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Jelige: Exegesis

The Fallacy of “The Mad Scientist”

Abstract

The character of Victor Frankenstein paved the way for a long list of characters, who are referred to by scholars and by popular culture as “mad scientists.” However, along the way, literary and cultural discourse started treating Victor as “the mad scientist.” A close reading of the novel suggests that even though he is the main inspiration for the archetype referring to him as a scientist contradicts the essence of the story and his character and misrepresents the moral antithesis the novel features on science and unhallowed arts. My paper concludes with one possible way of referring to Victor that is authentic considering the story of the character and pays justice to the extensive moral analogies present in the novel: “a student of unhallowed arts.”

Keywords: Mary Shelley, exegesis, mad scientist, student of unhallowed arts, *Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus*

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Introduction

The mad scientist is one of the most recognizable stock figures in literature and film (Stiles 339), and many attribute Mary Shelley with the origins of this character: “She invented the mad scientist who locks himself in his laboratory and secretly, guiltily, works at creating human life, only to find that he has made a monster” (Moers 395). Victor Frankenstein paved the way for a long list of characters who now we refer to as mad scientists. However, in the scholarly discourse and in popular culture Victor’s story is not simply regarded as the main inspiration for these characters, but rather as “the first mad scientist narrative” (Toumey 417), making Victor Frankenstein the first representative of the mad scientist’s archetype or, in other words, “the prototypical mad scientist” (Weinstock 49). Nick Groom wrote an introduction for the 2018 Oxford World’s Classics edition of the novel, his first sentence exhibits the same ideas: “Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* can be summed up in one short sentence: a mad scientist loses control of a daring experiment with devastating consequences” (*Frankenstein* 1st ed., Introduction, ix). Moreover, this stigmatization is not solely a peculiarity of the scholarly discourse, but of “critics (and film-makers), whose emphasis has always fallen upon Frankenstein himself as the archetypal mad scientist” (Gilbert et al. 417). This paper will argue through exegesis, that the understanding of Victor Frankenstein has shifted away from what he originally stood for in Mary Shelley’s novel, and that it is not only not satisfactory to refer to Victor as a scientist but doing so also contradicts the essence of Frankenstein’s story.

“Mad scientist” is not the sole fallacious label associated with Frankenstein, as more often than not, scholars and movies refer to him as Dr. Victor Frankenstein. The first instance of such labelling can be found in the 1931 movie, *Frankenstein*, directed by James Whale (Zarka 0:44). One of the more recent instances of this phenomenon can be found in the series *Penny Dreadful* (2014-2016). As the issue shares similarities with that of the mad scientist, arguing for its inadequacy can illustrate the manner of reasoning this paper will employ. The label “Doctor” does not require extensive afterthought, since readers familiar with the novel could argue for the label’s improper nature. In the novel “the title ‘Doctor’ is never actually used for Frankenstein” (Hindle 29). Frankenstein is a student at the University of Ingolstadt and his scholarly career there is cut short when he receives news of the first murder; he leaves for Geneva, abandoning his studies at the institution consequently making the “Doctor” title we so often grant him problematic.

To restore what Victor Frankenstein truly stood for in Shelley's novel, one must contemplate two editions of the novel. The first edition is from 1818 and it is the source of the 2018 Oxford World's Classics edition, edited by Nick Groom, and the third edition is from 1831, which I accessed via the 2008 Oxford World's Classics edition, edited by M. K. Joseph. Between the two editions, the second edition from 1823 "included Shelley's name," but did not have textual differences from the original 1818 edition (Hadi). However, "the third edition was extensively revised by Mary Shelley," and it is considerably longer than the original work (*Frankenstein* 3rd ed., notes on the text, xv). The reason for the utilization of the two differing editions is the significance of the textual changes she made, which have important implications for the main argument of this paper. I use the 1818 edition where it is possible, and whenever I use passages from the 1831 edition, it is because the passage is new, or is heavily revised compared to the original text.

