

88. Two Doctors as Self-Fashioned Overreachers: Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*¹

Merve AFACAN²

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Abstract

Only a few themes in English literature may have the same profound symbolic significance such as the pursuit of human potential and the quest to surpass the human capability as employed Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus*. Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* presents the perilous exploration of knowledge and power within the context of Renaissance, the era that is brave and fertile in terms of intellectual rebirth while challenging of the long-held truth about individualism. Similarly, Shelley's *Frankenstein* reflects the Romantic period's preoccupation with individualism and the breaking of societal and natural norms centered around an academic's hubristic struggle to conquer the mysteries of life and death. Both narratives not only stand out more than horror stories, but also turn out to be an exploration of self-identity, morality, societal norms and the inextricable link between science and the notion of the self. Thus, both protagonists, Faustus and Victor Frankenstein, embody their eras's ethos, with the former reveling in the Renaissance's celebration of human potential and the latter mirroring the Romantic fascination with the sublime and the transgressive. Taking these perspectives into account, this article delves into how *Doctor Faustus* and *Frankenstein* critically engage with their characters's attempts to transcend social, cultural and scientific barriers through their process of self-fashioning. Both works not only encapsulate the social atmosphere of their respective times but also serve as cautionary tales about the ramifications of overreaching ambition.

Keywords: Christopher Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus*, Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*, Self-Fashioning Theory

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² Arş. Gör., Hacettepe Üniversitesi, Edebiyat Fakültesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Bölümü, İngiliz Dili Ve Edebiyatı ABD / Research Assist., Hacettepe University, Faculty of Letters, Institute of Social Sciences, Department of English Language and Literature, Department of English Language and Literature (Ankara, Türkiye), mafacann@gmail.com, **ORCID ID:** 0000-0002-4960-6746, **ROR ID:** https://ror.org/04kwvgz42, **ISNI:** 0000 0001 2342 7339, **Crossreff Funder ID:** 501100005378

Kendi Kaderini Aşanlar Olarak İki Doktor: Christopher Marlowe'un *Doctor Faustus*'u ve Mary Shelley'nin *Frankenstein*'i³

Öz

İngiliz edebiyatındaki yalnızca birkaç temanın Christopher Marlowe'un *Doctor Faustus* ve Mary Shelley'nin *Frankenstein veya Modern Prometheus* eserlerinde kullanılan insan potansiyelini arayış ve insan kabiliyetlerini aşma çabası gibi derin sembolik anlam taşıdığı söylenebilir. Marlowe'un *Doctor Faustus*'u, entelektüel yeniden doğuşun cesur ve verimli olduğu Rönesans dönemi bağlamında, uzun süre kabul görmüş gerçeklerin sorgulanmasıyla birlikte bilgi ve güç arayışının tehlikelerini sunar. Benzer şekilde, Shelley'nin *Frankenstein*'i da Romantik dönemin bireysellik ile toplumsal ve doğal normları yıkmaya olan takıntısını, hayat ve ölüm sınırlarını fethetmeye çalışan bir akademisyenin kibirli mücadelesi yoluyla yansıtır. Her iki anlatı da sadece korku hikâyelerinden fazlasını sunar; aynı zamanda öz kimlik, ahlak, toplumsal normlar ve bilim ile benliğin kavramı arasındaki ayrılmaz bağın bir araştırmasını gözler önüne serer. Böylece, her iki başkahraman, Faustus ve Victor Frankenstein, dönemlerinin dünya görüşünü temsil eder; ilki Rönesans'ın insan potansiyelinin kutlarken, diğeri Romantik dönemin yüce ve aşırıya kaçan takıntısını yansıtır. Bu bakış açılarını göz önünde bulundurarak, bu makale *Doctor Faustus* ve *Frankenstein* eserlerinin karakterlerinin öz biçimlendirme süreçleri aracılığıyla sosyal, kültürel ve bilimsel sınırları aşma çabaları ile nasıl eleştirel bir şekilde ilgilendiklerini incelemektedir. Her iki eser de sadece kendi dönemlerinin toplumsal atmosferini özetlemekle kalmaz, aynı zamanda aşırıya kaçan hırsın sonuçları konusunda uyarıcı öyküler ortaya koyarlar.

