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Categorizing Humans, Animals, and Machines in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein

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Abstract

From Plato to Descartes and Kant and now to modern day, there is a general idea that pervades Western society. This idea is about the uniqueness and superiority of the human being. We are rational and conscious beings that apparently stand alone in the world, separated intellectually from animals and biologically from machines. The relationship between humans, animals, and machines is a tumultuous one and it is not easily definable. For many classical philosophers, this relationship has always been a hierarchy. Humans are on the top and animals and machines fall somewhere below. These beliefs have created a distinct category for the three terms that leaves no room for overlap. Because of the great disparity between these groups, the animal and machine have come to be known as the "Other." This title demonstrates that they are markedly disregarded and disrespected.

All of the points indicated in regard to the relationship between humans, animals, and machines can be seen in the *Frankenstein* novel. Victor Frankenstein, the maker of the creature, has all of the typical ideas about the rarity and dominance inherent in humans. When working on his creature, he thinks of everything mechanistically. The human remains that he has collected are simply parts in the machine he wants to build. The whole creation is just a scientific procedure. What Frankenstein is doing is trying to make an artificial human or a cyborg. Once his experiment is complete, the creature becomes alive. He is not human-like in appearance and he cannot talk. Frankenstein flees in terror from the monster that he has brought into existence. He treats his work as some sort of animal not worthy of his attention any more. The creature

runs away as well and is treated by everyone like a demon. He hides and it is during this time that he learns to read, write, and speak. He has learned what humans prize the most as something that is their own: language. At this point in time when the creature is most clearly human, he still has the qualities of animal and machine. Frankenstein's creature has blurred the distinct categories of humans, animals, and machines. By analyzing the most contemporary philosophical writing on the boundaries between humans, animals, and machines as well as recent critical analyses on *Frankenstein* regarding these categories, a more unified view of the separate groups emerges.

Project

Before beginning it is important to note two problematic terms in this essay. The first term is *animal*. While it is true that humans are animals, many people in today's society and many philosophers throughout time consider the term *human* different from the term *animal*. There is constant talk about the difference between humans and animals even though humans are biologically animals as well. During the essay, for simplicity and understanding, the term *animal* will continue to signify all non-human animals. By using *animal* in this regard, it is vital not to apply many of the negative connotations that people think of when the term is used today. The term is only used to distinguish from humans and non-human animals and nothing more. The second term that causes problems is *creature*. In many situations this term is used negatively or derogatorily but that is not the aim when using it in this essay. It is the only term to describe Frankenstein's creation without evoking prejudicial sentiments like *monster* and *fiend* generally would. It is necessary to realize that Mary Shelley does not use the term *creature* negatively either. She uses it to describe humans such as when Elizabeth calls Justine her "fellow-creature" (81) and also when the creature says upon first seeing Agatha that she is a "young creature" (99).

For Shelley, *creature* is more a term of endearment and not something offensive. Because of this and the fact that Frankenstein's creation has no name, he will be referred to as *the creature*.

Throughout the essay, bear in mind the significance of these two terms.

Humans are special. This is the idea that has been circulating for many hundreds of years. It begins as early as the popular philosopher Plato and lasts up to more contemporary and well-known philosophers such as Descartes and Kant. This concept is also seen in many literatures with one in particular being *Frankenstein*. For these philosophers and literatures, human beings are unique and superior to the other animals and non-animals that surround them. The uniqueness and superiority is mainly attributed to a human's ability to rationalize and possession of a consciousness. These qualities are said to exist only in humans and this is why humans are regarded so highly. Because of this, other animals and non-animals are disregarded and placed somewhere below humans. A hierarchy is then established putting humans at the top and everything non-human is beneath. Two main philosophers that make these ideas prevalent and pervasive even in today's society are Descartes and Kant. Their concepts also are evident in *Frankenstein*. What is apparent both in their beliefs and in *Frankenstein* in regards to humans and non-animal is that there is a strong divide between the two categories.

René Descartes lived in France from 1596-1650. He is known as the father of modern day philosophy and contributed greatly to the scientific revolution of the 17th century. What is important in this discussion to note are his ideas concerning human nature and subsequently his ideas concerning animals. Descartes believes that human beings are composed of two parts: a body and a mind. The mind part can be considered to be a person's consciousness. The consciousness or mind of humans is what makes them who they are. The mind of the human is immaterial and can survive death. It is also something that cannot be studied by science. To

justify the existence of the human's mind, Descartes points to language. This is the main idea that does not work to attribute a mind in animals. Animals are therefore distinctly different from humans. Leslie Stevenson and David L. Haberman say in their book on human nature that Descartes "argues that there is a distinction of kind rather than in degree between the innate mental faculties of humans and animals, picking out language as a distinctive component of human rationality" (114). In *Discourse on Method*, Descartes says that because non-humans do not have language, it "shows not merely that the beasts have less reason than men, but that they have no reason at all" (88). He goes on further to say that animals "have no intelligence at all" (89). According to Descartes, because non-humans do not possess rationality and therefore do not have a language, they are firmly separated from humans. As a result, he views animals as machines. As such, animals are unaware; they have no thoughts or consciousness and are like clocks. The apparent suffering that occurs during scientific experiments as Descartes views it is simply the animal reacting unemotionally to a stimulus. The animal has no feelings so humans can use them as needed. Because of the differences stated by Descartes between non-human animals and humans, a hierarchy is created. This hierarchy maintains views from before and stabilizes it so that it is still apparent after the time of Descartes.

