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**THE PHANTASMAGORIA OF
PREGNANCY IN
*FRANKENSTEIN OR THE
MODERN PROMETHEUS*
(1818), BY MARY SHELLEY**

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Abstract

The objective of this study is a double analysis of the vital creation process: on the one hand, to analyze how social concern for technological advance is reflected in the era of Romanticism in the work of Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus* (1818), and how such technological advances can pose a threat to the social structure of the moment. On the other, the constants associated with the dynamic creation-rejection-destruction in the work by Mary Shelley, the recurrent harmful influence, both physical and psychological, of creation in the creator and in the receptacle of his creation, as a reflection of the traumas associated with pregnancy in the figure of Victor Frankenstein. To elucidate constants associated, directly or indirectly, with this theme, various aspects that connect with the psychological field, the social role traditionally granted to women in relation to motherhood, as well as the permanent conflict between creators and creature (father and son) have been considered. Our attention will fall, consequently, on the female figure and more specifically on the process of pregnancy, delivery and care of the newborn, without ignoring the concept of generic transmutation. Similarly, beyond parricide, infanticide or female subjugation - the archetype of the "Angel of the House" and its manifestations in the work - we have studied more deeply the myth of birth, considered taboo in Victorian literature, granting Shelley's text an innovative character in this field of study of the relationship between body and pregnancy, whose scientific research would not begin until the 20th century. The author's work, science fiction in its purest form, clearly reflects postpartum depression, a subject which stands as realistic as mundane, contrasting with the idyllic image of motherhood.

Keywords: creation, technology, father, mother, rejection, depression.

Resumen

El objetivo del presente estudio es un doble análisis del proceso de creación vital: por un lado, estudiar cómo se refleja la preocupación social por el avance tecnológico en la época del Romanticismo en la obra de Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein o el Moderno Prometeo* (1818), y cómo dichos avances tecnológicos pueden suponer una amenaza para la estructura social del momento. Por otro, las constantes asociadas a la dinámica creación-rechazo-destrucción en el trabajo de Mary Shelley, la recurrente influencia nociva, tanto física como psicológica, de la creación en el creador y en el receptáculo de su creación, como reflejo de los traumas asociados al embarazo en la figura de Víctor Frankenstein. Para dilucidar constantes relacionadas, directa o indirectamente, con dicha temática, se han considerado diversos aspectos que entroncan con el ámbito psicológico, el rol social que tradicionalmente se le ha otorgado a la mujer en relación a la maternidad, así como el permanente conflicto entre creador y criatura (padre e hijo). Nuestra atención se centrará, consecuentemente, en la figura femenina y más específicamente en el proceso de gestación, alumbramiento y cuidado del neonato, sin obviar el concepto de transmutación genérica. Asimismo, allende el parricidio, infanticidio o la subyugación femenina –el arquetipo del “Angel of the House” y sus plasmaciones en la obra– estudiaremos más a fondo el mito del nacimiento, considerado tabú en la literatura victoriana, otorgando al texto de Shelley un carácter innovador en dicho ámbito de estudio sobre la relación entre cuerpo y embarazo, cuyas investigaciones científicas no comenzarían hasta el siglo XX. El trabajo de la autora, ciencia ficción en estado puro, refleja con claridad la depresión posparto, un tema tan realista como mundano, que contrasta con la imagen idílica de la maternidad.

Palabras clave: creación, tecnología, padre/madre, rechazo, depresión.

1. OBJECTIVES

The objective of this study is to analyze Mary Shelley's work, *Frankenstein*, from a social perspective, focusing mainly on the issue of pregnancy and creation. In the analysis, the objective pursued is twofold. On the one hand, the allegory of pregnancy is present throughout the work as an influence of the technological advances of the romantic era, where there is a change from biological sexuality to technological sexuality.

On the other hand, the work is analyzed as an allegory of pregnancy through the male figure of Victor Frankenstein due to the desexualization of women in the Romantic era –which also extends to the Victorian period–, this being a consequence of the social double moral that considers any topic related to female sexuality taboo or a non-'talkable' issue, from intercourse, through the entire gestation period, to delivery, a fact that affects the female psyche in the face of ignorance of what pregnancy produces in the body, leading, as a consequence, to disorders such as postpartum depression or tocophobia.

2. METHODOLOGY

Apart from the analysis of motifs and hallmarks related to the themes under scrutiny and study by means of a close reading of *Frankenstein*, considering narratological, figurative and literary milestones, we have adopted an eclectic lens so as to properly understand the extremely rich plethora of subtexts interacting in Shelley's work. To be more precise, we have expanded on the understanding of contextualizing matters illuminating the different ways of reading this masterpiece offers and grants, by supporting our approach with studies mainly connected with psychology, sociology, architecture, history and other issues related to the woman's question. As it can be inferred, a feminist approach stands as a foundational point of entry in our interpretation, but not necessarily narrowing the ideas posed by some other schools of criticism we have also followed, such as, for example –and this is a very essential aspect to be underlined and emphasized in any analysis of Shelley's work since the work is recurrently based and pivots around the idea of the empty identity or space, the nameless essence or entity– reception theory calling for the active reader's filling in blanks of uncertainty, *Frankenstein* being an epitome of this. Our methodology, in fact, can be paralleled with the patchwork model the so-called monster embodies.

3. STATE OF THE ART

Mary Shelley's narrative *Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus* (1818) has undoubtedly been one of those literary works which, due to its vast and multidimensional essence, has elicited most diverse –sometimes, convergent; some other times contrastive¹– interpretations within criticism, not only literary, but also scientific, psychological, anthropological, cinematographic and biological, among others. It is a multilayered novel which has resonated with the public imagination since its publication and will definitely have a neverending and enduring echo in our minds, opening new debates to shape its wide and diverse horizon of expectations. Genara Pulido speaks of "riqueza implícita" due to its wide range of variety of interpretations throughout its existence:

Ni que decir tiene que toda obra literaria de calidad encierra una variedad de interpretaciones que responde a los distintos intereses que surgen a lo largo del tiempo y/o en función del intérprete que se acerca a dicha obra. Lo destacable en *Frankenstein o el moderno Prometeo* es que las diversas interpretaciones teórico-críticas que conlleva conviven en perfecta armonía, no son excluyentes ni a nivel sincrónico ni diacrónico. Se trata, con pleno derecho, de una obra dialógica, polifónica. (2017: 25)

Within this polyphony of interpretations, there are readings regarding science and its uses, the origin of life, the situation of the subjugation of women (Anne K. Mellor, 1996) or the conflict between creator and creature (father and child), among other topics. The focus of attention in this study, however, will consider the female figure in relation to the process of gestation, delivery and care of a child and the extrapolation of this situation to Victor Frankenstein and the creature.

To begin with this analysis, it is necessary to mention that many scholars, after analyzing Mary Shelley's work, have categorized it as a patriarchal work since it portrays the figure of women as the "Angel of the House", a concept inherited from Victorian literature and which portrays the ideal figure of the woman / wife as a submissive person and devoted to her husband and family, a role model for other women. In *Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus* (1818), starting from a superficial reading, the female figures

¹ Hoeveler affirms:

[F]eminists and critics working in cultural studies have been interested in Frank enstein as a particularly potent discourse system, a manifestation of conflicted ideologies, working sometimes in league with its society's repressive attitudes towards women and sometimes arguing against society's negative stereotypes about the proper roles of mothers, daughters, servants, and friends" (2004: 49).

of Caroline, Justine and Elizabeth project all the characteristics of women as caregivers, nannies and protectors of the home, although their role is also that of "social stabilizers" without whom the micro-society represented in each family environment is destabilized. In any case, this characterization contextualizes the women in the work within a family environment in which the gestation of the offspring is not explicitly mentioned, something which is not a coincidence, but a relevant aspect having a most peculiar interpretation.

