creation of the Creature as evidenced by the nightmare. The echoes of Victor also shine through in the Creature's play acting. According to Elizabeth, Justine used to be a "great favourite" of Victor's and if he was "in an ill

humour, one glance from Justine could dissipate it” (52). Similarly, the Creature identifies himself to Justine as “thy lover [...] who would give his life but to obtain one look of affection from thine eyes” (132). Unfortunately for Justine, this identifies her as a potential feminine double of Victor’s as well, which alone could be enough to decide her fate.

The Creature and Victor oftentimes find themselves doubled in the same people, but not always for the same reason. Justine during her trial is one of the rare occasions when a double embodies the same aspect of both. In the courtroom she is no longer a feminine double representing their lack, but a masculine one who carries their shared crime like a sacrificial scapegoat. The Creature through his scheming and Victor through his inaction transfer the identity of the murderer to Justine, a transference that is so complete that in the eyes of the people it negates all of Justine’s positive actions and qualities, making them appear abhorrent. Thus during the course of the trial Justine’s own identity is stripped away leaving nothing but the identity of the murder behind.

While she is forced to act as their shared double she adopts the language of the Creature. She repeatedly calls herself a “wretch” (73, 74), the name most commonly associated with the Creature, and her words at many times anticipate the Creature’s worldview. Her “I had none to support me; all looked on me as a wretch” (73) is the same sentiment expressed in the Creature’s question of “am I not shunned and hated by all mankind” (134). His famous claim that he is “alone and miserable” (133) and “malicious because I am miserable” is also foreshadowed by Justine’s explanation of how “the affection of others” is so sweet to “such a wretch as I am” that it “removes more than half my misfortune”. Justine assures Elizabeth that she can make peace with her fate if Elizabeth will “remember me and think of me as of one unjustly condemned” (74) and similarly the Creature exclaims that even if only one person could show him affection “for that one creature’s sake I would make peace with the whole kind” (135).

While other characters tend not to change the route they take, in the end this diversion means nothing. Justine’s unique journey through the doubling process still concludes the same as all of those who cannot exit it: with her death.

### **Self-doublers**

When it comes to the doubling process, self-doublers are in a uniquely privileged position as they are the only ones who have true control over the process. Because of that there are only two characters in the novel who can be categorised as self-doublers and self-doublers only.

The first of them is Caroline Beaufort Frankenstein. During one of their travels Victor's mother finds herself in the odd situation of encountering a young child named Elizabeth Lavenza who is of unusual similarity to herself. They have a similar history. Caroline Beaufort was the daughter of a wealthy merchant who lost all his fortune before dying in poverty leaving his daughter "an orphan and a beggar" forced to do "plain work" (18). Elizabeth Lavenza was the daughter of a Milanese nobleman whose wealth was confiscated after he was either killed or imprisoned leaving Elizabeth "an orphan and a beggar" (21) to be raised by a peasant family. They are described similarly. Caroline is of an "uncommon mould" (18) and Elizabeth is of a "different stock" (20). They are both described in a language that associates them with religion and the divine. Caroline is described as acting like "the guardian angel of the afflicted" (20) and Elizabeth is described as having the appearance of a "cherub" (21) who bears a "celestial stamp" that marks her as "heaven sent" (20). They both encounter a Frankenstein who decides to rescue them.

Elizabeth clearly has the markings of a Rankian double but Caroline does not heed the implicit warning, perhaps because she already dabbles in self-doubling. She was rescued from her state of poverty and despair by Alphonse Frankenstein who appeared to her as a "protecting spirit" (18) and now she visits people in similar states to act as their guardian angel. This to her is "more than a duty; it was a necessity, a passion", almost like a compulsion born from "remembering what she had suffered, and how she had been relieved" (20). From this it becomes evident that Caroline acting under the guise of Alphonse cannot leave behind someone so similar to herself. Similarly to how Alphonse took her under his protection and later married her, Caroline wants to ensure Elizabeth's future by adopting her as her "much desired" (19) daughter who one day will marry her son, Victor and become a proper member of the Frankenstein family, just like Caroline herself. This is a plan on which Caroline's "firmest hopes for future happiness were placed on" (28).

With her adoption Elizabeth may have become an "inmate" (21) of her new family destined to become a perfect double for Caroline, but Caroline's hopes are all jeopardised when Elizabeth contracts the scarlet fever. Hearing that "the life of her favourite was menaced" so distresses Caroline that despite evidence that there were "medical attendants" available she insists on nursing Elizabeth herself. Her attentions save Elizabeth's life but cost her her own. However, Caroline achieves her goal. On her deathbed she trades fates and roles with Elizabeth, which Caroline verbally acknowledges by saying "you must supply my place to my younger children" (28). The force of the parting words of her dying saviour lock Elizabeth into her role as the new Caroline and complete Caroline's self-doubling process.

As for why doubling herself in Elizabeth was so important to Caroline only assumptions can be made, but a clue to it might be found in a painting. What

Caroline went through between the loss of her father's wealth and the arrival of Alphonse was so immensely traumatic that it had shaken "her health, and even the tranquility of her hitherto constant spirit" (19). The greatest blow had to be the death of her father and in those moments of grief is when Alphonse finds her, kneeling at the side of her father's coffin and weeping. This moment of great suffering is commemorated in a painting Victor claims was "painted at my father's desire" that portrays Caroline "in an agony of despair, kneeling at the coffin of her dead father" (64) that is hanging in their library. It seems like even in her happy home Caroline could not escape that moment and the only way to leave it behind appeared to be recreating herself in a new form, as a new person—as a double.

Victor Frankenstein, on the other hand, does not encounter his double within his narrative, he literally creates it. As Victor's creation, the Creature "can be taken as an expression of an aspect of Frankenstein's self [...] leading an apparently independent organic life of its own and yet [...] reenacting in mildly disguised ways, his creator's feelings and experiences" (Levine [1973] 1996, 209–10). Poovey ([1984] 2012) identifies this aspect of Victor's self as his "ambition and desire" and she argues that by giving these an independent form Victor has effectively separated them off of himself, which left him in "permanent incompleteness" (348). That the Creature is a part of Victor who, as Poovey puts it, "simply acts out the implicit content of Frankenstein's desires" (349) when committing his crimes, leaves the two of them in a precarious position. If the Creature is moved by Victor's will then the Creature's crimes are Victor's crimes as well. If the Creature is Victor's double then Victor is, or can become, the Creature's double.