Chapter One: Scientist and Modern Chemistry

Through the use of exegesis, it was proved that "Victor is in no sense a medical doctor" (Johnson 287) since "there is no indication that he learns either the healing or surgical arts, and he obtains neither a degree nor a license. Hence, he never claims the title »Dr. Frankenstein«." (Johnson 295). Similarly, if we search for the word "scientist," not just in reference to Victor but also in the text, it is "nowhere to be found" (Hindle 29). Mary Shelley did not create these labels; both were attached to Frankenstein by readers of posterity. One could argue, however, that the appellation "scientist" is justified even if it never appeared in the novel since Victor studied chemistry, natural philosophy, mathematics, the theory of medicine, and the theory of galvanism among other fields of science, while also locking himself in his laboratory, a trope often associated with scientists in fiction (Moers 395). Perhaps Mary Shelley would have referred to her protagonist as a scientist had the word been coined when she wrote the novel. According to Maurice Hindle:

The fact is, the word "scientist" had not even been coined in 1818, when Shelley's novel was first published. Indeed, as late as 1834 the science historian William Whewell was reporting how members of the Association for the Advancement of Science had felt "oppressed" by the difficulty of finding a name "by which we can designate the students of the knowledge of the material world

collectively.” Some suggestions had been put forward by the members. “Philosophers,” he said, “was felt to be too wide and too lofty a term,” while *savans* was rather assuming.” When “some ingenious gentleman proposed that, by analogy with artist, they might form scientist . . . this was not generally palatable.” (29)

Even though scholars tend to call him a scientist today, it is now evident how that would not have been possible in 1818 as “the name scientist was first propounded in the Quarterly Review for March, 1834” (Ross 71), and, as has already been argued, we cannot grant him a Doctorate out of thin air either.

Jeffrey Allan Johnson argues that Victor’s “creation will be primarily the product of chemical and electrical science, not of medicine” (295). There is a lot to support this argument which could justify the title scientist for Victor Frankenstein as the setting is authentic to the history of chemistry as a modern science:

Around 1780 there were some twenty German chemists doing regular research, and a couple of hundred more doing occasional research, as shown by publication records. It was a diverse group, including physicians, pharmacists, and professors, as well as a very few technical chemists in mining or manufacturing. Hence it would have been wholly in the historical and cultural context for young Victor Frankenstein to associate the study of chemistry with the study of the nature of life at the University of Ingolstadt. (Johnson 292)

We also know that Mary Shelley was exposed to the ideas and theories of chemistry at the time as “in 1812 her father had taken her to hear the chemist and inventor Humphry Davy lecture, and while writing *Frankenstein* she read Davy’s ‘Discourse Introductory to Lectures on Chemistry’” (*Frankenstein* 1st ed., Introduction, xx). She was also familiar with Erasmus Darwin’s theory of spontaneous generation as she recalls a conversation in the preface she wrote between Percy Shelley and Lord Byron (Johnson 297):

They talked of the experiments of Dr. Darwin . . . who preserved a piece of vermicelli in a glass case, till by some extraordinary means it began to move with voluntary motion. Not thus, after all, would life be given. Perhaps a corpse would be re-animated; galvanism had given token of such things: perhaps the component parts of a creature might be manufactured, brought together, and endued with vital warmth. (Qtd. in Johnson, 298)

Nonetheless, as Johnson mentions Darwin “ruled out spontaneous generation of anything but microorganisms” and as he argues “these biological limitations might, however, be overcome through chemistry” (298-99). He theorizes that Victor’s creation is a merit of Darwin’s theory of spontaneous generation furthered by the chemical demonstrations of Darwin’s contemporaries, brought into flesh by Xavier Bichat’s insights into tissues (299). As it has been established Mary Shelley could not have called Victor a scientist as the word did not exist, however, the word chemist and chemistry did exist, and they appear in the novel itself. She had knowledge of the above-mentioned theories of chemistry – still, if we consider the use of the word chemist and chemistry in the novel it is never used to refer to Victor Frankenstein or his creation and, as I will argue, Shelley made sure to distance Victor from the designs of modern chemistry. Moreover, all of Johnson’s hypotheses for the specific means of creation of the monster will remain a hypothesis, as Victor purposefully withholds his process of creation from Captain Walton to save humanity from the consequences of his misconduct:

Sometimes I endeavoured to gain from Frankenstein the particulars of his creature’s formation, but on this point he was impenetrable. “Are you mad, my friend?” said he. “Or whither does your senseless curiosity lead you? Would you also create for yourself and the world a demoniacal enemy? Peace, peace! Learn my miseries and do not seek to increase your own.” (*Frankenstein*, 3rd ed., 209-10)

All we know of his creation process is that he plundered “graves and stealing, not bodies, but parts of bodies, from the church-yard” (Croker 269) and “tortured the living animal to animate lifeless clay” (*Frankenstein* 3rd ed., 54). Remaining within the confines of exegesis, Victor is never referred to as a chemist in the novel. We cannot prove, based solely on the fact that he learned chemistry in Ingolstadt, or speculated from Shelley’s knowledge of contemporary chemistry, that his creation is the merit of chemistry. Thus, we cannot refer to him as a chemist. Consequently, referring to Victor Frankenstein as a scientist is not justifiable based on the context of chemistry as it appears in the novel.