Immanuel Kant, who lived in Germany from 1724 to 1804, constructs this same hierarchy of human above animal. He says that humans have "no direct duties" to animals. By saying this, Kant means that the duties humans have towards animals are "indirect duties toward humanity" (489). He thinks that if a person treats animals poorly, he or she would then treat humans in the same way so for people to be nice to other people, they must also be nice to animals. Kant goes on to say that "tender feelings toward dumb animals develop humane feelings towards mankind" (490). This is not to say, however, that animals are on the same level

as humans. To begin with, Kant calls animals “dumb.” He thinks that animals are “not self conscious” and because of that, they are only a “means to an end” (489) with that end being humans. Kant later says that animals are “man’s instruments” (490). Animals are beneath humans so humans are allowed to use animals for their own purposes and disregard what might be best for the animal.

After these two philosophers and in a period where the relationship between human and animal is well defined, Mary Shelley writes *Frankenstein* which is published in 1818. This book questions the animal/human structure that had been established for centuries especially the beliefs held by Descartes and Kant. To begin with, Mary Shelley grew up in a somewhat vegetarian household. Mary’s father, William Godwin, was surrounded by many vegetarian friends and was therefore influenced by them. Mary obviously then grew up knowing to some extent of the suffering of animals and, according to Stephanie Rowe, more than likely read the essays of her father’s friends which pertained to vegetarianism such as “An Essay on Abstinence from Animal Food as a Moral Duty” by Joseph Ritson and “The Return to Nature: or, a Defense for the Vegetable Regimen” by John Frank Newton. Not only was Mary surrounded by vegetarianism in her youth she married a vegetarian. Her husband, Percy Bysshe Shelley, wrote many essay on the subject including “A Vindication of a Natural Diet” and “On the Vegetable System of Diet.” Percy Shelley was a strong advocate for the rights of animals which is evident in his writings. Even though Mary Shelley was not a vegetarian herself, she could not avoid the beliefs that she confronted in her father, husband, and others in her social circle. She was not blind to the cruelties imposed on animals and this becomes evident when she writes *Frankenstein*.

In the novel, the reader can see that Mary Shelley is upholding but also opposing the traditional hierarchy between non-human animals and humans. The way in which she supports the traditional belief is through Victor Frankenstein. This character is portrayed as the typical human that thinks people are superior and everything else is beneath them. The first indication of this is seen in the interests of Victor. He is a strong believer in the sciences and thinks all knowledge is attainable through the power of the human mind. Because of this, he prizes human intellect. Robert Walton, the narrator of the story, is also of the same thought because he too “seek[s] for knowledge and wisdom” (39) and believes that the *human* mind can discover anything. Frankenstein, however, esteems human rationality more than Walton to the point where he devalues animals as demonstrated through his experiments and use of live animals. While Walton’s search for knowledge is aimed at finding the North Pole which requires no use of animals, Frankenstein searches for the a way to animate the dead for which he requires living and dead animals.

In the beginning of the novel, Frankenstein has a “fervent longing to penetrate the secrets of nature” (47) because he feels people barely know anything about the natural world. By studying the sciences, he hopes to help humans. This is particularly evident when he says that he “enter[s] with the greatest diligence into the search of the philosopher’s stone and the elixir of life; but the latter soon obtained [his] undivided attention” (47). The philosopher’s stone is supposedly able to transmute any metal into gold and the elixir of life makes one immortal or is able to raise the dead. The elixir of life ends up being more important to Frankenstein than the philosopher’s stone for two reasons. One if that he does not care too much for wealth and the second is that he is looking to help humans. With this discovery, Frankenstein could “render man invulnerable to any but a violent death!” (47) thus making man immortal. In looking to