The complicated nature of their relationship is instinctively recognised by Victor. When he first sees him again after William's murder he calls the Creature "my own vampire, my spirit let loose from the grave forced to destroy all that was dear to me" (64). The Creature is his spirit, they are the same. Victor's conscious mind, however, rejects this notion and he starts rationalising it away. By describing the Creature as "filthy demon" with a form "more hideous than belongs to humanity" (63) Victor classifies him as something non-human (Hindle 1994, 50) and places him a safe distance away from himself. Thus reassuring himself of the insignificance of his connection to the Creature, Victor can comfortably come to the conclusion that "*he* was the murderer" because "nothing in human shape could have destroyed that fair child" even though he has only "the mere presence of the idea" as "irresistible proof" (63). At this stage of identifying and identifying with the Creature, the distinction between the two of them is so stark and important in Victor's mind that the word "*he*" is italicised as early as the 1818 edition (50), one of the few occasions something is italicised for emphasis in the novel.

Before Justine's trial, Victor firmly believes that "Justine, and indeed every human being was guiltless of his [William's] murder" and that his fault at most is being the creator of "the living monument of presumption and rash ignorance which I had let loose upon the world" (66). This weak assertion of his innocence, however, cannot survive Justine's trial which Victor already sees as a test to see "whether the result of my curiosity and lawless devices would cause the death of two of my fellow beings" (68). Calling his devices lawless is already a soft form of admitting not only that he has transgressed the laws of nature but also of the still subconscious realization that there are no human laws to regulate what he has done and thus his Creature has to be "immune to human justice" (Poovey [1984] 2012, 352). Because of this he instinctively understands that the trial is just a "wretched mockery of justice" that can only end with Justine being "obliterated in an ignominious grave, and I the cause" (68).

However, this initial admission of guilt is severely undercut by Victor's inability to voice it. At first he tries to reassure himself that since Justine is not the real murderer no evidence brought against her could condemn her. Then he justifies his silence by claiming that "my tale [...] would be looked upon as madness" (66) and a "declaration would have been considered as the ravings of a madman and would not have exculpated her who suffered through me" (68). He is, of course, wrong. The presence of the miniature is something that Justine cannot explain. "How could she imagine", Veeder ([1982] 1996) asks, "that an eight-foot-tall, man-made monster had sneaked up and slipped the miniature into her pocket" (272). The only person who has any hope of proving that is Victor, who could use his work as proof of his words or he could have even merely lied about an enemy of his committing the crime in retaliation against him. After all, he already claimed to know the identity of the murderer in front of his younger brother, Earnest, before the revelation of Justine's arrest, exclaiming that "I saw him too; he was free last night" (65).

These thoughts do not enter Victor's mind at all as he refuses to take any responsibility for his creature. Victor claims that he cannot take the blame for the murder because "I was absent when it was committed" (68). Victor does realise that his greatest crime is being absent. Merriam-Webster (n.d.) defines the word absent as "not present at a usual or expected place", "not attentive", "missing" and ties it to the word "lacking", which means "to be deficient". As a son, a brother, a fiancé, a father, Victor is not where he is expected to be. He is not only absent from the life of the Creature whom he created and abandoned two years ago, an action that leads to William's murder, but he is also absent from the life of his family. He is not attentive. He did not bother to find out what became of his creature and he kept postponing returning home despite his family's desire to see him again after years

of absence. Victor is missing from his home, which is the root of the problem. Mellor ([1988] 1996) explains that because of the novel's separation of the spheres of the masculine intellectual and feminine emotional activities Victor "cannot work and love at the same time" as the former happens only outside of the home while the latter is confined within it (275).

Victor's "unsurmountable aversion to the idea of engaging myself in my loathsome task [...] while in habits of familiar intercourse with those I loved" (141) that forces him to leave the sphere of the influence of feminine understanding and affection in order to be able to work is born from the nature of his work. Victor wants to create life not only by excluding the feminine but by denying it (Sélei [1999] 2015, 76). This desire can be seen as a result of the separation of intellect and affection, which supposes that by being unable to feel affection by himself Victor is deficient and can be whole only by uniting with Elizabeth whom Sélei identifies as a feminine double of Victor's (100). It is only because a part of himself is already missing that Victor engages in the Creature's creation and separates off yet another aspect of his self. This results in Victor being not only physically absent at the time of William's murder but also in the sense of being lacking twice over. The Creature, that is a part of Victor that he is lacking, is also a manifestation of Victor's lack of affection born from his absence from home. Therefore, it can be said that it is literally Victor being absent that killed his brother and condemned Justine.

This, however, is something Victor cannot understand. After citing his absence as the reason for his silence, Victor does little more than describe the court proceedings until it becomes clear that "concerning the picture [Justine] could give no account", at which point Victor calls her "the unhappy victim" (70). This shortly morphs into "my unhappy victim" (72) when he is forced to confront how he would be viewed if those around him knew the situation in its whole. Justine innocently assumes that "none surely would have been so wicked to destroy me wantonly". Victor is not only like all the others who knew Justine for years and out of "fear and hatred of the crime" became "timorous and unwilling to come forward", he is wicked. They spoke well of Justine when called upon, Victor stayed silent. The final condemnation comes from Victor's feminine double, Elizabeth, who demonstrates all the affection Victor only claims to feel because she cannot watch "a fellow creature about to perish through the cowardice of her pretended friends" (71). In *Frankenstein* the word friend also means family and by claiming Justine as her sister Elizabeth also claims her as Victor's sister. Thus Victor allows the death of another sibling out of "self-devoted concern for [...] his own reputation" (Mellor [1988] 1996, 276).

Getting closer and closer to realising the true nature of his relationship to the situation and the Creature causes Victor constant pain. The trial is a "living torture"

(68) during which his “agitation and anguish was extreme” (71). After Elizabeth’s testimony when he finally considers the possibility that the “demon who [...] murdered my brother” framed Justine and doomed her to “death and ignominy” (71) he becomes unable to “sustain the horror of my situation” and upon realizing that the public already decided Justine’s fate he “rushed out of the court in agony” (72). He claims a torture greater than Justine’s for himself since she is at least “sustained by innocence” while he is torn apart by “fangs of remorse” forcing him to spend a night in “unmingled wretchedness”. The word wretchedness is of note here as it is derived from the word wretch, the name most commonly used for the Creature and its appearance signals that Victor is close to self-admission.

The final barrier between him and the realization of what he became breaks down in Justine’s prison cell where he is taken reluctantly by Elizabeth, the living embodiment of his capacity for love and affection. There, in her conversation with Elizabeth Justine echoes back Victor’s private musings both from the trial and from the time Victor saw his Creature again by claiming that she was made to feel like she was “doomed to ignominy and perdition” and by claiming that “none but the devil himself” (73) could have been the true murderer. Victor merely listens to the desperate exchange of his sisters, to Justine admitting to a false confession, to Elizabeth promising to save Justine and to Justine resigning herself to death. He cannot take part in their heartfelt farewell. Not even when he is directly addressed. Regardless, the talk has an effect on him. He “gnashed my teeth and ground them together, uttering a groan that came from my inmost soul” (74) as “anguish and despair” finally “penetrated into the core of my heart” (75).

