



Alberto Filipe Araújo

Armando Rui Guimarães

"The child is father of the man"

On the pedagogical teachings of the myth of Frankenstein

ABSTRACT

The myth of Frankenstein is one of the most emblematic myths of contemporaneity. It is open to multiple possible readings with an interdisciplinary character (philosophical, political, psychological, literary, anthropological, etc.). In this article we favour an educational and pedagogical reading: a distinction is made between the fabrication and the sculpturing of the human and the consequences that such distinction brings to a philosophy of education that is sensible to an education as value which is quite misunderstood in these post-modern times. We have divided our article into six parts: 1. A nameless creature; 2. The creature's educating influences; 3. Is the creature a "new man"? 4. The creature's loneliness; 5. Is Victor Frankenstein a Modern Prometheus? 6. On the pedagogical teachings of the myth of Frankenstein.

KEYWORDS

Mary Shelley; The myth of Frankenstein; Education; Fabrication; Sculpture; Imagination.

ALBERTO FILIPE ARAÚJO

University of Minho, Braga, Portugal
afaraujo@ie.uminho.pt

ARMANDO RUI GUIMARÃES

University of Minho, Braga, Portugal
arcmguimaraes@hotmail.com

Introduction

According to Carter and McRae, the famous line of Wordsworth's poem *My Heart Leaps Up when I Behold* (2003: 169) that we quote in the title means that adults can learn from children, an idea quite alien to the pedagogical ideas and practices of his time. What was «normal» and current then was that children should be controlled by adults and learned from adults¹.

In 1932, Gilbert K. Chesterton, writing on the one hundred year anniversary of Lewis Carroll's birth, voiced his "dreadful fear" that Alice's story had already fallen under the heavy hands of scholars and was becoming "cold and monumental like a classic tomb". "Poor, poor, little Alice!" bemoaned G. K. "She has not only been caught and made to do lessons; she has been forced to inflict lessons on others. Alice is now not only a schoolgirl but a school mistress. The holiday is over and Dodgson is again a don"². This *caveat* by G. K. Chesterton on the fate of Lewis Carroll's *Alice*, transforming it into a boring school textbook, is also fitting for Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* because this novel has been appropriated by so many, that we face the risk of missing the pleasure of simply reading the novel without any further worries. The



fact is that Mary Shelley's novel has been apprehended by scholars from many different fields of knowledge and is seen by many as one more classic. In fact, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* is not only a novel that is not easy to categorize as one that is replete with multiple possible readings and interpretations: starting with literary criticism and political interpretations, there are also philosophical, sociological, educational, psychoanalytical, Marxist, feminist, scientific and mythological analyses among many others. And the fascination this novel holds on people's imagination is attested by the numerous uses of the Frankenstein name and monster in so many different and unexpected circumstances and situations, now and in the past: from food to political unrest and environmental dangers³ to the parody of the recent scandal of the NSA spying of American citizens and foreigners where, in a cartoon, we can see the image of the Frankenstein monster, with head-phones and a T-shirt with the NSA logo, being admonished by Barak Obama for listening unlawfully to people's communications⁴. These manifold associations of the name of Frankenstein and of its creature "have enhanced a 'Frankensteinian' mythology which has concentrated upon images of fear and monstrosity at the expense of other issues. This is a pity, because Mary Shelley deals with a range of significant ideas in her story. Frankenstein is not a simple battle between good and evil; it is not a ghost story, nor really a Gothic novel. It defies a simple interpretation, engaging instead with some of the crucial social and political questions of the period"⁵.

Our first objective is to reflect on the mythical and hermeneutical implications of the subtitle of the novel: *The Modern Prometheus*⁶. Our second objective is, based on perspectives of the philosophy of education and the philosophy of educational imaginary, to answer this question: which is the

contribution of the myth of Frankenstein in order to understand education when, according to some, it should be understood as "fabrication" and "moulding", and according to others, as "sculpturing"⁷?

A nameless creature

The monstrous creature created by Victor Frankenstein has no name, assuming by antonomasia the name of its own creator⁸. The being created by Victor is described in Mary Shelley's novel as a "creature", a "daemon", a "monster"⁹ and he is a fatherless and a motherless artificial man. He thinks, speaks and seems to have the capacity to reproduce which sets him apart and makes him different from an automaton. As an automaton, he is an artificial man but possessing some differences that make him, as a living organism, to be nearer humanity than a mere *artefact*. It should be emphasized that this creature has language and through language is capable of establishing social ties, although even this will be condemned to failure and to tragedy, not due to the monster's inability but to men's prejudices.

