

**From Europe to Baghdad:**  
**A Narratological Reading of Two Frankensteins**

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**Introduction:**

Right after its anonymous publication in 1818, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*, has been both well received and disregarded. Yet the novel's reinterpretable nature—leading to an incomprehensible number of metamorphoses, different versions and interpretations—unofficially canonized it. Though clearly influenced by the gothic tradition, Shelley's *Frankenstein* is often considered the first science fiction novel, despite the lack of any scientific explanation of the monster's animation and her focusing, instead, on the moral issues and the consequences of such an experiment. The narrative could be a late version of the myth of Faust, a futuristic vision of the mad scientist, the rise of the proletariat, the rampage of the id, a Christian allegory about Adam and the fallen angel Satan, a story of the unavoidable eruption of violence, or even coming from a single-parent household.

In 2013, Iraqi novelist, poet and screenwriter Ahmed Saadawi (1973- ) had his *Frankenstein in Baghdad* published in Arabic. Set in the spring of 2005, the narrative follows Hadi al-Attag (a much darker version of Shelley's Victor Frankenstein), a middle-aged, hard-drinking, smelly scavenger and antiquities seller, also known as Hadi-the-liar, who lives in a popular district in Baghdad, and who spends his days taking the discarded body parts of those killed in explosions and sews them together to create a new body. He later calls this body, after its being brought to life by a misplaced soul, “the-what's-its-name”; the authorities name it “Criminal X” and others refer to it as simply “Frankenstein”. Afterwards, Hadi's creature begins a campaign of revenge against those who killed him, or killed those whose parts make up his body. Yet his vigilantism is complicated by the fact that his body parts belong to criminals as well as innocents and by the need to continue killing simply to replenish his body. The novel would later win the International Prize for Arabic Fiction (IPAF)—often referred to as the “Arabic Booker”—because of the originality of its narrative structure, as represented in the “what's-its-

name” character, who embodies the violence currently experienced in Iraq, other Arab countries and the wider world, and for raising

questions about an oppressive legacy from which neither individuals nor society can escape. The novel dazzles with captivating storytelling, utilising the techniques of magical realism to reveal the depths of the human soul in its darkest hours. Although set in Baghdad, its subject matter goes beyond that city to embrace humanity everywhere.

Saadawi's novel, therefore, reflects violence and a sense of political urgency that can be easily tied to the current situation in Iraq. In an interview with Najjar, the novelist said that his *Frankenstein* is “the fictional representation of the process of everyone killing everyone”. To Saadawi, *Frankenstein in Baghdad* is how he gets to reflect all the elements of the Iraqi experience; “There are many messages. One of them is that with this war and violence, no one is innocent” (Arango).

To avoid confusion, it is worth highlighting the fact that the name “Frankenstein” has different connotations to Western and Arab readers. In Shelley’s novel, Viktor Frankenstein is the scientist, the creator of the hideous anomaly. To Saadawi and the Arab readers, Frankenstein is synonymous with the unsightly creature himself. Throughout this paper, therefore, Shelley’s scientist will be referred to as Victor or Victor Frankenstein, and Saadwi’s creature as the-what’s-its-name or the Frankenstein creature. I will, moreover, refrain from using the pronoun “it” to describe both creatures for reasons that will be later explained in the paper.

### **Framing:**

The structure of the narrative in both novels is quite symmetrical, for it comes full circle. Shelley’s *Frankenstein* begins with Walton (who mediates the stories and introduces key themes), then Victor, before moving to the creature, then going back to Victor, and lastly to Walton. Thus, the creature becomes the heart of such a structure, an integral piece without whom the whole story falls

apart. Shelley begins her novel in epistolary fashion with a series of embedded reports that draw the reader's attention not only to Walton but also, by extension, to Shelley herself, the original anonymous author and the subsequently public Introduction writer in the 1831 edition. The most heavily layered report is Walton's report of Victor's report of the Creature's report of his self-education and experiences (Behrendt). The triangular nature of the narrative, where each of the three main characters carries out important conversations with the other two, helps in excluding all the other characters, reinstating the importance of the three protagonists. Moreover, Kestner argues that such a three-fold narrative signals the three protagonists' "doubleness and otherness, the one the *doppelgänger* of the next, including their desire to explore, their failure to love, their loneliness, their avid reading, and their egoism".