The pain that Victor experiences has significance because it is a mimicry of what the Creature goes through when his heart “fashioned to be susceptible of love and sympathy [was] wrenched by misery to vice” (209–10) could not “endure the violence of the change without torture such as you cannot imagine” (210). The pain Victor feels is the pain of becoming the wretch that murdered his brother. Now Victor too “bore a hell within me” (75) just like how the Creature “like the arch-fiend, bore a hell within me” (125) when he first turned violent after being rejected by the de Lacey family. Having gone through the process of recognising what he became, Victor is finally able to admit that he is “the true murderer” (74) and that both Justine and William are only “the first hapless victims of my unhallowed arts” (75).

That more victims are to follow is a natural consequence of Victor’s new, more complex relationship with his Creature who fits the Rankian observation of doubles working against their prototypes (Rank 1971, 33). However, the Creature’s purpose cannot be the destruction of Victor’s loved ones because, as Séllei ([1999] 2015) observes, his true desire is to be united with a female and thus the feminine

principle (96). This, due to the stark separation of the masculine and feminine spheres is truly a desire for self-unification. The Creature who was born of pure masculine intellect correctly perceives that the only way to enter society, in fact the only way to become a whole person, is through a union with a representative of the female aspect. If this purpose is the opposite of Victor's own desire then what Victor truly wants is disunion, the splintering of the self represented by Victor's solitary act of creation. Understanding this reveals the true reason for Victor's self-identification with his Creature. It does not bring their purposes into alignment because Victor cannot grasp the nature of his creation's desires, rather it is another act of self-splintering. By identifying with the Creature, the split off part of himself, Victor is rejecting every other remaining aspect of himself that is reflected back in his friends.

Thus Elizabeth, whose "existence was bound up" (78) in Victor's is correct in her unknowingly uttered assumption that "I never could survive so horrible a misfortune [as Justine innocently being executed]" (74). Justine's death could occur because Victor lacks both the aspect of his self that is capable of affection and the aspect that is willing to unite with the affectionate feminine principle. As a consequence, Victor is also incapable of reconciling with his Creature, who as Victor's double, is thus forced to act on Victor's implicit desire for the splintering of the self even when it is contrary to his own desires. It is only because Victor has "no thought nor sense of joy except as it is mirrored also in your dear countenances" (75) that the Creature is "forced to destroy all that was dear to me" (64).

Levine ([1973] 1996) writes that "the family is an aspect of the self and the self cannot survive bereft of its family" (213) and the rest of the novel illustrates that. Every death in the family is also a death of an aspect of Victor, thus the Creature, a double of theirs. Victor's desire for splintering his self kills them one after the other and with that more and more of what made up his self, what made him Victor Frankenstein dies, as well. The death of his masculine self starts with the birth of the Creature, the embodiment of his ambition, as with that he loses not only his ability to create but also his desire to pursue science evidenced by how after the Creature's birth he "wished to fly from reflection and hated my formal studies" (55). It completes with the death of Alphonse, after the last hope of self-unification dies with Elizabeth. The only thing that remains is the Creature, and Victor becomes just as single-mindedly obsessed with revenge as the Creature is. "Revenge remains—revenge, henceforth dearer than light or food" (158) claims the Creature and Victor, who with nothing else left turns into the Creature's double also becomes "reserved for vengeance" (193).

Victor's various acts of self-doubling left him nothing of himself but even on his deathbed he refuses to see that. He rejects Walton's offers of friendship claiming

that none can replace those who are already gone and with that he refuses to form new social ties that could reunite him with lost aspects of his self and turn him back into Victor Frankenstein. Instead, he yet again seeks another disunion by trying to turn Walton into his surviving double by entrusting him with his tale and vengeance much like Caroline entrusted Elizabeth with the continuation of her life. Unlike his mother, Victor does not succeed and Walton apparently rejects the role of the double.

### **Masculine Doubles**

The criteria for categorising someone as a masculine double is that they have to represent an aspect contained within either Victor or the Creature, as opposed to the feminine doubles who represent an aspect that they lack, and die as a result of that. Surprisingly, there are only two purely masculine doubles to speak of.

That the first of these masculine doubles to die is William Frankenstein, Victor's youngest brother, the innocent child of the novel, is no surprise. To both the Creature and Victor, William is the embodiment of the Ideal-I (Lacan 1977, 2), a concept that in simple terms means that ideal image of the self that the self attempts to achieve throughout its life (Zuern, n.d.).

For the Creature William Frankenstein represents everything he wants to become and wants to have. Before he learns how they are connected the Creature only wants to abduct him to "educate him as my companion and friend" (131) as he believes that as a child William is still unbiased. He is "doomed only when he is identified as a son" (Veeder 1986, 384) by crying "my papa is [...] M. Frankenstein" because it changes the Creature's perception of him into that of someone who "belongs to my enemy" (131). It is within reason to assume that in that moment the Creature believed that he accidentally found Victor's son as the child did not specify which M. Frankenstein he spoke of. Another son, a brother but one who is beautiful, well-loved and who can be confident in the help and protection provided by his father. As that is all the Creature hoped to achieve by seeking Victor, when presented with the impossible distance separating him from his ideal self, he responds violently and destroys the child in whom it manifests.

For Victor, William is that double of his that still lives in that ideal state that he himself has lost. As a child Victor was the "idol" (19) of his parents who were "possessed by the very spirit of kindness and indulgence" and who appeared to him as "not the tyrants to rule our lot [...] but the agents and creators of all the many delights which we enjoyed" (23). That, however, changes when Victor discovers Agrippa. He takes the volume to his father "bounding with joy" but Alphonse

“carelessly” dismisses it calling it “sad trash” (24). This one small moment drives a wedge between father and son, the dismissal of his latest delight becoming so monumental in Victor’s mind that when recounting his tale to Walton he traces all his miseries back to it. This fundamental shift appears in how he talks about his father later on. Veeder (1986) observes that it is like Victor “blames Alphonse for sending him to Ingolstadt” and he feels “driven from home”. He points out that Victor uses a passive language such as “my parents resolved”, “my father thought”, “my departure was therefore fixed” that implies a lack of agency (377). Alphonse has become a tyrant in his eyes to such a degree that even after his mother’s death Victor can obtain only some respite from him before he has to obey his father’s will and leave home.