The creature is an artificial man fabricated by the artifices of science, namely by the invention of electricity. In a certain sense, he has a superhuman nature because he may have been created in order to defy life's limits: birth and death¹⁰. He is a creature made in order to avoid the human limitations, both in the clinical and in the social levels. In fact, he is an artificial man who does not come from biological procreation, but is a product of an artificial creation, although he was made with pieces of dead human material reanimated by science's technical means.¹¹ As he had not a natural birth he could not also die naturally (in the novel there is no indication that the creature may die of a natural death; in fact,



he chooses his own demise), as he does not experience the normal cycle of growth since he was made an adult. And the creature's lack of infancy is also important: the creature was never a child, never played as a child, never dreamt as children do and so had hurriedly to become an adult. It should also be noted that, as he was never a child and never experienced all the "normal" phases of a child's development, he could have no memories of a past and he was not able to enjoy the pleasures of a child's imagination. But can anyone be a person without some kind of memory and without imagination? Here, Mary Shelley would probably approve of Wordsworth's reflections on memory and imagination: "(...) Wordsworth wanted to show the importance of the human memory, because it is the memory which continues to give life to our major experiences. The memory allows us to keep our understanding of the world fresh and alive, although there is despair in Wordsworth's later poetry when the imagination fails and memory no longer works"¹². Another characteristic of his artificiality, besides the conditions of his creation and education, is his outsider condition, as someone who has no place in the society of the so-called "normal" men, which makes Jean-Jacques Lecercle speak of "social monstrosity"¹³: the creature as an abnormal, monstrous, ugly being who is not recognized as a fellow-creature because he is horribly different and so he is excluded, expelled, repudiated and hated. There is no place for toleration and for a favorable reception of that which is different and this is testified by the reaction of the De Lacey children who cannot avoid the repugnance that the vision of the monster provokes: "I had admired the perfect forms of my cottagers – their grace, beauty, and delicate complexions; but how 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"¹⁴.

This is another important theme in this novel: here we are dominated by the dictatorship of appearances, by an ideality of forms instead of seeing content and substance. As Hindle has noticed, our society seems to value appearance more than listening to others, and here we also discover the importance of light as the means through which we can see others and the world. We have then a society more concerned with appearance than "seeing" the wants, needs and aspirations of other people. We have a society that measures people by appearances and is incapable of putting itself in the place of others¹⁵.

On a philosophical and ontological level, this makes us wonder if the creature, despite his fabricated human nature, is not human after all. In other words, being a creature of the heroic and superhuman type, thus beyond the typical contingencies of human beings, one but wonders whether one is still in the sphere of the natural man or in the realm of the artificial man. It seems plausible therefore that the creature has been thought (by its creator) as a kind of an ideal of man (the natural dominion of science fiction) and as such free from the constraints of birth, death and even disease.



The creature's educating influences

Frankenstein is a product of its own cultural times where one can find not only the belief in the indefinite progress of humankind (the postulate of human perfectibility and the belief in the sacred benefits of Science), but also the influence by two important philosophers: Jean-Jacques Rousseau and John Locke¹⁶. If the former helped us to understand the nature of language that the creature uses and the relationship between the creature and the themes of the *bon sauvage* and of *l'homme à l'état de nature*, it is with Locke that we understand not only the acquisition of language as, in a special way, the empiricist education of the monstrous creature which includes perception, sensations, the acquisition of language, etc.¹⁷ At the same time there is the description of the creature's education: the creature learns and refines his language and gets his natural and social education by reading Volney's *The Ruin of Empires* (1791), Milton's *Paradise Lost* (c.1667), Plutarch's *Parallel Lives* (c.100 A.D.) and Goethe's *The Young Werther* (1774). These books were found by the creature abandoned in the forest near De Lacey's family cottage: "In contact with these authors, the monster receives an education: these books are like parents to the monster"¹⁸. In fact, in Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*, the creature learns about public virtue. In Goethe's *Young Werther*, the creature discovers private sentiment. In Volney's *The Ruin of Empires*, the monster's autodidactic education becomes more complete, because in its pages the creature can learn history, politics and the way societies function¹⁹. But, "Most of all, it is through *Paradise Lost* that he comes to understand himself and his situation under the double analogy of Adam and of Satan" and by