Based on the above argument the question remains if Victor Frankenstein was not a scientist, not a chemist nor a doctor, then what did he originally stand for in the novel? For a possible solution, we can turn to the author. Mary Shelley wrote an introduction for the 1831 third edition of the novel in which she gives an “account of the origin of the story” (*Frankenstein* 3rd ed., 5). She recalls a dream sequence of hers, which had a “vividness far

beyond the usual bounds of reverie” (*Frankenstein* 3rd ed., 9). In her description of this dream, she provides us with a peculiar way to refer to Victor: “I saw—with shut eyes, but acute mental vision, —I saw the pale student of unhallowed arts kneeling beside the thing he had put together” (*Frankenstein* 3rd ed., 9). A “pale student of unhallowed arts” she calls Victor. The word “unhallowed” only occurs once in the original 1818 edition of the novel: “Who shall conceive the horrors of my secret toil, as I dabbled among the unhallowed damps of the grave, or tortured the living animal to animate the lifeless clay?” (*Frankenstein* 1st ed., 34). It is used as an adjective, and it does not have much connection to Victor himself. However, in the 1831 edition Victor uses the same designation: “Thus spoke my prophetic soul, as, torn by remorse, horror, and despair, I beheld those I loved spend vain sorrow upon the graves of William and Justine, the first hapless victims to my unhallowed arts” (*Frankenstein* 3rd ed., 89). Furthermore, he uses the word “unhallowed” to describe his actions: “How they would, each and all, abhor me and hunt me from the world, did they know my unhallowed acts and the crimes which had their source in me!” (*Frankenstein* 3rd ed., 185). Now we have “student of unhallowed arts” from Mary Shelley and “unhallowed arts,” “unhallowed acts” from Victor Frankenstein. The word unhallowed recurs in these references. It is important to investigate the meaning of this word to understand its significance when used in connection to Victor. Johnson’s Dictionary Online provides examples from literature in which the word unhallowed is synonymous with “unholy”: ¹

I had not thought to have unlockt my lips
In this unhallow'd air, but that this Jugler
Would think to charm my judgement, as mine eyes,
Obtruding false rules pranckt in reasons garb. (*Cosmo*,
756-59)

Thy currish spirit
Governed a wolf who, hanged for human slaughter,
Even from the gallows did his fell soul fleet,

¹ The full result can be found at the following link (Date of access 22 Sept. 2022):
www.johnsonsdictionaryonline.com/views/search.php?term=unhallowed.

And whilst thou layest in thy unhallowed dam,

Infused itself in thee, (*Merchant of Venice* 4.1.135-39)

They specify its meaning as a “profane adjective.” According to the Thesaurus edition of the novel, the word “unhallowed” is synonymous with the words “unholy, ungodly, demonic, unsanctified,” its antonym being the word “holy” (45). It seems that something about Victor’s endeavors is fundamentally against the religious notion of God, and consequently, against “Good” or “Nature.” The “student” part of the designation is also authentic because it reflects how Victor is a student at the University in the process of learning, while also conveying the lack of responsibility and lack of better judgement or as Christopher P. Toumey put it his “youthful folly” (419). I suggested earlier that perhaps Mary Shelley would have used the label scientist when referring to Victor had the word been coined at the time of writing her novel; however, from the use of the word “unhallowed” in the two differing editions it could be argued that for Mary Shelley it was of significance to provide an authentic designation that conveys the antithesis between Victor’s undertakings and the divine, which consequently makes “student of unhallowed arts” a more proper description of Victor Frankenstein as it highlights that Victor’s endeavors are fundamentally against the “divine,” or as Stevenson put it: the “law of life,” (*Jekyll and Hyde* 83). In contrast, the word “scientist” is inadequate, as it does not have the same capability to convey and strengthen that central aspect of the character and his story.

Chapter Two: Science and Unhallowed Arts

In the pursuit of great, we failed to do good.