Keywords: Christopher Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus*, Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*, Öz- Biçimlendirme Teorisi

The Renaissance which means “rebirth” in French was a cultural, artistic, political and intellectual movement that lasted from the late thirteenth century until the early seventeenth century. This transitional period from the Middle Ages to the Modern Age was distinguished by a growing interest in the art, literature and philosophies of ancient Rome and Greece. People were encouraged to embrace the ideals of ancient Rome and Greece as humanism flourished and classic art and literature made a triumphant return. There was a noticeable desire for self-discovery, a willingness confront society's established conventions and a desire to explore new intellectual realms. All of these factors worked together to foster critical thinking and pave the way for a vibrant human spirit. During the Renaissance, “intellectuals emerged from the church into an independent lay status, they had to reconceive their relation to power and particularly to the increasing power of the royal courts” that marked this era as unparalleled in its transformation of societal roles (Greenblatt, 1980, p. 36). In the light of the newly introduced power relations, many people during the Renaissance were on a quest to stand out with the

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motivation of a fresh feeling of self-actualisation. Stephen Greenblatt's self-fashioning theory emerges as an effective instrument for generating new insights into the Renaissance on the grounds that it provides a framework for understanding how individuals in this period construct their identities through various social and cultural practices. In his book, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare*, Greenblatt (1980) defines the term as "the achievement of a less tangible shape: a distinctive personality, a characteristic address to the world, a consistent mode of perceiving and behaving" that define an individual's presence and influence within their society (p. 2). Through his theory, Greenblatt suggests that individuals have the ability to shape and decide their fate by way of their decisions and behaviors. Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* (1616) and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus* (1818) offer two iconic characters, Faustus and Victor Frankenstein, respectively, who serve as emblematic self-fashioned overreachers driven by ambition and thirst for knowledge and aim to transgress boundaries to defy societal norms. Although the challenges of their times are revolutionary and distinct in their own senses, both narratives delve into the similarly profound human inclination to transcend human boundaries that eventually result in dramatic consequences. The parallels between Faustus and Frankenstein on the basis of their shared motivations, the consequences of their actions along with their potential pitfalls construct the main concern of this study. Besides, although both of these works exemplify the popular genres of their times, they thematically and contextually inhabit the mutual concern that develops the focus of this study.

Stephen Greenblatt in his *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* refers to two principal subjects: power and selfhood in the process of identity formation. By connecting the social and cultural dynamics of the Renaissance to the process of forming a personal identity, Greenblatt offers a fresh perspective on the subject. His theory of self-fashioning displays self not as a self-enclosed performance but as an outward oriented response to power that "is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere" (Foucault, *The History* 93). In other words, the sense of self is shaped and dominated by a multitude of experiences, interactions and sources that make it pervasive rather than absorbing or consuming every aspect of the society. Greenblatt discusses the mutual influence between culture and literature. To explain further, Greenblatt believes culture shapes literature as a means of reflecting its values, beliefs and norms. Conversely, literature can influence and reshape culture by introducing new ideas, challenging established norms or highlighting particular aspects of society. Culture and literature are interwoven areas that affect and are affected by the other. Self-fashioning refers to a person's desires and objectives in the process of developing a self, the concept that "has provided an opportunity for re-examining the relation between the individual and society, an opportunity to detail the myriad ways in which individuals are constituted as identities or subjects who interact in a socially structured world of people, relationships and institutions" (Elliott, 2020, p. 13). By way of executing this discipline, these institutions consider it critical to have control over the individual identity that directly determines the greater social fabric. In this respect, individual identity "is not an interior possession, but communal, a question of property rights, a place-holder in a web of legal and social determinations" and should not be assessed apart from social, political and religious institutions (Kerrigan, 1989, p. 116). In his book, Greenblatt inquires if an individual has the autonomy to craft his/her own persona or if external norms predominantly dictate one's identity.