Yet as we pass from one teller to another, more elaborate series of frames appear, like "peeling back one story to discover another as though peeling an onion, we progress not only through time but also toward some goal" (Newman), for example, the story of the De Laceys, the family of exiles who the creature tries pathetically and unsuccessfully to adopt as his own. By shifting his narrative to that of the DeLacey's (which disturbs the single narrative line), the creature maintains continuous motion that echoes his life in which he himself physically pops in and out of Victor's residences. To Favret,

He reaches into these texts and dwellings not to steal or even defile authority, but rather to search for analogues, correspondents in language, human intercourse. His voice intrudes and interrupts, but it also sets off echoes within and without the novel.

Narratologically, such sub-texts are considered narrative sub-texts embedded in the primary text causing "text interference". When the embedded text presents a complete story with an elaborate narrative, the reader gradually forgets the story of the primary narrative. In the case of the story of the De Laceys, such a distance helps the reader to temporarily forget Victor's perspective, bringing us closer to the creature's turbulent world, and drawing our sympathies. Adding to the horror of Victor's

scientific experiment, Shelley employs the usage of letters, journals and notes of characters' testimonies to add an aura of realism to her novel. Even the nature of such material changes, for example, Walton moves from a conventional letter form to a letter journal, which itself becomes a form of confessional autobiography after Victor's intrusion. The more violent the story becomes, the more informal Walton's journal becomes, for he starts abandoning the formalities of dating and address.

Saadawi's novel opens with a top secret "final report" issued by a special investigation committee that alludes to a secret police unit employing fortune-tellers and astrologers, and to the presence of an "author" who is in possession of a disturbing manuscript (7-9). This mysterious, unnamed author will reappear at the end of the novel, as the narrator of final events. Right after the introduction, the reader is then plunged in the midst of the story. Unlike Shelley's novel that relies on three major focalizers, Saadawi's novel employs fourteen different focalizers, some of whom are major characters (like the creature, Hadi and Mahmoud the journalist) while others play minor roles in the events, functioning as the providers of more details or posing more questions to attract the reader's attention. In many chapters, the setting takes the shape of oral narration, where the narrator (Hadi) is sitting in a local café telling his story to those around him. It is then that the reader is told how Hadi found the last piece of his puzzle, a freshly decapitated nose that only had to be sewn to the body being assembled.

Hadi got out a fresh nose with clotted crimson blood, before putting it, with shaking hands, inside the black hole in the face of the corpse. It looked like it belonged there, as if the nose of this corpse had come back to it. (34)

However, the main narrative keeps being interrupted with minor stories and details, to the extent that Hadi's listeners voice their dislike of such disruptions and delays (37), constantly asking him questions:

- Hey . . . then what?
- Hey . . . it is over.

- What do you mean? . . . Where has the body gone Hadi?
- How do I know . . .
- This is not a good story Hadi . . . Tell us another one.
- You don't believe me . . . As you wish . . . I will leave now . . . And you pay for my drinks.

### **Narrators and Perspective:**

Subtitled *The Modern Prometheus*, Shelley's *Frankenstein* refers back to the myth of Prometheus, the fire bringer and the giver of both creation and destruction who was sentenced eternal punishment by Zeus for taking back the fire and giving it back to Man. Following his namesake, Victor Frankenstein attempts to discover the secret of life by creating a new species from dead organic matter through the use of chemistry and electricity;

The raising of ghosts and devils was a promise liberally accorded by my favourite authors, the fulfilment of which I most eagerly sought . . . Whence, I often asked myself, did the principle of life proceed? It was a bold question, and one which has ever been considered as a mystery. (locations 367 and 514).