“The Monsters You Created”

The line between science and what is beyond science is a fine line; however, the novel provides the reader with extensive arguing and material that help to distinguish between the two. M. Waldman, one of Frankenstein’s professors at the University of Ingolstadt, conveys to Victor his opinion on his previous studies: “The ancient teachers of this science,” said he, “promised impossibilities, and performed nothing. The modern masters promise very little; they know that metals cannot be transmuted, and that the elixir of life is a chimera” (*Frankenstein* 1st ed., 29). When they are having this conversation, the professor compares scholars of modern chemistry with the alchemists of the past saying that they “promised impossibilities;” one of

those impossibilities was the elixir of life which he states is a “chimera.” The explanation by the Oxford English Dictionary for the use of the word “chimera” in this sentence is, “a thing which is hoped for but is illusory or impossible to achieve” (Kindle, Oxford English Dictionary).² Victor draws several comparisons between science and “pseudo-science;” one of which can be seen in the following monologue:

Besides, I had a contempt for the uses of modern natural philosophy. It was very different, when the masters of the science sought immortality and power; such views, although futile, were grand: but now the scene was changed. The ambition of the inquirer seemed to limit itself to the annihilation of those visions on which my interest in science was chiefly founded. I was required to exchange chimeras of boundless grandeur for realities of little worth. (*Frankenstein* 1st ed., 29)

Victor here expresses his views that modern natural philosophy stands apart from what grasped his interest in the writings of his favorite authors. They no longer pursue “chimeras of boundless grandeur” but “realities of little worth,” meaning that the goals of modern science are futile compared to the masters who pursued far more ambitious aims like immortality. It becomes evident with the use of the word “chimera” in both citations, that they are meant to be treated in contrast to one another and as such, Victor’s ideas are in clear contrast with his professor’s, as unhallowed arts aim for opposite ends compared to the goals of modern sciences.

Victor states his goals several times in the novel, which further establishes the use of “student of unhallowed arts” as a proper label for him: “The raising of ghosts or devils was a promise liberally accorded by my favourite authors, the fulfilment of which I most eagerly sought” (*Frankenstein* 1st ed., 24). His design is to fulfill the fancies of his idols, the raising of ghosts or devils. He elaborates on this aspiration in a later passage: “treading in the steps already marked, I will pioneer a new way, explore unknown powers, and unfold to the world the deepest mysteries of creation” (*Frankenstein* 3rd ed., 48). He wants to continue in the footsteps of his favorite authors, the key notions being a new way, unknown powers, and the mysteries of creation. It is important to note that this whole passage is one of the new additions of Shelley for the 1831 edition, which further specifies Victor’s goals, distancing him from the aspirations of modern science.

² This information was accessed via Kindle 10th’s dictionary provided by Oxford English Dictionary (Date of access: 08 November 2021).

One of Frankenstein's other professors, M. Krempe, also has his opinion on Frankenstein's particular interests:

The professor stared: "Have you," he said, "really spent your time in studying such nonsense?" I replied in the affirmative. "Every minute," continued M. Krempe with warmth, "every instant that you have wasted on those books is utterly and entirely lost. You have burdened your memory with exploded systems, and useless names. Good God! in what desert land have you lived, where no one was kind enough to inform you that these fancies, which you have so greedily imbibed, are a thousand years old, and as musty as they are ancient? I little expected in this enlightened and scientific age to find a disciple of Albertus Magnus and Paracelsus. My dear Sir, you must begin your studies entirely anew. (*Frankenstein* 1st ed., 28)

M. Krempe calls Victor's previous studies "nonsense" and "fancies," making it clear that they are a complete waste of time. In the last sentence, he states that Victor must begin his studies entirely anew. The use of the word "entirely" is important in this context because it signals how extensive the difference between unhallowed arts and modern science is. For a moment in the story Frankenstein's conviction in his "accustomed studies" is shaken when he attends a lecture on "electricity and galvanism" given "by a man of great research in natural philosophy" (*Frankenstein* 3rd ed., 41). He reflects on what he heard and distinguishes between the nature of the two differing domains of research:

All that he said threw greatly into the shade Cornelius Agrippa, Albertus Magnus, and Paracelsus, the lords of my imagination; but by some fatality the overthrow of these men disinclined me to pursue my accustomed studies. It seemed to me as if nothing would or could ever be known. All that had so long engaged my attention suddenly grew despicable. By one of those caprices of the mind which we are perhaps most subject to in early youth, I at once gave up my former occupations, set down natural history and all its progeny as a deformed and abortive creation, and entertained the greatest disdain for a would-be science which could never even step within the threshold of real knowledge. In this mood of mind I betook myself to the mathematics and the branches of study appertaining to that science as being built upon secure foundations, and so worthy of my consideration. (*Frankenstein* 3rd ed., 41)