reading Victor Frankenstein's Diaries he also discovers "that his situation is yet more desperate than theirs, since he has been rejected without guilt and is utterly companionless"²⁰. Maurice Hindle, on the other hand, also acknowledges the importance of Milton: "It is perhaps not surprising that a woman of Mary Shelley's intuitive capacities, living in a rapidly changing society, should call on Milton for guidance and inspiration, for he was a man who had himself lived through a historical period of enormous religious, political and existential turbulence and written an epic poem in response to it"²¹. However, these readings also make the creature acknowledge and picture himself as a monster; they are "one important stage in the construction of the monster's conscience"²². Through these readings, the creature's monstrosity growingly acquires human features, becomes more cultured, more sentimentally delicate and morally and emotionally refined. The creature acknowledges his conscience and it leads the creature inexorably to moral judgment²³. Thus, near the end of the story, this is how the creature opens his heart to Walton: "I seek not a fellow feeling in my misery. No sympathy may I ever find. When I first sought it, it was the love of virtue, the feelings of happiness and affection with which my whole being overflowed, that I wished to be participated. But now that virtue has become to me a shadow, and that happiness and affection are turned into bitter and loathing despair, in what should I seek sympathy?" (...) "I was nourished with high thoughts of honour and devotion. But now crime has degraded me beneath the meanest animal. No guilt, no mischief, no malignity, no misery, can be found comparable to mine. When I run over the frightful catalogue 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 evil. Yet even that enemy of God and man had friends and associates in his desolation; I am alone²⁴. As it can be seen, his conscience goes along a rhetoric oscillating between *pathos* (that aims at commotion) and *logos* (that aims at knowledge).

At the center of the story is the education of a natural man and his dealings with his creator and other people: “the monster sees himself as essentially benevolent but it was the rejection by his creator and by mankind at large that had made him first a fallen Adam and then a fallen Lucifer”²⁵. As the monster says to Walton: “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”²⁶. The question arising is thus why Victor Frankenstein has fabricated his creature if afterwards he came to abandon him. By acting this way, the creature had to initiate his own education *a solo*. This educative experience certainly made him more conscious of his own situation and condition, especially when the creature found in his pocket the Diary of Doctor Frankenstein²⁷ but it also made the creature to hate, at that moment, his creator. The creature, by assuming himself as a being with a conscience, this fact allows the creature to affirm himself as human, even though under a different guise.

Philippe Meirieu discusses here whether the learning process of the autodidactic creature can be considered as education because, for Meirieu, there can be no education without a mediator²⁸, and thinking about the qualities of Hermes, without a communicator, a guide, a messenger, an initiator. And without a mediator anything can happen: the creature fails his entrance into human society and society fails by not welcoming the creature. A double failure

with tragic consequences²⁹, because to “fabricate” is not to “educate” and Victor, according to Meirieu, may have confused these two verbs with all the well-known consequences in the development of the narrative of Mary Shelley: “A man who believed that he could place a being in the world without having to accompany him in the world. (...) But a man’s body is something more than flesh, it is the place of a subject that builds himself, that projects himself and that prolongs beyond his fabrication something like an excess of humanity”³⁰.

Is the creature a “new man”?

One question that can be asked is if the creature, not being a simple *artefact* and also escaping man’s natural history, is more than human, and if so are we not in the presence of a new species of mankind? A “new man”, a “new Adam”? Our answer is that the purpose of Victor Frankenstein, a devoted apostle of science as a new religion and an admirer of its miracles, was twofold: first, it was that of creating a “new man” (using the most advanced knowledge and scientific technologies such as electricity and chemistry, because Mary Shelley, inspired as she was by Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, imagined life being bestowed on an assembled corpse by the galvanizing use of electricity³¹; and second, it was that of educating him (take into account the reading of the great philosophical, pedagogical and educational books mentioned). This “new man” could rise above humanity’s natural limitations and would be able to escape natural birth (the theme of procreation and parthenogenesis³², death and disease. With this innovative creation and experimentation, he would affirm and materialize one of the oldest dreams of mankind: the conquest of immortality and in this way man becomes



a god on earth, perpetuating the Promethean wishes and dreams: “Life and death appeared to me ideal bounds, which I should first break through, and pour a torrent of light into our dark world. A new species would bless me as its creator and source; many happy and excellent natures would owe their being to me”³³. The project envisaged by Victor Frankenstein was to establish a new species that would be happy and good, and here we go back to Rousseau’s *bon sauvage* and *l’homme à l’état de nature*: “No one can conceive the variety of feelings which bore me onwards, like a hurricane, in the first enthusiasm of success. Life and death appeared to me ideal bounds, which I should first break through, and pour a torrent of light into our dark world. A new species would bless me as its creator and source; many happy and excellent natures would owe their being to me. No father would claim the gratitude of his child so completely as I should deserve theirs”³⁴. As a result of all this, the creature would be happy, good and endowed with superhuman characteristics. The creature would be happy because happiness was thought to be attainable thanks to the advances and benefits of modern sciences and technologies and it was, ideologically speaking, not only heir of the illuminist tradition as it also recovered one of the nuclear mythologems of the “Golden Age” myth; the creature would be good as we find here the “natural goodness” of Rousseau’s man; and it would be endowed with superhuman strength because: “Here we have a creature made up by human materials, being in possession of the physiological and intellectual characteristics of the human being, but escaping man’s tragic destiny, death”³⁵.

