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Queering the Gothic Monster: Abjection and Non-Normative Embodiment in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818)

Serdzhan Ibryam Hasan*
* Student at University of Amsterdam.
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Abstract: *This article examines Mary Shelley's Frankenstein (1818) through the combined frameworks of queer theory and Julia Kristeva's concept of abjection in order to reconceptualise monstrosity as a socially produced condition rather than an inherent trait. I argue that the creature becomes monstrous not because of innate moral failure or bodily difference, but through a cumulative process of rejection, disgust, and exclusion — what I term the aftereffect of abjection. Drawing on queer Gothic criticism, the study situates the novel within nineteenth-century anxieties surrounding normativity, sexuality, and embodiment, demonstrating how bodies that destabilise dominant classifications are rendered unintelligible and unliveable. The creature's repeated encounters with social refusal, particularly within the De Lacey episode, parallel the historical marginalisation of queer subjects within heteronormative systems of kinship and recognition. By placing Kristeva in dialogue with queer Gothic scholarship, the article shows how abjection operates as a regulatory mechanism that produces the very deviance it claims to expel. Ultimately, Frankenstein transforms the Gothic monster into a queer figure whose suffering exposes the violence underlying normative social order and reveals monstrosity as the enduring consequence of exclusion rather than natural otherness.*
Keywords*: Frankenstein, Mary Shelley, abjection, queer theory, gothic, monstrosity*

Introduction

Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818), narrates the tragic downfall of Victor Frankenstein, a scientist whose ambition to transcend the boundaries of nature compels him to assemble and animate a creature from dead bodies (Kara 44). In her introduction, Shelley articulates that the story aims to "speak to the mysterious fears of our nature and awaken thrilling horror," urging the reader to "dread to look round," and to "curdle the blood, and quicken the beatings of the heart" (Shelley 8). This sense of horror is manifested not merely through supernatural elements, but through Victor Frankenstein himself, whose "fervent longing to penetrate the secrets of nature" (Shelley 41) drives the plot. His insatiable quest for knowledge and obsessive desire to surpass natural limits result in the successful animation of lifeless matter—an achievement that rapidly devolves into horror, revulsion, and affective refusal. Rather than signifying triumph, the act of creation triggers a cycle of rejection and alienation that entraps both creator and creation in mutual suffering and ruin. Representative of the Romantic era's preoccupation with the sublime and the limits of human ambition, the novel also exemplifies Gothic conventions through its engagement with the abject and the grotesque.

Although frequently classified as one of the earliest works of science fiction due to use of now-canonical tropes such as the mad scientist and dangerous experiment, Mary Shelley's

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Frankenstein is more fundamentally a Gothic narrative that interrogates monstrosity as a socially constructed and affective condition rather than inherent characteristic. In this paper, I argue that the creature's designation as monstrous does not originate in innate evil or bodily difference, but emerges through a sustained process of abjection initiated by Victor Frankenstein and perpetuated by the larger social order. Drawing on Julia Kristeva's theorisation of the abject as that which "disturbs identity, system, order" (4) and must be expelled to preserve subjective and cultural coherence, this study conceptualises monstrosity as the "aftereffect of abjection": the cumulative and enduring consequences of repeated acts of disgust, rejection, and exclusion that progressively render a subject socially unintelligible and unliveable.

From a queer Gothic viewpoint, *Frankenstein* reveals how bodies that do cannot conform to normative conceptions of humanity, relationality, and subjectivity are pushed beyond recognition. The creature's systematic marginalisation ultimately parallels to the historical marginalisation of queer bodies in heteronormative society, where nonconformity elicits fear and contempt rather than empathy. By rendering bodily difference into a justification for social exclusion and rejection, *Frankenstein* portrays monstrosity as a socially produced condition rather than a natural deviation. The monster thus becomes as a Gothic figure through which queerness is rendered visible as the result of continuous abjection rather than innate transgression.

To advance its argument, this paper moves through a set of interrelated theoretical approaches. It begins by placing *Frankenstein* within the Gothic genre, exploring the genre's focus on monstrosity, excess, and societal unease. Next, it summarises the main ideas of queer theory, emphasizing heteronormativity as a system that enforces deviance and exclusion. Building on this, the analysis employs queer Gothic criticism to elucidate how Gothic monstrosity has long served as a metaphor for bodies and desires outside social norms. Lastly, utilising Julia Kristeva's concept of abjection, the paper offers a close reading of *Frankenstein* that reveals monstrosity as the aftereffect of sustained abjection, showing how disgust, rejection, and social exclusion gradually make the creature incomprehensible as a human being.