Stephen Greenblatt refers to the Renaissance era in his study as the period in mention is an outstanding period of cultural, artistic and intellectual rebirth that "there may well have been *less autonomy* in self-fashioning in the sixteenth century than before, the family, state, and religious institutions impose a more rigid and far-reaching discipline upon their middle-class and aristocratic subjects" (Greenblatt, 1980, p. 1). This era presents a significant shift towards a new kind of individualism by means of which

people begin to see themselves as the shapers of their own destinies rather than merely as actors in a predetermined divine script. Furthermore, a heritage of historical and literary materials from the Renaissance, ranging from Shakespearean plays to courtly conduct, offer a plenty of materials to be studied to comprehend the complex processes of self-fashioning in addition to “the sixteenth-century figures on whom [Greenblatt’s] study focuses a common factor that may help to explain their sensibility as writers to the construction of identity: they all embody, in one form or another, a profound mobility” (Greenblatt, 1980, p. 7). Among these, Christopher Marlowe (1564- 1593), one of the prominent literary figures in English Renaissance, was a boy on scholarship throughout his education who experienced the self-actualisation process himself. Christopher Marlowe’s protagonists, much like Marlowe himself, represent individuals determined to push beyond societal and ethical limits to fulfill their desires. They are “the impenitent sinner[s], the structural pattern exists for a protagonist who is tragic and yet comically degenerate, and who is both an individual and a universal example of spiritual failure” (Bevington, 1962, p. 165). For example, Marlowe presents the shepherd Tamburlaine in *Tamburlaine the Great* (1590) as the perfect example of an overreacher who becomes a conqueror. Although in the context of wealth and social status, wealthy Jewish merchant Barabas represents Marlowe’s overreacher in his next work, *The Jew of Malta* (1592) who aims to regain his lost wealth and to position himself in a place of power and security even if it means causing harm to others. These characters are perceived as representations of the two-fold essence of Renaissance values, reflecting both their pursuit of individuality and self-direction and the tragic outcomes that arise from exceeding their boundaries. Among his literary productions, *Doctor Faustus* stands out to be “the tragedy of a man who in striving boundlessly misdirects great gifts of mind and spirit and hence progressively loses his soul by disintegration as well as by capture” (Farnham, 1969, p. 10). Christopher Marlowe’s landmark “and perhaps the last” work (Bevington, 1962, p. 245) comes in two distinct editions: the A-text and the B-text. Published in 1616, the B-text is notably extended with added comic sequences and further details that offer a “tragedy of a scientific libertine who gained control over nature while losing control of himself” (Levin, 2013, p. 134). The story is based on the German Faust legend in which a medical student trades his soul to the devil in exchange for knowledge and power. Faustus, a notable scholar from Wittenberg, grows weary of the confines of conventional academics and turns to the dark arts of necromancy. Tempted by the fascination of infinite knowledge, he strikes a deal with the devil that he seals with his own blood. According to the pact, Mephistopheles, an agent of the devil, is dispatched to attend to Faustus and fulfill his desires for the following twenty-four years. Yet, even as Mephistopheles offers him various worldly indulgences and adventures, Faustus finds himself unfulfilled. He eventually realises that his pursuit of greatness has only produced ephemeral displays that have little lasting power.

Stephen Greenblatt describes the era during which *Doctor Faustus* was crafted as a time as “the period in which European man embarked on his extraordinary career of consumption, his eager pursuit of knowledge, with one intellectual model after another seized, squeezed dry, and discarded, and his frenzied exhaustion of the world’s resources” (Greenblatt, 1980, p. 199). Marlowe’s play delves deeply into the inner conflicts and persistent self-shaping endeavors of its main character. Faustus emerges as an ambitious academic who has already exhausted traditional avenues of study and now yearns for knowledge beyond human comprehension. The play prominently underscores the dangers of unchecked ambition, as Faustus’s thirst for knowledge leads him towards his own destruction. While Faustus embodies many characteristics of a Renaissance man “with his eager, courageous, outward-looking, chance-taking view of the world”, his actions provide a commentary on the dangers of unchecked ambition and desire (Male, 1985, p. 35). The tragic conclusion of his story highlights the perils of ambition and the ethical and spiritual repercussions of surpassing human limits. While Faustus exemplifies certain aspects of the Renaissance man, his character also serves as a critique concerning

the portrayal of the dilemma of the Renaissance man “within the limits of this dualism that the tragical history of the life and death of Doctor Faustus exists” (Mizener, 1969, p. 115).