What is at stake here is something fundamental for the future of humanity: to defeat death and disease. Although acquainted with the alchemist tradition (the

works of Paracelsus, Albert the Great and Cornelius Agrippa), Victor Frankenstein, was attempting, with the help of the advancements of modern physics, chemistry and physiology, to make real the old alchemist idea of the “elixir of long life”, also known as the “elixir of immortality”, with all the mythical resonances and consequences that this theme holds in the socio-cultural imaginary. Influenced by Professor Waldman, Victor, keeps alive the unbreakable belief of the time in scientific progress, particularly the extraordinary advancements of modern physics and chemistry, anatomy and physiology (such as the debate on the vital principle and its nature, electric or not – the theme of vitalism)³⁶. In fact, Victor Frankenstein did recognize that “One of the phenomena which had peculiarly attracted my attention was the structure of the human frame, and, indeed, any animal endued with life. 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; yet with how many things are we upon the brink of becoming acquainted, if cowardice or carelessness did not restrain our inquiries”³⁷. Thus Victor Frankenstein intended not only to understand nature but fundamentally to control it. He was one of those scientists who, thanks to the all-powerful wonders of science, dedicated his life to the study of the causes of life, oriented by modern chemistry: “From this day natural philosophy, and particularly chemistry, in the most comprehensive sense of the term, became nearly my sole occupation”³⁸. We should remember that Mary Shelley knew the works of Humphry Davy and the man himself (a friend of his father): H. Davy, as a matter of fact, saw science as an active understanding of nature, as a master with its instruments in order to change and modify nature itself. But Mary Shelley would not approve of this version of science in such an ambitious way and formulation.



So it is this “Promethean “maker”, “artist”, “shaper” of men in a scientist-hero guise that interested Mary Shelley and which should preoccupy us”³⁹. And it should also be remembered that Mary Shelley wrote in the infancy of modern science and through *Frankenstein* she created “a lasting symbol of the perils of scientific Prometheanism. Her success is shown by the simple fact that her tale has acquired a kind of independent mythical life, like that of Quixote or Crusoe”⁴⁰. On this theme Hindle sees as the major theme of *Frankenstein* “the aspiration of modern masculinist scientists to be technically creative divinities”⁴¹. Thus, the creature, as a created but not a procreated being, is left to his own fate and abandoned by a scientist who feels neither remorse nor responsibility towards his own creation, in the same way as he felt none towards the domination and exploitation of nature.

More important than to know the technical details of the scientific experiment that led to the reanimation of the creature made up by human pieces (details that Mary Shelley never disclosed in her novel but entered popular imaginary due to James Whale’s 1931 film), is to reflect on the philosophical and educational consequences of Victor Frankenstein’s experiment: it is important to stress that the creature is not an automaton because his actions are autonomous and independent of the will of its creator. And the creature is not either, as Descartes writes in his *Discours de la méthode* (1637), a simple man-machine. It is true that his gigantism indicates an artificial nature, although such characteristic does not mean that he is opposed to nature. What is certain is that his gigantism, besides his physiological explanations, is synonymous to super-human strength and toughness: “It becomes possible that the monster appeared before the eyes of his creator as an ideal being, an accomplished being”⁴².

The creature’s loneliness

If we accept the artificial nature of the creature, will he be able to escape one of the elementary principles of human nature which is to be accepted and live in society? In this sense, the creature evidences one of his significant limitations to accede to the status of a “new man” because, notwithstanding all his perfection (the idea of perfectibility so dear to the illuminist tradition), he has to be accepted and live in society⁴³. This limitation thwarts his final and complete fulfillment of becoming human, though Victor intended to create a new humanity: “Victor’s project is indeed clear: he wants to create a new race, one that does not know the limits of humanity. Victor’s new man is *contra naturam*: it does not correspond either to the old humanist dream or to the objective of positivist science”⁴⁴. Notwithstanding his perfectible capacity, the creature will never escape his monster condition even though he is quite human. In the novel, the creature tries hard to interact socially with other people, but he is condemned to isolation, to an isolated independence and autonomy: “The creature’s drama lies here: he refuses the independence that is imposed on him, he vainly aspires to a relationship of interdependence”⁴⁵. This will lead the creature, later on, to demand from Victor Frankenstein the creation of a female partner: “I must not be trifled with, and I demand an answer. If I have no ties and no affections, hatred and vice must be my portion; the love of another will destroy the cause of my crimes, and I shall become a thing of whose existence everyone will be ignorant. My vices are the children of a forced solitude that I abhor, and my virtues will necessarily arise when I live in communion with an equal. I shall feel the affections of a sensitive being and become linked to the chain of



existence and events from which I am now excluded”⁴⁶.