Gothic Literature and Victorian Age's Sexual Anxieties

Gothic literature typically refers works emerging in the late eighteenth century and evolving throughout the nineteenth century. It is a genre of prose fiction that gained prominence in the early nineteenth century, characterised by the integration of supernatural elements and extraordinary occurrences. The origins of the genre are commonly attributed to the publication of *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) by Horace Walpole, which is frequently regarded as the first Gothic novel. In this work, "the sightings of ghosts and supernatural happenings haunt and terrify the characters" (Lebe Watson 2). From its inception, Gothic literature has been distinguished by its preoccupation with sensation, terror, and the fantastic, often foregrounding socially repressed desires, fears, and bodies that the dominant culture seeks to exclude. In doing so, the Gothic operates as a subversive mode that exposes the instability of social norms by giving narrative form to what is deemed irrational, deviant, or unfit for representation. As Abrams and Harpham note, the Gothic "opened up to fiction the realm of the irrational and of the perverse impulses and the nightmarish terrors that lie beneath the civilized mind" (78). This section argues that Gothic literature does not merely represent monstrosity as supernatural excess, but frames it as a cultural reaction to perceived threats against normative social, sexual, and bodily order.

In "Sensation and the Fantastic in the Victorian Novel," Lyn Pykett argues that sensation and fantastic literature are profoundly intertwined with taboo, excess, and the irrational, occupying a cultural space defined by alterity rather than conformity to social norms (192). Within this framework, Gothic literature repeatedly stages figures and desires that unsettle dominant social structures, rendering them monstrous, enigmatic, or inhuman. As Lebe Watson observes, "the gothic as a genre embodies numerous characters that are suppressed and could not be represented in society in a mysterious, bizarre, and nonhuman form" (3). In this fashion, the Gothic becomes a narrative mode through which social exclusion is made visible, exposing the limits of representation and the mechanisms by which certain bodies and identities are rendered unintelligible.

While Gothic literature emerges in the late eighteenth century, its preoccupation with social anxiety intensifies and mutates in the Victorian period, particularly in relation to sexuality and moral regulation. As Emre Kara observes, the public acknowledgment of homosexuality without fear of judgment or persecution was unattainable in a society regulated by strictly heteronormative standards. In such a milieu, heterosexuality operated as the unchallenged norm, rendering any deviation a perceived threat and casting queer individuals as "monstrous" within a prejudiced and stigmatising social structure (Kara 230). In this light, queerness was construed as a potent embodiment of "otherness," defined specifically for its resistance to the era's systems of classification and control.

Moreover, Kara posits that the subject constructs the "other" from that which it cannot fully comprehend or control, attributing to these other inexplicable characteristics that engender uneasiness and discomfort. This fear intensifies when the other appears disconcertingly proximate to the self, exposing the fragility of the boundaries that demarcate normality from abnormality. The uncanny tension arises from the simultaneous impulse to expunge the other and the disquieting recognition that the other is not entirely distinct from oneself. Within Victorian discourse, this process culminated in the moral condemnation and medicalisation of homosexuality, which was characterised as perverse, deviant, immoral, and pathological. Such discourses generated a cultural anxiety concerning the now-visible queer subject, an anxiety encapsulated by the unarticulated apprehension: "They are among us. They look like us, but they are not like us" (Kara 16).

This logical structure closely parallels the Gothic construction of monstrosity. Gothic monsters typically reflect human qualities while being designated as inhuman or subhuman, occupying a liminal space that destabilises established taxonomies. As Kara asserts, "the homosexual is just like a doll, a waxwork, an automaton: Something that looks human but is (perceived to be) somehow inhuman or subhuman…because the queer looks normal but is not normal according to the standards of normalcy of the period" (Kara 15-16). The monster, therefore, is terrifying not because it is wholly alien or lacks humanity, but because it transgresses the normative boundary between the human and the non-human, just as queerness disrupts the period's hegemonic norms.