In similar vein, the nineteenth century England is marked by numerous transformations as well; some of which are embraced by society while others elicit resistance among individuals. Similar to the rise of the middle class and urban centers during the Renaissance, the nineteenth century England has gone through the Industrial Revolution that has transformed the economic landscape. This shift has paved the way to the emergence of industrial bourgeoisie and working class. Additionally, the advancements and innovations in science at the time evoke a combination of fascination and apprehension among the Victorians. Scientific discoveries and the inventions especially in the fields of chemistry, biology, electricity, medicine and human anatomy were the effective developments which caused science to displace the current norms and offer new perspectives. After a gradual development, the evolution theory found its way into public Victorian thought, especially after the publication of Charles Darwin's *The Origins of Species by Means of Natural Selection* in 1859. Following the release of Darwin's seminal work, the notion of an ongoing evolutionary process became more plausible which prompts the consideration of contemporary humanity as a preliminary stage for additional transformations. Consequently, beliefs and values that were held in reverence in preceding centuries became subject to scrutiny and reinterpretation through a modern lens during this age. On an individual level, the departure from a dogmatic worldview and the emphasis on individualism and human potential take steps further and individual exploration gains emphasis both in political discourse and societal expectations. Along with the lines of Renaissance works, the literary texts of the age, especially novel as the dominant genre, aim to offer an insightful exploration of individual consciousness, social norms and the tension between them. The importance of social status and individuality were the romantic characteristics that were made use in the Gothic novels of the time. The influential gothic horror novel that fused both romantic and gothic traits was Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus* of which narrative delves into the paranoia surrounding the dangers of unbridled scientific ambition, confronts the taboo of challenging natural boundaries by creating life and exposes the barbaric consequences of societal alienation and abandonment; thereby, establishing itself as a quintessential work in the Gothic literary tradition. *Frankenstein* is a ground-breaking work that takes a critical look at the expanding domains of scientific advancements through the protagonist that attempts to surpass the boundaries he faces. Through its portrayal of an ambitious man of knowledge, Mary Shelley's work explores a variety of themes, including self-identity, morality and societal conventions and their influence on his personal aspirations. This literary persona offers an intriguing case to study self-fashioning by means of questioning standard notions of identity and cultural conventions. Above all, the story emphasises the importance of scientific development in our knowledge of mankind and what it means to be human.

Although the protagonists belong to different centuries, they are both bound by similar social structures. Their aim to transcend these structures render the protagonists in mention relevant to examine through Greenblatt's concept of self-fashioning. They both attempt to redefine their identities and transcend human boundaries under the influence of their distinctive overreaching ambitions. In both cases, their mutual enthusiasm cause their tragic downfall. Both narratives share thematic resonances that are emblematic of their respective eras. Situated at the height of the Renaissance, Marlowe's Faustus reveals the spirit of overreaching as he challenges the accepted norms of the age. His inclination towards necromancy is reinforced by his desire for unparalleled power and fame. In the prologue, his interest is put forward to be “cursed necromancy; / Nothing so sweet as magic is to him, / Which he prefers before his chiefest bliss: / And this the man that in his study sits” (Marlowe, 2005, pp. 49-50). Furthermore,

Faustus reveals his aspiration for knowledge and reflects his self-fashioning's course to become a learned and knowledgeable man at the very beginning of the play: "Settle thy studies, Faustus, and begin / To sound the depth of that thou wilt profess; / Having commenc'd, be a divine in show, / Yet level at the end of every art, / And live and die in Aristotle's works" (Marlowe, 2005, p. 51). In these lines, Faustus expresses his desire to be acknowledged as a godly figure while also mastering all forms of arts and subjects especially the ones celebrated in Aristotle's writings. His thirst for knowledge and prestige mirrors his journey of shaping himself into a powerful and knowledgeable individual.