As a matter of fact, with a more detailed reading, Ellen Moers (2012) highlights the presence of the "birth myth", a topic that was considered taboo in Victorian Literature and that would begin to be more and more present with the arrival of Naturalism: Physical sexuality (including pregnancy and childbirth) being pushed to the forefront. According to this author, and referring to *Frankenstein*, this topic could be a reflection on Mary Shelley's part considering her situation of insecurity with motherhood at the time of writing the novel since it must be remembered that her motherhood was a chaotic period due to her constant state of pregnancy for five years, losing many of their babies shortly after their births, something also studied by Muriel Spark (1954), Anne Mellor (1989) and Antonio Ballesteros (1998), the latter relating the creation of the abhorrent entity with the author's particular situation in the moment of inspiration and creative writing, this having a definite and seminal influence, as a crucial and undoubtedly marked aspect in the plot: "en el momento en que se plantea la escritura de *Frankenstein*, Mary parece estar debatiendo internamente sus miedos y ansiedades acerca de un proceso creativo: el de traer al mundo a sus propios hijos y educarlos con todo su afecto maternal" (1998: 115). The present analysis, however, considers a study of the work not considering the author's personal context, defending the hypothesis that the text is a constant allegory related to the problem of technological vital creation and pregnancy –an aspect which is constantly idealized in the literary canon–, with the recurrence of those fears of the initial stages of childbirth –process of gestation and pregnancy–, as well as the subsequent one –postpartum depression.

3.1. The *desexualization* of women.

As we have already stated, it is a fact that the best known work by Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus* (1818), is a masterpiece highly influenced by both the private and social environment of the author. Ballesteros (1998) indicates, as a

possible influence on the main theme of the work, Mary Shelley's concerns with her problems or worries about being a mother, as well as her mother Mary Wollstonecraft's struggle for the rights and equality of women. In fact, Ballesteros (1998: 299) points out that the creation of life serves as an ironic counterpoint to the social moment in which it occurs:

Es un elemento irónico de la novela el hecho de que [...] es capaz de crear o dar vida a algo. En un contexto carente de toda presencia femenina –incluyendo cualquier figura materna– la creación es monstruosa e imperfecta. [...] La mujer, pues, se ve impedida para cumplir un papel en un contexto en el que no existe la familia tradicional y burguesa, epitome del bienestar absoluto para la mentalidad Victoriana, y que constituyó una de las aspiraciones incumplidas de la joven Mary Shelley.

This work is a literary creation that was born in the Romantic era, however, its themes and subtexts should not only be limited to that literary period, since it also expands and has deep reverberation in later periods. In fact, Mary Shelley's novel is contextualized at the end of the Romantic period and socially, in terms of the figure of the woman –not only in the literary sphere but also in the social one– it anticipates many of the major issues related to women's oppression during the Victorian era. Furthermore, in both periods, it is important to highlight the taboo in relation to everything surrounding the issue of pregnancy: from the first symptoms to delivery and even childcare. According to the Malone (2000), the society of the late 18th and early 19th centuries is widely marked by what is known as “bourgeois delicacy” or “delicacy of feeling”, as Queen Victoria calls it:

And now of the new fashions of our very elegant society is to go in perfectly light-coloured dresses- quite tight- without a particle of shawl or scarf...and to dance within a fortnight of their confinement and even valse at seven months!!! Where is delicacy of feeling going to? Sybil St Albans danced a quadrille under these circumstances.

-Queen Victoria, March, 1870 (qtd. In Perkin 66)

In other words, it is a time when appearances take on more importance than the nature of life. The term double standard is widely known, duality in Victorian times, where the institution of marriage is simply a social procedure, in many cases nothing to do with love relationships between the spouses. Within this institution, women had the role of caretaker of the home, good wife and procreator, or as we have already stated, "Angel of the House", a term from the narrative poem "The Angel in the House" by Coventry Patmore (first published in 1854). In this semi-autobiographical work, the author describes his love for his wife Emily, how they met as well as the courtship and marriage between them. In these lines, his wife is sublimated, described as a person

devoid of all selfishness or negative feelings, full of kindness and always willing to help her husband get the best of himself, a person, also, dedicated to the care and protection of her family, the perfect wife, chaste and innocent. In fact, the poem itself ends up acquiring great importance for its social content since it portrays the ideal and prototype of the Victorian woman and housewife due to the obsession of the aforementioned society for respectability and social decorum. As Suzanne Cooper explains:

A woman's place was at home caring for her family and looking after the household, while her husband was out working, earning money and protecting the family. It had become a symbol of a respectable status, when the women (both wife and daughters) did not need to go out and work but could stay at home and hone skills that became a lady such as painting, singing and fine needle work. (2011: 12)

In this sense and as a consequence of this domestic role of women, there arises what Ruth Perry calls the *desexualization of women* arguing that "in a remarkably short span, the maternal succeeded, supplanted, and repressed the sexual definition of women, who began to be reimagined as nurturing rather than desiring, as supportive rather than appetitive" (1992: 116). In fact, Sha (2009) adds the idea –and probably the myth– that women, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries do not experience sexual desire, "the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries witnessed the increasing influence of the passionless woman" (9) and sex in marriage was considered a duty as well as something that women should not enjoy. In this sense, Kühl (2016) adds "marital sex was a duty, which at least in theory served the sole purpose of procreation, not something to be indulged in for pleasure" (174). Any issue surrounding pregnancy is restricted to the domestic sphere, veiled or mentioned allegorically, symbolically or with circumlocution in the literature of the time. As an example of the avoidance of mentioning any term related to female sexuality, Malone (2000) includes the example of how menstruation was referred to by the term *ceasing-to-be-unwell*, meaning that a healthy woman who ceases to be unwell is almost certainly pregnant. As Malone specifies, "being 'unwell', of course, is an euphemistic phrase for menstruating" (375). Another example to illustrate the social attitude in literature with respect to pregnancy can be found in a criticism of the novel *Adam Bede* (1859), by George Eliot, in *Saturday Review* as presented in *Unstable Bodies* (1995) by Jill Matus where acceptable Victorian decorum is explicit. When it comes to the literature dealing with birth, the authors should completely eliminate the period of gestation and delivery and bring the child before the readers' eyes directly:

The author of *Adam Bede* has given in his adhesion to a very curious practice that is now becoming common among novelists, and it is a practice that we consider most objectionable. It is that of dating and discussing the several stages that precede the birth of a child. We seem to be threatened with a literature of pregnancy. [...] Let us copy the old master's of the art, who, if they gave us a baby, gave it us all at once. A decent author and a decent public may surely take the premonitory symptoms for granted.