This cultural and historical context highlights the significance of Gothic literature as a medium for examining queer exclusion and abjection. Gothic fiction illuminates the mechanisms through which heteronormative society constructs and expels its "others," offering narrative form to individuals deemed immoral, unnatural, or socially incomprehensible. Queer theory thus emerges as a vital critical framework at the intersection of Gothic monstrosity and queer marginalisation, facilitating a more nuanced investigation into how fear, disgust, and exclusion operate as social regulatory mechanisms.

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Queer Theory and Heteronormativity

Queer theory originated from lesbian and gay criticism and developed into a prominent critical movement in the late 1980s, offering innovative perspectives on sexuality, gender, and identity (Lebe Watson 5). Rather than a unified methodology, it encompasses a range of approaches that interrogate the naturalisation of gender and sexuality under heteronormativity. Its primary aim is to challenge socially constructed norms of gender and sexuality—particularly those upheld by heteronormativity—and to deconstruct binary oppositions such as male/female, sex/gender, and cisgender/transgender.

Queer theory's principal critique of heteronormativity can be articulated as "the presumption and privileging of heterosexuality" (Pollitt 1). Heteronormativity operates as a normative system that constructs heterosexuality as natural, moral, and universal, while simultaneously regulating, marginalising, or penalising sexual expressions outside this paradigm. This system not only excludes homosexuality, but also restricts heterosexuality by prescribing strictly delineated roles and responsibilities. Furthermore, heteronormativity expects every individual to fall into either the masculine or the feminine category in order to be accepted and valued within society.

Therefore, queer theory rejects the notion that gender and sexuality are fixed, binary, or biologically determined. As Lebe Watson observes, it "strictly protests heteronormativity and its gender classifications as well as its repression and its power of marginalising people that are not considered as normal" (Lebe Watson 5). Emphasising fluidity, instability, and performativity, queer theory demonstrates how identities are constructed and maintained through repeated social practices and discourses. In this way, queer theory reveals the processes by which norms function as regulatory systems that govern bodies and desires, rather than serving as neutral descriptors. Individuals who fail or refuse to conform to these norms are frequently labelled as deviant or abnormal, positioning them outside the boundaries of societal recognition. Queerness thus emerges not as an innate identity, but as a position produced through mechanisms of social control and exclusion. This theoretical perspective provides a critical foundation for analysing cultural texts that represent non-normative bodies and identities as dangerous, unnatural, or monstrous—an analytical approach that will be further developed in the subsequent section through the concept of the Queer Gothic.

Queer Gothic: Monstrosity, Non-Normativity, and Abjection

The intersection of Gothic literature and queer theory has long been regarded as a rich ground for investigating the cultural creation of normativity and deviance. Gothic fiction arises historically alongside the construction of contemporary sexual categories, and its enduring obsession with terror, secrecy, excess, and transgression makes it especially amenable to queer interpretation. According to Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *Between Men*, the Gothic was "the first novelistic form in England to have close, relatively visible links to male homosexuality," (91) debuting at a time when homosexuality was growing more visible, as well as more policed, within British society. Sedgwick places Gothic fiction amid a cultural atmosphere characterised by what she calls 'homosexual panic': a pervasive anxiety grounded in the fear of being labelled as homosexual, a panic that controlled not only same-sex connections but also purportedly heterosexual bonds.

Several critics have extended Sedgwick's observation by identifying the Gothic's inherent affinity with queerness as a form of non-normativity. For example, George E.

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Haggerty states that Gothic impulses are profoundly linked to "the secrecies of private desire that are well outside public norms" (Haggerty 149), making the Gothic remarkably akin to queer theory, which examines not only homosexuality but also "the wide range of all non-normative sexualities" (Haggerty 149). In this context, Gothic fiction serves as a narrative space where suppressed or inexpressible urges might emerge indirectly, conveyed through terror, secrecy, and excess rather than direct depiction.

Furthermore, Ellis Hanson also emphasises the reciprocal effectiveness of Gothic analysis and queer theory, contending that the Gothic provides an advantageous framework for expressing anxiety and abjection. Hanson posits that "queer theory is arguably most valuable to Gothic criticism, and vice versa," since the Gothic facilitates "the creative transfiguration of the self through the readerly pleasures of fear and abjection" (Hanson 175). Thus, gothic reframes societal fears as subjective experiences, enabling queer alterity to manifest in displaced, monstrous, or nonhuman forms, rather than diagnosing or moralising deviance.