Victor calls the former subject of his studies “would-be science,” which is nowhere near as relevant as “real knowledge,” and he goes on to study mathematics and science being built upon secure foundations. “Real knowledge” and “science of secure foundations” are key elements in this citation that stand for the difference between his particular field of interest and modern sciences. Moreover, Victor goes on to draw a moral distinction between his former studies and “real science”:

Thus strangely are our souls constructed, and by such slight ligaments are we bound to prosperity or ruin. When I look back, it seems to me as if this almost miraculous change of inclination and will was the immediate suggestion of the guardian angel of my life—the last effort made by the spirit of preservation to avert the storm that was even then hanging in the stars and ready to envelop me. Her victory was announced by an unusual tranquillity and gladness of soul which followed the relinquishing of my ancient and latterly tormenting studies. It was thus that I was to be taught to associate evil with their prosecution, happiness with their disregard. It was a strong effort of the spirit of good, but it was ineffectual. Destiny was too potent, and her immutable laws had decreed my utter and terrible destruction. (*Frankenstein* 3rd ed., 41)

Victor was at a moment where he could have gone in two differing directions in his career and life: one of real science and one of unhallowed arts. He states that it felt like having a “guardian angel” that would pull him towards real science and save him from damnation. He also associates this force of calling with the “spirit of good” but, unfortunately, “destiny was too potent” and he eventually ends up pursuing unhallowed arts. “Guardian angel” and “spirit of good” are religious notions that strengthen the idea that the domain of the real sciences is in the realm of “good” while the path of the “unhallowed arts” is the pathway that leads to a fate that cannot be associated with “good.”

Chapter Three: The allegory of the character of Captain Walton

There is an extensive and profound allegory in the novel which strengthens the divide between good and evil, science and unhallowed arts as two antithetical paths. Captain Walton, who tells the story of Frankenstein, admittedly longed for a friend of “fellow mind” which he finds in Victor (*Frankenstein* 3rd ed., 28). He is leading an expedition to the North Pole, which

makes him an explorer much like Victor in the sense that they are both at the cutting edge of their particular fields. Walton's endeavors stand for discovery in the most literal sense of the word. He is willing to risk his life in his expedition, a testament to his passionate and driven nature, as can be seen in his self-reflexive thoughts:

I shall satiate my ardent curiosity with the sight of a part of the world never before visited, and may tread a land never before imprinted by the foot of man. These are my enticements, and they are sufficient to conquer all fear of danger or death and to induce me to commence this laborious voyage with the joy a child feels when he embarks in a little boat, with his holiday mates, on an expedition of discovery up his native river. But supposing all these conjectures to be false, you cannot contest the inestimable benefit which I shall confer on all mankind, to the last generation, by discovering a passage near the pole to those countries (*Frankenstein* 1st ed., 8)

Victor and Captain Walton both endure hardships and neglect their mental and physical health in their pursuit. Walton's testimony about the extent of his dedication appears in the first letter:

I accompanied the whale-fishers on several expeditions to the North Sea; I voluntarily endured cold, famine, thirst, and want of sleep; I often worked harder than the common sailors during the day and devoted my nights to the study of mathematics, the theory of medicine, and those branches of physical science from which a naval adventurer might derive the greatest practical advantage. (*Frankenstein* 1st ed., 8)

He states that he endured cold famine, thirst, and want of sleep. Victor's account of his hardships during his pursuit shows similarities to Walton's:

Winter, spring, and summer passed away during my labours; but I did not watch the blossom or the expanding leaves—sights which before always yielded me supreme delight—so deeply was I engrossed in my occupation . . . But my enthusiasm was checked by my anxiety, and I appeared rather like one doomed by slavery to toil in the mines, or any other unwholesome trade, than an artist occupied by his favourite employment. Every night I was oppressed by a slow fever, and I became nervous to a most painful degree; a disease that I regretted

the more because I had hitherto enjoyed most excellent health, and had always boasted of the firmness of my nerves. (*Frankenstein* 1st ed., 36)

Victor used to find joy in watching the leaves blossom, but his work occupied his mind to such an extent that he could no longer indulge in his previous delights. In his introspective thoughts, he also mentions how he “became nervous to a most painful degree,” meaning that his new state of mind and health was hitherto alien to his nature. This new Victor Frankenstein is a source of “anxiety” for him. As he recalls: “I had worked hard for nearly two years, for the sole purpose of infusing life into an inanimate body. For this I had deprived myself of rest and health. I had desired it with an ardour that far exceeded moderation” (*Frankenstein* 1st ed., 37). He “deprived himself of rest and health” while pursuing his vision and describes his state of health akin to a slave working in the mines. This overtly driven aspect of these characters is possibly the reason for the attachment of the adjective “mad” in the “mad scientist” trope.