Yet his experiments lead to psychological torture and suffering, for instead of creating a creature in the image of the gods, he creates a monster whom he loathes and tries to destroy:

I [creature] exclaimed in agony. 'Accursed creator! Why did you form a monster so hideous that even YOU turned from me in disgust? God, in pity, made man beautiful and alluring, after his own image; but my form is a filthy type of yours, more horrid even from the very resemblance. Satan had his companions, fellow devils, to admire and encourage him, but I am solitary and abhorred.' (location 1615)

In Shelley's narrative, there is no Hercules to save the creator, and the events chronicle the increasing irrationality that culminates in madness. To Fitzpatrick,

The mythic Prometheus is famous for creating men. The modern Prometheus is infamous for creating monsters. Both are tormented as a result of their creations, punished for the prideful usurping of a creative power that ultimately renders their creation deficient. The mythic Prometheus suffers for defying the supernatural, the modern Prometheus for defying the natural.

A narrator is the most central concept in analyzing narrative texts, for his/her identity, the degree and manner of his identity in the text and his/her choices lend the text its specific character. In principle, it does not make a difference whether a narrator refers to him/herself or not, for as soon as there are linguistic utterances, there is a narrating subject. When a narrating agent does not explicitly figure in the narrative as an actor, s/he is called an *external narrator* (EN). On the other hand, if the “I” is identified with a character, we are speaking of a *character-bound narrator* (CN). The difference between an EN and a CN entails a difference in the narrative rhetoric of “truth”. When a “focalizer” (the point from which the elements of the narrative are view) coincides with a character, that character will have an advantage over the other characters and the reader will be inclined to accept the vision presented by him/her. However, such a *character-bound focalizer* (CF) brings about bias and limitations, especially in the case of first-person novels (like *Frankenstein*) where the reader is manipulated in forming an opinion about the character. By reintroducing the same major events through different narrators, Shelley might be trying to present the reader with a more coherent, unbiased narration of the events. However, by tangling the story line, partly due to the introduction of an elaborate series of parallel personalities and events, narrative authority becomes questionable. Consequently, the fact that the narrators retell versions of the story is questionable in itself. Usually, when each narrator tells “a” version of the story, the reader is invited to question the accounts offered. The different versions of the narratives present confessional first-person stories, nevertheless, they more or less repeat the same tales. Instead of providing a perspective that heightens the differences

between the narrators, the stories are repeated with no major changes, corroborating one another, and providing a sameness of voice that blurs the distinctions between them instead of reinforcing them. Moreover, the more narrators slide from their own stories into the histories of others, the more the reader questions narrative authority. In other words, the point of view from which the elements of a narrative are being represented (traditionally known as *perspective*) becomes a prime means of manipulation, or operation, in itself. It is worth noting that focalization relies heavily on “memory” which in itself is unreliable, for the story one remembers is not usually identical to the real one experienced. Such discrepancies are given a dramatic outlet in nightmares. For example, Victor experiences a nightmare where Elizabeth turns into the corpse of his mother with “grave-worms crawling in the folds of the flannel” (location 613).

Through her choice of narrative frame, Shelley succeeds in avoiding the mere telling of a life story, for she presents the reader with the “progress” of the history of certain individuals, highlighting the “limits of individuality” and providing a “network of voices” (Favret). Through the epistolary form and the multiple correspondences that overlap, reveal connections, and move back and forth in time, *Frankenstein* is not solely the story of Victor Frankenstein. The outcome, which is a confusion of identity, represents human life.

