Nearly Human: Dickens's Estella and Mary Shelley's Creature as Representations of the Uncanny

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Introduction

Every year at Halloween, thousands of children don costumes depicting Frankenstein’s Creation with the intent to frighten their peers. This is because this towering Creature is an iconic image of monstrousness, popularized as such by decades of images in popular culture, from the trendsetting Boris Karloff movie rendition of the Frankenstein story, to the tongue-in-cheek musical and film ‘Young Frankenstein’. For the most part, these renditions portray the Creature as an inhuman, voiceless brute, incapable even of human speech. Literary critic, author and lecturer James Heffernan comments of this tendency of film adaptations to misrepresent the Creature:

Film versions of *Frankenstein* …[show] us far less of the monster’s inner life than his lone autobiographical narratives in the novel do. In the first talking film version, James Whale’s *Frankenstein* of 1931, the monster is totally silenced and thus forced…to make gesture and expression tell a fraction of his story, which is mutilated as well as severely abridged…In Kenneth Branagh’s *Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein* (1994), the creature rips out Elizabeth’s heart and in so doing, reenacts what filmmakers regularly do to Mary Shelley’s text. They rip out *its* heart by making the creature speechless…” (Heffernan, 136).

Film representations tend to dehumanize the Creature by denying him the chance to tell his own story, and reducing him to a grunting brute of limited intelligence. Yet this is not at all the approach of Shelley’s novel. Shelley’s Frankenstein is a far more complex character than the film versions portray; the novel’s Creature possesses the ability to think logically, to communicate and reason, to speak persuasively and eloquently – more so even than his recognizably human creator. Rather than engaging in the behavior of a classic ‘monster’ – running about mindlessly devouring any humans he encounters – he spends most of the novel
engaged in a calculated revenge against his maker, Victor Frankenstein, who created him and, horrified by his appearance, rejected him. The Creature later recounts to Victor his attempts to find a place for himself in the world and his failure to do so because of his ugliness, and begs his creator to make for him a companion with whom he can communicate and share affection. When Frankenstein refuses to do this, the Creature takes vengeance against him by killing Frankenstein’s beloved bride, Elizabeth. His underlying motive throughout the novel is his need for affection and human companionship and his desire to be accepted by the society which continually rejects him.

This paints the picture of a disturbingly human-like character, with needs and desires with which the reader can empathize. Even though the Creature was ‘born’ through unnatural, scientific means, and even though his appearance is distorted, he exhibits enough human traits to make the reader wonder, ‘is the Creature really a monster, or a deformed human being?’ This question of the monster’s humanity points to the underlying questions with which Shelley’s Frankenstein grapple: can we consider the Creature to be human, despite its appearance and origin? If so, how do we understand the concept of humanity?

Frankenstein’s representation of this question made the novel a sensation after it was published in 1818, and it has been a watershed work in the pursuit of this question ever since. Early realist authors were particularly concerned with the problem of representing the most fundamental elements of human existence, since realism concerns itself with the realistic representation of human life. While it is impossible to present one definition of realism which encompasses all the nuances of this literary and philosophical school of thought, Professor Ian Watt offers a helpful analysis of formal realism:
Formal realism, in fact, is the narrative embodiment of a premise …which is implicit in the novel form in general: the premise, or primary convention, that the novel is a full and authentic report of human experience, and is therefore under an obligation to satisfy its reader with such details of the story as the individuality of the actors concerned, the particulars of the times and places of their actions, details which are presented through a more largely referential use of language than is common in other literary forms (Watt, 32).

Writers belonging to the school of realism, in creating works which are ‘reports of the human condition’, are forced to grapple with the underlying question of the human condition which Frankenstein’s Creature presents to the reader: how is the human condition most recognizably represented?

Charles Dickens, as one of the nineteenth century’s foremost realist writers, grappled with this question in a much more subtle way than did Shelley. As a realist writer, Dickens does not employ such fantastical devices as a terrifying creature animated from the reappropriated and reanimated parts of corpses, however, the narrator makes a direct reference to Shelley’s story in his novel Great Expectations, thereby establishing a direct link between the two novels.

*Great Expectations* tells the story of the narrator, Pip, a poor country boy who has been bequeathed a large sum of money by an unnamed benefactor and embarks on a quest to become a proper gentleman, which takes him further and further from his home and surrogate family. His quest for sophistication is spurred on by his love and admiration for the cold and condescending Estella, who lives with her wealthy, eccentric adopted mother, Miss Havisham. As an effect of Miss Havisham’s upbringing, Estella declares herself incapable of feeling love and affection, as Miss Havisham has raised her to manipulate men, while herself avoiding emotional entanglement.

Several of Dickens’s characters in the novel evoke themes raised by *Frankenstein*: the narrator, Pip, is a gentleman ‘created’ by an unsavory ex-convict, who funds his education and
lodgings in London; the narrator recoils from him in disgust and revulsion, bringing to mind the relationship shared by Frankenstein and his Creation, which is also based on creation and rejection. However, the character in the novel who most evokes the theme of defining humanity – yet is often overlooked – is that of Estella, the narrator’s love interest and his motivating goal which ignites his desire to be a gentleman. It is the combination of Estella’s captivating beauty and cold condescension which spurs Pip on to pursue the sophisticated lifestyle which he believes might earn him her notice.

Upon cursory examination, the character of Estella appears to be Frankenstein’s Creature’s polar opposite: where the Creature is male, Estella is female; where the Creature is hideous, Estella is beautiful; where the Creature is despised and rejected by society, Estella is adored by legions of suitors; where the Creature spends the novel in pursuit of true affection, Estella spends the novel being pursued by the narrator, and turning away his affections. Yet, a closer depth of scrutiny reveals a common, underlying theme; they both present a sort of cognitive dissonance associated with the disconnect between their outward appearance and inner reality. This dissonance can be further specified and clarified with the use of the idea of the Uncanny.

**The Origin and Development of the Uncanny**

The Uncanny is characterized by an uneasy mingling of the familiar and the strange to produce a distinct feeling which differs in texture and complexity from simple fright. German philosopher Ernst Jentsch first identified this phenomenon in his 1906 essay, ‘On the Psychology of the Uncanny’, which he wrote in response to a short story by German writer E.T.A. Hoffman entitled ‘The Sandman’.
The story follows the deterioration of the student Nathaniel, who carries a fear of the sandman, whom he associates with an eerie acquaintance of his father named Coppelius, who once wished to burn out his eyes. Later, an older Nathaniel meets an optician who goes by the name Coppola, and at first believes him to be Coppelius, but is later reassured by a beloved professor that this cannot be. Nathaniel purchases a telescope from Coppola and, through this, sees for the first time the beautiful Olympia, the professor’s daughter, with whom he eventually falls in love. However, he notes the strangeness and mechanical regularity of Olympia’s actions, the coldness of her body, and the blankness of her gaze. To his shock, it is later revealed that Olympia is an automaton created as a collaborative effort between the professor and Coppola. Even though the narrator escapes, he is later driven insane by the sight of Coppelius in his hometown and throws himself off the town hall tower to his own death.