(28 February 1859, vii, 250-251, qtd. In Carroll, 76)

Regarding the physical appearance of pregnant women, Perkin highlights “voluminous clothes hid the increasing size of the mother-to-be, who tended to stay in virtual hiding until after the birth” (1993: 66). Such is the concealment or period of confinement that middle and upper class women had to go through, period that began when their state became apparent (usually in the last trimester of pregnancy) and lasted until the birth of the newborn. Malone specifies “by confining and concealing the pregnant woman, [...] the nineteenth-century novel confirms both the reconstruction of the woman's body as maternal and the containment of that body in the private sphere of the family” (2000: 376), which is, we add, an issue both unspeakable and invisible to society². Alan Bewel (1988: 107) reveals there were books which tended to include “establishing rules of conduct for pregnant women who wished to be delivered of healthy and well formed children. They are explicitly books on the “management” or “government” of pregnant wives. Where normally a woman’s behavior was guided by moral, religious, familial, and economic restraints, pregnant women found themselves –then, as now– the subject of intensive medical scrutiny and advice”

Significantly and in this sense, Joan Perkin points out that “pregnancy was too indelicate a subject to discuss” (1993: 66) and, consequently, the desexualization of women in the social sphere becomes a matter of good taste, to such an extent that even the taboo prevails and affects everything related to pregnancy –from pregnancy to delivery– in public. In fact, within the literature of the time, any reference to this topic is considered vulgar. We can find an example in *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), by Jane Austen, in the character of Mrs Jennings, who is portrayed as “rather vulgar” due to her open speech on pregnancy. This continues in Victorianism, women being stripped of any sexual tinge, since gestation evidences and reveals the carnal –and therefore sexual– knowledge of women in a social sphere. As Malone explains:

2 Although the confinement was the social isolation of the woman, this also entailed an emotional and mental isolation, a fact that, as will be seen in the next section, could lead to depressive emotional states.

Not only does pregnancy bear clear witness to a woman's sexual relations, defining her simultaneously as sexual being and as mother-in-the-making [...] Confining the pregnant body, then, conveniently locates both maternity and sexuality in the private sphere. [...] Her domestic and reproductive labor, like her legal identity, were wholly subsumed in husband, family, and home. Tightening up the constraints when she was pregnant, confining her to the private space of the home, signaled even more clearly that the full range of this sexual-maternal woman's energies and capacities belonged there. (2000: 377-378)

This social prohibition of decorum on the subject of pregnancy results in new mothers having absolute ignorance about any aspect related to it, this fact being evidenced in a series of letters compiled by the Women's Co-Operative Guild in *Maternity* (1978). As an example to illustrate this most surprising fact, here is a letter written by a new mother at the time:

My first girl was born before I attained by twentieth year, and I had a step-mother who had had no children of her own, so I was not able to get any knowledge from her; and even if she had known anything I don't suppose she would have dreamt of telling me about these things which were supposed to exist, but must not be talked about. About a month before the baby was born I remember asking my aunt where the baby would come from. She was astounded, and did not make me much wiser. (30)

Consequently, a double culture is created around the sexuality of women, as Angus McLaren, in *Reproductive Rituals* (1984), explains: "By the beginning of the nineteenth century, one could speak of two sexual cultures: a 'low' culture of traditional beliefs in which women's sexuality was accepted, and a 'high' culture of scientific understanding in which women's sexuality had little place" (4). It is also common for the husband to have affective and sexual relationships outside of marriage, aspect that reveals the paradox of the Victorian Society, "that society was at the same time prudish in an unprecedented way but at the same time obsessed with sex and its consequences. While chastity was expected and idealized as a female virtue, pre- and extramarital sex was a reality, even if one did not talk about it in polite society" (Kühl, 2016: 174). Hellman (1987) also adds the notion of dichotomy between male/female sexuality around sexuality:

[The] dichotomy between the sexes is exemplified by the double standard. Women, unlike men, are permitted to engage in sex only for the purpose of becoming pregnant. A woman's sexuality is curtailed by both moral standards and by her own psychological make-up. Contrary to this, male promiscuity is acceptable and even, covertly, to be condoned. (82)

These men's relationships occur with socially unacceptable women, or "Fallen women", types of women who assume the negative binary of the term "Angel in the

house".³ Following Anderson's (1993) definition, this term is applied "to a range of feminine identities: prostitutes, unmarried women who engage [d] in sexual relations with men, victims of seduction, adulteresses, as well as variously delinquent lower-class women" (2). It is necessary to clarify that the term 'prostitute' is not limited only to those women related to sex practiced on the street as a means of economic support, but is extended to "unmarried women who were in relationships with men, unmarried mothers, unfaithful wives and mistresses to artist 'models and certain kinds of actress" (Eley, 2011: 90). This term comes from Augustus Egg's pictorial trilogy⁴: *Misfortune*, *Prayer* and *Despair* (1858)



Figure 1: *Misfortune*, by Augustus Egg (1858)

³ In fact, both terms are complementary, one cannot exist without the other, as Kühl (2016: 177) points out, "in order for the categories to be most effective, women needed to be ushered to the extreme ends of the spectrum- the domestic angels needed to be glorified in order for the transgressions of the fallen women to appear more shameful, so the differences between them would appear insurmountable".

⁴ Although the terms "Angel in the House" and "Fallen Women" appear for the first time in the works by Coventry Patmore and Augustus Egg respectively, both stereotypes go back to the culture of Christianity in the figures of Mary and Eva, the virgin Mary being the incarnation of attributes of sacrifice, goodness and dedication; opposite to Eve, whose embodied attributes are that of surrender to the seduction of the devil, carnal in his sin, and therefore, condemns society to expulsion from paradise



Figure 2: *Pray*, by Augustus Egg (1858)



Figure 3: *Despair*, by Augustus Egg (1858)

These works portray an adulterous wife lying on the ground at the feet of her husband in a position of repentance (*Misfortune*), followed by the next canvas in which the children appear praying for the fallen mother (*Prayer*), ending with a scene in which

you can see the fallen woman under a bridge, stripped of all home, watching the river in the middle of the night (*Despair*), faithfully representing the vision of the time regarding the fact that these women looked like:

moral menace, a contagion [...] Separated from society socially by stigmatization [she] was often physically removed from the gaze of respectable society, most frequently through her death. The Victorian view was that the fallen woman lacked shame and modesty; however, while society viewed these women as 'fallen' and as morally and socially repugnant, they were, in fact, victims not only of male domination and seduction, but of a social system that stigmatized and ostracized them for their fall. (Barnhill, 2003: 7-8)

In turn, in relation to sexuality, the term "Fallen women" refers to a woman whose sexuality is not restricted by social approval, but rather enjoys her sexual freedom. The man of Victorianism does enjoy this sexual freedom -outside of marriage, a socially known fact. It is for this reason that all those women, whose social role is not associated or is not linked to marriage and who have sexual relations with different men, are related to contagion.

4. ROMANTICISM AS A PERIOD OF TECHNOLOGICAL TRANSFORMATION: TECHNOLOGICAL SEXUALITY.

Highly remarkable, in *Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus* (1918), the vast majority of new births are related to the death of their parents. In fact, death is a highly recurring theme all throughout the novel, more concretely the death of a large number of characters appearing in the following order: Caroline Beaufort's father, Elizabeth Lavenza's mother (death by childbirth), Caroline Frankenstein née Beaufort, Justine Moritz's father, Justine Moritz's brothers and sister, Madame Moritz, Safie's servant, William Frankenstein (killed by the creature)⁵, Justine Moritz, the second creature (destroyed before being given life), Henry Clerval (killed by the creature), Elizabeth Lavenza (killed by the creature),

⁵ Anne K. Mellor points out the author's autobiographical implication in this case:

Mary drew psychologically on her own childhood experiences of isolation and abandonment after her mother's death in childbirth and her father's remarriage to a hostile stepmother to articulate the creature's overwhelming desire for a family, a mate of his own, and the consequences of his violent anger when he is rejected by all whom he approaches, even an innocent young boy, William Frankenstein (modeled on William Shelley), and then his maker. By including an image of the murder of her own son, William, in the novel, Mary articulated her deepest fear that an unloved (and psychologically abused) child, such as she herself had been, could become an unloving, abusive mother, even a murdering monster (2017: 240).