William, on the other hand, is the current idol of the family. He is at home under the protection of his doting father and he is clearly the favourite of everyone. In the letter notifying Victor of his death there are no less than six endearments attached to William. Amongst others he is called “my darling child” by Elizabeth, “sweet”, “lovely” and “beloved” (59) by Alphonse and he is also referred to as Caroline’s “youngest darling” (60), managing to win even the dead mother’s favour. Later Alphonse claimed that Justine “appeared to love [him] as if [William] had been her own” (80) and about himself that “no one could love a child more than I loved your brother” (78). Even Henry mourns him and calls him a “dear lovely child” (60). Victor had just as much reason to be jealous of William as the Creature, therefore in order for him to be able to return home, this double of his that has occupied his place had to die.

If William was Victor as a child than Alphonse Frankenstein was Victor as a father. He was also the kind of father the Creature wished for as “in bestowing the gift [of a bride] and in caring for him, behaves to his son as the monster would have Frankenstein behave” (Levine [1973] 1996, 211). His death at the end of the novel symbolises the death of any hope of reconciliation between Victor and his own son, but its occurrence is perhaps more closely tied to another way in which Alphonse doubles Victor.

Victor claims that his father died because “he could not live under the horrors that were accumulated around him” (189) and that even before his physical death his eyes already “wandered in vacancy, for they had lost their charm and their delight—his Elizabeth, his more than daughter” (188). This account of events is of course highly questionable. “The unconvincing thing about fictional deaths-from-sorrow is precisely that they can occur whenever the novelist requires” (Veeder 1986, 385). Alphonse dying from sorrow over Elizabeth’s death is no more convincing than it would have been if he died after the loss of his wife or son until the three little words, more than daughter, are taken into account. The only other

relationship in the novel described in terms of being more than something is that of Elizabeth and Victor, as by being Victor's bride Elizabeth is more than just a sister. That it resurfaces in connection with Alphonse and Elizabeth puts Victor's previous claim that she was Alphonse's Elizabeth into a new perspective. It is entirely possible that regarding William, Alphonse, the child's father, and Elizabeth, who was entrusted with being his mother, functioned much like a married couple in Victor's absence. However, because Elizabeth is not truly Caroline but Victor's bride, her letter to Victor shows that the role of the married Victor is projected just as much onto Alphonse as the living Caroline's image is onto Elizabeth. Thus Alphonse becomes the double of the Victor who already united with his feminine double and he can receive his original self back only once Victor takes his image back by marrying Elizabeth and becoming complete in reality. That this might be the case is supported by a very similar idea appearing in one of Shelley's later works, *Mathilda*, where Veeder (1986) observes marriage functioning as a form of unification of father and groom (372). However, since Victor never consummated his marriage, Alphonse's double nature was never dissolved and as an idealised self of Victor's he dies from the overwhelming loss of his feminine double who made him whole as a realization of Victor's death wish after the loss of Henry.

### **Feminine Doubles**

The novel's feminine doubles represent a missing aspect of Victor and the Creature, the affectionate emotional self that they have to unite with in order to become whole and be able to fully integrate into society. The novel's method for such unification is marriage and it can be assumed that any marriage either Victor or the Creature could hope to have would have to follow the example of Alphonse's who "gradually relinquished all his public functions" (19) before finally marrying Caroline.

While this is an acceptable course for the Creature, by returning only after his brother's death, Victor already gave proof of his reluctance to leave behind his masculine spaces such as the university in Ingolstadt and to move into the domestic spaces where Elizabeth is confined. For him this kind of self-unification might be impossible as his solitary act of creation betrayed his hidden desire not only to exclude the feminine principle from his life but to eliminate it. Séllei ([1999] 2015) sees this desire expressed in Victor's nightmare about the turning of the living Elizabeth into his dead mother as well, claiming that it not only foreshadows Elizabeth's death but also the death of all women and the death of the feminine principle itself (96).

The two women in the dream indeed mark the beginning and end of the destruction of the feminine presence in the novel. It starts with Caroline's self-elimination and each following death comes gradually closer to the main threat to the independence of Victor's masculine self, to Elizabeth. After Caroline, the next feminine double to die is Justine, whose case was previously discussed. She, as a love interest so far in the past that Victor had to be reminded of not only her family history, but also of his former affections for her, is still a safe distance away from Elizabeth. The next victim, the unborn female creature, the new Eve is closer as she was conceived to be Elizabeth's double by the Creature.

Victor's thought process before destroying Eve's body reveals that while in many regards he thinks of her as just another Creature he finds her far more dangerous. The two of them might be created "in the same manner" and he would be "likewise ignorant" of her "disposition" but he fears that "she might become ten thousand times more malignant than her mate and delight, for its own sake, in murder and wretchedness" (155). He worries that she will not consent to honour a contract made in her name and even more that they will hate each other. He reasons that the Creature who already "loathed his deformity" might "conceive a greater abhorrence for it [...] in female form" and he reasons that the same might be true for Eve who could turn "to the superior beauty of man" (155).

Eve's potential choice of a mate is the core of Victor's anxiety. The being he is about to bring to life with her superior strength could have the power to forcefully unite herself with a man, perhaps even Victor, and force self-unification on him. But even if that does not come to pass and Eve honours the Creature's promise and is satisfied with her allotted mate, the threat does not disappear. If they manage to live "in the interchange of those sympathies necessary for [their] being" (134) then "one of the first results of those sympathies for which the demon thirsted would be children, a race of devils" (155–56). Together the Creature and Eve as a united whole would be able to create, to fulfil Victor's overtly stated goal of creating "a new species [that] would bless me as its creator and source" (40). By successfully bringing Eve to life, Victor would risk aiding and propagating self-unification.

Tearing Eve's body apart makes Victor's desire to eliminate the feminine explicit and even the language describing it negates the kind of union the Creature is hoping for as it "suggests a violent rape" (Mellor [1988] 1996, 279). Victor seems to be aware of the meaning of his actions as he notes that the Creature watched him "destroy the creature on whose future existence he depended for happiness" (156). This further strengthens the connection between Elizabeth and Eve, as for Victor after the loss of Henry, Elizabeth will become the one in whom "all that [Victor] may one day enjoy is centred" (180). Given how strongly Eve doubles Elizabeth, it is no wonder that the Creature delivers the threat of "I shall be with you on

your wedding-night” (158) to Victor in an attempt to repay him the misery he has caused, as it can stand to reason that the Creature viewed the night he appeared to “claim the fulfillment of [Victor’s] promise” (156) as his own wedding night.

What is surprising is the identity of the next victim. After such a promise and the gradual escalation of the closeness of the victims, the next anticipated death is of Elizabeth’s, the last remaining woman’s in Victor’s life. However, instead of her the next body to grow cold is that of Henry Clerval’s.