This dynamic is further elaborated by Hughes and Smith, who propose that queerness, within the context of the Gothic, arises from the disquieting juxtaposition of the familiar and the unfamiliar, the acceptable and the condemnable. They argue that Gothic fiction is regarded as morally perilous not due to its resolutions, but because of "the unease encountered in the fictional progress towards denouement," an unease that encourages readers toward an "assimilation to the alternative" and fosters acceptance of non-normative identities—whether cultural, political, or sexual (Hughes and Smith 2). Gothic monstrosity, therefore, does not merely denote difference; it destabilises normative boundaries and encourages identification with that which society deems transgressive.

Victorian Gothic texts, in particular, frequently depict monsters as embodiments of otherness, thereby interrogating prevailing social norms. Many Gothic monsters elicit fear specifically because of their "uncanny ability simultaneously to embody multiple subject positions," thereby unsettling rigid classifications of identity (Haefele-Thomas 4). Rather than merely demonising such figures, Victorian authors often addressed subjects labelled as "degenerate" or "perverse" with a measure of sympathy, employing Gothic monstrosity as a means of reconfiguring the mechanisms of social exclusion. These "queers and others" exist outside the hegemonic Victorian ideal of the patriarchal family and, through their very existence, challenge established constructions of gender, sexual, national, and racial purity (Haefele-Thomas 5). Thus, the Victorian Gothic monster functions as both a site of cultural anxiety and a vehicle for critiquing the very norms that render certain identities monstrous.

Collectively, these critical interventions establish Queer Gothic as a mode that exposes how non-normative identities are rendered monstrous through cultural processes of fear, repression, and exclusion. Central to this process is the logic of abjection: the expulsion of bodies and desires that threaten dominant systems of meaning. Gothic monsters repeatedly materialise that which heteronormative society seeks to disavow, transforming queerness into a site of horror whilst simultaneously revealing the fragility of normative identity itself. This theoretical framework provides the foundation for reading *Frankenstein* as a narrative in which monstrosity functions not as inherent deviance but as the consequence of abjection—a process through which non-conforming bodies are designated as unliveable and expelled from the social order.

In this study, I utilise Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection as the main theoretical framework to explore how Gothic literature expresses sexual and bodily otherness in relation

to queerness. In *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1982), Kristeva defines the abject as that which "disturbs identity, system, order" and resists stable classification, existing in "the in-between, the ambiguous, the composite" (Kristeva 4). Abjection emerges when the boundary between subject and object breaks down, resulting in what Kristeva describes as a "violent, dark revolt of being" against a perceived threat that seems to come from both internal and external sources (Kristeva 1). The abject is not only expelled but also remains "quite close," continually tormenting the subject despite its rejection (Kristeva 1). This theory leads itself to a queer reading by positioning queerness as abject within heteronormative social orders: as that which queerness disrupts (hetero)normative identity formations, opposes totalising classifications and boundaries, and occupies the domain of ambiguity that prevailing systems seek to eliminate.

Kristeva conceptualises abjection as a structural process that secures identity and social order, rather than merely a psychological reaction to bodily revulsion. She articulates this relationship as follows: "To each ego its object, to each superego its abject" (Kristeva 2). While this formulation initially delineates an individual psychic mechanism, it proves particularly salient when extended to the social sphere. When examined within the framework of queer theory, the "superego" may be interpreted as the dominant ideological apparatus that governs a society, most notably heteronormativity. As the regulatory framework that determines what is deemed acceptable, intelligible, and human, heteronormativity constructs its own constitutive "other," thereby rendering queerness abject (Kristeva 2).

Within the prevailing ideological structure, the abject is inextricably linked to constructions of perversion. As Kristeva articulates, "[t]he abject is related to perversion. The sense of abjection that I experience is anchored in the superego" (Kristeva 15). Within a heteronormative and homophobic societal framework, queerness is constructed as a moral and existential threat—characterised as deviant, excessive, and contaminating—rather than merely constituting difference. This construction derives not from any inherent quality of queerness itself, but rather from its capacity to destabilise normative boundaries of gender, sexuality, and identity.