The creature comes out of his “state of nature” by learning how to speak, by the acquisition of moral principles, by his legitimate longing of integrating himself in human society and apparently achieves what Rousseau designates, in his *Contrat social* (1762), as the “civil state”. However, there always is a “but” because even this transition to the “civil state” becomes incomplete, because there is some kind of short circuit at the level of his moral formation and of justice’s criteria. The passage of the creature into a “civil state” is deceptive because it is mainly accomplished by the readings already indicated and it does not result from a process of socialization and acculturation taking place in the bosom of society with other fellow-creatures. And it should be remembered too that the creature never had a chance to be and to grow as a child, he missed most of the common stages in the process of socialization of a child. Moreover, if the narrative and the creature’s condition seem to rest in the tension emanating from these two poles, culture and nature, his exclusion from society is due not only to his gigantism but also to his ugliness: the creature does not find any answer in men’s social laws but only in the grandiose, sublime and wild nature (remember Mont Blanc’s glaciers or the desert arctic planes that point to the brutal and excessive beautiful). This kind of scenery appears as his natural sanctuary, as his confidant, like its own metaphor that mirrors some gigantism and brutality, even if beautiful (anything that frightens by its ugliness and monstrosity holds over the sociocultural imaginary a magnetic power of attraction and fascination): since the social and familial life is interdicted for the creature, it means that the creature is condemned to live in a state of selfsameness because the realm of otherness

is prohibited for the creature, and this may be so because it reflects the existential incompleteness and alienation of his creator⁴⁷.

This way, his drama is that despite all his efforts for integration, the creature remains an incomplete man and, therefore, unable to accede to the category of a “new man”, some sort of integral or complete humanity, because this “new man” is, by definition, complete, integral, and total from a scientific, social, anthropological, philosophical and educational viewpoint. And the creature is not.

Is Victor Frankenstein a Modern Prometheus?⁴⁸

The myth of Frankenstein is a creation myth of an anthropogenic character not unlike the other myths of Prometheus⁴⁹, Deucalion and Pyrrha. And as such, it deals with life and death, with human creation and its mysteries⁵⁰ and in this sense it subsumes that which is proper to the nature and function of the myth⁵¹.

It is also important not to forget that the myth of Prometheus deals with titanic abandonment and solitude (the solitude of the creator hero). In this case, the creature also suffers from abandonment and solitude⁵², similar to that of his own creator, Victor Frankenstein, who while studying at the University of Ingolstadt leads a lonely life and describes his laboratory as a solitary prison⁵³. In this context, it is understandable that Mary Shelley subtitles her novel *The Modern Prometheus* because of the similitude that can be established between the creative gesture of Victor Frankenstein and that of the titan Prometheus⁵⁴. Both wanted to give life to inanimate matter by “fire”, and here we should not forget the absolutely meaningful symbology that fire possesses in mythical and symbolical traditions⁵⁵, even when we consider that Victor’s and Prome-



theus' motivations and projects were different. Furthermore, a major difference separates them: while Prometheus was proud of the life he gave men and proudly assumed his paternity as the father of humanity, Victor Frankenstein was terribly unhappy to have given life to such a creature and, therefore, rejects his paternity by running away when faced with the disturbing look of the monstrous creature. In other words, if the titan never abandoned men, the same cannot be said about Victor's attitude: he seems to be treading an inexorable and inescapable path, running away from his creation even though he paradoxically seems to need the creature in order to exist. Here we encounter the topic of the "double" that the Frankenstein myth contains⁵⁶. Both myths, Frankenstein's as well as Prometheus's, are simultaneously myths that deal with creation and transgression (Frankenstein's myth deals with the transgression of the frontier life-death, which was until then an exclusive dominion of the gods or God; in Prometheus we deal with life, with the transgression of an Olympic order): the titan appears, in Aeschylus' version, as the founder of arts, civilization and technology (as *pyroforos* which means the thief of fire), while its Latin version presents him in his function as demiurge, that is, *plasticator* (the moulder that moulds and creates man from clay)⁵⁷. Nevertheless, Prometheus is generous and philanthropic, a benefactor of humanity, a scientist *avant la lettre*, and he rebels against the gods in order to give humanity the fire of life: "In a nutshell, it is the faith in man against faith in God that is subjacent in the Promethean myth, man on the side of the Titans, and Zeus or the Olympics, or God the Father, being on the other side of the fence. Behind this myth there is always a rationalist, humanist, progressive, scientific and sometimes a socialist ideology"⁵⁸. Victor, conversely, is an individualist similar to Faust⁵⁹, another myth