Jentsch identified his definition of the Uncanny with the character of the automaton Olympia, classifying it as “doubts about whether an apparently animate being is really alive; or conversely, whether a lifeless object might be, in fact, animate” (Jentsch, ). Jentsch thus identified the dissonance in the story as being caused by the reader’s uncertainty as to whether or not Olympia is really a human being, which is only resolved towards the end of the story. Jentsch’s conclusion is that the Uncanny is based on the fear of the unfamiliar and the intellectual uncertainty caused by this unfamiliarity.

Freud later responded to Jentsch’s idea of the Uncanny in his 1916 essay entitled ‘The Uncanny’, but rejected his identification of the dissonance in the story with the character of Olympia, instead focusing on the idea of being robbed of one’s eyes, linking this to a fear of castration and the reminder of repressed infantile psychology. Freud concluded that the Uncanny can be whatever we experience in adulthood which brings to mind earlier psychic stages of the
unconscious or the primitive experience of humans. While Freud’s analysis of the Uncanny draws heavily upon specifically psychological concepts, his conclusion is more easily applied across the board: “the uncanny is that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and familiar” (Freud, 195).

The Uncanny 2.0: The Uncanny Valley Hypothesis

This concept can best be illustrated by its application in the field of robotics, that of the Uncanny Valley Hypothesis, as set forward by Japanese roboticist Masahiro Mori, who uses it to describe the uneasiness which people feel towards a robot with too humanoid an appearance. In his study, Mori graphed the relationship between the resemblance of the robot to a human being and the participants’ perceived familiarity and comfort with the robot.

He found that participants responded more favorably to robots with increasingly more humanoid features until a certain point, where participants became unnerved by the extremely human-looking robots, or androids. This point is what Mori called the Uncanny Valley; this valley demonstrates the dissonance between the strange and familiar caused by the participants’ uncertainty about whether or not what they were seeing was indeed human, which seems to echo Jentsch’s ideas about animation. Mori suggested that the participants’ discomfort
stemmed from the vague and subtle discrepancies between the most human like robots and actual humans. With the higher levels of human resemblance, participants became more focused on the idiosyncrasies which marked the robot as an ‘other’. In other words, in a robot that appeared 95% human, they became unnerved by that 5% which suggested a non-human being, such as jerky movements, fixed eyes, unconvincing facial expressions, etc.

Roboticist Karl MacDorman elaborates on the usefulness of the Uncanny Valley theory in understanding the perception of human likeness and behavior:

Subtle flaws in appearance and movement only seem eerie in very humanlike robots. This uncanny phenomenon may be symptomatic of entities that elicit a model of a human other but do not measure up to it. If so, a very humanlike robot may provide the best means of finding out what kinds of behavior are perceived as human, since deviations from a human other are more obvious (MacDorman, 565).

MacDorman draws a direct line between the phenomenon of the Uncanny and its reflection of our perception of what constitutes human like behavior, which corresponds to my emphasis in the use of the Uncanny. In applying the Uncanny to my study of the Frankenstein Creature and Dickens’s Estella, I will emphasize the Uncanny as being evoked not by reminders of past psychological states as identified by Freud, or issues of animation, as identified by Jentsch, but rather the disparity between physical appearance and inward reality, particularly the dissonance caused when one of these aspects appears to others to be human-like and the other not. MacDorman proposes using the manifestation of the Uncanny in robotics to determine what characterizes human-like behavior; I intend to show how Dickens and Shelley use the Uncanny to seek an answer to the question of how we recognize each other as human. In order to do this, I will first elaborate on how the Frankenstein Creature and Estella are representations of the Uncanny, through a literary analysis of these characters. I will next identify the most
distinguishing characteristic of the Uncanny in both cases, and how this illustrates the most basic element of the human experience as rendered by the respective authors.

The Creature and Estella in the Uncanny Valley

Though a concept developed to explain the human aversion to androids – robots with an extremely human appearance – the Uncanny Valley Hypothesis helps to explain the way in which the Frankenstein monster and Estella are set apart from the other characters in the novels. It suggests a close approximation of a human appearance and behavior which somehow lacks a definitive human characteristic.

Both the characters of Estella and the Monster are essentially disturbing to the reader because of a basic human element which they lack. The Frankenstein Creature lacks the appearance of a normal human, having been fashioned from parts of decomposing corpses, and the novel continually plays on his horrific ugliness. However, it is not simply a case of a monstrous, shapeless creature evoking feelings of horror. The description which the narrator gives hints at a deeper underlying reason for the narrator's disgust:

His limbs were in proportion, and I had selected his features as beautiful. Beautiful! – Great God! His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath; his hair was of a lustrous black, and flowing; his teeth of a pearly whiteness; but these luxuriances only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes, that seemed almost of the same colour as the dun white sockets in which they were set, his shriveled complexion, and straight black lips (Shelley, 34).

The narrator's horror is fuelled by the distortion of the Creature's human features. His limbs are proportional to his body, his hair is lustrous, his teeth a brilliant white, but these stand out in contrast to his thin, sallow complexion, watery eyes, shrunken skin and black lips. This description hints at the heart of what is so terrifying about the Frankenstein Creature; unlike some Kraken from the deep, he takes humanoid form, and in this proximity to a human form is
much more difficult to dismiss than would be an octopus the size of a bus, or a gelatinous mass of radioactive goo. The difficulty which Frankenstein – and in turn, the reader – has is attempting to reconcile the familiarity of the Creature's human features with the strangeness and unfamiliarity of their deformation. It is this mix of human and inhuman, familiar and strange, which makes Frankenstein so deeply disturbing. The implication brought on by this unease is that the Frankenstein Creature falls, then, into the Uncanny Valley and in turn can be seen as more human than monstrous.