Kristeva explains that abjection has an important stabilising role: "Abject and abjection are my safeguards. The primers of my culture" (2). The construction of the abject allows dominant ideologies to retain coherence by defining hard limits between what belongs and what must be excluded. In this perspective, abjection is a necessary mechanism for preserving and legitimising cultural norms, rather than an unintended consequence of fear. However, fear continues to play an important role in this process. As Kristeva notes, "The phobic has no other object than the abject" (6). The abject becomes the focal point of concern precisely because it undermines the subject's sense of self and stability.

This dynamic closely parallels the heteronormative anxiety surrounding queerness. In order for heterosexuality to maintain its coherence, security, and dominance, queer bodies and desires are constructed as abject. Abjection, therefore, operates as a form of social regulation: by designating queerness as polluted and unliveable, heteronormative society reaffirms its own norms. This theoretical lens is particularly salient in the analysis of *Frankenstein*, wherein monstrosity is not presented as an innate quality but as the result of sustained abjection that renders the creature socially unintelligible and marginalised. As previously outlined, this study theorises monstrosity as the product of abjection: the cumulative and enduring effects of repeated acts of disgust and exclusion, which position certain bodies as socially outcast and less than human.

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From Creation to Exclusion: Abjection and the Social Construction of Monstrosity in *Frankenstein*

After years of rigorous scientific inquiry, motivated by Victor's self-described "fervent longing to penetrate the secrets of nature" (Shelley 41), the animation of the creature marks the culmination of his transgressive ambitions. Victor's act of "giving life" to the creature, assembled from corpses and pursued in isolation from society, ultimately results in the successful animation of inert matter. Yet, this long-awaited act of creation fails to deliver triumph or mastery; instead, it immediately devolves into horror. Victor's initial encounter with the creature illustrates that monstrosity is a product of affective abjection, not an inherent or essential malevolence. His response to this moment of animation is articulated through a language of corporeal excess and visceral disgust, exposing how the creature is instantly categorised as abject:

> How can I describe my emotions at this catastrophe, or how delineate the wretch whom with such infinite pains and care I had endeavoured to form?… His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath; his hair was of a lustrous black, and flowing; his teeth of pearly whiteness… but now that I had finished, the beauty of the dream vanished, and breathless horror and *disgust filled my heart*. Unable to endure the aspect of the being I had created; I rushed out of the room… I beheld the wretch—*the miserable monster* whom I had created… *the demoniacal corpse* to which I had so miserably given life. (Shelley 58-59, emphasis mine)

Victor's language in this instance demonstrates that monstrosity is not a consequence of the creature's actions or intentions, but rather emerges from an immediate affective response of revulsion. The sustained emphasis on horror, disgust, and Victor's inability to tolerate the creature's appearance reflects a reaction that predates moral judgment or objective evaluation. By denying the creature the opportunity to speak or engage in social relations, Victor enacts an emotional rejection that constructs monstrosity as a reactionary label rather than an inherent trait. Victor's reaction thus echoes Kristeva's theory of abjection as a visceral revolt against anything that "disturbs identity, system, or order" (Kristeva 4). Victor does not address the creature as a moral subject; rather, he is repulsed by what the body represents—a breakdown of definitive boundaries between life and death, within and outside, human and non-human.

Moreover, Victor's description privileges bodily surfaces and fragmented details—such as "yellow skin," "muscles and arteries," and "watery eyes" (Shelley 58-59)—over a unified or integrated form. Consequently, the creature's body is perceived as disproportionate and improperly delineated, with the skin failing to function as a stable boundary. The exposure of elements that ought to remain concealed situates the creature squarely within Kristeva's framework of the abject. The creature occupies a liminal space between corpse and fully human subject, eliciting repulsion through ontological ambiguity rather than the threat of violence.

Victor's reflexive escape from the room emphasises abjection as a kind of exclusion rather than conflict. The creator does not destroy his creation; rather, he abandons it. This scene establishes a pattern of rejection that will shape the creature's interaction with society throughout the novel, introducing monstrosity as a result of expulsion. From a queer Gothic standpoint, this instance demonstrates the fundamental logic by which bodies that do not adhere to conventional norms of coherence and recognisability are rendered abject. The creature's monstrosity is not intrinsic, but rather the result of repulsion, retreat, and denial of relationality,

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foreshadowing the broader consequences of abjection that will define his exile from society as a whole.