Alphonse Frankenstein, Victor Frankenstein and the creature (death by self-immolation). This may be influenced by the fact that the author herself suffered several miscarriages throughout her life, but it is not by chance that the diegesis contains many cases of biological creation, but most of these deliveries culminate in a tragic end. This fatality in relation to the use of technology and science is one of the characteristics of Romantic literature, since in Romanticism there is an enhancement for the natural, a great interest in man's return to the countryside so as to take the reins of cultivation and move away from the mechanical and any technological advance that may pose a threat to a lifestyle in contact with nature.

When Mary published Frankenstein in 1818, England was getting completely upended by runaway technological innovation in the Industrial Revolution. Ways of life that had endured for centuries disappeared in the blink of an eye. William Wordsworth would soon write mournful letters and poems about railroads ruining his beloved countryside. Ancient trades disappeared without fanfare; new careers appeared overnight. Every constant was unmade; the maps were redrawn; and the old, steady rhythm of life stuttered and pulsed erratically. Young Mary, eighteen years old when she started writing Frankenstein, felt revolution in the air (Doctorow, 2017: 210).

In addition, nature was a metaphor for the inner world of the individual. This characteristic leads us to the great importance of subjectivity and feelings, because this artistic and cultural movement exalted moods and feelings, which is why it is in direct conflict with technology and mechanization, traditionally and assumedly deprived of any type of feeling. In fact, Romantic authors show constant nostalgia for the past and oppose the progress of the Industrial Revolution in their works, being reluctant to any technology or science that is in favor of an advance of the future on the basis of economy. According to the Romantic spirit, the things created were not to be rejected as long as they showed practicality to the user; however, when the benefit was merely economic, they were not accepted. The main reason for this opposition was that the Industrial Revolution threatened to break the foundational –and, somehow, holy– connection between man and nature. Another characteristic that concerns technological or scientific creation is the relationship of the Romantic man with God, the relationship of man with the supreme Creator without intermediaries being a key aspect, that is, a unipersonal and bilateral relationship between the creator and the man since it is precisely God who can create life, so any advance in technology that seeks to emulate what only God can create is

considered an anti-natural advance outside the entire natural order of things⁶. In synthesis, as Coeckelbergh explains, Romanticism is a cultural movement associated with feelings, nostalgia for the past –hence conservative– imagination through the introspection of the individual, the dreamlike, spirits, ghosts and other worlds, it is ultimately a world related to magic; while technology, on the contrary, is associated with the objective, with rationality, therefore, it does not contemplate the religion or the introspection of the individual, it is oriented towards the future, it is practical and realistic (2017: 71-94).

As for the relationship of the individual with nature and with God, this is precisely where the fateful element of Victor Frankenstein's creation lies, since on the one hand, it is the proud arrogance of this scientist that leads him to work without ceasing to be the first to create life in a scientific way; and, on the other hand, vital creation is being carried out through scientific techniques and not through human reproduction, and much less with women as the main protagonist in the gestation and delivery period – which, until that moment, was only possible in a natural way. Jackson (2013: 112) argues that this type of reproduction anticipates an inhuman future of human reproduction and highlights the rupture between birth and nature:

Family relations are no longer determined by the “natural” link between the biological and the social or the religio-mythic link between divine will and its material manifestation. In fact, the family is no longer the microcosm to the macrocosm of the social. Rather, the social is determined by [...] manipulation. [...] Sexual reproduction is replaced with technological reproduction, children born through technological wombs, “related” to their parents only through technological media and mechanisms.

According to Alfred Nordmann, Victor's ambitions are:

[T]o genetically engineer plants and animals, to technologically enhance human nature, to create artificial life, and to “banish disease from the human frame, and render man invulnerable to any but a violent death” (p. 23)—but also of the far more mundane achievements of today's synthetic chemistry, nanotechnology, and materials science, with ordinary plastics first in line to mock the world with its own shadows (2017: 224).

With reference to literary authors of the early Victorian era, Patricia Hellman makes it explicit in her Thesis *The Representation of Childbirth in Literature* (1987) that there is a greater interest in abnormal deliveries, "earlier authors described primarily abnormal and tragic deliveries [...] the women generally die, young, beautiful, pale, and wan" (75). In addition to this –and epicentric in our reading of Mary Shelley's

⁶ In addition, Immanuel Kant's philosophical approach in the eighteenth century is added regarding the fact that the human is an end in itself, or the works by Darwin by which it is proclaimed that “the human represents the pinnacle of evolution. There is nothing after the human; how could there be? The end of the human would mean the end of the world, or so we used to believe.” (cited in Jackson, 2013: 143)

masterpiece—, we have to point out that there are vital technological creations, such as the one carried out by Victor Frankenstein, which is totally stripped of female intervention since it is replaced by technological means —Galvanism—.

Victor's usurpation of the natural mode of human reproduction implies a kind of destruction of the female. We see this destruction erupt symbolically in his nightmare following the animation of his creature: while in his embrace, Elizabeth, his bride-to-be, is transformed into the corpse of his dead mother [...]. By stealing the female's control over natural reproduction, Victor has eliminated the female's primary biological function and source of cultural power. Indeed, as a male scientist who creates a male creature, Victor eliminates the biological necessity for females at all. One of the deepest horrors of this novel is his implicit goal of creating a society for men only: Victor's creature is male; he refuses to create a female; there is no reason why the race of immortal beings he hopes to propagate should not be exclusively male. (240-241)

In this case, the guideline is in charge of a man, that is, there is an almost total replacement for biological reproduction, though again, creation is imperfect:

El monstruo [...] es proyección imperfecta y grotesca de su hacedor, ser que contiene la semilla del darwinismo. [...] La ciencia [...] se contempla desde una perspectiva pesimista y poco esperanzadora que se relaciona con los temores a una sociedad preindustrial, [...] con una desconfianza en cuanto a los límites que la naturaleza puede permitir. (Ballesteros, 1998: 296)

Contextualized in an era of increasing technological and industrial development, this fact —the creation of imperfect and monstrous life— focuses on the vision of science regarding its limits, Mary Shelley's work thus anticipating in its time technological methods of reproduction alternative to natural ones, as pointed out by Jackson (2013: 147)

Birth, pregnancy, maternity, and the ways that our understanding of the social role of the mother, the biological or natural processes of birth and gestation, [...] altered by the increasing integration of technology into these processes and identities. [...] Conception, gestation, and birth are no longer "natural" occurrences in the way this term has traditionally been understood.