This at first seems odd: it is so odd that the usually eloquent Creature who tends to give a complete account of his crimes cannot explain it. When talking to Walton he omits what lead to the murder and starts in the moment of it by asking “think you that the groans of Clerval were music to my ears” (209) which implies an emotional state much different from the “exultation and hellish triumph” (131–32) he felt after William’s murder and the emotional void that followed Elizabeth’s of which he claimed that “then I was not miserable. I had cast off all feeling”. He also makes no mention of the disposal of Henry’s body, a curiously odd occurrence, simply stating that “after the murder of Clerval I returned to Switzerland” (210). Because of his inability to formulate the reasons behind his actions this might be the clearest instance of Victor’s will moving the Creature since unlike the Creature, Victor had a reason to substitute Henry for Elizabeth.

Regardless of his gender, Henry represents a feminine presence in Victor’s life. This is noted by Séllei ([1999] 2015) as well, who observes that through interpreting the meaning behind their literary preferences it can be shown that Henry’s ideology is a feminine one (93–94). Henry tends to fall into feminine patterns as well, even experiencing an attempt of confinement by his father just like the female characters do.

One of the markedly feminine activities Henry engages in is nursing. Caroline nurses her father and Elizabeth, Justine nurses Caroline and her mother, a hired woman nurses Victor and Elizabeth wishes she could nurse Victor. The only men who engage in this activity are Henry, who chooses to nurse Victor himself instead of hiring “some mercenary old nurse” (50), and Walton, who operates in a place devoid of feminine presence and who is accused by Victor of trying to be another Clerval.

Henry’s role as a nurse gains further meaning from Elizabeth’s categorical denial of it in her letter. From Victor’s account of his illness given prior to the arrival of her letter it is known that “Henry was my only nurse” (47) because according to Victor “he knew that I could not have a more kind and attentive nurse than himself” which is underlined by Victor believing that “surely nothing but the unbounded and unremitting attentions of my friend could have restored me to life” (48). Victor explains that out of concern for his family, Henry has hidden the full

extent of his illness from them in his letters, but nothing suggests that he kept the fact that he was the one nursing Victor a secret as well. Yet Elizabeth, who cites the “constant letters of dear kind Henry” effectively removes him from the side of Victor’s sickbed by imagining that “the task of attending on your sickbed has devolved on some mercenary old nurse, who could never guess your wishes, nor administer to them with the care and affection of your poor cousin” (50).

Why Elizabeth feels the need to do that can be discerned from examining the topics that were on her mind when she wrote the letter: the possibility of Victor’s return, the children of the family, Victor’s childhood love and above all, marriage. It is implicitly present in her mothering tone when she talks about Ernest and William and it comes to the surface after she shares with Victor that William already had “one or two little wives”. It seems that Elizabeth is surrounded by marriages: a Miss Mansfield is soon to marry an Englishman, Miss Mansfield’s sister recently married a banker and even Victor’s old schoolfellow is on the verge of marrying a widow despite his “several misfortune since the departure of Clerval” (53). Since the second line of the letter it has taken Elizabeth until the second to last paragraph to mention Henry again but now he is not “dear kind Henry” (50) but Clerval who is framed as an obstacle that had to be removed so Victor’s old school fellow could marry. This betrays Elizabeth’s own anxiety that by being by Victor’s sickbed in a way she could not, Henry has taken her place in some intrinsic way and has become a barrier between herself and Victor, jeopardising her marriage prospects.

Elizabeth’s fear of being replaced might not be entirely unfounded. During the year in which Victor stays in Ingolstadt, despite her thinly veiled pleas for his return, Henry takes over the role of softening Victor’s mood. In their shared life it was Elizabeth who subdued his sullen mood “to a semblance of her own” (24) but now it is Henry who called “forth the better feelings of my heart; he again taught me to love the aspect of nature and the cheerful faces of children” (56), the latter of which is something that Elizabeth herself seems to have failed to achieve with her letter.

The nature of Victor and Henry’s relationship is also noted by several critics. Séllei ([1999] 2015) notes how Henry nurses Victor with an almost homoerotic love (78) and Mellor ([1988] 1996) identifies Henry as Victor’s “true soul mate” (280) and points to Victor’s “description of Clerval’s haunting eyes [...] [that] verges on the erotic” (281). Several of Victor’s own statements can be interpreted to carry romantic connotations as well, such as admitting that “Clerval had always been my favourite companion” (56) and that he “loved him with a mixture of affection and reverence that knew no bounds” (55) admiring him to the degree that he cannot help but question if “could aught ill entrench on the noble spirit of Clerval” (24).

Victor also acts with more affection, consideration and protectiveness towards Henry than towards Elizabeth. Despite Elizabeth’s urging to return home, Victor’s

journey has to be delayed by a year due to his “unwillingness to leave Clerval in a strange place before he had acquainted himself with any of its inhabitants” (56) which is an excuse that disregards the fact that Henry had already successfully spent an entire season in Ingolstadt not only without Victor’s help but despite being busy nursing him. Victor rather uncharacteristically also considers the sacrifice Henry made for him because “instead of being spent in study [...] [Henry’s time] has been consumed in my sick room” (48). He tries to make up for the wasted time by introducing Henry to all of his former professors, introductions that he had started his academic career with, seemingly forgetting that Henry “had never sympathised in my tastes for natural science”. He is also easily convinced to follow Henry into his studies of the “Oriental languages”, (55) despite how “the structure of languages [...] possessed no attractions for me” (23), finding “great relief in being the fellow pupil with my friend” (55).

Even more surprising is that Victor’s attentiveness towards Henry’s needs and desires did not diminish even when he started gathering information and materials for Eve’s creation during their time in London. This is remarkable because when he was previously engaged in such work he cut all communication with his family to “procrastinate all that related to my feelings of affection” (41). But while he claims that this time as well “company was irksome” to him “the voice of Henry soothed me, and I could thus cheat myself into a transitory peace” (147). He also took care not to diminish his companion’s enjoyment of their trip going as far as accepting an invitation to Scotland that Henry “eagerly desired to accept” despite how he “abhorred society” (148).

The most telling sign of Victor viewing Henry as his other half, his feminine double, perhaps the only one he could unite with, is the stark contrast between how he assessed the Creature regarding the safety of Henry and Elizabeth. Mellor ([1988] 1996) notes that Victor’s “self-devoted concern for his own suffering” (276) prevents him from perceiving the threat to Elizabeth, who might not have died had Victor stayed with her (280). Regarding Henry, however, Victor does not only consider the possibility that the Creature might “expedite my remissness by murdering my companion” but as a precaution against it he also “would not quit Henry for a moment, but followed him as his shadow to protect him” (151).