In the aftermath of Victor Frankenstein's initial encounter with his creation, monstrosity in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* emerges not as an inherent attribute of the creature, but as the cumulative consequence of ongoing abjection. The text repeatedly constructs the creature as monstrous through cycles of recognition, followed by disgust, fear, and abandonment. Upon subsequent meetings, Victor perceives the creature as a manifestation of corporeal excess rather than as a sentient subject: "its gigantic stature, and the deformity of its aspect, more hideous than belongs to humanity" (Shelley 77–78). Here, the primary focus is on visuality. The creature's mere appearance—prior to any action, speech, or declaration of intent—renders him repellent. This mode of perception exemplifies Kristeva's concept of abjection: a reaction to that which threatens the stability of identity and categorical boundaries, prompting rejection rather than ethical engagement. Importantly, even as Victor acknowledges the creature as his own creation—"the wretch, the filthy daemon to whom I had given life" (Shelley 77–78)—this recognition fails to generate responsibility or kinship; instead, it heightens his repudiation. The creature thus occupies a paradoxical position as the abject: fundamentally excluded, yet persistently proximate. As Kristeva asserts, the abject is "something rejected from which one does not part" (4), a presence that remains "quite close" (4) and thus continually threatening. Victor's repeated confrontations with the creature exemplify this dynamic: the creature cannot be fully expelled from the symbolic order, yet is consistently denied a stable place within it.

The creature's own narrative reveals that abjection operates through both longing and exclusion. His aspirations are not oriented toward dominance or transgression, but rather toward recognition, companionship, and integration within society. After enduring repeated acts of rejection and violence, the creature retreats into the forest, where he encounters the De Lacey family and observes their daily lives from concealment. Through this vantage point, he acquires language, history, and knowledge of social customs, gradually cultivating an understanding of human relationships characterised by intimacy, mutual care, and affective bonds. For the creature, the De Lacey household embodies the possibility of acceptance and social belonging—a context in which he hopes ethical conduct, empathy, and shared emotional experience might counterbalance his corporeal otherness. This aspiration marks a critical juncture in the process of abjection's aftermath: the creature internalises the very norms that marginalise him, aspiring that conformity to human affect and behaviour will render him intelligible as a social subject.

Therefore, the creature envisions presenting himself to the De Lacey family with the expectation that "by my gentle demeanour and conciliating words, I should first win their favour, and afterwards their love" (Shelley 117–118). This imagined scenario underscores the creature's investment in normative social bonds, encompassing affection, reciprocity, and communal belonging. Nevertheless, the visual economy of aversion that governs human responses to his corporeal form continually hinders the realisation of this aspiration. Upon perceiving his reflection in the pool, the creature recognises that his appearance alone precludes his intelligibility: "I was endowed with a figure hideously deformed and loathsome; I was not even of the same nature as man" (Shelley 123). Monstrosity is thus revealed as relational rather than intrinsic, emerging from the failure to acknowledge bodily difference as consonant with humanity.

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This episode powerfully illuminates the heteronormative boundaries of belonging. As Kara argues, the creature's desire for inclusion within the De Lacey household exposes the family's heteronormative structure. Within this framework, the creature's existence constitutes a form of queerness, as he cannot be assimilated into a familial system predicated upon consanguinity and biological reproduction (Kara 42). The creature's conviction that gentleness and virtuous conduct will secure his acceptance reveals both his innocence and the exclusionary logic inherent to heteronormative kinship structures, which function as closed systems impervious to all perceived outsiders, irrespective of intent. This exclusion operates beyond mere denial of inclusion; it renders the creature abject, positioning him as a figure whose presence destabilises the coherence of familial and social order. Thus, the De Lacey episode facilitates a queer reconceptualization of kinship by exposing consanguinity as an ideological rather than physiological determinant of belonging.

As the creature's intellectual and historical awareness deepens, the experience of abjection intensifies rather than recedes. He poignantly observes, "Increase of knowledge only discovered to me more clearly what a wretched outcast I was" (Shelley 133). For the creature, education does not serve as a conduit to social integration; instead, it amplifies his sense of exclusion within normative society. This moment is pivotal, as it demonstrates abjection as an ongoing process through which individuals who internalise social marginalisation are compelled to endure crises of identity and selfhood. Consequently, the creature comes to view himself through the hostile judgment of others, questioning whether he is "a monster, a blot upon the earth, from which all men fled" (Shelley 123). From a Kristeva's perspective, the creature assumes the position of the "deject"—a subject defined by expulsion—whose existence marks the limits of the human yet who remains perpetually unassimilable within the social order.