It must also be remembered that in such a scientific universe in Romanticism and Victorianism, the female figure is practically nil, as Ballesteros (1998) mentions: "La tarea científica —o simplemente profesional en un alto nivel de exigencia—, [...] es predominio exclusivo del hombre y, por tanto, le está vedada a la mujer, que en el lapso cronológico victoriano accede de forma escasísima a este ámbito" (297). This can be also applied to the time in which Shelley's nightmarish work was written. As a matter of fact, there were a series of developments and scientific achievements related to reproduction at the end of the XVIIth and beginning of the XVIIIth centuries:

The first human artificial insemination in 1776, Spallanzani's work on sperm and artificial insemination, the sexualizing of the brain, John Hunter's transplantation of the ovary of a hen into a rooster along with his studies of the descent of the testicle in the foetus, and the discovery of the female ovum in 1827. (Sha, 2001:1)

These events probably had a great influence on the works of the Romantic authors, reflecting in some way the medical revolution around sexuality and reproduction in their works. For Sha (2001), developments such as artificial insemination mean widening the gap or separation between sexual pleasure and reproductive function, which, in turn, translates into sexual liberation: “if artificial insemination helped to widen the gaps between sexual pleasure and reproductive function, then sexuality might enable meaningful liberation insofar as it is no longer necessarily chained to instrumentality” (2). Added to this technological revolution is the interest of romantic authors in puberty and eunuchs, these concepts revealing the liquid aspect of sexual identity or biological sex. In this respect, Elfenbein highlights that “although recent critics have separated sexuality and gender, the distinction did not exist in the eighteenth century” (1990: 19). With this, the male-female sexual binary opposition disappears, or at least is questioned as soon as reproductive capacity and what Claudia Johnson (1995) calls “crises of gender in the 1790s” or “equivocal beings” arise. Medical writers such as the Hunter Brothers, Buffon or Spurrzheim stipulated puberty as the biological stage where it is really possible to identify gender: men and women live in an “equivocal state” because the sexual difference does not manifest itself until the stage of puberty in terms of physical traits – greater muscle mass in men, providing more body strength, against the so-called feminine delicacy, or the appearance of facial hair–, which does allow the biological gender distinction. This liquid sexual characteristic that takes place prior to puberty is also permanently manifested in the figure of the eunuch, an iconic representation that contemplates the permanent doubt about their sexual identity. Sha (2001) provides the possible explanation why the eunuchs aroused such fascination in the Romantic society and literature:

[B]orn male and now clearly effeminate, what was the gender or sex of an eunuch? That eunuchs with their testicles removed were thought to still be able to perform intercourse/penetration implied that sexual desire had no necessary connection to reproduction. If biological sex was more fluid in Romanticism, so too was the boundary between normal and abnormal sexuality. (4)

Therefore, Romanticism can be considered a historical period of transition regarding the treatment of sexuality in society, assuming “asexual zone between

eighteenth-century edenic “liberated” sexuality and guiltless pleasures, and the repressive sexology of the Victorians that enabled real sexuality to emerge.” (Sha, 2001: 6)

However, all technological advances, social concerns about sexual identity and the figure of the eunuch, do nothing more than deprive women of their natural reproductive capacity, which is being replaced by technology. Although it may initially mean a sexual liberation since sexuality is separated from reproduction, it cancels or at least relegates the female figure to a secondary position with respect to the creation of life, so that, in turn and as a consequence, it leads to a lower social and medical interest around the female figure and its reproductive capacities due to the fact that, as Sha explains, “generation/reproduction is split from sexual acts: the sciences of sexuality in Romanticism make us aware of this elision” (2001: 10)

5. PSYCHOLOGICAL DISORDERS IN RELATION TO “MATERNITY-CREATION”

Mary Shelley’s work has previously been dealt with from a social perspective: how the social mentality of the time affects the female figure in terms of their role as procreators, and how technology poses a threat to vital creation through technological and scientific means. Next, an analysis will be carried out following a psychological point of view in relation to how the previously mentioned aspects can negatively influence the female psyche and provoke disorders that may include inducing the rejection of the child.

One of the pioneering authors in relating Mary Shelley’s work to this topic is Moers, arguing that *Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus* (1818) is an allegory of postpartum depression:

Frankenstein seems to be distinctly a woman’s mythmaking on the subject of birth precisely because its emphasis is not upon what precedes birth, not upon birth itself, but upon what follows birth: the trauma of the afterbirth. [...] Fear and guilt, depression and anxiety are commonplace reactions to the birth of a baby, and well within the normal range of experience. (2012: 321).

This could indicate that Mary Shelley’s intention is to endow her science fiction “treatise” with a mundane and realistic character, describing, in fact, a real situation, that of those mothers suffering after childbirth, contrary to the idyllic image of motherhood:

In making her hero the creator of a monster, she does not necessarily mock idealistic ambition, but in making that monster a poor grotesque patchwork, a physical mess of seams and wrinkles, she introduces a consideration of the material universe which challenges and undermines the purity of idealism. In short, the sheer concreteness of the ugly thing which Frankenstein has created often makes his ambitious and his character –however sympathetically described– seem ridiculous and even insane. The arguments on behalf of idealism and unworldly genius are seriously presented, but the controlling perspective is that of an earthbound woman. (Kiely, 1972: 161)

Through a more detailed reading, it can be seen that Mary Shelley, as mentioned above, is ahead of her time in dealing with a subject whose research began in the twentieth century. Indeed, as Ellen Moers perceives, Victor Frankenstein's rejection of the creature is "the trauma of the afterbirth" or what is now known as "Postpartum Depression", although if the text is examined more closely, the phase prior to childbirth, described as "creation", can be, as a whole, considered the allegory of gestation through the character of Victor Frankenstein, his obsessive desires, his hubristic quest, his decisions, his actions, plans and prospective ideals. Not less interesting, consequently, is the fact that in this procreation-gestation-delivery process the author chooses a male figure, who represents the woman through the technique that we could call "generic transmutation" or "masquerade", which contributes to this fantastic narrative social verisimilitude since it must be taken into account that it is created⁷ in a social context where science was limited to men, as Ballesteros claims:

La tarea científica –o simplemente profesional en un alto nivel de exigencia–, [...] es predominio exclusivo del hombre y, por tanto, le está vedada a la mujer, que en el lapso cronológico victoriano accede de forma escasísima a este ámbito. [...] Un universo caracteriológico en el cual predominan los hombres. [...] El universo del relato no parece ser el mejor lugar para los personajes femeninos. (1998: 297)

It is, therefore, Victor Frankenstein, who, through the problems resulting from his scientific creation, represents the fear of pregnancy. Beginning with the period that includes this process, which in some cases for women is the "initiation rite" towards maturity, this would be the reflection of the moment in which Víctor separates from his family ties through his journey to the University of Ingolstadt and that is when he decides to create life by beginning the process of collecting "material" for the creation of a human body, a clear mirror of the gestation period. In this sense, the ambitious scientist represents the vitalist spirit, opposed to the materialist one, at those times. As Maienschein and Maccord write:

⁷ As Westfall (1977: 82-104) emphasizes, Shelley constantly uses the term "create" and not by chance.

Materialists rejected, for example, the idea that there is some special life force and maintained that living organisms are made of matter that changes over time. In contrast, vitalists believed that there is some kind of vital or life force that makes things come alive—that it takes a life force to make something a living organism rather than a hunk of clay or other material. Through these new explanatory frameworks, people began to explore the living world and ask what causes life to appear in the first place and then continues to make something alive rather than dead (2017: 217)

Obviously, we are talking about an equality between the concepts of pregnancy-collection of material since the difference between both processes would be that on the female side it is a "biological creation", while on the part of Victor it is an "organic creation" (or even a recycling process). As Mellor puts it, "Frankenstein robs both cemeteries and slaughterhouses in order to suture together a creature composed of dead animal and human body parts, a creature he then animates with the "spark of being"" (2017: 239). However, faced with what could be called an existential fable, that is, the idealism surrounding motherhood as a process full of happiness and positivism, Victor describes this process of compilation/creation-gestation as nauseating, disgusting and full of negative connotations as opposed to his enthroning desire for creation. A macabre, bizarre and most grotesque graphic style is to illustrate this moment, feelings emerging from within, at the throes of damnation:

My cheek had grown pale with study, and my person had become emaciated with confinement. Sometimes, on the very brink of certainty, I failed; yet still I clung to the hope which the next day or the next hour might realise. One secret which I alone possessed was the hope to which I had dedicated myself; [...] 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? My limbs now tremble, and my eyes swim with the remembrance; but then a resistless and almost frantic impulse urged me forward; I seemed to have lost all soul or sensation but for this one pursuit. It was indeed but a passing trance, that only made me feel with renewed acuteness so soon as, the unnatural stimulus ceasing to operate, I had returned to my old habits. I collected bones from charnel-houses and disturbed, with profane fingers, the tremendous secrets of the human frame. In a solitary chamber, or rather cell, at the top of the house, and separated from all the other apartments by a gallery and staircase, I kept my workshop of filthy creation; my eyeballs were starting from their sockets in attending to the details of my employment. The dissecting room and the slaughter-house furnished many of my materials; and often did my human nature turn with loathing from my occupation, whilst, still urged on by an eagerness which perpetually increased, I brought my work near to a conclusion. (Shelley, 2006: 56)⁸

This feeling of horror and rejection of pregnancy was already studied in clinical psychology by Esquirol in 1818 under the concept of "prenatal depression", followed by Menzies (1893) and Kanuer (1897), who accentuated the severity of the aforementioned

⁸ This quote exceeds twelve lines, but it is important to include this part of Mary Shelley's novel in order to illustrate Victor's feelings towards his creation.

condition. Hofberg and Ward add the concept "tocophobia" as a state of anxiety or fear of childbirth and relate it to the fear of death during childbirth:

Women still suffer from the fear of death during delivery." When this specific anxiety or fear of death during parturition precedes pregnancy and is so intense that tokos (childbirth) is avoided whenever possible, this is a phobic state called 'tokophobia'. Tokophobia may affect women from childhood into old age. (2003: 507)

It should be noted that this fear does not mean that women who suffer from it do not want to be mothers, but rather it can cause them to give up having children because they are trapped in their own fears, a thought that Valeria Babini also shares: "every when woman follows her own natural destiny she encounters risks and dangers no less terrible than when she opposes it. If in the latter case she is already sick, in the former she could easily become sick: it is not at all rare [...] that she should fall sick, go crazy, be delirious, kill (1986: 58)". Christina Mazzoni adds to these statements the aspect of corporeity and the metamorphosis of the body as another factor related to this fear "[...] a crisis each woman must learn to face one way or another: a crisis that goes well beyond aesthetic differences from her pre-pregnant self, a crisis that involves varying degrees of self-transformation as a metamorphosis or as a deforming anamorphosis perhaps, guided by myriad factors." (2002: 113). It is not surprising, therefore, that as a consequence, a picture of deterioration of self-esteem can be triggered with a possible resulting depression. All this is reflected at the time of Victor's description of the compilation of material and creation as "filthy creation", thus loading the creative process with negative and loathing connotations, abjection in its purest form.

In addition, the spatial setting is crucial to reinforce this idea of repudiation. Mary Shelley gives a great importance to atmosphere and background since the direct and indirect effect they have on the reader is an essential parameter which emphasizes the balanced orchestration of elements resulting in the sensation of abhorrence. This author, projective in nature, reflects the traits and major aspects defining the characters on the environment and, as a consequence, all the places that the creator and creature – nomads and exiled actants – and travel through or those houses they pass by or stay in are a reflection of their emotional states. It is also, and therefore, an atmosphere that emotionally influences the reader – *stimmung* – and where you can see the evolution of events in the narrative, as well as the social and gradual exclusion of the so called antagonist in the face of the constant uprooting of the despised and abnormal creature with respect to the civilized environment. Having mentioned this, Victor begins to collect

material from the holy fields, the "frontier place" between life and death. The moment of creation takes place in the laboratory dimension, or "paternal cradle", which is not described in detail but left suspended in an uncertain sphere of action. Only the location and the abjectness of the place⁹ are indicated, but definitely emphasizing both its vertical and horizontal separation from the epicentric house, since Shelley mentions that it is away from the home area by a passageway and stairs, it being in the highest part of the house that Victor has rented at the moment. From this, we can infer that the monster is already marginalized before its life starts:

In a solitary chamber, or rather cell, at the top of the house, and separated from all the other apartments by a gallery and staircase, I kept my workshop of filthy creation; my eyeballs were starting from their sockets in attending to the details of my employment. The dissecting room and the slaughter-house furnished many of my materials; and often did my human nature turn with loathing from my occupation, whilst, still urged on by an eagerness which perpetually increased, I brought my work near to a conclusion. (Shelley, 56)

The moment of creation is the turning point in the diegesis where the rejection that a mother may have towards her newborn is most obviously manifested. Showalter speaks of "puerperal insanity" which she divides into "mania" and "melancholia"¹⁰: "Puerperal insanity [...] follows birth and was seen as taking two main forms: mania and melancholia. A mania was usually evident a few days or a week after the birth. Melancholia developed later, three or four weeks after the event." (1985: 57), the symptoms of these being respectively, according to Maudsley:

[...] [Mania] preceding and presaging the mania are such symptoms as irritability, sleeplessness, excited look and talk, restless agitation and suspicion, accompanied or followed by fits of gloom, indifference to the child, perhaps angry aversion to it and to the husband. [...] [Melancholia] beginning commonly with a dislike or suspicion of husband, nurse, and others around her, it is often accompanied with suicidal impulse and sometimes with the impulse to kill the child. (1895: 416)

Facing the abnormal and fissured body, once it has been given life against all the laws of nature, realizing the new being is born, its creator, Victor, immediately regrets his achievement and concluding the creature does not meet his expectations, his dream or delusion turns into a nightmare—in fact, this is a cautionary state, bringing him images of Elizabeth as a rotting corpse, a warning indeed—, a canvas of latent and threatening

⁹Quite a modelic illustration of the bad place in urban gothic literature at the very end of the nineteenth century, very similar, for example, to Dr. Jekyll's laboratory or the place where Dorian Gray hides his demonic portrait

¹⁰ These concepts have been studied in relation to motherhood in Victorian times, and are currently comparable to postpartum depression.

essence covered by the vivid colours of abjection and the impossible balance between paleness and rigid black, a sense of mourning and omen:

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 limbs were in proportion, and I had selected his features as beautiful. Beautiful! Great God! His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath; his hair was of a lustrous black, and flowing; his teeth of a pearly whiteness; but these luxuriances only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes, that seemed almost of the same colour as the dun-white sockets in which they were set, his shrivelled complexion and straight black lips (Shelley, 60).

Negligent to the core, the surrogate “father” runs from the laboratory leaving the left-over animated corpse abandoned, despising the child he has “modelled” within. Victor is, then, a neglectful progenitor denying his responsibility, this concept being a seminal aspect and axis in Shelley’s work. As Johnston puts it:

A rich theme running through Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* is responsibility. In a straightforward—even didactic—way, the novel chronicles the devastating consequences for an inventor and those he loves of his utter failure to anticipate the harm that can result from raw, unchecked scientific curiosity. The novel not only explores the responsibility that Victor Frankenstein has for the destruction caused by his creation but also examines the responsibility he owes to him (2017: 201)

Elizabeth Bear refers to Victor’s immoral crime or fault, inverting the traditional view of critics and focusing on his immature response to his praiseful scientific achievement. By abandoning his creation and not considering or anticipating its negative impact on human beings, he does not do justice to his success and blurs his findings. Consequently, the problem is not to be associated with his gestation or mode of creation but to his refusal to assume parental responsibility, another symptom illustrating the afterbirth delirium:

Victor’s crime is not pursuing science but in failing to consider the well-being of others and the consequences of his actions. I contend also that Mary’s great work is a tale not about the dangers of a man’s quest for knowledge but about the ethics of his failure to attempt to anticipate and take responsibility for the results of that quest. There is a strong link between Victor’s failure of empathy for his creature and the particular kind of hubris that allows for the discarding of other people’s lives in service to an ambition. This failure of empathy is closely connected to the moral cowardice of refusing to take responsibility for one’s actions or for the outcomes derived from one’s research (2017: 231).