Dickens's Estella, by contrast, suffers no such deformation of physical features. While Dickens is not specific with her physical description, she is portrayed as a stunningly beautiful woman who never wants for admirers. Yet there is something disturbing about Estella, not easily traced by those not privy to her inward reality. Like Frankenstein's deformed appearance, Estella suffers from a deformation of her emotional character of which she is well aware:

“You must know,” said Estella..., “that I have no heart – if that has anything to do with my memory...Oh! I have a heart to be stabbed in, or shot in, I have no doubt...and, of course, if it ceased to beat I should cease to be. But you know what I mean. I have no softness there, no – sympathy – sentiment – nonsense...I have not bestowed my tenderness anywhere. I have never had any such thing” (Dickens, 237-8)

Estella's affliction is not an outward distance from a human appearance, but rather an inner distance from human emotion. Lacking the ability to recognize or understand human affection and tenderness renders her seemingly inhuman to the reader. Thus, the focus is on the inner reality which keeps us from perceiving her as fully human. Applying this principle to the Frankenstein Creature and Dickens's Estella allows us to see the two in terms of their shared distance from a human ideal. For instance, the Frankenstein Creature's primary problem is his appearance. Had his creator been successful in crafting an Adonis, he would in all probability
have been regarded as a scientific miracle instead of a monster. However, the Creature's corpseslike appearance excludes him from society. His problem is not that he is completely without a human appearance, but that he is almost human, having the general features ascribed to human male, but so distorted by the means of his creation as to give him the appearance of the living dead, transformed.

Applying the idea of the Uncanny to Estella becomes slightly more abstract, and has to do with the discrepancy of her angelic exterior and inward barrenness. She looks human, biologically is human, yet lacks basic human affection and positive emotion. Estella demonstrates how easily a character may fall into the 'Uncanny Valley' Both these sets of circumstances have the effect of unnerving the reader much the same way the most humanoid of the androids unnerved the participants in Mori's study.

**The Uncanny Reflecting our Perception of Humanity**

MacDorman points out the use of the Uncanny Valley effect not only in determining how humanlike something is, but also in determining the participant's conception of humanity and what constitutes a human likeness. It is impossible, then, to study the Creature and Estella as representations of the Uncanny without taking into account the perspectives from which the characters are described, and how this affects their representation.

*Frankenstein* demonstrates this idea more obviously; the story presents a dual depiction of the Creature, both as monster and wayward human, by presenting dual perspectives: that of the narrator, Victor Frankenstein, and the Creation himself. These dual perspectives provide a dual lens through which to examine him; that of appearance versus inward reality. The monstrousness of the Creature's physical appearance is described from the point of view of the narrator, emphasizing the inhuman aspects of his appearance and his violation of the human
aesthetic ideal, thus representing the “strangeness” or the alien element involved in understanding the Creature as a representation of the Uncanny. This is in contrast to the Creature's own account of his experience, which reveals his humanity. He feels human emotions such as hurt from rejection, jealousy and longing for social contact and communication, as seen by his fixation with the De Lacys, the family in the woods whom he observes and wishes to join, his pain at their rejection of him due to his appearance, and his eventual insistence that Frankenstein create another Creature to be his companion. The Creature's perspective reveals the humanity of his inner reality, representing the element of the familiar involved in the idea of the Uncanny.

The same dichotomy of appearance versus inner reality manifests itself in Great Expectations, with the difference that all we know about the character of Estella is conveyed through the perspective of the narrator, Pip. The assumption is, then, that as narrator, Pip relates those incidences which strike him as important and revelatory in some way of Estella's character. Taking into account Pip's adoration of Estella, those things which strike him – her devoted admirer – as strange or negative, should be given due notice, for instance his description of her "self-possessed indifference…that was almost cruel" (Dickens, 304), and his saying that "her calm face was like a statue's" (Dickens, 268). The 'statue' description is particularly telling, as a statue is a close representation of a human appearance composed of an inorganic substance, thus substantiating the theme of human appearance contrasted with an inhuman reality which we recognize and name as the element of the Uncanny.

Frankenstein’s Creature evokes the Uncanny through the juxtaposition of human and inhuman qualities.

While the story of Frankenstein and his creation is told as a framed narrative – a story within a story – the two main perspectives through which it is narrated are that of Victor
Frankenstein and later his Creation itself. It is this juxtaposition of both sides of the tale which allows the reader to develop a sense of the inner realities of both parties. This difference in perspective, in turn, gives rise to the main dichotomy which drives the character of Frankenstein’s Creature: inner reality in contrast and opposition to external appearance or reality.

Through the eyes of Victor Frankenstein, the being which he has brought to life is a creature so monstrous he flees from it in terror, repulsed by its appearance. His initial reaction and subsequent horror regarding the Creature are not at all caused by any sort of moral repulsion on Victor’s part at having usurped the natural order of life, but rather at his failure to correctly approximate a human appearance. This is the view which Victor represents, that of the external view. So fixated is he on the creature’s demi-human appearance that he fails to recognize the creature’s attempts to connect with him, misinterpreting them as signals of possible aggressiveness:

I beheld the wretch, the miserable monster whom I had created. He held up the curtain of the bed; and his eyes, if eyes they may be called, were fixed on me. His jaws opened, and he muttered some inarticulate sounds, while a grin wrinkled his cheeks. He might have spoken, but I did not hear; one hand was stretched out, seemingly to detain me, but I escaped, and rushed down the stairs. (Shelley, 58).

At no point in time does the Creature make any overt actions of aggressiveness. In fact, the opposite appears to be true. Had the creature been of small size and less repulsive appearance, Victor might have recognized the behavior of a very young child attempting to communicate. The signs are all there: the fixed regard, the inarticulate sounds and unprovoked smiles, the reaching out of the hand to establish physical contact, which, in his panic, Victor misinterprets as an attempt to hold him down. This is perhaps another aspect of the Uncanny; the jarring discrepancy between the Creature’s hideous, hulking appearance and the childlike gestures representing a desire for contact and acceptance. In any case, the Creature’s overtures
are friendly, but he is rejected based on his menacing appearance. He is never given a chance to prove his humanity to his Creator, since he has been labeled as inhuman solely because of its appearance.

This is not the only rejection which the Creature’s appearance garners him. After his disastrous encounter with his maker, the Creature flees as well, retreating into the sanctum of nature as he wanders in a forest. In the course of his wandering – during which he has had to sort out his senses one from the other and learn through trial and error the basic facets of human sustenance – he comes upon a village. Scarcely has he set foot within it than ‘the children shrieked, and one of the women fainted…the whole village was roused’ (Shelley, 106). Immediately, he is set upon by the frightened villagers, who drive him away in a hail of stones and other projectiles. In this way, the Creature’s attempts at social interaction are rebuffed because his obvious deformities prevent those with whom he wishes to communicate from encountering his inner reality.