From the very beginning of his experiment, Victor keeps a cold scientific attitude towards his creation, never seeing him as human, aided by his choice of charnel-houses and slaughter-houses as collection places for body parts. However, this distant attitude does not reduce his shock at finally seeing his creation alive:

How can I describe my emotions at this catastrophe, or how delineate the wretch whom with such infinite pains and care I had endeavoured to form? . . . His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath . . . his watery eyes that

seemed almost of the same colour as the dun-white sockets in which they were set, his shriveled complexion and straight black lips. (locations 601-07)

Even though Victor understands that his creation only longs for the “love and sympathy of man” and “seek their kindness” (location 1845) and that the latter’s “evil passions” are only renewed when met with detestation, he denies the Victor such gentleness, pushing him further towards a path with no return, denying him any glimmer of hope. Ironically, Victor only feels responsible for the creation process and not for the way he pushed the creature away. However, despite his eventual hatred of Victor and his attempts to evade him, the creature is not able to loosen all ties with his creator, powerless to let go of his abuser: “sometimes he himself, who feared that if I lost all trace of him I should despair and die, left some mark to guide me” (location 2625).

Shelley never ascribes an actual name to the creature. Victor refers to him as “creature”, “frightful fiend”, “spectre”, “filthy daemon”, “wretch”, “devil”, “monster”, “thing”, “being” and “ogre”. The creature, on the other hand, begins by describing himself as the “Adam of your [Victor’s] labours”, then he sees himself as a god who can enslave Victor:

“Slave, I before reasoned with you, but you have proved yourself unworthy of my condescension. Remember that I have power; you believe yourself miserable, but I can make you so wretched that the light of day will be hateful to you. You are my creator, but I am your master; obey!” (location 2132)

Thus, similar to Victor who defies nature, the creature follows the unnatural course of mastering over his creator. Lastly, the creature becomes the fearless, powerful snake: “I will watch with the wiliness of a snake, that I may sting with its venom” (location 2143). Sadly, the creature does not consider himself a human being, but an abomination, for he describes the de Lacey family as “my human neighbours” (location 1332), distancing himself from them. Later, and after repetitively being shunned and abused by everyone he encounters, the creature shows symptoms akin to dissociative identity disorder,

describing himself once as a monster (for example, when he confesses to Victor that he is a monster who needs to be cut off from the world, a promise he gives in return of getting an equably monstrous mate) and right afterwards, describing himself as more peaceful than the average man (“My food is not that of man; I do not destroy the lamb and the kid to glut my appetite; acorns and berries afford me sufficient nourishment” [location 1839]).

At the beginning of the novel, Victor’s spellbinding voice becomes one of his persuasive tactics; Walton describes Viktor’s eloquence saying,

Even the sailors feel the power of his eloquence; when he speaks, they no longer despair: he rouses their energies, and while they hear his voice they believe these vast mountains of ice are mole-hills which will vanish before the resolutions of man.

(Location 2767)

It is only after the creature masters speaking that the reader is allowed to fully sympathize with the former’s plight. Contrary to many movie versions, the creature is eloquent, articulate, and by the end of the novel, he can fluently speak German, French and English. Although Victor’s creation is often referred to as the “monster” not the “creature”, emphasizing his hideousness instead of his humanity, Shelley provides no real explanation for such ugliness. If we are tempted to account for such looks psychologically (seeing his features as a mere projection of Viktor’s guilty revulsion of his experiment or a mirroring of his darker self), we will run up against the horrified reactions of the other characters. Even the creature himself is frightened by his physical hideousness when he first studies his reflection in the water.

[H]ow was I terrified when I viewed myself in a transparent pool! At first I started back, unable to believe that it was indeed I who was reflected in the mirror; and when I became fully convinced that I was in reality the monster that I am, I was filled with the

bitterest sensations of despondence and mortification. Alas! I did not yet entirely know the fatal effects of this miserable deformity. (location 1395).

Such stark contrast between the beauty of the component parts and their final combined body dramatizes Shelley's philosophical debate regarding the relation between the parts and the whole.