Delirium and evil, as David Sokya suggests:

Victor is, however, a considerably flawed creator whose irresponsibility and short sightedness produce a creature who can’t help but become evil. In casting her novel with the Miltonic theme of the created’s rejection of the creator, and the earthly havoc this rejection causes, Shelley

suggests through her characterization of Victor Frankenstein that it is God's hubris and subsequent lack of interest in His Creation that lays the groundwork for human wickedness. (1992: 166-167)

Trying to leave the "ghoul" behind is counterproductive since Victor Frankenstein is thrown into the dark waters of guilt over and over again –the monster becoming a ghost or shadow, a doppelganger, recurrently haunting its creator– during his countdown to extinction, his post-partum depression, "in a dark dance with the creature, attempting to forestall further horrors from being inflected upon humanity" (Douglas, 2017: 247). In Frankenstein's words:

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. [...]; 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 and continued a long time traversing my bed-chamber, unable to compose my mind to sleep. At length lassitude succeeded to the tumult I had before endured, and I threw myself on the bed in my clothes, endeavouring to seek a few moments of forgetfulness. But it was in vain; I slept, indeed, but I was disturbed by the wildest dreams. (Shelley, 61)

This rejection embodied by the father-creator, having its origin in a psychological abjection, finally has a projection in society since the creature or "final product" belongs to no accepted or normal categorization and, consequently, is doomed to remain alone, having no name nor rights, so not recognized as natural after the process of generation. In the article "A Troubled Legacy: Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and the Inheritance of Human Rights", Diana Reese (2006) raises this unstable situation between the human-inhuman, emphasizing human rights and, more specifically the fact of being deprived of them, is one of the major motifs in the work. In this sense, Jackson (2013: 115) makes reference to the ambiguous nature of the creature:

The monstrous creation has too many human traits to be treated otherwise, but it has too many monstrous traits to be assigned a place in the biologically human category. A central question in each narrative is, what is the status of such a being, given its origins and makeup, and how should it be treated? This question is ultimately rendered moot in each case because of the threat that the creature poses to humanity. (115)

Undoubtedly, the orphan's permanent solitude and incapacity to act within a social group and feel identified with it, consequently his lack of visibility and pertinence, his being a disfunction, a massive patchwork with no proportion or harmony among its

parts¹¹, impels the creature to manifest its need for socialization. Shelley insists on what lies behind the disgusting façade, transcending the physical, abiding on the monster's feelings¹², the ones the reader perfectly and vicariously understands:

The monster comes to embody the paradox of capitalist being: individual interests can only be declared through identification with a social group and so exist in the same way that the general interest does. Therefore, the monster's demand that Victor create for him a female so that he could become a species, a social group and not a lone individual, poses too much of a threat to the "unreal universality" of rights-bearers. (125)

Continuing with the process of creation/gestation, there are three crucial aspects to perceive it as traumatic: firstly, it is carried out in secret since Victor remains in absolute isolation, away from society, walled up in the laboratory and hiding the gestation/creation stage; secondly, and as we have just suggested, once the creature is born/created, Victor abandons it, his abjection and hatred finally leading him, during the ensuing plot, to bear a constant idea and desire of killing "his" creature. These are aspects considered within transitory insanity as some of the symptoms related to melancholy, usually associated, Maudsley affirms, with the first pregnancies or those considered socially non-legitimate, as is the case of the child who never asked to be born in *Frankenstein*:

Melancholia was [...] associated with *first pregnancies* and *illegitimate pregnancies*. It may be questioned, then, how far this 'insanity' was a reaction to the terrible nausea and discomfort accompanying many pregnancies or the condemnation and censure following an illegitimate pregnancy. [...] There were cases of girls and women hiding the fact of their pregnancies, killing their illegitimate babies then destroying the body, rather than face the consequences of acknowledging the offspring. No doubt a few would have felt suicidal also. (1895: 415)

Victor's rejection causes the creature not to acquire a name, that is, there is a lack of nominalization, this resulting in a lack of domestic and cultural identity, blurring all possible familial ties or potential belonging to a concrete social group and, consequently,

¹¹ Nordmann claims "Mary's tale is not one of modern science. On the contrary, it tells the limits of science and dreams the dream of technoscience, a dream that gains power in the plastic world of Frankenmaterials (2017: 225)

¹² On discussing what makes the creature a monster in comparison with other characters in Shelley's work, Maienschein and Maccord focus on the aberrant entity's rational side:

What about the creature's rational "soul" or his intellectual faculties, which also include emotion and sensations? Are his deficits here what makes him a monster? This is another strong possibility. He displays behaviors that challenge his contemporaries' moral sensibilities—violence, vengeance, and murder. But these acts are also committed by many people to whom the label monster might not apply. (217)

any responsibility on the part of the father/creator. In addition to this linguistic uncertainty, behavioral, emotional or cognitive delays can also develop during childhood, as well as social problems. In “Postnatal Maternal Depression and its impact on child Neurodevelopment. Prospective cohort study”, González et al. found that 18-month-old children with mothers who suffered from postpartum depression showed sociability and language problems, in addition to having less facial expression and vocalization, due to the lack of adequate stimulation on the part of the mother, this task being more present among family members or educational institutions. (2016: 364).

A representation of the alternative linguistic models replacing that of mother as actants of linguistic and social stimulation is found in the De Haley family, inhabitants of the place next to the “blind house” where the “child” lives for a time. In this refuge, it is impossible to see or access the outside as there are no windows or doors. The only two accesses to the place are through a small door that the creature covers with mud and stones every time he enters or leaves to avoid being seen, as if he were looking for a metaphorical womb for he is not ready to face the outside world yet once his father/mother has failed to provide him with company or instructions nor has he gone through any rite of passage to adapt to life. His habitation, in fact, has a bricked-up window that adjoins the cabin, with a small slit that allows him to see and hear the family, but does not allow interaction with them. The creature tells his father about the hardships he had to face when trying to adapt to the new circumstances and learn how to communicate, experiencing life from the other side of the mirror, identifying himself with actants on stage, as if everything before his eyes were simulacra of life:

Here, then, I retreated and lay down happy to have found a shelter, however miserable, from the inclemency of the season, and still more from the barbarity of man. As soon as morning dawned I crept from my kennel, that I might view the adjacent cottage and discover if I could remain in the habitation I had found. It was situated against the back of the cottage and surrounded on the sides which were exposed by a pig sty and a clear pool of water. One part was open, and by that I had crept in; but now I covered every crevice by which I might be perceived with stones and wood, yet in such a manner that I might move them on occasion to pass out; all the light I enjoyed came through the sty, and that was sufficient for me. [...] On examining my dwelling, I found that one of the windows of the cottage had formerly occupied a part of it, but the panes had been filled up with wood. In one of these was a small and almost imperceptible chink through which the eye could just penetrate. (Shelley 126-128)

This adjoining cabin is, consequently, the “comfort zone” for the monster though it is described as a ruined place or “left-over”, an indirect presentation of the abandoned child and his limited assertiveness. The alternative family –the one he will never have–

acts as a learning model in this case; here he acquires knowledge of languages, food, communication, political and religious notions, interpersonal relationships, and begins to experience emotions, from love to anger, a deep and pathological emotional dependency as well as a fear of being abandoned once again, the persistent trauma of being deprived of a home. Both father and child react in the same way, falling from grace and love, once they face a disappointment which spoils their desires by destroying what surrounds them:

But again when I reflected that they had spurned and deserted me, anger returned, a rage of anger, and unable to injure anything human, I turned my fury towards inanimate objects. As night advanced, I placed a variety of combustibles around the cottage, and after having destroyed every vestige of cultivation in the garden, I waited with forced impatience until the moon had sunk to commence my operations (Shelley, 168).