Therewithal, Faustus embodies the transition from Medieval to Renaissance thinking. As a scholar, he initially studies traditional disciplines like divinity, law, medicine and logic. However, finding them inadequate for his aspirations, he delves into necromancy that stands as the reassessment of contemporary knowledge, an act of rebellion against the intellectual constraints. In his pursuit of fashioned self, necromancy works as a quest of manipulation of moral and supernatural forces to explore his potential and limits. Lastly, in the atmosphere of the awakening, Faustus embodies the spirit of inquiry although it leads him to his awaiting downfall. Throughout the play, these Renaissance ideals are often portrayed as temptations from the devil. Faustus's deal with Mephistopheles reveals his inconsiderate behaviour to trade his soul in exchange for services from the devil's assistant. Above all, his pact marks a drastic shift in his identity from a revered academic to someone drawing power from dark forces. When empowered, Faustus, particularly in the scene with the angels, reveals how his newfound capabilities, especially the notion that spirits can fulfill any of his desires, serve but consume him. He feels enthusiastic about the supremacy he now possesses in the lines: "How am I glutt with conceit of this! / Shall I make spirits fetch me what I please, / Resolve me of all ambiguities, / Perform what desperate enterprise I will? / I'll have them fly to India for gold, / Ransack the ocean for orient pearl, / And search all corners of the new-found world / For pleasant fruits and princely delicates" (Marlowe, 2005, p. 53). These words refer to the impending catastrophe that frequently results from unbridled ambition. Using his newly acquired powers to subvert social structures, Faustus displays his self-made character throughout the play. His interactions with the nobility – including the Emperor, the Duke and the Duchess – further highlight his desire to be acknowledged and honored as a man of unparalleled skill. Another particularly noteworthy instance is when he makes fun of the Pope using magic. Faustus playfully boxes the Pope's ears and his bold gesture can be read as a symbolic challenge to the authority of the Catholic Church. More than just a playful moment, it showcases Faustus's desire to stand above traditional powers and reveals his lack of awareness about the dire consequences of his actions. Faustus's use of magic highlights his yearning to stand out from the crowd and exert control over the ordinary individual. Faustus's attempt to transform himself into a strong and intelligent persona reveals the complex aspects of his self-made character by exposing his desire for earthly pleasures. His declaration, "A sound magician is a demi-god; / Here tire, my brains, to get a deity!" (Marlowe, 2005, p. 52) demonstrates his desire to transcend his human limitations and assume a position of near-divinity. His passion sets the stage for the choices he makes later in the play reinforcing the central idea about the dangers of unbridled ambition and the moral implications of his choices. While initially courageous and willing to gamble his eternal spirit for transitory worldly pleasures, Faustus slowly begins to sense the hollowness and impermanence of his desires. This understanding doesn't strike him suddenly but is a gradual realisation that intensifies as his doom nears. Marlowe unfolds Faustus's despair and regret in a deeply moving soliloquy:

FAU. O God,
If thou wilt not have mercy on my soul,
Yet for Christ's sake, whose blood hath ransom'd me,

Impose some end to my incessant pain;
 Let Faustus live in hell a thousand years,
 A hundred thousand, and at last be sav'd. (Marlowe, 2005, p. 111)

In this deeply introspective moment, Faustus tragically recognises how he has wasted his great mind and the terrible results of his wrong decisions. This monologue and his belated self-awareness underscore the devastating consequences of his misguided attempts to define himself.

Centuries later, it is still possible to observe the impact of social developments and transformations within literary works. While it is evident that the scientific debates and discoveries of its time have direct influence on Mary Shelley's work, it is still a matter of scholarly debate whether the main plot of *Frankenstein* has gained its inspiration from Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*. Nevertheless, considering the vibrant literary environment in which Shelley composed her work, it's probable that the expansive Faustian legacy may have subtly shaped her perspective owing to its numerous interpretations and adaptations. *Frankenstein* discourses upon a biological experiment of a passionate medical student who "does not lack for knowledge, the monster is proof of that; but he is clearly unable to see how the application of that knowledge can be used in a way that is proper and judicious as well as humane and rational" (Rauch, 1995, p. 243). As Faustus aims to become proficient at the mysteries of life via challenging his own, Shelley's eponymous hero Doctor Victor Frankenstein carries the Faustus myth a step further by generating life in its own right so as to comprehend its secrets through science. In the course of his experiment, Victor lacks the foresight concerning the consequences. Just like Faustus, Victor's impetuous attempt initiates the reason of his tragic downfall in itself. Even though he achieves to fulfill his dream of discovering "the principle of life" via the inanimate, he has epistemological difficulties in conveying the method and the result to his peers and the public (Rauch, 1995, p. 241). His loss of the loved ones and increasing isolation exacerbate his challenges. Victor's inability to address or find a solution to the problem he has initiated gives rise to his tragic end. This fact proves his professional inadequacy as a scientist, as he is destitute of recognition that "all knowledge has a monstrous quality and the only way to introduce knowledge is to de-monstrate it, that is, to display it and in doing so, to demystify it" (Rauch, 1995, p. 237).