The impression that Henry is Victor’s true feminine double and thus Elizabeth’s double is further strengthened by Henry oftentimes appearing in the narrative where one would anticipate Elizabeth. He arrives in Ingolstadt the day after Victor dreams of Elizabeth visiting him; he nurses Victor when Elizabeth wishes to; and after her marriage seems secure, Elizabeth sends Henry with Victor to London in her place; and finally, when the narrative foreshadows the death of Elizabeth, Henry’s body is found.

While in the light of their relationship Henry's death appears to be an appropriate response to Eve's unmaking, the Creature's seeming lack of ability to explain it still makes it seem curious. If he had not recognised Henry's significance to Victor and if Victor treated Henry with such marked difference as if he was the only feminine double with whom a union was possible, then why did Henry have to die? In this instance, the Creature's purposes and Victor's, appeared not to be at odds with each other.

The answer to that question might be in a letter of Henry's that Victor received after destroying Eve's body. Henry wrote that "friends he had formed in London desired his return" (159) and that after his return to London he might depart soon to India and before that he would like Victor "to bestow as much of my society on him as I could spare" (160). Henry was leaving him and Victor wanted to stay by his side for as long as he could. Before Eve's destruction this would have aligned him with the Creature's desire for self-unification but in this situation their roles reversed: Victor desired the company of his feminine double and the Creature sought to deprive him of such a union.

As Victor's spirit let loose, it can be assumed that the Creature shares a special bond with his creator so him being able to sense the change in Victor and the urgency with which he had to act to foil him is not something beyond the scope of the already fantastic premise of the novel. That this might be the case is supported by the sheer oddness of everything surrounding the discovery of Henry's body. The Creature's encounters with his victims are all plausible if not always likely, but this is not the case here.

Victor, who selected the "remotest of the Orkneys as the scene of my labours" (152), receives Henry's letter asking him to meet him at Perth the night after Victor destroyed Eve and the Creature departed. The night after that, on the second night after the Creature departs, he sets out on sea from the northernmost islands of Scotland to dispose of the remains of his unborn creation but a storm breaks out that over the course of the night washes him far away from the Orkneys and by the next and third night he arrives at the northern shores of Ireland, at the same village where Henry's body was dropped off, still warm, on the night of the disposal. This course of events would assume that after the Creature departed from Victor's make-shift laboratory he travelled south to Perth, presumably abducted Henry, an assumption that has to be made on account of his body still being warm when discovered, and carried him over to the northern shores of Ireland to dispose of his recently murdered body almost in anticipation of where Victor would end up landing. Without a profound connection, anticipating Victor's arrival would be impossible, without the ability to anticipate him the action would be meaningless. That the impulse for the act was born inside the Creature and was not merely a

manifested side effect of the Creature's nature as a double and that the ever-forthcoming Creature would not explain something as uncharacteristic and outlandish as this if he could, is almost as unbelievable as his animation itself.

That Henry's death was a result of him functioning as Victor's feminine double and his equivalent of the Creature's, Eve is further supported by how the Creature reflects back on it. "After the murder of Clerval I returned to Switzerland heart-broken and overcome. I pitied Frankenstein; my pity amounted to horror; I abhorred myself" (210). He puts the emphasis not on his own loss, but on Victor's and the magnitude of his creator's loss renders the usually eloquent speech of the Creature fragmented. His next admission, "but when I discovered that he [...] dared to hope for happiness [...] I recollected my threat and resolved that it should be accomplished" (210) implies that the Creature was surprised by Victor's decision to marry Elizabeth. The word 'recollect' implies that the Creature either has discarded the idea of revenge and had to collect it again, or that he had forgotten about his threat and had to call it back to mind. Either interpretation would mean that the Creature decided that his vengeance was already fulfilled with the death of Henry Clerval.

What the Creature could not understand about the nature of Victor's marriage with Elizabeth is that while it serves as a union with the feminine double, Victor seeks to use it as a further means of achieving disunion. From the minute he heard the threat, Victor interpreted it as the fixing of the hour in which "he should die and at once satisfy and extinguish [the Creature's] malice" and had expected a "bitter struggle" (158) in which he would either kill or be killed by the Creature. One of the reasons for his short sighted interpretation is perhaps that after Henry's death he started to think like "I should have died on the coffin of Henry" (171) and became suicidal recounting how he "often endeavoured to put an end to the existence I loathed, and it required unceasing attendance and vigilance to restrain me from committing some dreadful act of violence" (173). This attitude and the expectation of the duel greatly contributed to his hasty marriage to Elizabeth. Victor is sure that "if the monster executed his threat, death was inevitable" and the Creature promised to act on his wedding night.

The lingering feeling that Victor would prefer that outcome and that he had already rejected the possibility of consummating and living his union with Elizabeth remains even despite his insistence that although his survival would be freedom "such as a peasant enjoys when his family have been massacred before his eyes, his cottage burnt, his lands laid waste and he is turned adrift, homeless, penniless and alone, but free" (179), it would be made up for by Elizabeth's presence. It appears that Victor can view Elizabeth only as an "inadequate consolation prize", a "possible possession, and never as an erotic and sexually attractive being" (Hindle 1984,

101) which makes his later claim that marrying Elizabeth would make his life worth living feel more like a performance put on for Walton's sake.

Regardless of what Victor would prefer, or perhaps in part because of what he would prefer, the battle cannot take place. It does not matter whether the attempt at a union with Elizabeth is genuine or not, it is still an attempt at self-unification. Elizabeth, who has been Victor's designated feminine double since their childhood and who at points serves as a double to all other feminine doubles, has to die to fulfill Victor's initial desire for the elimination of all things feminine. Since this desire has been separated off from Victor and given an autonomous form in the Creature, Victor cannot hope to control it and thus cannot redirect it at himself.

Thus Elizabeth's death follows the script written by Victor with the destruction of Eve, it takes place on her wedding-night in front of the horror-struck bridegroom described by a language that Hindle (1984) interprets as suggesting sexual violence (104). Elizabeth's death marks the end of the elimination of the feminine and the loss of all potential for achieving self-unification and thus seals Victor's fate as well.

## Survivors

There are some characters who managed to escape the narrative and thus survive, but only one of them could avoid completely playing the role of a double.

Ernest Frankenstein is like a step-child of the narrative: it pays very little mind to him despite the fact that by the end of the novel he is the only surviving Frankenstein left. Even this information needs to be divulged from a passing mention of him when Victor remarks that "my father and Ernest yet lived" when he returns after Elizabeth's murder. After this brief mention Ernest disappears from the pages of the novel completely and his absence becomes the only thing confirming that he did not pass after this point since his name is not in Victor's recitals of his lost loved ones.