make this discovery, Victor is solely concerned in bettering the lives of humans. He says nothing about non-human animals because he does not care about them. The disregard towards non-human animals is consistent with the traditional ideas regarding animals during this time. This same thinking continues today and many people have written on the topic. Lynda Birke and Luciana Parisi say in their essay “Animals, Becoming” say that “humans beings remain privileged” and “rational man remains central” (57). They say that there is a general belief that humans are not animals because humans have reason. This view is apparent in Frankenstein in the way that he exalts human intellect and denies the elixir of life to non-human animals. His sole concern is confined to the human realm signifying the importance he gives to humans. Another contemporary philosopher who supports the importance Frankenstein places on humans is Tibor R. Machan who wrote an essay called “Do Animals Have Rights?” In this essay, Machan reaffirms the traditional continental philosophy by saying that there is a “scale of importance” (512) or a “hierarchical structure” (513) because “[humans] are more important or valuable than other animals” (512). Frankenstein affirms these views by making comments about humans such as “fine form of man” (56), “an animal as complex and wonderful as man” (57), and “superior beauty of man” (144). Again, it is apparent that Frankenstein has the traditional notions of humans and non-human animals.

In addition to Frankenstein’s thoughts of superiority for the human species, his actions convey these ideas. This can be seen primarily when he is constructing his creation. Preceding the construction, Frankenstein experiences a few times experiments done on animals. Stephanie Rowe notes one of these in her essay “‘Listen to Me’: *Frankenstein* as an Appeal to Mercy and Justice, on Behalf of the Persecuted Animals.” She says that the “physiological process of animation had fascinated Frankenstein since childhood” (138) when he saw a visitor using an air

pump on a bird. Rowe describes the air pump to be a device that deprives birds of oxygen and then revives them. To this, Frankenstein's reaction is "utmost wonder" (qtd. Rowe 138).

Frankenstein seems more astounded with the device and its use than the harm that is done to the bird. He has no feelings towards a species that is not his own in this demonstration, according to Rowe; this experiment is what starts Frankenstein's scientific career. Once Frankenstein starts his creation of life experiments, his disregard for animals is furthered.

First of all, Frankenstein refers to his quest for the creation of life as an "operation" and considers his apparatuses, animals, and human parts all as "materials" (57). By using these terms, he is distancing himself from what he is actually doing and what comprises his experiment. Throughout his whole narration of the experiment to Walton, Frankenstein never clearly states how exactly he creates the creature. While he attributes this to not wanting anyone else to be cursed like he is, it can also be attributed to the fact that he does not want to describe the atrocities that he has committed. He himself is even disgusted with his own experiment. He says that his "human nature turn[ed] with loathing from his occupation" (59). Despite this revulsion, Frankenstein still continues with his experiment.

In describing parts of his experiment to Walton, he mentions that he "tortured the living animals" (58) in order to gain knowledge and build his creation. He does not torture or use live humans though. The only humans that he utilizes are dead ones that he has stolen from graves. He would never even think to use live humans in his research but does not think twice about using live animals. Experiments done on animals were done frequently during this time period and are still done today. Peter Singer, an animal liberationist, talks about the needless experiments done on animals today. He asserts that animal experimentation "inflict[s] severe pain without the remotest prospect of significant benefits for human beings or any other animals"

(36). This is precisely what Frankenstein does. He causes pain on countless animals to arrive at the culmination of his experiment only to realize that he has done nothing. What he has created, he does not like so it becomes apparent that his experiment has not benefited anyone or anything. The outcome is bad for Frankenstein, his family, the creature, and also the animals that were used in creating the creature. There is no benefit in this situation and Singer attests that these experiments rarely, if ever, produce “valid results” (45). He says over and over again that experiments using animals are a “waste of time” (47) and “not useful” (48) and the results are “trivial, obvious, or meaningless” (49). Later on he says that “the arrogance of the researcher...justifies everything on the grounds of increasing knowledge” (83). This mirrors Frankenstein’s experiment precisely. Frankenstein is clearly arrogant while he is studying in Ingolstadt. He is the top of his class and feels that everything is in his grasp. He says that he is going to “explore unknown powers, and unfold to the world the deepest mysteries of creation” (53). In this, it is obvious that he considers himself to be extremely smart and also will be a benefit for mankind. He regards himself highly and because of this and the science that he is studying, he believes that when searching for knowledge, everything and anything is justifiable. He claims, “in a scientific pursuit there is continual food for discovery and wonder” (55). Frankenstein is only concerned with the wondrous discoveries that he can find without pause at the means in which they are attained. He runs quickly over the methods and is only focused on the outcome which, to him, is always magnificent and desirable.

Frankenstein and other scientists of his time and now are able to use animals for their experiments without any concern for the animals for one main reason. This reason is that they have imposed on them the traditional hierarchy of humans above animals. Singer agrees with this because he says that animal cruelty in experimentations is tolerated because there is an

“institutionalized mentality of speciesism.” (42). Singer defines speciesism as “a prejudice or attitude of bias in favor of the interests of member’s of one’s own species and against those of members of other species” (6). He also thinks that speciesism is analogous to racism or sexism. Frankenstein, while in pursuit of bettering his own species, hurts members of other species.