**The Chain of Existence and Events**

Beyond simply being lonely and wishing for company, the Creature desires to “become linked to the chain of existence and events, from which [he is] now excluded” (Shelley, 147). This “chain of existence and events” refers to a sense of inclusion in the human community facilitated by a connection with others through experiences, to which he refers is a defining characteristic of human relations.

Peter Brooks, in his paper entitled “Godlike Science/Unhallowed Arts” posits that the capacity of language to enable the communication of experiences and feelings and evoke emotions renders it a “godlike science” (Shelley, 112). This capacity for language is what allows
human beings to participate in the “chain of events” which characterizes human interaction. The Creature observes this both positively, through watching the de Lacy family members interact with and affect each other through the use of language, and negatively, by noting his own inability to join this chain of events because he lacks any means to do so. His appearance is at the very least gravely disturbing, and, before he teaches himself, he has no understanding of language.

It is through the Creature’s experience with language and communication, then, that his Uncanniness comes most to light. In the beginning of his story, he is without a passably human appearance and has no understanding of language. At this point, he is at his most inhuman. He has no connection to the chain of events of which women society is woven, and is acutely aware of this miserable exclusion in observing the de Lacy cottagers:

I admired virtue and good feelings and loved the gentle manners and amiable qualities of my cottagers; but I was shut out from intercourse with them, except through means which I obtained by stealth, when I was unseen and unknown, and which rather increased than satisfied the desire I had of becoming one among my fellows (Shelley, 121).

This self awareness and desire for community is, in and of itself, an important element of humanity. He is human enough to understand his difference from those around him and to long for a relationship with his ‘fellows’. However, as the story progresses and he starts to grasp the imperativeness of gaining access to language in order to gain access to society, the Creature begins to teach himself to communicate. He teaches himself to read, and peruses such works as “Paradise Lost”, “Plutarch’s Lives”, and the “Sorrows of Werter” - certainly not meager intellectual fare.
The effect of these books is twofold; we see through the style in which he narrates his story that he becomes an eloquent speaker, able to communicate in more elevated fashion than his creator. They also cause a great deal of self-questioning, in particular, the ‘big questions’ concerning his existence and his place in society. “My person was hideous, and my stature gigantic: what did this mean?” he asks himself. “Who was I? What was I? Whence did I come? What was my destination?” (Shelley, 128). These questions are along the vein of those with which philosophers have grappled since the dawn of human self-awareness, and the Creature’s natural gravitation towards these questions emphasize the depth of his humanity. These questions would be right at home in a coming of age novel, which deals with the struggle of the young to establish an individual identity and orient themselves in the world around them. Unfortunately for the Creature, he is able to establish an identity, but not a place in the world, and so his coming of age is in a way stunted. He is unable to take the next step to join the larger community which a traditional coming of age protagonist would.

The Creature’s next step on his mission to connect himself to the chain of events from which he has been excluded is to initiate contact with the de Lacy family, whom he has been observing in secret for months. The de Lacy family consists of a young brother and sister and their blind, aging father. Frankenstein chooses to approach the old blind man while the other two are out. His choice is a wise one; by excluding the most influential factor to his detriment – his appearance, he opens up a level field of communication.

His ensuing interaction with the blind man is a significant turning point in the reader’s estimation of his humanity because, unable to see how the Creature looks, the blind man is unable to tell that there is any thing fundamentally different about the Creature. “I am blind, and cannot judge of your countenance,” he says, “but there is something in your words, which
persuades me that you are sincere….it will afford me true pleasure to be in any way serviceable to a human creature” (Shelley, 134). In showing that the blind man is able to perceive only the Creature’s humanity, this incident demonstrates the shallowness of Victor’s initial assumption of his creation’s monstrousness, and causes the reader to question that assumption as well.

The blindness resolves, in a way, the sense of the uncanny which plagues the Creature’s attempts to establish himself in the ‘chain of events’; in a sense, the blind man is the only one in the novel who sees the Creature for what he truly is, and not what he appears to be. Man and Creature are able to meet each other half way because the man’s blindness tempers the horror of the Creature’s external appearance, while the Creature’s use of language enables him to express his inner reality, the most human part of him.

**The Uncanny as Unwelcome Mirror**

Unfortunately for the Creature, his brief interlude with the blind man is an island of hope set in a sea of rejection. The somewhat naïve and cliché advice which the man gives to him in response to his complaints about his desperate and friendless state sound out a death knell for the Creature’s hope of future acceptance.

Do not despair. To be friendless is indeed to be unfortunate; but the hearts of men, when unprejudiced by any obvious self-interest, are full of brotherly love and charity (Shelley, 134).

This advice is, unfortunately, not very useful to the Creature, who, in one way or the other, seems to be continually evoking the negative side of self-interest in those who he encounters. For the most part, his menacing and inhuman appearance awakens one type of self-interest, namely self-preservation; people flee him because his appearance threatens their sense
of safety. However, a fear for one’s physical safety is not the only form of self interest which the Creature arouses. Victor Frankenstein is one of the two people in the novel who experience the inner reality of the Creature in combination with his distorted, monstrous appearance, and his fear of and loathing towards the monster can be partially explained by his discomfort with the Creature’s reflection of himself and his own actions and desires. The Creature acts as an unwelcome mirror for the elements of his psyche which Victor might not wish to confront, for example his unnatural desire to give birth to human life without the normal biological processes, and his usurpation of the role of God in creation, bearing in mind the religious convictions of the time.

In Karl MacDorman’s paper on the exploitation of the Uncanny Valley, he proposed using the Uncanny Valley to determine what kinds of behavior are considered human-like, by gauging the participants’ reactions to a very humanlike robot. Thus, MacDorman is using the Uncanny Valley Hypothesis as a sort of reflective surface to determine something about the one reacting, rather than the android to which one is reacting. In this case, we may use Victor’s reaction to the Creature, especially during the interaction in which the Creature narrates his tale to his creator, as a reflection of his own perception of human life.