Most of Walton’s and Victor’s passion and ambition originate from the same vocation of the soul, to discover. However, Frankenstein’s motivations for his overly enthusiastic undertakings are more sinister. Walton participated in creation himself but of a different kind: “These visions faded when I perused, for the first time, those poets whose effusions entranced my soul and lifted it to heaven. I also became a poet and for one year lived in a paradise of my own creation” (*Frankenstein*, 1st ed., 8). His type of creation as a poet “lifted his soul to heaven” and thus he lived “in a paradise of my own creation” (also see, Goodall 627). In comparison, Victor creates life from dead matter “his motive, for doing so is highly suspect” (Hindle 34). Victor’s similar thoughts about his own creation are the following: “A new species would bless me as its creator and source; many happy and excellent natures would owe their being to me. No father could claim the gratitude of his child so completely as I should deserve theirs” (qtd. by Hindle 34). Victor’s words make it clear that he has a deep desire to become a creator of a new species, and, in doing so, he attempts to rival God’s act of creation.

Captain Walton explored the different branches of the sciences which could prove useful in his undertakings: mathematics, medicine, and naval physical sciences. All these fields belong to sciences considered to be “good” according to Victor and his professors, not solely from a utilitarian but from a moral point of view as well. There is a profound moral analogy based on theological symbolism in the comparison between Captain Walton and Victor Frankenstein, which anchors Walton’s campaign on the side of “good” and Victor’s “unhallowed acts” on the side of “evil,” and that is the name of the seaport from which Walton’s expedition begins: Archangel.

It is a Russian seaport, and its name originally is Архангельск or Arkhangelsk using the Latin alphabet. Shelley chose this city as a starting point for Walton's campaign, moreover, chose to include it in English. It is important to explore the meaning of the seaport's name so that its significance is fully understood: "coming from the Greek meaning "chief angel," these angels seem to be at the top of the angelic hierarchy in terms of power. Created by God, these types of angels have a number of purposes they fill, lining the Old and New Testament of Scripture" (Bolinger). The purpose of these higher angels is also important: "Although not explicitly mentioned, archangels have a number of duties. As indicated in their name, they lead the other ranks of angels. It appears they engage in spiritual combat, as Scripture indicates Michael is known to do so" (Bolinger). Saint Michael the Archangel mentioned in this article is the commander of God's army as he "leads a host of angels in a victorious war over Satan and His demons in Revelation 12" (Lucey). These articles suggest that Archangel Michael is the utmost rival of Satan and his demons, according to Scripture, and thus, the fact that Captain Walton's expedition starts from the city of Archangel signifies how Walton's campaign is at the forefront of the forces of good.

A mutiny breaks out on the ship in the novel and Victor reminds the crew of the nature and significance of their campaign: "You were hereafter to be hailed as the benefactors of your species, your names adored as belonging to brave men who encountered death for honour and the benefit of mankind" (*Frankenstein* 1st ed., 164). It is important to remember that this conclusion comes from the Victor Frankenstein who has lost his loved ones as a consequence of his unhallowed acts, meaning that he believes there is a clear difference between his past pursuits and Walton's campaign. The Victor who created the *dæmon* is not the same Victor whom Walton meets on the frozen sea. Frankenstein learned his lesson and became "more mature," suffering the repercussions of morally blind ambition (Toumey 419). What Captain Walton and his crew undertake is for the benefit of humanity as a whole, thus the seaport Archangel is fitting as a starting point for an expedition of such purpose.