that deals with transgression, with a scientist avid for knowledge and power. Victor is not looking for eternal youth and he does not sign a pact with the Devil and this difference is quite important⁶⁰ as "he finally steals the spark of life thinking only about himself, he is unable to educate his creature beyond the level of bestiality (...). He is a scientist who, for a brief moment, thought he was equivalent to God but was incapable of assuming the consequences of his acts. He created his own punishing instrument. If Frankenstein is a decidedly modern version of the myth of Prometheus, it is perhaps because this myth is somehow laicized⁶¹. By giving life to men, Prometheus brought about his own punishment: Zeus chained Prometheus, in the Caucasus, where an eagle devoured his liver during the day and while at night the liver grew back again. So far we have considered the Promethean myth in the perspective of the creator, it will be sensible to consider the creature as an artificial man, materializing the benefits of civilization and, in this way, creating a new race of men that allows for the closing of the Promethean cycle. We can doubtlessly assert that the myth of Frankenstein is a fictional narrative where the theme of the "double" has a place, especially because of its relation with the myth of Prometheus (*pyroforos* and *plasticator*)⁶². The answer to the our initial question naturally comes forth due to the fact that the similarities that Victor has with Prometheus are in fact multiple and in no way secondary: in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* we can find the persistence of the mythemes and mythologems that constitute the Promethean myth, as Gilbert Durant has studied them⁶³, somewhat adapted which, according to Durant, are to be viewed as derivations and usury of the myth of Prometheus such as reported by the classical versions of Aeschylus and Hesiod⁶⁴.



Let us now assess the contributions of this *Modern Prometheus* in its philosophical and in its educational imaginary aspects. Philippe Meirieu, as far as we know, was the only specialist in the Sciences of Education to discuss educational issues concerning the myth of Frankenstein as a “fabrication of the human”: “This is what, in fact, the myth of Frankenstein tells us: it positions us facing what could be considered as the “hardcore” of the educational adventure”⁶⁵. “The central discussion lies in the question that the author formulates: “can we be educators without being Frankenstein?”⁶⁶ and “Can we ‘make the other’ without renouncing to educate him?”⁶⁷. This means that Frankenstein is a perfect illustration of the ‘myth of education as fabrication’ ”⁶⁸.

The pedagogue and the educator have as their mission to make, form, fabricate, mould, shape and sculpture the nature of the child, that of the adolescent and even the one of the adult through the cultural medium: here resides, in fact, the fascination and the anxiety of the pedagogue and the educator. This is, in fact, a very complex, dramatic and paradoxical challenge: how to “make” a pupil simultaneously moulded by certain “patterns of culture” (Ruth Benedict) and at the same time free and enable him to escape “the will and the fabrication’s whims of his educator”⁶⁹. This myth forces us to face without excuses the “educational issue” which aims at “fabricating a human being”, that is, to form someone, moulded in accordance to some “worldview” and who, using Paulo Freire’s terminology, would conjugate in himself both the “banking” and the “problematizing” educations. We mean here the pedagogue and the educator who, in the name of certain principles and of certain pedagogical practices, like Victor Frankenstein, yields to the temptation of “fabricating” someone who is similar in his humanity but who, in the name of freedom of

being and of living and for better or worse, escapes their control⁷⁰. Certainly, the educator always faces the danger that his creature may rebel against him or may escape his power without ever becoming a subject of *Bildung* (referred here to the individual’s self-formation, based on the “otherness”, in his relation to life, society and the world) escaping the paradox of education as “fabrication” (referred here to the formation of the subject on the basis of “selfsameness” and of external influences in line with the empiricist philosophical tradition).

“Making” the other draws attention to education as an all-powerful current of the Illuminist tradition and this omnipotence of education can be summed up in Helvetius’s *De L’homme*⁷¹: “Nothing is impossible to education: it makes a bear dance”, an idea already enunciated by Leibniz.