Not only does Frankenstein use live animals from “the dissecting room,” he says, “the slaughter house furnished many of [his] materials” (59). What he is using are the parts and bodies of animals that have already served their purpose for scientific reasons and human consumption. They are the unwanted scraps from the unwanted animals. By using the animals that come from these places, Frankenstein is supporting the two major institutions of animal cruelty. The role that the science community plays has already been discussed as a place where animals are considered sub-human and creatures that do not warrant the concern of humans. The food industry produces the same conclusions.

While the food industry of the 1800s is nothing in comparison to what is occurring today, the same issues are present in both time periods. In any type of animal production for human consumption, animals are considered as “things for our convenience” (Singer 157). Like animal experimentation, the food industry creates and/or reinforces the “unquestioned acceptance of speciesism” (69). Tom Regan, another animal rights author, says in his essay “The Case for Animal Rights” that “the system...allows us [humans] to view animals as *our resources*, here for *us*” (500). By taking animal parts from a slaughterhouse, Frankenstein is supporting the procedure by helping them get rid of their trash. He also does not think anything about getting his materials from a slaughterhouse which plays into the normality of these places. Slaughterhouses, however, are not normal. For Frankenstein, the slaughterhouse is somewhere where he can get animal parts. He never comes into contact with the animals before they are

killed and thus views the slaughterhouse only as a supplier for his experiments. This is seen especially in today's society where animals are mass-produced in horrendous conditions just for the sake of profit and human enjoyment. Through this process, most people never witness the animals alive and do not see the killings that happen daily. What people view of the whole process is only the product, which is distantly related to the actual animal it came from. There is a disconnect with what is done to what is produced. This is similar to Frankenstein in his lab. He considers the animals as parts to suit his needs and nothing more.

The notion of parts and materials highlights the next point. It is apparent that during the experiment, Frankenstein views the animal and human body parts as fragments of a machine that he is going to assemble. A machine, like an animal is also considered lower in hierarchy than humans. According to Descartes, animals were machines. He likens animals to clocks so to him; animals and machines are on the same level beneath humans. Because of Descartes' idea of animals as automata or machines, societies have come to believe the same. As evidence of this, there is Victor Frankenstein who uses terms that can be applied to both animals and machines throughout his experiment such as "parts," "instruments," and "creation." Also, in describing how he brings his experiment to life, he says that he wants to "infuse a spark of being" (60). Spark implies something electrical and things that use or run on electricity are generally considered to be machines. In essence, Frankenstein uses electricity to turn on or start his machine-like creation.

After the creature has been created, the reader is able to witness more of his machine-like qualities. To begin with, the creature has a "gigantic stature" (75) which makes him more than a human or an animal in the eyes of those who see him. Walton, when he first views the creature from a distance, thinks he is a man but at the same time, a being that he has never seen before.

He considers the creature as unusual or unnatural. The creature is something that Walton has never seen before and he comments on his large stature and quick speed. In other places throughout the novel, the speed of the creature is mentioned. Frankenstein says that the creature possesses “superhuman speed” (92) and incredible strength. By saying superhuman, it indicates that the creature is something that is more than a human or animal. He is in a class all by himself and could be associated with a machine because again he was constructed from many parts and brought to life through mechanical means.

Where then should the creature be situated? Is he an animal, as Victor Frankenstein would like to think or is he a machine based on how he was created? Is it possible that the creature could be considered a human? He is very human-like in many regards. His physical features can attest to his human qualities. Frankenstein made him mostly of human body parts as is seen in his physical form. From a distance, Walton says that the creature is “a being which had the shape of a man” (35). Even Frankenstein later says that the creature has the “figure of a man” (92). The physical characteristics of the creature are not the only aspects that make the creature more human than machine or non-human animal. Another humanistic quality that is portrayed in the creature is that he has emotions. When the creature tells his tale to Frankenstein, Frankenstein notes that the creature shows “anguish,” “disdain,” and “malignity” (93) which are all caused by the treatment he has received from his creator and other humans. The creature has obviously suffered as is seen in his anguished countenance and disdain for his creator. During other parts of the narrative, the creature demonstrates other emotions such as happiness and sadness. This is seen especially when he is living next to the De Lacey family. When he first feels these emotions, he says that he had “felt sensations of a peculiar and overpowering nature: they were a mixture of pain and pleasure, such as [he] has never before experienced, either from

hunger or cold, warmth or food; and [he] withdrew from the window unable to bear these emotions” (100). This shows that the creature has more depth than people generally attribute to animals. Before this time, the creature had experienced hunger and cold which are physical feelings but at this moment, he experiences mental feelings. These feelings are complex and much more powerful than the feelings that he has felt before. Unlike the simple feelings of hunger and cold which are external, the feelings that the creature has when watching the De Lacey family are internal. These emotions can be attributed to the creature’s mental capacities in observing and then analyzing a situation.