From a queer theoretical perspective, this dynamic closely parallels the historical production of queer bodies as socially unintelligible within heteronormative structures. As with the creature in Frankenstein, queer subjects are marginalised not on the basis of immorality, but because their embodiments, desires, or relational modalities fail to align with prevailing norms of cohesion, legibility, and normativity. In *Bodies That Matter* (1993), Judith Butler argues that the constitution of the subject is inextricably linked to the simultaneous emergence of a domain of abject beings—those deemed "unliveable" and "uninhabitable" (Butler 3) within the social order, who demarcate the boundaries of the human. The creature's persistent hope that benevolence might overcome prejudice—repeatedly met with violence and revulsion—mirrors the affective mechanism through which queerness is rendered abject: proximity generates anxiety, difference is construed as contamination, and the prospect of recognition deteriorates into repudiation. In this context, the creature exemplifies the position Butler delineates: a figure whose exclusion is requisite for the maintenance of normative identity. Significantly, the creature's striving for acceptance does not imperil society through inherent evil, but rather exposes the precariousness of the boundaries defining the human.

Following his rejection by his creator, the De Lacey family, and society at large, the creature resorts to violence, embodying the cumulative effects of sustained abjection. His declaration "I was benevolent and good; misery made me a fiend" (Shelley 103)—explicitly frames monstrosity as a product of social exclusion rather than as an inherent ontological condition. Abjection thus operates progressively, ultimately producing the very threat it seeks to eliminate. Kristeva's assertion that "from its place of banishment, the abject does not stop challenging its master" (Kristeva 2) finds narrative embodiment in the creature's turn to

vengeance. This choice is not so much a rejection of humanity as a demand for recognition that has been persistently denied. Through this gradual process, Shelley's *Frankenstein* reveals monstrosity as a socially constructed condition, grounded in withdrawal, fear, and the refusal of relationality.

Building on this dynamic, the creature becomes monstrous not through the violation of moral law, but through his inability to conform to the symbolic and emotive boundaries of humanity. Jones and Harris observe that "Frankenstein's monster is rejected and damaged not by any innate difference or inhumanity, but by his inability to belong in a society that reinforces his outsider status, despite his emotional similarity to the humans around him" (524). This process is a mechanism by which "his alienation, unintelligibility, and monstrosity grow," alongside his fury and humiliation (524). Similarly, Kara contends that monstrosity must be understood as a social creation, shaped by heteronormative and homophobic structures that define queerness as abject, thus transforming the queer subject into a monster (47). Consequently, Shelley's novel suggests a queer Gothic rationale in which bodies that disrupt normative frameworks are rendered abject, marginalised, and ultimately compelled into conflict. Monstrosity, then, emerges as the Gothic representation of queerness—not as mere deviation, but as the result of sustained abjection within a hostile social structure.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that monstrosity in *Frankenstein* is not portrayed as an intrinsic state, but emerges cumulatively through the process of abjection—a mechanism by which bodies that disrupt normative classifications are rendered unrecognisable, uninhabitable, and ultimately inhuman. Informed by Kristeva's concept of abjection and situated within a queer Gothic framework, the monster is not presented as inherently deviant. Instead, he becomes a subject constructed through repeated acts of rejection, revulsion, and exclusion.

Viewed through a queer Gothic lens, *Frankenstein* anticipates contemporary critiques of heteronormativity by illustrating that kinship, humanity, and moral worth are granted selectively, not universally. The creature's longing for recognition, affection, and belonging—persistently denied by both his creator and society—mirrors the historical marginalisation of queer individuals, whose proximity to social norms evokes fear rather than acceptance. In this way, Mary Shelley's novel powerfully exposes the cruelty endured by those who do not conform to prevailing social and cultural norms in their search for community.

Frankenstein thus invites readers to reconsider monstrosity—not merely as a symbol of otherness, but as an ongoing product of the very social structures that depend on exclusion to sustain their authority. In centring the consequences of rejection, the novel transforms the Gothic monster into a distinctly queer figure: one whose suffering reveals the profound cost of living in a world that preserves its boundaries by relegating certain lives to the margins of humanity.

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