The city's name is not only important because it captures the essence of Walton's campaign, but it serves as the antithesis to Victor's "unhallowed acts." Victor refers to his creation in various ways: monster, wretch, my creation, fiend, animal, devil. However, one of the most frequently recurring phrases he uses, and the first designation the reader encounters, can be found in the following excerpt, where Captain Walton is having his first conversation with Frankenstein: "Then I fancy we have seen him, for the day before we picked you up, we saw some dogs drawing a sledge, with a man in it, across the ice." This aroused the stranger's

attention, and he asked a multitude of questions concerning the route which the dæmon, as he called him, had pursued” (*Frankenstein* 1st ed., 15). Victor refers to his monster “dæmon” nineteen times in the novel. The number of occurrences for the word did not change between the 1818 and the 1831 editions. Moreover, both Victor and his monster at one point associate themselves with the character of Satan from Milton’s *Paradise Lost* as the monster in the novel has read the epic poem. Victor’s own analogy to Lucifer and his fate is shown in his words: “All my speculations and hopes are as nothing, and like the archangel who aspired to omnipotence, I am chained in an eternal hell” (*Frankenstein* 1st ed., 162). The passage from Milton’s epic poem that Victor refers to is:

Invests the Sea, and wished Morn delays:
So stretcht out huge in length the Arch-fiend lay
Chain'd on the burning Lake, nor ever thence
Had ris'n or heav'd his head, but that the will
And high permission of all-ruling Heaven
Left him at large to his own dark designs (*Paradise Lost*,
Book 1, ll. 208-13)

Victor reflecting on his “unhallowed acts” concludes that his endeavor of creation is like Lucifer’s aspiration to omnipotence in *Paradise Lost*, and he too feels as if he is chained to the burning lake in Hell just like Satan, because of all the misery that followed his attempt at rivaling God. Moreover, as Victor draws a parallel with Satan from Christian theology, Mary Shelley connects her protagonist with a similar story and fate from Greek mythology. Shelley called her protagonist “the modern Prometheus;” a possible reason for doing so can be found in Pseudo-Apollodorus’ work *Bibliotheca*, which gives an account of the deeds and fate of Prometheus:

Prometheus moulded men out of water and earth and gave them also fire, which, unknown to Zeus, he had hidden in a stalk of fennel. But when Zeus learned of it, he ordered Hephaestus to nail his body to Mount Caucasus, which is a Scythian mountain. On it Prometheus was nailed and kept bound for many years.

Every day an eagle swooped on him and devoured the lobes of his liver, which grew by night. (Pseudo-Apollodorus)

In this account of the myth, Prometheus is responsible for the creation of men out of water and earth, and the theft of fire, which he gave to the people. Frankenstein in his unhallowed acts attempts to rival God by creating his monster, this way both Victor and Prometheus become creators of a species. Furthermore, Victor's act of creation is like that of Prometheus's theft of fire, because it manifested the divine power of creation by the acts of men. Consequently, as Satan was chained by the will of God on the burning lake in Hell in *Paradise Lost*, as Prometheus was nailed on a rock by the will of Zeus, Victor is chained or nailed in his own hell of reality, where his loved ones are murdered as the consequence of his unhallowed acts of creation.

The monster draws some of the same analogy on two occasions: "Remember that I am thy creature; I ought to be thy Adam, but I am rather the fallen angel, whom thou drivest from joy for no misdeed" (*Frankenstein* 1st ed., 70). The "fallen angel" in the Monster's monologue refers to Lucifer in *Paradise Lost*. The second occasion takes place when the monster is reflecting on his deeds to Captain Walton at the deathbed of Victor Frankenstein:

No guilt, no mischief, no malignity, no misery, can be found comparable to mine. When I run over the frightful catalogue of my sins, I cannot believe that I am the same creature whose thoughts were once filled with sublime and transcendent visions of the beauty and the majesty of goodness. But it is even so; the fallen angel becomes a malignant devil. (*Frankenstein* 1st ed., 170)

In the shadow of his unforgivable malevolent acts of murder, the Monster believes that "fallen angel" is no longer a fitting analogy as "malignant devil" is what remains of the once benevolent creature. The significance of the designations of dæmon, devil, and fallen angel contrasted with the seaport's name Archangel ensues that Captain Walton's campaign and his "modern" scientific studies are for "the benefit of mankind" and belong to the forces of "good," while Victor's "unhallowed arts" and his attempt at rivaling God, only result in death and misery, and the fall of the once benevolent creature. The contrast between the Archangel and Satan is that of opposites: "Often people try to say Satan is God's rival, but they often forget Satan has limited power, and God is omnipotent. A better matching would be Satan and Michael. Rest assured, God has no match. Man stands just a little lower than the angels, even powerful ones like Michael" (Bolinger). I have mentioned that the seaport was named after Archangel

Michael, but what is more is that the city “bore as its civic arms a representation of the Archangel Michael overcoming the Devil. Legend insists that this victory occurred at the place where Archangel now stands, and that since then the Archangel Michael has stood guard over the city to ensure the Devil does not return” (Baronage).