The creature demonstrates other emotions when he is residing next to the De Lacey cottage such as sorrow when he realizes the situation he is in. From the three books that he reads, *The Sorrows of Werter*, *Plutarch’s Lives*, and *Paradise Lost*, the creature has emotions of “despondency and gloom” (116), admiration, pride, courage, love, hate, etc. The mind of the creature is rich with complex emotions that require him in many cases to think about the situation in order to be able to produce certain feelings. In addition to having these emotions, the creature possesses other qualities that people attribute only to humans. These attributes include but are not limited to kindness, sympathy, trust, and caring. The reader primarily sees the majority of them during the time when the creature is with the De Lacey family. He is sympathetic towards the state that the family is in and feels their pain when they are sad and is also happy when they are happy. He has become attached to the family and cares for them. Because he cares so much, he is kind to them. He does acts of kindness like shoveling the snow in the winter and chopping wood for them so they are never cold. The actions of the creature are things that humans might expect of other humans. No one would ever expect this from an animal or a machine not aided by a human. The De Lacey family does not consider it to be an

animal or machine either. They think it is a “good spirit” (105) helping them. While they do not think that it is necessarily a human helping them, they do believe that it is something that has the capacity to do kindness for no reason.

While the capacity for emotions and kindness is in no way completely indicative of the creature being considered a human, there are two other aspects that solidify the creature in the realm of being human. One is language and the other is rationality. These two qualities have throughout time been the distinguishing features of human beings. Descartes in particular points to language and rationality as main points that divide humans from animals. Tom Regan points out that Descartes uses a “*language test*, to determine which individuals are conscious” (11). This is one way that Descartes justifies a strong separation between animals and humans. Descartes also says that language is a validation of the human mind thus making humans different from animals on another level. While there are many philosophers who disagree with the importance that is placed on language and do not think that it is an adequate method to differentiate between animals and humans, the majority thinks traditionally. These non-traditional philosophers include but are not limited to Tom Regan, Jeremy Bentham, and Peter Singer. Tom Regan does not feel that the “language test” is reasonable because he questions what would be done with infants. Jeremy Bentham disregards language as a measure for anything and focuses on the suffering which he says both humans and animals feel. Peter Singer is of the same thinking as Bentham and points to Jane Goodall who believes that nonlinguistic communication is more important. These arguments, however, are not pertinent to the case at hand because the creature does acquire the use of language. Language has traditionally been a barrier between animals and humans so would this not place the creature in the category of humans based on this tradition?

When the creature is first created, he has no knowledge of language. This lack of language continues for a time while he is traipsing through the woods. Only when he starts living next to the De Lacey family does he begin to learn language. The process is slow at first but in the end, the reader can observe that the creature learns language rapidly, perhaps at a machine-like pace indicating another aspect of his cyborg quality. When the creature first realizes that the cottagers have a “method of communicating their experience and feelings to one another by articulate sounds,” he thinks it is a magnificent thing and he “ardently desire[s] to become acquainted” with the “godlike science” (103). In his first attempts to learn their language, the creature is extremely confused because of the rapidity and abstractness of the talk. He says that “by great application,” and after quite some time, he eventually learns simple words such as sister, father, brother, son, fire, wood, milk, bread, good, dearest, unhappy and also the names of the children: Agatha and Felix. The creature says that he spent the entire winter trying to pick up words. At this point, he is still confused about reading and writing but this becomes clear to him when Safie arrives in the spring. Safie, like the creature, does not know French so the De Lacey family has to teach her the language from the very beginning. The creature benefits from the lessons as well and boasts how he “improved more rapidly” than Safie. After the many lessons, the creature could “comprehend and could imitate almost every word that was spoken.” While learning the spoken language, the creature also learns the “science of letter” (108). Because of this, the creature is then able to learn many things from the books that he obtains.

It is not important for the present discussion to describe what the creature learned by reading and listening to stories being told. What is important is the fact that the creature learns language. Not only does he learn the language, he masters it. His speeches are poetic and he

speaks in a very educated form. This is very clearly different from the movies that have been produced where the creature either does not talk or his speech is very disjointed. Frankenstein even says that when the creature speaks, he is “eloquent and persuasive” (178). Walton says something similar when he encounters the creature himself. He says the creature has a “human voice” (185). The creature has at his disposal all of the complexities of language and uses it very effectively. By mastering language, he has learned something that humans prize very highly and think is a distinguishing factor. As mentioned earlier, Descartes believed that language is a means of separation and that language is human. Does this mean that the creature that has been portrayed so far by Frankenstein as an animal is actually a human? If language alone is not reason enough to consider the creature a human, one can also look at his rationality.