Wielding his newfound weapon of language, the Creature evokes a twofold response from Victor; firstly, Frankenstein is still utterly repulsed and revolted by his appearance. Moreover, it is the combination of human expressions on an inhumanly ugly face which so disconcerts him: “He approached; his countenance bespoke bitter anguish, combined with disdain and malignity, while is unearthly ugliness rendered it almost too horrible for human eyes” (Shelley, 99).
His hatred of the Creature is by no means assuaged by his suspicions that he is responsible for the murder of his younger brother. However, as the Creature narrates his story, Victor becomes torn between sympathy and revulsion. “His words had a strange effect upon me”, he thinks; “I compassioned him and sometimes felt a wish to console him; but when I looked upon him, when I saw the filthy mass that moved and talked, my heart sickened, and my feelings were those of horror and hatred” (Shelley, 147).

These oscillating attitudes are brought about as a result of Frankenstein being fully confronted with what he has created: not just a monster, but a creature with a soul. The Creature’s newfound eloquence allows him to express his inner reality, which Victor cannot help but recognize as in some way human, which raises the disturbing question of what, exactly, makes the Creature any less human than himself, and raises again the specter of the Uncanny:

“The Monster perfectly illustrates the Unheimliche [strange, unfamiliar, not of the home], a monstrous potentiality so close to us – so close to home – that we have repressed its possibility, and assigned an un as the mark of censorship on what is indeed too heimisch [familiar, of home] for comfort.” (Brooks, 217-218).

Victor’s horror of and hatred towards the monster is partially spurred by this suppression, the censorship of what is human in the Creature. It is easier for him to allow himself to draw hate from the creature’s hideous appearance than be made uneasy by his human emotions and ability to express them. It is this knowledge of the Creature’s humanity that triggers a vague sense of responsibility in Frankenstein. “For the first time, also, I felt what the duties of a creator towards his creature were, and that I ought to render him happy before I complained of his wickedness” (Shelley, 102).
This marks the first time Frankenstein acknowledges any degree of responsibility, however grudging, towards the Creature born of his own hand. This grudging acknowledgment goes hand in hand with Victor’s repressed guilt; it is he who, through his rejection of his ‘progeny’, has driven the Creature to such extreme measures in his desire for human contact. Even further, the Creature is, in his uncanniness, reflecting an even deeper guilt of Victor’s, more familiar and closer to home; this monstrous creation is a reflection of Victor Frankenstein himself, and bears the stamp of his own persona. He has been made in the mold of Victor’s socially unnatural obsession with creating life in this asexual way, without help from God or woman. George Levine comments on “the displacement of God and woman from the acts of conception and birth: (Levine, 8). This is essentially the usurpation of the natural order of life, and is itself a representation of the Uncanny; the Creature is given life, and this is familiar, but the way through which this life comes is altogether new and strange.

Levine also remarks on the universality of the perception of Victor and the Creature as mirror images of each other:

Almost every critic of *Frankenstein* has noted that Victor and his Monster are doubles. The doubleness even enters some of the popular versions and is un-self-consciously accepted by everyone who casually calls the Monster “Frankenstein”…So pervasive has been the recognition that the Monster and Frankenstein are two aspects of the same being that the writers in this volume assume rather than argue it (Levine, 14-15).

If Victor and the Monster are two aspects of the same being, this implies a sense of shared humanity.

In his paper, “Frankenstein and the Monster of Representation”, Daniel Cottom argues that Frankenstein is a representation of man’s inability to adequately represent himself. This is the same problem which the roboticists researching the Uncanny Valley experience; despite
advances in technology, androids are still a long way from replicating convincing human behavior. In a similar fashion, Frankenstein’s Uncanniness, which consists of is a direct result of the inability and subsequent failure of humankind to represent itself, to successfully defy the laws of nature to recreate itself. The result is the Uncanny.

**Estella the Strange: Evoking the Uncanny Through the Contrast of Inner Reality and External Appearance**

In E.T.A. Hoffmann’s The Sandman, the short story which inspired Jentsch’s examination of the Uncanny, the young protagonist, Nathaniel, falls madly in love with Olympia, the daughter of a local professor. When he first observes her, he notes both her flawless beauty and her blank, vacant stare, which makes him uneasy. When he takes in her beauty, he is enraptured, but when he touches her cold hands, or observes her stiff movements, he becomes uneasy and disoriented, and these discrepancies make him uncomfortable. Eventually, the shocking news is revealed that Olympia is an automaton built by the professor, who is punished by the university for daring to attempt to pass off a machine as a human being.

Throughout the story, there occurs the repetitive theme of Olympia’s blank and empty gaze, which seems to lighten only when she is actively engaged with Nathaniel in conversation. The first time he sets eyes on her, he describes her thus:

“A very tall and slender lady, extremely well-proportioned and most splendidly attired, sat in the room…She sat opposite the door, so that I could see the whole of her angelic countenance. She did not appear to see me, and indeed there was something fixed about her eyes as if, I might almost say, she had no power of sight. It seemed to me that she was sleeping with her eyes open. I felt very uncomfortable, and therefore I slunk away…”(Hoffmann, 9).

The emphasis on the blankness brings to mind the saying “the eyes are the windows to the soul”, and indeed, physical eyes are often used as metaphors for the human soul. In this case,
the empty eyes seem to thematically suggest Olympia’s soulessness, and if Olympia has no soul, she is simply a beautiful shell, and a failure to adequately represent a human form. It is this representation of the Uncanny, an unreconciled external appearance and inward reality that causes Nathaniel discomfort, and causes him to leave the room, just as Victor Frankenstein fled the being of his creation which was almost human but not quite.

Nathaniel is not the only one made uncomfortable by Olympia; at a ball thrown by the professor, those in attendance avoid her and later exchange their opinions on her. Sigismund, a friend of Nathaniel’s, tells him:

To us – pray do not take it ill, brother she appears singularly stiff and soulless. Her shape is well proportioned – so is her face – that is true! She might pass for beautiful if her glance were not so utterly without a ray of life – without the power of vision. Her pace is strangely regular, every movement seems to depend on some wound-up clockwork. Her playing and her singing keep the same unpleasantly correct and spiritless time as a musical box, and the same may be said of her dancing. We find your Olympia quite uncanny, and prefer to have nothing to do with her. She seems to act like a living being, and yet has some strange peculiarity of her own (Hoffmann, 19).

From this, we see that Olympia suffers from the same malady as the androids which the roboticists used in MacDorman’s study; despite their human-like appearance, small idiosyncrasies such as the rhythm of her movements and the depth of her gaze give her away as being something Other; in fact, the last line of the quote sums up the Uncanny Valley Hypothesis; “she seems to act like a living being, and yet has some strange peculiarity of her own” (Hoffmann, 19).