Unlike Victor's creature whose parts were at least beautiful on their own, the description of Hadi's creature's body parts was repulsing from the very beginning:

There was nothing there except some little blood, small spots of crusty blood on the arms and legs, and bruises and blue-coloured abrasions around the shoulder and the neck. The colour of the corpse was not clear, it had no homogenous colour to say the least. (33-34)

Even the creature himself could see how ugly he is:

He went closer to the photograph . . . He noticed the reflection of his face on its glass. He was slightly surprised, feeling the stitches on his face and neck. He looked very ugly. (65)

Yet Hadi's creature, at least, is not rejected by the first human who sees him, for thinking that he is an incarnation of her dead son, the old woman, Ellishwa, treats him well, providing him with her dead son's clothes and a place to stay. Saadwi's creature might be uglier than Shelley's, but he is also more invincible, for bullets go through him without killing him, or even making him bleed. In Saadawi's novel, however, the differences between Hadi and his creature are eliminated with the passage of time, even physically; Hadi gets severely burnt in one of the explosions:

With careful staring, something quite deep was revealed to him. This is not the face of Hadi al-Attag, this is the face of someone he knows full well . . . the face of the-what's-his-name, the face of the nightmare that has been ravaging his life with no hope of its going back to the way it was. (334)

In narratology, distinction is usually made between an active, successful “hero”, a “hero-victim”, who although confronted with oppositions cannot vanquish them, and the “anti-hero” who is passive and hardly distinguishes himself by function. However, the two main characters in Shelley’s novel (Victor and the creature) do not follow that distinction, for they are neither victims nor passive heroes; they both try to play god at one point and they both miserably fail at the end. The creature, moreover, becomes a representative of moral ambiguity, for he is a freakish hybrid of Adam and Satan. Opposite to Victor, Hadi’s urge to create this creature has nothing to do with playing god or the love of science. He defended his work saying:

I wanted to deliver him to forensics, for this is a complete corpse that they have left in the streets, treating it like garbage. People, he is a man . . . He is a human being . . . I made it a complete corpse so that it won’t turn into garbage . . . so that it gets respected like the other dead people and gets buried. (34)

Yet like Victor, as soon as his creature is assembled, he regrets his actions and decides to carry out another “despicable mission” (69), annihilating the creature:

He discovered . . . that he was in trouble, and that the only proper solution is to go quickly back home and recut the corpse into pieces like it used to be, pieces of scattered corpses which he collected from the city streets in the past few days. He will throw those remains back in the streets and squares. (39)

However, after making up his mind, and surviving another explosion in Baghdad on his way home, he discovers that the corpse he sewed together has disappeared in the storm (42). At the same time, a hotel security guard, Haseeb Mohamed Gaafar, experiences an out-of-body existence after his demise in the explosion; his soul, not finding his original body that blew into pieces in the terrorist attack, becomes attracted to the awaiting soulless body of the creature. Instead of dying in his new body and getting buried, the new hybrid awakens.

Compared to Victor's creature, Hadi's creature is more prone to violence. His first murder is deliberate and premeditated:

Who has killed those poor beggars? . . . They were sitting in the form of a square, each one of them holding the neck of the one in front of him, strangling it, as if it were a painting or a form of a theatre performance. (80)

Hadi's creature ends up committing one or two murders a day, many of whom are women strangled to death. After going on a murdering rampage, he decides to give meaning to his killings by seeking revenge against those who killed the people who involuntarily ended up as his body parts providers:

I have to find the real murderer of Haseeb Mohamed Gaafar so that his soul can rest in peace and he stops wailing . . . They accuse me of criminality, they don't understand that I am the only justice in this country. (143-49)