Rationality, like language, is another facet that humans esteem and point to as another separating factor between humans and everything else. Birke and Parisi agree to this and state that humans “prioritize rationality” (56). Descartes thought this same idea and considered language and rationality to go hand in hand. Descartes is not the only one to think like this. These ideas go back to Plato and Aristotle who were both strong proponents of the rational man and did not even consider animals as being rational. This mind-set is continued today when looking at the arguments of Machan who thinks that animals cannot have rights because they do not think the way that humans do. Human rationality and animal irrationality are pervasive ideas throughout time and they have yet to be over-turned completely. With that said, rationality is equated to the human. Because the creature portrays a strong sense of rationality, is he then definitively human?

When Frankenstein first encounters his creature after a long absence, the reader is probably surprised at the creature’s speaking capabilities and also his reasoning. Once

Frankenstein and the creature finally meet after two years, Frankenstein is furious and is unable to contain his emotions. It says that he “exclaimed” (93) signifying heightened emotions and during his dialogue, he swears and is very demeaning towards the creature. The creature, on the other hand, takes what Frankenstein says and responds calmly. He is the complete opposite of Frankenstein in how he is presented in this situation. He mentions how he “expected this reception” and attributes it to himself and his wretchedness. The creature dismisses the harsh words of Frankenstein and immediately begins to reason with his creator. He tells Frankenstein that he has a duty towards him and that he should “comply with [his] conditions” (93). The creature has apparently thought everything through and has come to his creator with a proposal. This implies reasoning, forethought, planning, etc. The creature says that if Frankenstein complies with what he is requesting, he will leave but if he does not, he will wreak destruction on Frankenstein and his family. Frankenstein does not take the creature’s response easily and tries to hurt him. It is at this point that the creature has to tell Frankenstein to “be calm!” (93). By this reaction of the creature, it is clear that the creature understands that he will not be able to make his case if Frankenstein is not listening. This is a demonstration the creature’s rationality. The creature then continues and argues with Frankenstein for a female companion. Throughout the argument, the creature makes several points in order to convince Frankenstein. As part of his argument, the creature says that he has a right to ask because he was not asked to be created and he deserves happiness. In exchange for a companion, the creature promises that he “shall again be virtuous” (94) and he will go away to South America and leave Europe forever. All of these points are very logical and meticulous. The creature presents Frankenstein with a choice and persuades him to choose the one desired through a series of promises and threats.

The encounter between the creature and Frankenstein is not the only example of the creature being rational. Later on when Frankenstein considers destroying the female companion, the creature says that he is “content to reason” (128) and he “intended to reason” (129). This is not only an example of the creature’s rationality; it is also the creature’s affirmation of his rationality. He knows that he is a thinking being and that he is fully capable of reasoning with Frankenstein. A little while after when these two meet on the island that Frankenstein has secluded himself upon, the creature again repeats the existence of his rationality by saying that he has “reasoned with [Frankenstein]” (146). Other examples of the attribution of rationality to the creature include when Frankenstein reflects back on his creation and say that he is “a sensitive and rational animal” (180). Then again later on, he admits to having “created a rational creature” (184).

In the end, all of these instances of rationality point to the creature being human. He is composed mainly of human body parts, is intellectual, learns language, and is rational. But how can he be considered as part of human society when he is continually shunned by them and also has no name? The lack of the name is significant because names are social constructs, given by parents or guardians to their children. Naming is a crucial part of human society and it is generally the first thing that happens when one is born. The creature does not receive a name from his creator or father. Frankenstein gives him no name because when the creature takes his first breath, Frankenstein does not think of him as human and consequently does not believe him to be in society. The creature, the reader finds, is never part of human society and will never be part of society. He is something different and something that even his creator does not want. He is repeatedly kicked out or abandoned by society because no one views him as human. The first of these instances occurs at the very moment that he has come to life. His creator describes the

experience of his awakening as a “catastrophe” (60) mainly because what he has created is repulsive to him. While having his “limbs in proportion” and beautiful features, the creature is ugly.

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 the same color as the dun white sockets in which they were set, his shriveled complexion and straight black lips. (60)

This description shows that the creature is not a normal human. He looks different and this is what terrifies Frankenstein. Frankenstein declares that “breathless horror and disgust filled [his] heart” because he is not able to “endure the aspect of the being that [he] had created” (61).

Frankenstein had originally wanted to create a human but when he is completed he runs in fear because what has been created does not resemble the human that he had envisioned. He calls his creature a “monster” and questions his human body parts by saying that his eyes were staring at him “if eyes they might be called” (61). Frankenstein disregards the creature because he is not the image of the human standard. Because of the non-human physicality of the creature, Frankenstein flees and leaves the creature alone. This is the first experience the creature has with other humans and it is not a pleasant one.