In addition, stimulation not only gestural, but of the senses also is intensified: with his eyes, through the crack in the bricked-up window –a fissured symbol allowing him access to knowledge, a parallelism with the monster himself, also cracked and fractured, a wandering silhouette which has pure feelings–, he is a spectator of the cultural and social nucleus of the family, but lacks interaction with them, a crucial aspect for the training and materialization of identity. Within the walls, not under siege or oppressed but enjoying the safe comfort of isolation to gradually get the skills so as to perform and be, getting accustomed to loneliness and the interpretation of life, the creature lives in the invisible angle, the ruins that allow him not to participate in the rules stipulated by social groups, a place outside of regulation, where failure to comply with social convention does not entail punishment. As a matter of fact, once he has fire by his side, once he has knowledge, he becomes assertive enough to leave the training and, born through hate, exert his power, taking revenge by embodying the storm and destroying:

As the night advanced, a fierce wind arose from the woods and quickly dispersed the clouds that had loitered in the heavens; the blast tore along like a mighty avalanche and produced a kind of insanity in my spirits that burst all bounds of reason and reflection. I lighted the dry branch of a tree and danced with fury around the devoted cottage, my eyes still fixed on the western horizon, the edge of which the moon nearly touched. A part of its orb was at length hid, and I waved my brand; it sank, and with a loud scream I fired the straw, and heath, and bushes, which I had collected. The wind fanned the fire, and the cottage was quickly enveloped by the flames, which clung to it and licked it with their forked and destroying tongues. (Shelley, 168-169)¹³

It should not be forgotten that the novel is set at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, but the vast majority of the places that appear in the novel are remote areas

¹³ This quote exceeds twelve lines, but it is important to include this part of Mary Shelley's novel in order to illustrate how left-over spaces may influence people's mood into rage and destruction.

away from large cities, reluctant to accept rapid technological advances, like the rejected monster. The Industrial Revolution greatly accelerated the recycling process "repeat, novelty, death", a cycle which parallels Victor Frankenstein's goal: "I thought that if I could be returned to animation upon lifeless matter, I might in process of time (although I now found it impossible) renew life where death had apparently devoted the body to corruption" (Shelley, 2016: 55). In fact and somehow, garbage –the rejected and obsolete material– at those times, somehow, acquired a new life like the creature that arises from previous bodies.

As previously mentioned, the coexistence of the concepts of trash and ruin, or "left-over spaces" (Hudson, 2012), are recurrent throughout the work. Ruins, in fact, are the only places of settlement for the creature, those Augé (2008) defines as "non-places", where dialogues, experience and emotional attachment converge. The hut is the only place where the creature experiences the closest thing to feeling "alive", as Erik Erikson (1968) explains. The latter is an abandoned environment, intrinsically related to urban landscape planning, according to De Sola-Morales (1995, 120) "where the city is no longer", being outside the official occupation, commercial, residential or institutional use. Like the animated patchwork creature, ruins or isolated spaces always carry negative connotations as defined by various authors: "Terrain Vague" (De Sola Morales, 1995), "Dead Zones" (Doron, 2000), "Superfluous landscapes" (Nielsen, 2002), "Spaces of uncertainty" (Cupers and Miessen, 2002), "Voids" (Armstrong, 2006), represented on official maps as blank spots or areas, which illustrate unacceptable socio-economic neglect contrary to the ideal image of the city, dimensions which are considered empty and meaningless. A more frequent space in *Frankenstein* is the frozen aquatic place, the North Pole, that sea of ice meaning vast and icy solitude, as well as the horizon of infinity and a blank canvas showing that which lies beyond the familiar, the limits of reason and convention, where no path can be traced and where the embedded narratives of Victor Frankenstein and his creature –the only embrace between father and child is narratological– take place, as philosophical dialogues of love, hate and retribution:

We have moved beyond Enlightenment and Romantic notions of the human and its monstrous underside exemplified by Frankenstein's monster. The latter ultimately served as the sign or portent that would not allow the narrator's ship to go any farther toward the North Pole, its sublime icy climes representing not only the end of the earth but also the limits of pure reason. (Jackson, 2013: 144)

And the analysis of setting, considering the creature's learning process, also leads us to underline these places lack a logical social order in the arrangement of objects, so retroactive deductive thinking is activated trying to imagine the past life that took place in that place based on this information. This thought directed to the past is a constant in Victor Frankenstein and in his creature; in the case of the former, he constantly regrets and curses his creation, resorting to the same idea every time he fears possible future reprisals from the monster due to his having abandoned his son. The creature, for his part, tries to compile information and interpret it; he keeps an inventory-like list of the situations he lives and makes constant use of narratives referring to his social experiences, all resulting in sadness and anger, since everywhere he has to suffer rejection.

Finally, and in relation to this, as the creature wanders earthly and advances in his cognitive and maturity process, the need for companionship by a female creature arises, something he demands. After a series of moral dilemmas, even having begun the collection of material for it (a new gestation), Victor decides to destroy it when he sees his first monster through the laboratory window. The unfinished creation (interruption of pregnancy, in terms of a biological creation) is the representation of "secondary tocophobia". While the primary is suffered by nulliparous women, that is, the one that precedes the first conception, the secondary occurs in those who have already had children previously and, after suffering a traumatic experience related to pregnancy or childbirth, they experience this fear either for their own life or that of the baby.

6. CONCLUSION

As well as illustrating aspects related to patricide and infanticide, in a more detailed analysis and through the constants of creation-rejection-destruction, Shelley's work stands as a treatise on abnormal pregnancy, since from the generic transmutation, the author represents the disorder of tocophobia and postpartum trauma in the character of Victor, focusing on an antithesis of the idealized representation of pregnancy by revealing the psychological conditions that women sometimes suffer during the process from pregnancy to delivery, the child within representing a threat and a recurrent ghost, a subliminal entity beyond the threshold of conscience to become a burden and stigma of failure once born. In fact, this anguish is materialized in the work through the symbolism of artificial and unnatural creation, the compilation and collage of organs, Victor Frankenstein's rejection of the offspring, both by repudiating and abandoning the new

born child and denying both himself –his compulsion, his strong convictions about the creation of a new order or species to defeat death– and his progeny, having second thoughts of regret and retreat destroying the uncreated female monster, an abortion which represents everything under the sign of deviation, the ineffable and the dysfunctional, that having no identity, the proliferation of "non-places" and the inevitable –almost necessary– final downfall, consumption and destruction of the main characters after the succession of misdeeds and misfortunes starting in that “dreary night of November”. In the aftermath, a question remains: would the unfolding of events have been different to this tragic end should Victor have stepped into his parental role and provided his child with a safe path in existence?

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