At the beginning, a few followers join Hadi's creature in his quest of revenge: an old man who believes in genies and demons called "the magician", a sophist, and "the enemy" who is an officer in the counter-terrorism department, in addition to three mad men. Although they want to believe that a "savior never dies", reality is that with each murder, a revenge seeker's "account is closed" and his body part disintegrates and dissolves, bringing the creature closer to his own demise (163). Thus, they play the role of Hadi, cutting out body parts from fresh corpses and resurrecting the creature; to them, he is the one thing that gives meaning to their lives. Yet this only creates a vicious circle, for the more parts he gets, the more he is stuck in the role of an avenging monster, and the more followers he gets. Ironically, those followers give themselves numbers instead of names, in an attempt to identify more with the creature. Although, at the beginning, the creature insists that he does not want criminals' body parts, the real question becomes,

who can decide the percentage of criminality in a person? . . . Every one of us has a percentage of criminality and a percentage of innocence. Maybe the one who has been treacherously murdered is innocent today, but he was a criminal ten years ago . . . (171)

To the magician, with every new part, the creature is less of a “saviour”, feared as the “mysterious death” (175), and more of a “super criminal” who uses guns and bullets. At the end, and faced with his own demise, Hadi’s creature resorts to murdering an innocent man only to get hold of a much-needed body part: an eye. Now, from whom shall he avenge this murder? The only explanation he could give to himself is that he only “accelerates” the process of death. Afterwards, the creatures would kill criminals, innocents, and even his own followers to prolong his own life. Ultimately, both creatures resort to playing the role of god. Clinging to an imaginative interpretation of the events, Hadi tries to convince Mahmoud that:

The-What’s-his-name is made up of the remains of victims’ bodies, added to them is the soul of a victim, and the name of another victim. He is the summation of the victims asking for revenge so that they can rest. He has been created to avenge them . . . to kill them all . . . [then] he will fall part and go back to his previous status. He will decompose and die. (144-46)

Mahmoud, on the other hand, theorizes that the creature is neither looking for stardom nor power, he does not even want to frighten people; all the creature wants is to carry out a noble mission.

Ironically, although *Frankenstein* is written by a woman, women’s voices play no essential part in the unfolding events, usually only indulging in a “little gossip” (location 731). With the exception of two letters written by Elizabeth, Victor’s fiancé, no written text authored by a female character is presented without a male intermediary, and other than a few quoted dialogues, women’s verbal comments are usually summarized or paraphrased by a male author. Focalization in *Frankenstein* is only carried out by male characters. Moreover, female characters are either displaced

(Agatha de Lacey and Safie), entirely eliminated (Justine, Elizabeth, and even the creature's partially constructed mate), or only silently exist in letters (Walton's sister, Margaret). When Justine is given the chance to narrate her own story, she is unable to provide a coherent narrative. Added to that is her "variable voice" (location 958) which reflects her unreliability, unlike the authoritative full toned voice" of Victor and the creature's voice that though harsh, had nothing terrible in it. She is finally condemned and found guilty because her point of view is "unnarratable" and her voice is unreliable. One can argue that even the mother figure is eliminated, for not only does Victor's mother die early in the narrative, his experiment excludes the biological necessity of having females as part of the creation process. Moreover, despite the presence of female readership at Shelley's time, the choice of male narration could be an attempt to obtain acceptance and acknowledgement from the male audience, making it easier for them to identify with the narrative (Knudsen). On the other hand, by choosing an all-male narrative voices, Shelley creates distance between herself and the narrator, concealing her identity from the reader, and immersing the latter in her imaginative world. Additionally, although Victor's creation is achieved without a woman, he fails to provide his "offspring" with acceptance, empathy, love and care, creating a monster on both physical and psychological levels, hence, a criticism of male ambition and elimination of women. Similarly, Saadawi's female characters are minor ones, with the exception of Ellishwa, the old woman who awaits the return of her son from the war.