Olympia’s physical beauty, her premeditated creation and ‘soullessness’ evoke Dickens’s Estella, who shares these characteristics as the flesh and blood automaton of *Great Expectations*. Though Estella is born through completely normal means – she is a flesh and blood woman – there is a sense of the man-made creation to her as well. Her benefactress, the eccentric Miss
Havisham, adopted her with the sole purpose of turning her into an instrument of vengeance on men. She is then ‘molded’ and shaped into this design much as one might mold a sculpture, or a weapon – sharpened and whittled down. Her mission is to make men fall in love with her and break their hearts, while herself remaining aloof, avoiding love.

By all outward indicators, Miss Havisham is successful; men fall at Estella’s feet in droves, including the narrator Pip, for whom Estella is his motivating goal. His attempts to become a gentleman are all with the aim of being worthy of her. Estella is cold and heartless to them all, with the exception of Pip, towards whom she displays no ill will.

Dickens was certainly mindful of Frankenstein in his writing of Great Expectations; James Heffernan points out the correlation between the novels in his effort to define “the essential being of a monster” in relation to the Frankenstein creature:

The difficulty of answering this question…may be illustrated by turning again to…Great Expectations. …Shortly after Magwitch reveals himself as the source of Pip’s wealth and gentlemanly status…Pip explicitly compares [himself and Magwitch] to Victor and his creature. “The imaginary student,” writes Pip, “pursued by the misshapen creature he had impiously made, was not more wretched than I, pursued by the creature who had made me, and recoiling from him with a stronger repulsion, the more he admired me and the fonder he was of me.” Pip is of course not just another Victor. As a gentleman “made” by the wealth of a criminal, he is himself a creature, and perhaps a monster of snobbery and affectation as well. But his aversion to Magwitch, who now wants Pip to care for him, clearly recalls Victor’s loathing of his new creature, whose infantile appeal to his maker…prompts Victor to see only a “miserable monster” (Heffernan, 146).

We also see themes of monstrous creation and revulsion echoed in the story of Miss Havisham and Estella, whom Miss Havisham has reared as her own personal ‘mankiller’, and from whom she recoils when she discovers Estella’s true feelings, or lack thereof.

Miss Havisham’s obsessive molding, shaping and creating has left an indelible imprint on Estella; not on her body, as was the case with Frankenstein’s Creature, but on her psyche. Estella
finds herself unable to understand and give love. It is ironic that the person who ‘created’ her, Miss Havisham, is the first and, perhaps, the only, to realize the depth of this deficiency and to recoil in some sort of horror from her creation, just as did Victor from his Creature. Most horrifying to Miss Havisham is the indifference which Estella directs towards her, her only mother figure.

""You stock and stone!" exclaimed Miss Havisham. "You cold, cold heart!"" (Dickens, 304). When Estella calmly enquires what the problem is with her being cold, hard and proud, when this is what Miss Havisham has trained her to be, she exclaims in anguish, ""But to be proud and hard to me! ...Estella, Estella, Estella, to be proud and hard to me!"" (Dickens, 305).

Miss Havisham is unable to comprehend that there is not reserved in Estella’s heart some exception for her, a bit of love for her, even though she has decreed that Estella not love. She does not realize that Estella’s very ability to love at all has been severely compromised, if not obliterated. Estella’s calm and rational defense of her lack of love is what is most chilling, especially in the face of Miss Havisham’s grief-stricken passion:

"Would it be weakness to return my love?" exclaimed Miss Havisham. "But yes, yes, she would call it so!"

"I begin to think," said Estella, in a musing way, after another moment of calm wonder, "that I almost understand how this comes about. If you had brought up your adopted daughter wholly in the dark confinement of these rooms, and had never let her know that there was such a thing as the daylight by which she has never once seen your face – if you had done that, and then, for a purpose had wanted her to understand the daylight and know all about it, you would have been disappointed and angry?...Or...which is a nearer case – if you had taught her, from the dawn of her intelligence, with your utmost energy and might, that there was such a thing as daylight, but that it was made to be her enemy and destroyer, and she must always turn against it, for it had blighted you and would else blight her; if you had done this, and then, for a purpose, had wanted her to take naturally to the daylight and she could not do it, you would have been disappointed and angry?...So...I must be taken as I have been made. The success is not mine, the failure is not mine, but the two together make me" [emphasis mine] (Dickens, 306).
This passage is Estella’s declaration of her inability to love, and how the fault and blame for this lies directly at Miss Havisham’s doorstep; Miss Havisham is Estella’s Frankenstein. Through this verbal expression of her perspective, through this use of language, Estella has made known her inner reality, the one which exposes the dehumanizing effect of Miss Havisham’s ‘training’. Miss Havisham has taken a normal little girl and robbed her of her ability to love, and by extension, to feel the stronger emotions which are related to love, even hate. She is doomed to be an impassive spectator of life. Even her aloof behavior during Miss Havisham’s fiery,anguished outburst reveals her status as an observing outsider; even the narrator, Pip, who is madly in love with her, notes this aloofness:

Estella looked at her with perfect composure…her graceful figure and her beautiful face expresses a self-possessed indifference to the wild heat of the other, that was almost cruel…Estella, never depart[ed] from the easy grace of her attitude, never rais[ed] her voice as the other did, never yield[ed] either to anger or tenderness…Estella looked at her with a a kind of calm wonder, but was not otherwise disturbed… (Dickens, 305).

There is something in her cool, unaffected demeanor which evokes the theme of the automaton with its robotic, detached relationship to the spectacle of the human world, and further demonstrates Estella’s status as an emotional outsider, someone who feels no link to another human being beyond gratitude and duty.

**Estella evoking the Uncanny as Aberrant Female**

This emotional detachment on Estella’s part is especially notable because she is a woman, thus contradicting the Victorian ideal of the nurturing woman. This stereotypical representation of women is particularly evident in Dickens’s works, wherein he tends to employ
three major types of female characters, in relation to their success or failure in approaching this feminine ideal. Catherine Golden elaborates on these categories:

Different from contemporary women authors...Dickens idealizes the angelic woman. Dickens’s female characters fit easily into categorized types. Drawing examples from text and illustration, [Golden] group[s] Dickensian women into three types that resonate in Victorian literature: angels, fallen sisters, and eccentrics (Golden, 6).