This “making” always holds some risks, which we can find in the mimetic and paradoxical nature of Mary Shelley’s novel; it also generates some important philosophical consequences of an ethical and educational nature. Let us attend to the nature of this “making” and ask the following question: Why to fabricate a creature and then abandon him to his own fate in a society and a world that do not recognize him as human? What is the place of the creature in men’s society when left to his own devices, ignoring the human customs and reactions, with deformed looks, despite being kind-hearted and wanting to love, be useful and be loved⁷²? Thus, while incarnating the myth of the *bon sauvage*, the creature is abandoned by his creator and will have to educate himself following the nuclear principles of the empiricist philosophy which claim that there is nothing in the mind that is not previously in the senses. The monster, after escaping from the laboratory, takes refuge in the forest where he will begin his autodidactic learning: at the beginning it is sensitive, next he learns how to speak, how



to read, he discovers the moral and social values, the stories of men and he meditates on his own fate⁷³.

On the pedagogical teachings of the myth of Frankenstein

Philippe Meirieu in his *Frankenstein pedagogue* places education between *praxis* and *poiesis*. For him, *praxis* is an action that does not intent to fabricate an object that previously required a representation or a model: it is an act always performed or worked and always unfinished because “it does not admit of an end exterior to itself and previously defined”⁷⁴, and here we find the sculpting metaphor as already mentioned⁷⁵. In the case of *poiesis*, we look at an activity that requires some more or less complex set of technical means, some specialized knowledge and *savoir-faire*, which aims at fabricating something and which ends when its goal is reached: it aims at the fabrication or the attainment of some result which, after being attained, leads to a disengagement of the author from it.

Thus, Philippe Merieu affirms that Frankenstein’s work is not educative, that he is not an educator because he situates himself in the sphere of *poiesis*: “Frankenstein evidently reduces education to *poiesis*: for him, education ends at fabrication”⁷⁶. But the pupil is not a mere thing or object that is fabricated in accordance to a previously selected or chosen model by the educator or the artist (and here we find again the moulding metaphor), because although the pupil resembles his educator, “he disposes of freedom that allows him, exactly, to be distinct from that which was projected for him”⁷⁷. It is here that resides the substantial difference between *poiesis* (as activity – the metaphor of moulding) and *praxis* (as action – the metaphor of sculpting). The pupil must not be the Creature, neither the

educator a Victor Frankenstein because in the act of educating there necessarily is a prevision and its impossibility, an encounter and divergence, a sharing and the refusal to share, selfsameness and otherness, creativity (as productive imagination) and repetitiveness (as reproductive imagination), in sum, the freedom to refuse “in the name of efficacy the monopoly of a technique” and oppose the supreme value of efficacy that technique always tries to impose⁷⁸: that is the supremacy of didactics and of educational technologies instead of understanding formation as “Bildung”⁷⁹.

The desirable ideal of education is, fundamentally, the one that sides by *praxis*, the one that corresponds to the sculpting metaphor, understood as the act to induce the other to sculpture by himself his own statue, taking into account not only Plotin’s saying (1954: VI. Beau, 9: 105) but also Pindar’s maxim “Become what you are”⁸⁰, that is, become what you are in accordance with the interior image of humanity that each and every one harbors inside himself. This way, it is important not to forget that although the sculpting metaphor cannot escape a certain *poiesis* neither can it escape the consequences of the moulding metaphor and all that it implies⁸¹, education “is full of “calamities” because it is an unpredictable adventure in which a person is built and that no one can program”⁸².

Education cannot be confused with *poiesis*, as Frankenstein did. It cannot be confused with the fabrication of the other as if he were a mere “thing” or some kind of mouldable stuff, like clay, which the educator, as a potter, can mould at his free will. The myth of Frankenstein conducts us to the essence of the act of giving form, of “making” a man, but this “making”, as sustained by the moulding metaphor, is synonymous to the act of “fabricating a man” with all the consequences that such a gesture means⁸³.



After all, the Creature, close as he is to the “state of nature” as Rousseau described it, learns by himself like Émile (and here we can remember the virtues of “negative education” and of auto didacticism), and he only becomes violent when he feels abandoned by his creator and suffers the persecution of people, and here resides one of the great lessons of the myth of Frankenstein, “the myth of education as fabrication”: Although fabricated in order to obey the stimuli of his creator and under the auspices of the most advanced physiological techniques of the time (which today would correspond to genetic engineering), for better but especially for worse, the Creature, escapes the control of his creator⁸⁴. It is, therefore, in this escaping that dwells, as we see it, *les enjeux* of the educational adventure that we can sum up in the following question: “can we be educators without being Frankenstein?”⁸⁵.

Bibliography

Shelley, Mary, *Frankenstein. The 1818 Text. Contents. Nineteenth-Century Responses. Modern Criticism*, edited by J. Paul Hunter, New York, W. EW. Norton & Company, 1996.