The reason for his absence is most likely the reason for his survival. He is mentioned so little because he escaped Victor's regard as he could not see any aspect of himself reflected back in Ernest. That Victor mentions Ernest's birth only in passing probably means that he has never been a rival for their parents' affection like William came to be, and Elizabeth's letter reveals that he could not be Victor's academic rival either since he "never had your powers of application" (51). This means that Ernest was perfectly unsuitable to serve as a double, which means that the Creature never had a reason to harm him.

The de Lacey family, on the other hand, was a prime target for doubling as they themselves, just like Caroline, dabbled in self-doubling. The de Lacey family's first

foray into the doubling process was the result of Felix de Lacey's romantic notions of justice and love. He sought to rescue Safie's father, a Turkish merchant, from execution by helping him flee the country by procuring "passports in the name of his father, sister and himself" (112) with the knowledge of the old de Lacey and Agatha, who did not only consent to this ruse but also aided it by hiding in Paris while claiming to have travelled away. With this transference of identity Agatha and old de Lacey essentially created and let loose their doubles into the world. The consequence of this might not have been fatal, but the entire family was ruined as they were deprived of their fortune and sent into permanent exile.

This is lenient compared to what the other doubles experience in the novel but it can be argued that it is so only because the doubling process was interrupted before it could run its course. Agatha and old de Lacey might have created their doubles but Felix did not, so even the creation stage was not completed, and while the merchant and Safie did assume their new identities during their travels, the discovery of the ruse arguably means that they were not recognised as their new identities and thus as doubles. Since their status as doubles was revoked, all participants had the fortune of walking away alive.

An interesting thing to note about this self-doubling attempt is that while Felix could not possibly know, he unwittingly recreated the Frankenstein family's structure by transferring his father's and sister's identities onto the merchant and Safie. Safie, who during their travels was presented as Felix's sister, was to be married to him, and just like Elizabeth, Victor's more than sister, was to be married to Victor. This marriage was promised by the merchant who in this scenario serves as a minor double for Alphonse Frankenstein, the father who has "always looked forward to [Victor's] marriage with our dear Elizabeth" (140). In this latter case even the trope of competing intentions can be found, as while Alphonse wishes for nothing more than the union of his children, the merchant never intended to see his promise through. This similarity is noteworthy because later the Creature will also project double identities onto the members of the de Lacey family to recreate the structure of the Frankensteins.

When recounting the tale of his stay with the de Laceys the Creature introduces Victor to the family in the same way he got to learn about them. This tale also gives a full account of how he came to perceive the cottagers as doubles for not only the Frankensteins but also for the family he wished to have. At first he names them only as "old man", "young woman" and "young man" (98) and gives a simple description of their daily lives, which due to the complete lack of any indicators of familial relationships could lead to the de Laceys being perceived as a family consisting of an aging father, his child and their spouse. This image gets only marginally clearer when familial addresses are revealed. "The youth and his

companion had each of them several names, but the old man had only one, which was 'father'. The girl was called 'sister' or 'Agatha', and the youth 'Felix', 'brother', or 'son'" (100). Notably, the word daughter is missing from that list. This absence could lead anyone familiar with the Frankensteins to assume that Agatha is, much like Elizabeth, more than sister. That the Creature understood their relationship in these terms and that this is the ideal family structure that he internalised, shows in a minor way as well in how the first word he uses for the would be Eve is "companion" (133), the same thing he calls Agatha.

This is not to say that Safie's arrival does not complicate his view of the family. From the very beginning the Creature fixated on the father-son relationship of Felix and old de Lacey claiming that in his eyes "nothing could exceed in beauty the contrast between these two excellent creatures" (96). The figure of old de Lacey in particular is what he attaches himself to the strongest, seeing his own missing father in him. In his mind the Creature assigns the role of being Victor's double to old de Lacey with all the duties that come with it: introducing him into human society and providing him with a companion. He might see Felix as a potential double for himself as he is the one the Creature wants to become but nevertheless, it is Safie who is the most adequate double for the Creature in this situation as she is the one who serves as a model of social integration. That he proudly boasts that "I improved more rapidly than the Arabian" (106) shows that he is aware of the comparison.

The Creature's perception puts the de Laceys into grave danger as they are not aware that they were assigned the role of the Creature's family and that they are expected to perform as such. This danger manifests itself in the Creature's rage at what he understands as a rejection by his family. What saved the de Laceys from the violent consequences of an inevitable second rejection was that Felix was better equipped to deal with the threat presented by the Creature than Victor. As the Creature recounts, at his first approach, Felix without a moment of hesitation "tore me from his father, [...] he dashed me to the ground and struck me violently with a stick" (124) forcing the Creature to run away from the cottage. Then, to keep his family safe, Felix alerts at least some people judging by how some villagers "entered into conversation, using violent gesticulations" (126) near the cottage the next day most likely discussing yesterday's events, and how Felix himself claims that he revealed the "dreadful circumstances" (127) that forced his family out of their home to the cottage's new owner. From this latter conversation it also becomes evident that he relocated his family the very same day the Creature appeared to somewhere he thinks they would be safe.

He is right. The Creature never sees the de Laceys again. With their departure he loses the ability to attempt to reinforce their double identities and in his dejection

the only thing he can do is to symbolically murder them through the burning of their old home.

### **Those Whose Fate Is Yet Undecided**

The end of the novel leaves two characters with ambiguous fates. These two characters neither complete the doubling process nor leave it behind.

Robert Walton seems to finish the novel with the promise of survival. At the point of his life when he met Victor, Levine ([1973] 1996) described him as an “incipient Frankenstein, in his lesser way precisely in Frankenstein’s position”. Their ambition, their scientific drive, their loneliness and their blatant disregard for the safety of others in service of their ambition are all qualities that make them doubles. Levine, however, believes that “though this is not stated, in rejecting the vengeance that consumed Frankenstein” he managed to free himself of their connection “into a better (and perhaps a lesser) life – but one to which he returns in bitterness and dejection” (210). Conversely, Séllei ([1999] 2015) argues that Walton’s return cannot be taken as irrefutable evidence of his rejection of Victor’s thinking and way of life because the choice to turn back was taken out of his hands by the looming threat of mutiny. This forced retreat, however, does not rule out the possibility of another attempt later on (103).

That Walton will make another attempt outside the scope of the narrative can be anticipated from the life that formed him, his resemblance of Victor going far beyond the ways that Levine described. He too grew up under the softening influence of a loving sister, is mostly self-educated regarding his life’s great passion, which he, much like Victor, also discovered in books and which his father also rejected. Just like Victor, he left that passion behind for some time but returned to it later unable to find fulfilment in anything else.