### **Space and Description:**

Description, consisting of a theme or object described and a series of sub-themes, in narratives has a profound impact on the aesthetic and ideological effect of the text and has to be taken into account even if it appears to be of marginal importance. Moreover, space functions as a frame, and it is used differently in both novels. In Shelley's *Frankenstein*, space is more of a "frame-space" whose details help the reader visualize the action and the characters. Moreover, the characters constant

movement from one place/country to another (Russia, France, Germany, England, Scotland, the Netherlands and somewhere near the North Pole), and frequently going back to where they started, reflects their constant strive towards a dream which they eventually fail to fulfil. With such a circular movement, space becomes a labyrinth, an unsafe confinement. Both Victor and his creature, moreover, use distant locations as a means of escape. Saadawi's *Frankenstein*, on the other hand, employs "thematized space" where space becomes an object of presentation in itself, influencing the narrative and even making it subordinate to space, playing a role as important as that of the fictional characters. Saadawi's novel draws the reader into a web of mysterious crimes, interrupted by moments of occasional lightness from gossiping neighbours or advice-giving ghosts. Amid the horrendous story of the creation of the monstrous creature, the author provides the readers with glimpses of what life in Iraq is really about. They get to know about the long lines in front of the church where both Muslims and Christians wait for their turns to talk on satellite phones and mobiles to ensure their relatives living abroad that they are still alive and surviving in a constantly bombarded city (12). It is a city where it is not uncommon to park next to blood stains and body parts, where the seizure of abandoned property is a means of exploiting chaos and the disappearance of an organized government, where the government proudly announces the success of preventing seventy-five terrorist attacks, ending up with no more than fifteen explosions (38), where American military planes regularly fly low shaking the old houses, where Americans act with great independence without being accountable to anyone, where Christians pay their vows in mosques and synagogues, and where the creation of a "balance of violence" between Sunnis and Shiites is an unofficial policy of the government.

### **Motivation:**

There are three types of motivation that can be distinguished from a narratological point of view: looking, listening and hearing. First, the most effective, frequent and the least noticeable is motivation via "looking". Since description then becomes the reproduction of what a character sees, it

requires motivation and becomes a function of focalization and it is incorporated into the time lapse; a character must have the time to look and the reason to look at an object. Secondly, motivation via “listening” is when a character-bound speaker not only looks but also describes what s/he sees. The third kind of motivation resembles Homeric description and is accompanied with “acting”, for the description is made fully narrative when the actor carries out an action with an object. In some cases, the distinction between descriptive and narrative becomes nearly impossible. Shelley’s text is, therefore, made clear when her characters’ choices are analysed based on such motivations. Victor’s revulsion towards his abomination of a creature begins when he really “looks” at it:

It was on a dreary night of November that I beheld the accomplishment of my toils . . . by the glimmer of the half-extinguished light, I saw the dull yellow eye of the creature open; it breathed hard, and a convulsive motion agitated its limbs.  
(locations 597-601)

The fact that the creature could not articulate his feelings and thoughts at the beginning (which means Victor had nothing to listen to) only adds to the former’s bestiality, and lastly, the more cruelly and bloodily the creature acts, the more Victor is convinced that the former is an abomination that must be destroyed; “I had turned loose into the world a depraved wretch, whose delight was in carnage and misery . . . I ardently wished to extinguish that life which I had so thoughtlessly bestowed” (location 876 and 1081). The creature, on the other hand, goes through a different experience. His motivation changes throughout the narrative, for at the beginning, he “looks” at his creator, then at the different people he briefly sees on his journey, and despite brief cruel reactions to his ugliness, he is full of hope that he would some day belong to and be accepted by someone else. In the second phase, listening to nature and discovering the sounds of the birds endears him to the reader, painting him as a lover of nature, beauty and peace despite being recently abandoned:

I was delighted when I first discovered that a pleasant sound, which often saluted my ears, proceeded from the throats of the little winged animals who had often intercepted the light from my eyes. (locations 1244-50)

He also falls in love with De Lacey's singing voice that "sounds sweeter than the voice of the thrush or the nightingale" (location 1315). Finally, the violence he encounters (the "acting" of the other characters) pushes him into the abyss, altering his character, and turning him into a murderer:

I gazed on my victim, and my heart swelled with exultation and hellish triumph; clapping my hands, I exclaimed, 'I too can create desolation; my enemy is not invulnerable; this death will carry despair to him, and a thousand other miseries shall torment and destroy him. (locations 1789-95)