The science is portrayed as "the source of evil – the masking of one's intentions with what is desirable, precluding its covert potential for self-serving mayhem which begins with a desire to feed the ego and a human being's deluded notion of self-importance" (Sataravala, 2019, p. 218). These instances serve to highlight the inherent ethical and moral considerations involved in the pursuit of self-fashioning as well as revealing the potential risks associated with venturing into unexplored domains of scientific inquiry. In Sherwin's (1981) words, what actually Victor creates "is distance between his daemoni[s]ed self and a newly alienated reality" that become inseparable (p. 893). In his attempt to gain God-like power and control over his peers, Victor unwittingly designs his downfall. Similarly, Victor ventures beyond the known boundaries of science as a consequence of the same quest that of Faustus's. The established social order is subverted and conventional ideas of identity and Victor's wish to master "the world [that is] to [him] a secret which [he] desire[s] to divine" (Shelley, 2012, p. 36) are challenged through the creation of a human-like being through the manipulation of biological components by an ambitious God-like scientist. As Victor describes himself as an enthusiast "longing to penetrate the secrets of nature" (Shelley, 2012, p. 64) who aims to "pioneer a new way, explore unknown powers, and unfold to the world the deepest mysteries of creation" (Shelley, 2012, p. 75) and eventually achieves "discovering the cause of generation and life; nay, more, [he] became [himself] capable of giving life upon lifeless matter" (Shelley, 2012, p. 80). Victor Frankenstein's pursuit of knowledge and scientific advancement leads him

to create the creature using a combination of chemistry, alchemy, and galvanism through a process that melds organic and inorganic materials “for the sole purpose of infusing life into an inanimate body” (Shelley, 2012, p. 86). Although he is inherently suspicious of what his studies would possibly cause, Victor justifies both his aspiration “to become greater than his nature” (Shelley, 2012, p. 81) and his experiment in setting the required ground for the future studies. If there are any constraints on Frankenstein’s knowledge, Shelley wants the reader to realise that they are social rather than supernatural as the result of the experiment is a being in flesh and blood that demands recognition by the society. The creature is inevitably seen as strange and unacceptable by society since Frankenstein created it more for his personal benefit—that is, to fashion himself as exceptionally the most exceptionally capable one among his peers—than for the benefit of the community.

In the course of the work, giving life brings forth intricate ethical and moral dilemmas surrounding the alteration of human nature, particularly in terms of unintended consequences. Victor Frankenstein’s initial enthusiasm as a self-fashioned scientist for advancing human understanding through the creation of life quickly turns into horror and regret when he acknowledges the potential dangers posed by his experiment. He explicitly delivers his overreaching ambition and to be acknowledged as “the creator” in his words: “A new species would bless me as its creator and source; many happy and excellent natures would owe their being to me” (Shelley, 2012, p. 36). Further, he disguises his ambition in the form of science as

[t]he Enlightenment attempts to replace God with man which is what Frankenstein attempts to play at. Man becomes the agent, the creator, that gives commands and the subject that decides what will happen and what counts. This increase in power is purchased at a price which is estrangement. Thus, even though man has more power, he is estranged from the very things he is trying to understand. This is central to the relationship between Frankenstein and his fiend—they are unable to understand each other. (Sataravala, 2019, p. 220)

This realisation highlights the moral dilemma of pushing scientific boundaries without fully comprehending the consequences. For example, Victor is forced to accept responsibility of creating the “monster” and the following misery it causes as a result of the creature’s acts of vengeance and aggression, the feelings motivated by social rejection and thus loneliness (Shelley, 2012, p. 225). So as to fashion himself, Victor “makes himself a monster. Or, to put it in other words; Frankenstein’s monster images the monstrous nature of representation” (Cottom, 1980, p. 60). In a way he is successful in his wish to become the first of the mortals by creating life that uncovers “the social hubris he commits by pursuing knowledge for the sake of no one but himself” (Rauch, 1995, p. 251). The fact conforms his solitude and Victor recognises “his own separate consciousness of himself as the most wretched of mortals. But even if his egotism is such that he glories in this doom as the token of a special destiny, he has become just another Gothic hero-villain, a tiresome neurotic whose presence impoverishes the larger portion of the novel that bears his name” (Sherwin, 1981, p. 898).