The creature’s next human encounter is with an old cottager who upon seeing him “shrieked loudly, and, quitting the hut, ran across the fields” (98) in order to escape what he thought to be a monster or something non-human, unrecognizable. Shortly after, the creature goes to a village where he is soon noticed. At his appearance, “the children shrieked, and one of the women fainted. The whole village was roused; some fled, some attacked [the creature], until,

grievously bruised by stones and many other kinds of missile weapons, [he] escaped to the open country.” Like Frankenstein and the old cottager, the villagers only respond to the appearance of the creature because he is something very unlike them. He is not part of the human world because his features make him repulsively different.

The final encounter the creature tries to make with humans is probably the most horrible because it seems so cruel after everything the creature has done. This rejection occurs with the De Lacey family and it is what ultimately causes the creature to exact revenge. For many months, the creature had been living beside the De Lacey cottage in a small hovel. He learned many things from them while residing there including language and emotions. He is continually kind to the people he observes by shoveling snow and chopping wood and thinks that they will accept him and disregard his appearance once they hear his story. The creature gets the courage one day to speak to the blind father and is received happily. De Lacey tells him not to “despair” and claims that the “hearts of men...are full of brotherly love and charity” when “unprejudiced” (120). The blind man obviously cannot judge the creature by his appearance so accepts him without prejudice. It is only when Felix, Agatha, and Safie enter into the cottage that the creature is attacked mainly for his appearance. Instead of welcoming the gentle creature, they scorn him for his appearance because they are prejudiced in their views on what is normal for human figures. They are unable to view the creature as something other than a monster. Agatha faints and Felix attacks without even asking the father or creature any questions. They only respond to the horrid monster that they see because he is ugly and something that no one recognizes. The creature quits the cottage extremely hurt but upon reflection, he decides to go back to the cottage to try to fix the situation. When he arrives, he notices that the family does not awake and realizes that they are not there. He then learns from a conversation outside the

cottage between Felix and another that they have moved and are never returning. The creature is stunned and says that through their leaving, “the only link that held [him] to the world” was broken. The creature reflects how the family “had spurned and deserted [him]” (123). At this point the creature realizes that he is not welcome in society and will never be a part of it.

All of these encounters with humans and comments made by the creature and Frankenstein place the creature in a sphere that is outside what is human. Walton calls the creature a “daemon” (36) and Frankenstein repeatedly considers the creature as a monster. The creature even believes this based on the reactions he receives from people by saying he “was not even of the same nature as man” (109). Also he declares that he was “united by no link to any other being in existence” (116). To further this point, later in the novel when asking Frankenstein to create a companion for him, he says that his “companion must be of the same species, and have the same defects” (128). The creature believes himself to be of another species and something separate from humans. Frankenstein believes this as well and calls the creature a “fiend” and thinks that if the creature and his companion procreate, the creature will have “his own species” or “race of devils” (144). Further on, Frankenstein makes a definitive break between humans and the creature when he destroys the companion and says his “duties towards to beings of my own species had greater claims to [his] attention” (184). Frankenstein truly believes that his creation is something not human.

If the creature is not human, what does it mean that he is rational and has a mastery of a language? Would he be human if he were beautiful? It seems that for the people he encounters, they only think of him as something non-human because he is grotesque. But the creature still has the stature of a man because he is composed of human body parts. Why then is he considered human in some regards but in others not? In the other areas, his ugliness seems to

make him an animal and then his creation, body frame, strength, and speed make him a machine or superhuman. How is the creature to be classified when he is composed and thought of in different ways?

Glen A. Mazis in his book *Humans, Animals, Machines: Blurring Boundaries* states that “it is a mistake to define humans, animals, and machines as three separate kinds of entities” (21). He goes against what is typically thought and deconstructs the hierarchy set up by philosophers that makes humans superior to everything else. According to Mazis, humans are not privileged, special, or more valuable than any other thing. He creates a “*horizontal plane*” instead of conforming to the traditional hierarchy of humans “*being above* other creatures and inanimate objects” (9). Mazis ascribes to the horizontal rather than vertical plane because even though humans “can be unique, as indeed all beings can be unique, without being better” or “more intrinsically valuable” (8). The horizontal plane goes against Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Kant, and the general sentiments of society today. It is more integrated and there is also more interrelation. Concepts and ideas are able to flow freely through the categories without being pinned down. This is evident in the creature because his being goes in and out of what it is to be the tradition human, animal, and machine.