³Considering the metaphorical nature of the seaport Archangel and the analogies with Satan from Victor's and his monster's testimonies, they represent the two rivaling extremes of morality, and thus the difference between the two is irreconcilable. Consequently, the label “scientist” cannot be a proper term for Victor Frankenstein, as it stands for the exact opposite of the truth of the character, his story, and his “unhallowed arts.”

Conclusion

The character of Victor Frankenstein paved the way for a long list of characters, who are referred to by scholars and by popular culture as “mad scientists.” However, along the way, literary and cultural discourse started treating Victor as “the mad scientist.” A close reading of the novel suggests that even though he is the main inspiration for the archetype referring to him as a scientist contradicts the essence of the story and his character, and misrepresents the moral antithesis the novel features on modern science and unhallowed arts. My paper concludes with one possible way of referring to Victor that is authentic considering the story of the character and pays justice to the extensive moral analogies present in the novel: “a student of unhallowed arts.”

The title “mad scientist” could not have been given by Mary Shelley, since the word scientist did not exist at the time; it was attached to Victor by readers of posterity. Consequently, the word does not appear in the novel. In the scholarly discourse, some associate Victor and his creation with modern chemistry, a hypothesis that does not have valid foundations in the novel itself, thus it cannot justify the designation “scientist”. Mary Shelley's label for her character

³ The picture is from the following link:
www.web.archive.org/web/20150923182350/http://www.baronage.co.uk/2003b/russia-1.html

is “student of unhallowed arts” which first appears in the introduction she wrote for the third edition of the novel in 1831. This third edition is an important factor in this argument, because of the extensive textual differences it has over the first edition, implemented by Shelley. In the third edition, Victor refers to his work as unhallowed arts and his deeds as unhallowed acts. It seems that, for Mary Shelley, it was important to clarify what it is exactly that Victor undertakes and accomplishes, and thus it should be important to the reader and for scholars as well. The use of synonyms helped to understand the meaning of the word better and it unraveled how Victor’s unhallowed acts are fundamentally against the divine. This is a core element of Victor’s story which would not be reflected by the label scientist.

Mary Shelley devotes several passages to delineate the differences between science and unhallowed arts. Victor’s professors at the university try to convince him that his former studies are not true science and thus he should not pursue them any longer. Victor’s favorite occult authors promised immortality, and the raising of the dead, which are of supernatural element, belonging to unhallowed arts and not to modern science. Furthermore, Mary Shelley draws a moral distinction between unhallowed arts and modern science in an extensive allegory.

The character of Captain Walton serves as the counterpart of Victor as they are “fellow minds”, and the novel makes it clear on several occasions that they should be treated as such. Walton stands for modern sciences and their benefits for the human race, the idea of “good,” while Victor stands for unhallowed arts, the destructive consequences they have for mankind, and the idea of “evil.” Walton’s creation is poetry, while Victor’s is a murderous dæmon. Walton’s campaign sets off from Archangel while Victor and his Monster’s analogy stands for Satan and Prometheus. It is a difficult task to draw the line between science and unhallowed arts; however, Mary Shelley provides the reader with all the necessary distinctions to be able to separate the two, thus the use of the term scientist is not only not satisfactory when we refer to Victor, but it fails to take into consideration all the effort of the writer to delineate Victor and his unhallowed acts from modern science and the idea of “good.”

As readers and scholars contemplate Victor as a scientist, consequently, they often regard his story as a cautionary tale about the “dangers of scientific and technological progress” (qtd. in *Frankenstein* 1st ed., Introduction, ix). However, a close reading of the novel suggests that Shelley’s story is a tale for the advancement of modern science and the abandonment of unhallowed arts for the benefit of humanity.

The conclusion and the findings of my paper necessitate further research into the shift from occult philosophy to modern science and how it was represented in the genre of the Gothic and science fiction through characters of Victor Frankenstein's legacy for instance Dr. Henry Jekyll and Dr. Moreau. Such investigation would bring us closer to understanding the division between occult philosophy, and modern science and to the character of Victor Frankenstein "the student of unhallowed arts."

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