Even so, these similarities by themselves would be survivable if there was something to balance them, to soften Walton’s nature. What is alarming is the lack of prospects in front of a Walton who turns his back on all that made him Victor’s double. Walton is a failed poet who is “twenty-eight and am in reality more illiterate than many schoolboys of fifteen” (5) who outside of his foray into poetry devoted the largest portion of his life to acquiring the skills necessary to lead an expedition to the North Pole. To finance his curiosity he used money he inherited from a cousin and it is not unreasonable to assume that the majority of that inheritance was consumed by the costs of the expedition. More importantly, he appears to be incapable of forming human connections. He claims he has no friends. He cannot connect to the people on his ship finding fault with even the most noble of them.

His family most likely disapproves of his venture as evidenced by his father's "dying injunction [that] had forbidden my uncle to allow me to embark in a seafaring life" (2). The only one he can write to is his sister whose replies are absent, rendering her presence in the novel almost non-existent and Walton's loneliness more acute. Victor is the only one he can come to think of as a friend and as they are doubles that is almost like making friends with his own mirror image. Returning home would not only mean a lesser life, but a hopeless life full of regrets and loneliness.

Without his masculine ambition and the ability to find someone with whom he can achieve that "interchange of those sympathies necessary for [his] being" (134) there is little left for Walton and it does not bode well for him. That at the end of the novel he falls completely silent after attempting to act as Victor's double by reprimanding the Creature only to fall silent and passively report what he sees and hears already carries implications of the wilful elimination of the self that could foreshadow his impending death.

The other ambiguous character, the Creature, leaves the narrative with the image of a dramatic suicide. "I shall ascend my funeral pile triumphantly and exult in the agony of the torturing flames. The light of that conflagration will fade away; my ashes will be swept into the sea by the winds. My spirit will sleep in peace, or if it thinks, it will not surely think thus" (231). The image he paints is so vivid that it is not difficult to forget that it is not real and as Hindle (1994) speculates, it might never be. Hindle points out that the Creature is still very much alive at the end of the novel and that "in a deeply ironic text where nothing is quite what it seems, perhaps this is only how things 'appear'" (119). Séllei ([1999] 2015) expresses a similar sentiment when she notes how the Creature merely disappears in darkness and distance from where he can be called forth at any time (103).

The Creature not following through with his proposed actions would not be unusual of him. He spoke the words in a moment of great grief and passion and in similar situations he has a history of changing his mind rather quickly. When he was chased away from the cottage he privately declared "everlasting war against the whole species" (125–26) yet only a few lines later he "could not help believing that I had been too hasty in my conclusions" (126) then when he learns that the de Lacey's had departed he changes his mind again and burns down the abandoned cottage. The same happens with William. His first idea is to seize him but a moment of great passion changes his intentions and he ends up strangling him to death. He admits to being indecisive at the end of his narrative, telling Victor how he "haunted the spot where these scenes had taken place [William's murder], sometimes wishing to see you, sometimes resolved to quit the world and its miseries forever" (133). He apparently decided on the latter, seeking refuge in the mountains, yet he approached Victor with a request for a companion shortly after Victor entered his

domain. Then, yet again, when he sees his newfound hope destroyed by his father, he runs away with a howl of misery, just like he did after the rejection of the de Lacey's, and just like back when he shortly returns to try to reason with Victor. He threatens Victor with being with him on his wedding night but as Victor accuses, "he had murdered Clerval immediately after the enunciation of his threats" (179) and later he goes back and forth on whether he wants to make good on his original threat. Even when he lures Victor north claiming that at the end of their journey he wishes to "wrestle for our lives" (195) he still mourns and cries over his creator's death. After all these contradictions it would be quite shocking if his suicidal ideation would be more than just a moment of passion, a beautiful rhetoric, one that is perhaps performed for the benefit of his audience, or even only as a symbolic act of suicide much like how the burning of the de Lacey cottage was the symbolic murder of the family.

Thinking about the chances of the Creature's survival, another aspect to consider is his status as a double. If Victor's death was enough to sever the link between the two of them then technically the Creature already exited the doubling process and is a survivor. If Victor's death changed nothing and the Creature is still moved by his will, then he might follow the pattern of working against the wishes of his double and survive simply because Victor would wish for his death. Either way, unlike with Walton, he has many possibilities in front of him. Admittedly, he might truly commit suicide when reaching the north pole or he might choose to live there as harsh environments do not seem to affect him negatively. His encounter with Walton might convince him that winning the sympathy of humans might not be beyond his reach and he might attempt to return to society or, since Victor Frankenstein is dead, as his double he might even decide to become the new Victor Frankenstein and act as his prototype as originally intended. After all, with bringing the Creature to life, Victor manifested his ambition in an autonomous physical form and after his death it could be said that that Creature is literally let loose from the grave, possessing all of Victor's knowledge in the form of a journal containing "the whole detail of that series of disgusting circumstances which produced [the Creature] [...] [including] the minutest description of my odious and loathsome person" (119).

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## Motherhood, Sexuality, and the (Fe)Male Gaze in Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber*

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In my paper, I want to explore the idea that the heroine in Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber* is a "woman in process" (Kathleen E. B. Manley 1998, 71), focusing on three main aspects connected to this journey of self-discovery. One is the presence of the mother and the mother-daughter relationship. Another is sexuality and how the heroine's attitude towards it changes over the course of the story. Finally, the third is the significance of gazing, proposing that by the end of the story, a female gaze emerges.

*Keywords:* motherhood, sexuality, gazing, female gaze, Angela Carter, *The Bloody Chamber*

### 1. Introduction

Fairy tales have been a part of everyday life and growing up for a long time. They serve as a kind of instruction guide for children to learn the appropriate behaviour for a man and a woman. Merja Makinen (1992) describes them as "parables of instruction for children" (4). Since women have been in charge of raising children throughout history, storytelling also fell mostly on their shoulders. It is important to note, however, that these stories, the so-called 'old wives' tales', existed only in oral form for centuries; it was only later that "Charles Perrault, the Grimm Brothers, and other compilers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries transposed oral folk tales into fairy tales" (Mary Kaiser 1994, 30). So, a genre of sorts that had an "essentially feminine form" (30) suddenly became a part of masculine culture, that of "the published text" (30). According to Angela Carter (1990), old wives' tales are "worthless stories, untruths, trivial gossip, a derisive label that allots the art of storytelling to women at the exact same time as it takes all value from it" (xi). Taking this into consideration, perhaps it is not surprising that, today, fairy tale retellings are an important part of women's writing and the feminist discourse. First of all, it is a way for women to take back control over these stories that are centuries old and contribute to the "literary 'official' culture" (Kaiser 1994, 30). They also serve to draw attention to the stereotypical representation of women and men in traditional fairy tales, usually depicting heroines as passive, with no