Mazis expands this point by going into the particulars of the fluidity of categories. He states how humans are “biological beings” and “creatures or animals” (1) but also part machine with all of the mechanisms. By stating this, Mazis is bringing together the three terms (human, animal, machine) and incorporates them in one body. So instead of Descartes’ view that humans and animals/machines are completely separate, one can question this view as Julien Offray de la Mettrie did. La Mettrie wrote *Man a Machine* where he rejects Descartes’ separation of humans and animals because he thinks that if animals are machines, one can say that humans are just

machines too. Tom Regan is of the same mindset and believes that humans do not have a different body from other bodies such as the bodies of animals. Mazis, in his book, touches on the special case in *Frankenstein* saying that the creature is “a ‘machine’ made out of biological ‘parts,’ or it is a creature brought to life by the power of mechanisms in turn powered by human will and imagination” (4). As shown by this quote, Mazis has the same concerns as have been previously stated about the nature of the creature. There are many ways to interpret the creature and Mazis makes it clear that he thinks that the creature can be interpreted on many different levels as a machine, animal, and human. These categories, to Mazis are also not exclusionary. He likens the relationship to Möbius strips because “if one follows them along their apparent surface, they turn inside out and are part of another domain entirely, while still also being part of the first domain” (4). Through this analogy, unclear boundaries are made and it is apparent that while the categories of humans, animals, and machines are “distinctive,” they are “also inseparable” (Mazis 8). Each category is constantly defining and being defined by the other categories. Everything feeds off one another so it is difficult to pinpoint where one ends and another begins. This is what the reader sees happening with the creature. He is constantly referred to either as an animal, a human, or a machine but is actually always a combination of the three. His parts cannot be separated and must be viewed as a whole. A whole that is human, animal, and machine combined.

The creature is not the only being that can be considered human, animal, and machine at the same time. One can see that in today’s world, many people are clear demonstrations of the three categories and can never be just one. The modern person has extended body parts such as the cell phone, computer, and car. Andy Clark, author of *Natural-Born Cyborgs* explains that in Finland, the etymology of their word for cell phone is an actual extension of the hand. These

technologies while being separate from us are at the same time a part of us. People who have cochlear implants are more a part of a machine than people using cell phones. The integration of the cochlear implant becomes human at the same time that the human becomes a machine. Society is continually influencing machines and in turn the machines influence society. There is no place to mark a boundary because there is fluidity between the two groups. Just as there is a flowing quality that is observable in the creature's nature. At times he is viewed as a machine and others as a human but these terms never adequately explain who or what he is.

The lack of explanation is true with the animal side too. Animal is considered both to be machine and human. Descartes is the one who gives the idea of animal as automata and it is obvious that this idea has not changed much over the years. Today animals are simply products to many people much the same way that laptops are. They have become inanimate objects like machines because of the food industry and the scientific community. Even though this is true for many animals, there are some animals that people consider to be very human such as house pets. Pet owners generally ascribe human emotions to their animals and there is a personal connection that happens. In regards to emotions, it is also quite evident that we use animals to describe our own feelings such as being as brave as a lion. There is now a fluidity of animals to humans as well as machines. Animals are a part of us and we are a part of them. Like the relationship between humans and machines, animals and humans influence each other so that there are no discernable boundaries if any boundary actually exists.

What is evident when analyzing *Frankenstein* and taking a close look at the creature is that there is no term available to fully describe the creature. He is a tribrid of human, animal, and machine, but also nothing at all. The creature questions the pre-set notions of what it is to be a human, animal, or machine. In the end, the creature and what he represents is the flexibility

between the three categories. During the novel, the creature continually wonders who he is and at one point appropriately asks, “Who was I? What was I? Whence did I come? What was my destination? These questions continually recurred, but I was unable to solve them” (116). The creature asks pertinent questions that can never be answered by him or any other being. He is a mixture of traditional categories that are separated. When looking outside of the novel and at the world, one can see that we are all mixtures. There is no human in the absolute sense just as there is no absolute animal or machine. The separating categories are not sufficient to explain who or what everything is. The categories, if anything, bar one from trying to find the answers. They are useless and detrimental in finding any concrete answers just as looking at the creature as just an animal would be useless. Instead of simply looking at parts, the whole needs to be looked at. There is no category in which to put this whole.

While this essay is only one reading of *Frankenstein*, there are many people thinking along the same idea about the incorporation of humans, animals, and machines. Some contemporary books that were not included in this paper but might be useful to look at are Donna Haraway’s *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, Marvin Minsky’s *The Emotion Machine: Common-Sense Thinking, Artificial Intelligence and the Future of the Human Mind*, Chris Habl Gray’s *Cyborg Citizen: Politics in a Posthuman Age*, and Temple Grandin’s *Animals Make us Human* and *Animals in Translation*. All of these books are distinct in their topics and generally only address either humans and animals or humans and machines but they all focus on breaking the distinction of what it is to be human. These books, combined with what has been discussed in this paper demonstrate a shift in how humans think of themselves in relation to the world around them. This is seen especially in the growth of vegetarianism, stricter regulations concerning animal research, and the influence of technology in society. These

aspects show a change in the traditional views of Descartes and Kant of human superiority to a more inclusive and compassionate one. Even though this inclusiveness and compassion are more evident today than ever before, there is still room for better understanding and further research.

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