He even threatens Victor in one of their confrontations:

Yet you, my creator, detest and spurn me, thy creature, to whom thou art bound by ties only dissoluble by the annihilation of one of us. You purpose to kill me. How dare you sport thus with life? Do your duty towards me, and I will do mine towards you and the rest of mankind. If you will comply with my conditions, I will leave them and you at peace; but if you refuse, I will glut the maw of death, until it be satiated with the blood of your remaining friends. (location 1188)

### **Sequence, Duration and Repetition:**

The differences between the arrangement in the story and the chronology of the narrative are called "chronological deviations" or "anachronies", and the more complex the narrative is, the more drastic they are. According to Bal, this deviation in sequential ordering is a means to: drawing attention to certain things in the narrative; emphasizing; bringing about aesthetic or psychological effects; indicating the subtle difference between expectation and realization (83- 86). In Shelley's *Frankenstein*, the author's frequent use of anticipation creates an aura of suspense,

I see by your eagerness and the wonder and hope which your eyes express, my friend, that you expect to be informed of the secret with which I am acquainted; that cannot be; listen patiently until the end of my story, and you will easily perceive why I am reserved upon that subject. I will not lead you on, unguarded and ardent as I then was, to your destruction and infallible misery. Learn from me, if not by my precepts, at least by my example, how dangerous is the acquirement of knowledge and how much happier that man is who believes his native town to be the world, than he who aspires to become greater than his nature will allow. (location 543)

In the above quotation, moreover, Shelley's use of first person narrator helps the reader to personify with Walton, and listen to Victor's warning as if they were addressed to him/her. By drawing the reader into the events of the novel, the sense of fatalism is highlighted.

Thus, by manipulating the order of events (announcing something that occurs later or temporary silencing the information needed), Shelly creates suspense, generates tension, and expresses a fatalistic vision for her characters. Shelley also employs the technique of "ellipsis, which is an omission in the story of a section of the narrative where all the reader can is to logically deduce on the basis of certain information that something has been omitted. Such gaps in the sequence of chronology indicate painful experiences that a character wants to deny the fact of its ever taking place, exorcising its memory, for example, the murder of William, Victor's young brother. Furthermore, providing the reader with alternative and varied representations of the same events is a form of sequential repetition, which draws the reader's attention to the hidden, inherent similarities between the characters.

In *Frankenstein in Baghdad*, Saadawi plays with the timeline, employing the technique of anticipation, plunging in the midst of an event, then using flash-backs to narrate the details. Similar to Shelley, Saadawi's narrative is based on the repetition of the same events, each time from a different narrator/focalizer's perspective, and each time providing the reader with more details.

**Conclusion:**

At the end of the Shelley's novel, the creature asks, "Am I to be thought the only criminal, when all humankind sinned against me?" (location 286). Who then is the real monster? Isn't Victor the one with the more corrupt soul?

Remember that I am thy creature; I ought to be thy Adam, but I am rather the fallen angel, whom thou drivest from joy for no misdeed. (location 1198)

Is the monster a demonic projection of Victor's tormented psyche? Cantor explicates:

The monster becomes Frankenstein's *Doppelgänger*, his double or shadow, acting out the deepest darkest urges of his soul, his aggressive impulses and working to murder one by one everybody close to his creator.

As for Saadawi's narrative, it ends with the confiscation of the author's manuscript by the police as part of the open investigation, with Mahmoud the journalist being given the prophecy that one day he will be the Iraqi Prime Minister, with Hadi being arrested and confessing that he is the real nameless creature, and with the real creature hiding in Ellishwa's nearly destroyed house with the latter's old cat. Hadi's creature becomes a representation of the Iraqi society, an entity made up of different parts that strive for justice in the midst of a civil war. Like the city of Baghdad, the narrative has no closure, and its future is built on lies, superstition and death.

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