Whether it is Agnes Wickfield of David Copperfield, Lizzie Hexam of Our Mutual Friend, Florence Dombey of Dombey and Sons, Biddy from Great Expectations, or Lucie Manette of A Tale of Two Cities, these Dickensian heroines exhibit a common sense of gentle domesticity and nurturing. Golden refers to this kind of woman as the ‘Victorian angel’, or the angel in the house:

The selfless Victorian angel approaches the divine on earth by functioning as the holy refuge for her brother, father or husband, all of whom, in most cases, do not deserve her. Still, the angelic Dickensian woman offers unconditional love and support to her less moral male counterpart even if he unquestionably burdens her,...scorns her,...and nearly ruins her life” (Golden, 7).

In Dickensian novels, the angelic heroine is often set up in contrast to one of the other Dickensian stereotypes of women: the ‘fallen woman’ or the ‘eccentric woman’. Golden defines the fallen woman as one who “transgresses sexual norms” (Golden, 4). Often, these are women who are pregnant outside of wedlock, and as a result are scorned by society, which was far harsher with its judgment of such women than is ours today; as Golden puts it, “ Victorian society did not allow for a distinction between a prostitute and a young woman who had made one mistake” (Golden, 13).

The other kind of Dickensian stereotype which Golden identifies is the ‘eccentric woman’, whom she labels as “redundant” women, those who are widowed or perceived to be celibate. She also includes in this category Madame Defarge of A Tale of Two Cities despite her
married status, and Rosa Dartle of *David Copperfield*, who cannot really be perceived as celibate because of her infatuation with Steerforth. Her reason for including these characters in this category is that “both characters exude a terrible rage that ultimately consumes them” (Golden, 13).

However, in seeking to place Estella within these categories, we encounter a significant problem. While Estella certainly does not fulfill the Victorian ideal of the nurturing domestic angel, she cannot truly be called a fallen woman, for she has committed no sexual misdemeanor. Neither can she properly be called an eccentric woman, because she is not represented as celibate, and presents no outward indicators of deviant behavior; her bearing is that of a socially acceptable, if arrogant young lady and her appearance is immaculate.

Golden draws a brief parallel between Estella and one of the ‘eccentric women’, Madame Defarge: “Madame Defarge seemingly has no heart and so anticipates the creation of Estella of *Great Expectations* (Golden, 13-14). However, Estella exudes no terrible rage, and does not possess the bitter, seething malice which sets Defarge and Rosa apart. Estella, in fact, does not seem to exude much of anything but indifference, and this places her outside the pale of all the other Dickensian women, who are either lauded or censored based on their representation of the contemporary feminine ideal. Madame Defarge is perceived as monstrous because she blatantly rejects the nurturing role of the woman, which Golden points out in the confrontation between herself and Lucie, the angel-woman of *A Tale of Two Cities*. Lucie appeals to Defarge on the basis of their shared womanhood:

“As a wife and mother,” cried Lucie, most earnestly, “I implore you to have pity on me and not to exercise any power that you possess against my innocent husband but to use it in his behalf. O sister woman, think of me. As a wife and mother!” (Dickens, 266). In turn, Madame Defarge stares at Lucie “coldly as ever” (266). In spurning the triple entreaties of the Dickensian
angel, who begs for forgiveness as a wife, mother and sister woman, the unsisterly Defarge grows monstrous to her Victorian readers. (Golden, 14).

Defarge’s monstrosity is based on her conscious refusal to respond to the bonds and responsibilities of womanhood, whereas Estella is distinguished by her inability to do so. While one may argue that this might be construed as simply another representation of the Dickensian eccentric woman, Dickens’s emphasis on Estella’s inability to love, rather than her choice not to do so, seems to point towards a deeper meaning of Estella’s unique placement within the pantheon of Dickensian women. This is suggested by the extent of Estella’s emotional handicap; whereas Defarge is portrayed as monstrous through her vengeful dealings with the angel-woman, Estella’s lovelessness applies to everyone she encounters, and is not only a violation of the bonds of womanhood.

While it would be naïve to argue that Dickens’s general portrayals of woman are not stilted and two dimensional, his rendering of the character of Estella as a human automaton, incapable of the ‘finer’ human emotions seems to suggest a greater meaning for the character of Estella than that of an aberrant woman. She represents an aberrant person, whose aberrance is simply made more stark by its contrast with the traditionally expected role of the nurturing woman. Her lack of emotional attachment to her adoptive mother illustrates her inability to form even the most basic of human connections within the larger framework of human interaction. Like Frankenstein’s Creature, she has been excluded from the chain of events and affections which defines human community. Like the Creature, she is self-aware enough to understand her exclusion, but, unlike him, she does not seem motivated to remedy the situation. While the Creature seeks desperately to communicate with the human world through his newfound skill with language, and to gain for himself a female counterpart with which to share his affection, Estella seems to have resigned herself to a life without deeper human connection. There is
nothing in her words or actions to indicate that she pines for normalcy in this regard. In fact, by
deciding to marry Bentley Drummle, a hard, proud and violent brute of a man, she seems to be
quarantining herself from the human world.

**Redemption through human connection: Can the Uncanny Valley dwellers be redeemed?**

The end of the novel seems to grant a hope of redemption for Estella, since she began as
an ordinary girl, in a way that the Creature’s origins do not grant him. After years of marriage to
the brute Drummle, whose only redeeming quality seems to be the consistency of his villainy,
Estella is a different woman, broken by suffering at the hands of one who does not care for her.
After the death of her husband, she returns to the ruined grounds of Miss Havisham’s mansion,
and there encounters Pip, who finds her completely changed. Suffering has humbled her, it
seems, and given her hope for human attachment, as she and Pip declare their friendship and
leave the ruins of the estate together, hand in hand. However, this was not the original ending of
the novel; the original ending gave no room for a reunion between Estella and Pip, and had her
marry an unknown doctor. Pressure from his publishers forced Dickens to reconsider making a
happier ending, and the resulting version was his compromise.

The difference in the two endings raises the questions of whether or not redemption is
possible for Estella, and how such a redemption would be achieved. As we have seen through her
previous marriage to Drummle, the institution of marriage does not automatically ensure a
human connection. We cannot therefore assume that her marriage to the doctor in Dickens’s
original ending guarantees her reformation and admittance into the chain of events and human
connectedness. However, the second ending, with which we are more familiar, hints at a hope of
redemption for Estella through establishing a connection with Pip, towards whom she had
previously shown the least inclination towards indifference. While it is certainly true that Estella’s humbled character conforms to Dickens’s usual method of dealing with aberrant women by punishing them with misfortune, it also holds a dual meaning as a way for Estella to regain her lost ability to make human connections.