From another perspective, the novel proposes a provocative example of how a biological and scientific experiment can have an impact on several sociological sectors. *Frankenstein* ultimately invites readers to consider the delicate balance between scientific advancement, social dynamics and the quest for selfhood in an ever-evolving world. The creature’s transhumanistic characteristics serve as a springboard for investigating the relationships between science, society and the formation of the self. Considered from a different angle, self-fashioning journey of the creature, in the context of Greenblatt’s theory, foregrounds the difficult process of identity development and the difficulties faced by the members who exist outside of social norms. When the creature intends to be accepted as a member of the community, it “has left the state of nature and learned the language and laws of society, [it] has

gained a self-consciousness that [it] can never lose, the consciousness of his own isolation" (Mellor, 1989, p. 50). In Mary Shelley's novel, the creature's quest for identity and acceptance epitomises the existential crisis inherent to Victor and the creature that finds itself "similar, yet at the same time strangely unlike to the beings concerning whom [it] read[s], and to whose conversation [he] was a listener" (Shelley, 2012, p. 178). As the creature navigates the intricacies of its identity, purpose and position within society, it struggles with the precarious balance between its human and non-human aspects and aspires to have a higher status rather than being an outcast. However, the knowledge that gives Victor power to create also "brings about awareness of inequality in the monster and no matter how hard [it] tries, he is never treated as equal with humans. He learns from humans love and desire but he also learns from them rejection and denial, rage and revenge" (Sataravala, 2019, p. 216). Further to that, the tension and opposition that exists between the creator and the creature stands for a symbolic struggle that "can be interpreted as a semiotic battle between Victor, representative of human community in general, and the Creature, in search of identity and social niche" (Bernatchez, 2009, p. 207). Two specific examples from the novel emphasise the creature's pursuit of self-fashioning for acceptance. First, the creature, upon realising its own uniqueness and isolation, pleads with Victor Frankenstein to create a companion in its resemblance that Victor rejects for the reason "that future ages might curse [him] as their pest, whose selfishness had not hesitated to buy its own peace at the price, perhaps, of the existence of the whole human race" (Shelley, 2012, p. 225). This request underscores the creature's desire for connection and acknowledgment from a being similar to itself. Second, when the De Lacey family, whom the creature has been observing and learning from, violently rejects it upon discovering its appearance, the creature experiences profound despair and isolation. This rejection highlights the probable challenges faced by marginalised beings in their quest for acceptance and belonging within a society that often fears and ostracise them from society. Through these instances, Shelley delves into the complexities of identity, acceptance and the human condition as experienced by the creature in her novel that has been a scholarly debate of a separate work.

Building upon the exploration of Faustus and Frankenstein's engagement with social, cultural and scientific boundaries, it becomes evident that the consequences of their ambitions extend beyond individual tragedy. Marlowe's *Faustus* and Shelley's *Frankenstein*, despite existing in distinct temporal and literary contexts, intersect in underscoring a universal human struggle. Through their characters, these works present the timeless cautionary tale of the dangers associated with unbridled ambition. Faustus and Frankenstein, as emblematic figures of overreachers, force readers to confront the perennial question of the ethical limits of knowledge and power. The narratives of *Doctor Faustus* and *Frankenstein* transcend their temporal origins and offer profound insights into the perennial challenges of human ambition and the enduring need for ethical self-reflection.

In conclusion, Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus* present well-recognised protagonists in literary spheres as exemplary figures of well-educated men of their own eras. The doctors are both driven by the ambitious desires to transgress the social, moral, scientific and intellectual confines of their times. Their insatiable thirst for knowledge set these figures aside taking their ambitious desires into consideration. They emerge as emblematic figures of overreachers who attempt to fashion themselves and shape their destinies beyond societal and moral boundaries. Their pursuit of knowledge and power result in tragic consequences along with highlighting the dangers of uncontrolled ambition. Although both of these works belong to separate periods and contexts, they epitomise a universal human struggle.

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