Estella’s ability to ‘regain’ the humanity which she has lost through Mrs. Havisham’s influence stands in sharp contrast to the plight of the Frankenstein Creature, whose end is an unwitnessed suicide in the icy wilds. While Dickens finally offers Estella the chance to re-establish human connection through a possible relationship with Pip, Shelley offers no such hope for the Creature. He loses his only chance for human connection with the death of Victor Frankenstein at the end of the novel. The poignant conversation at the novel’s end between the Creature and the ship captain who discovers him with Victor’s body illustrates this hopelessness; even as the captain is “at first touched by the expressions of his misery” (Shelley, 220), he is turned from this sympathy both by the Creature’s hideous appearance and the history which Frankenstein has related of the Creature’s misdeeds, which has destroyed any chance for permanent sympathy from the Captain. Ironically, this history is the only reason which the captain invites the Creature to stay when he was about to flee; had the captain encountered the Creature before learning of his existence, there is very little reason to believe his reaction would have much differed from that of the frightened villagers who pelted the Creature with stones. Those who encounter the Creature without prior knowledge of his existence flee in terror because of his appearance, while the only ones who know enough of his existence to remain and speak with him are already jaded against him. Between these two attitudes, the Creature is given little opportunity in the course of the novel to establish a meaningful human connection based
on affection. The resulting hopelessness and bitterness which he feels spur a transformation in his character and a deformation of his nature which the Creature regards as irreversible:

“My heart was fashioned to be susceptible of love and sympathy; and, when wrenched by misery to vice and hatred, it did not endure the violence of the change, without torture such as you cannot even imagine…I had cast off all feeling, subdued all anguish, to riot in the excess of my despair. Evil henceforth became my good. Urged thus far, I had no choice but to adapt my nature to an element which I had willingly chosen. The completion of my demoniacal design became an insatiable passion” (Shelley, 220).

Eventually, the Creature is driven to cease seeking a companion, after the death of his dream of a companion created in his own image, and the death of his creator himself, the only two beings who could potentially understand him and look upon him with something other than disgust. He comes to a bitter acceptance of his inability to form human connections based not on a lack of desire or inclination to do so, as is the case with Estella, but on the hideousness of his appearance. The Creature gives up on finding a possible companion, partially because of the seeming impossibility of the task, and partially because of his crippling guilt over his misdeeds:

“Yet I seek not a fellow-feeling in my misery. No sympathy may I ever find …Once I falsely hoped to meet with beings who, pardoning my outward form, would love me for the excellent qualities which I was capable of unfolding. But now crime has degraded me beneath the meanest of animals…when I run over the catalog of my sins, I cannot believe that I am the same creature whose thoughts were once filled with sublime and transcendent visions of the beauty and the majesty of goodness. But it is even so; the fallen angel becomes a malignant devil. Yet even that enemy of God and man had friends and associates in his desolation; I am alone” (Shelley, 221).

However, we might read the Creature’s alienation and belief in the impossibility of his redemption as partially self-imposed. The conversation with the blind de Lacy patriarch proves that the Creature is able to gain the acceptance of those who can disregard his appearance. His violent rejection by the rest of the de Lacys has poisoned him against all future attempts to gain companionship and understanding, but, were he able to overcome this bitterness, he might have found another who was blind and surrounded by those less likely to react with violence towards a
loved one’s hideous companion. In the end, the Creature himself is partially responsible for his alienation; his burning of the de Lacy cottage after their rejection and hasty departure signifies the death of his hope of integrating himself into the existing chain of events and communication of human existence. Frankenstein’s abortion of the female companion which the Creature had requested signifies the death of Frankenstein’s hope of creating his own small chain of events and circle of communication. In response, he has alienated himself and abandoned all hope for meaningful human connection. His resulting despair leads to him to lose all desire for life, leading to his decision to commit suicide by immolation.

**Conclusion: The Centrality of Human Connection**

In examining the character of Shelley’s nameless Creature, the reader is confronted with a sense of unease evoked by the simultaneous presentation of the Creature’s distorted appearance and recognizably human inner reality. This mingling of the strange and the familiar can be explained through the use of the Uncanny as a lens with which to analyze the reactions, both of other characters and ourselves, to his character. The mingling of the familiar human features distorted by the unfamiliarity of their appearance prompts a sense of disgust and revulsion. However, once exposed to the inner reality of the Creature, the reader is forced to re-evaluate this dismissal of the Creature as a non-human entity. It is this inner reality which prompts the Creature’s desire for human connection as he unsuccessfully seeks relationships with his Creator/Father, the villagers he encounters, and the de Lacys. It is this desire for human connection, this yearning for “fellow feeling” and sympathy, expressed through his intellect, which allows us to perceive the Creature as somehow human. The expression of his inner reality through the medium of language allows the reader to overlook his unnatural origins and hideous
appearance in favor of his emotions and the desire for human connection with which we can readily identify.

Dickens’s Estella similarly evokes a sense of the Uncanny through the juxtaposition of her ideal physical appearance and stunted inner reality, which belies the expectation of human feeling and emotional connection which the reader places upon her because of her ideal appearance. Estella’s inability to love, despite appearance, estranges her from the reader.

The reversal of the role of physical appearance in human connection shown by these characters reveals the shallowness of the connection made between physical appearance and inner reality, and questions our expectations of the prerequisites for human connection and relationship. The only hope these characters have for redemption from the Uncanny Valley is through establishing human connection, thereby reconciling that which makes strange to familiarity. In the Creature’s case, his desire for an integration into the surrounding society allows the reader to overcome the sense of uneasiness created by his distorted, semi-human appearance and identify with him as an essentially human character. In the case of Estella, she is granted redemption through a restoration to the chain of communication and social relationship embodied by a possible relationship with Pip. This change eliminates the previous discrepancy between her appearance and inner reality, and eases the reader’s sense of unease about her character.

By placing such emphasis on the characters’ ability to establish meaningful relationships and integrate themselves into a social community, Dickens and Shelley identify this inclination towards and ability to create a social connection and relationships as the fundamental element of
the human experience, so much so that, when the Creature finds himself excluded from this possibility, he finds no meaning in further existence and kills himself.

By examining our reactions to these characters to determine how we as readers recognize characters as human, this paper applies a more psychological approach to literary analysis in the hopes of drawing out the nuances of the literature’s reflection of the human state. Literature at its best is the clearest reflection of ourselves, and this paper’s significance lies in its examination of that mirror to find what makes that reflection so accurate. It allows us to re-examine what these classical authors considered the most important aspect of human life to represent, and the ways in which they conveyed this.
Bibliography