Shelley, Mary, *Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus*, edited, introduction and notes by M. K. Joseph, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1998.

Shelley, Mary, *Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus. The 1818 Text*, edited, introduction and notes by Marilyn Butler, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1998^a.

Shelley, Mary, *Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus*, introduction and notes by Dr Siv Jansson, London, Wordsworth, 1999.

Shelley, Mary, *Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus*, edited, introduction and

notes by Maurice Hindle, London, Penguin Classics, 2003.

Shelley, Mary, *Frankenstein Galvanized. The 1818 Text plus Analysis and Commentary*, edited by Claire Bazin, Milton Keynes, Red Rattle Books, 2012.

Further bibliography

Araújo, Alberto Filipe, “Da metáfora da ‘modelagem’ ao mito de Pigmalião em educação. Considerações em torno de uma filosofia do imaginário educacional”, in Alberto Filipe Araújo; Joaquim Machado de Araújo (Org.), *História, Educação e Imaginário. Cadernos CIEd*, Braga, Centro de Investigação em Educação/ Instituto de Educação e Psicologia/ Universidade do Minho, 2007, p. 69-82.

Bachelard, Gaston, *La psychanalyse du feu*, Paris, Gallimard, 1985.

Berthin, Christine, “Frankenstein ou le Prométhée moderne”, in *L’humain et l’inhumain*, Paris, Belin, 1997, p. 97-165.

Carroll, Lewis, *The Annotated Alice*, edited by Martin Gardner, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1981.

Carter, Ronald; McRae, John, *The Penguin Guide to English Literature: Britain and Ireland*, London, Penguin Books, 1996.

Charbonnel, Nanine, *La Tâche Aveugle. Philosophie du Modèle. T. III*, Strasbourg, Presses Universitaires de Strasbourg, 1993.

Duchemin, Jacqueline, *Prométhée. Histoire du mythe, de ses origines orientales à ses incarnations modernes*, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1974.

Duperray, Max, “Un héritage interprété: Frankenstein au feu prométhéen”, in Gilles Menegaldo (dir.), *Frankenstein*, Paris, Éditions Autrement, 1998, p.62-75.

Durand, Gilbert, “Pérennité, dérivations et usure du mythe”, in Danièle Chauvin (dir.), *Champs de l’imaginaire*, Grenoble, Ellug, 1996, p. 81-107.

Florescu, Radu, *In Search of Franken-*



- stein. *Exploring the Myths Behind Mary Shelley's Monster*, London, Robson Books, 1996.
- Gual, Carlos García, *Diccionario de mitos*, Madrid, Siglo XXI, 2011.
- Haining, Peter (ed.), *The Frankenstein Omnibus*, London, Bounty Books, 2002.
- Hameline, Daniel, *L'éducation, ses images et son propos*, Paris, Éditions ESF, 1986.
- Hay, Daisy, *Young Romantics. The Shelleys, Byron and Other Entangled Lives*, London, Bloomsbury, 2010.
- Helvétius, *Œuvres complètes D'Helvétius. De l'homme et de ses facultés intellectuelles et de son éducation*, Paris, chez Mme Ve. Lepetit, Librairie, L'Imprimerie de Crapelet, 1818.
- Hindle, Maurice, "Introduction and notes", in Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus*, London, Penguin Classics, 2003, p VII-LLXIII.
- Hitchcok, Susan Tyler, *Frankenstein: as muitas faces de um monstro*, trad. de Henrique A. R. Monteiro. São Paulo, Larousse, 2010.
- Jansson, Siv, "Introduction and notes", in Mary Shelly, *Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus*, London, Wordsworth, 1999, p. VII-XXV.
- Joseph, M. K., "Introduction and notes", in Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1998, p. V-XX.
- Lecerle, Jean-Jacques, *Frankenstein: mythe et philosophie*, Paris, PUF, 1988.
- Lecerle, Jean-Jacques, "Le monstre de Frankenstein n'avait pas de carte d'identité", in Gilles Menegaldo (dir.), *Frankenstein*, Paris, Éditions Autrement, 1998, p. 77-87.
- Lecourt, Dominique, *Prométhée, Faust, Frankenstein. Fondements imaginaires de l'éthique*, Paris, Synthélabo, 1996.
- Lévy, Maurice, "Unde hoc monstrum?" in Gilles Menegaldo (dir.), *Frankenstein*, Paris, Éditions Autrement, 1998, p. 11-15.
- Meirieu, Philippe, *Frankenstein péda-*
- gogue*, Paris, ESF, 1996.
- Mellor, Anne K., *Mary Shelley. Her Life. Her Fiction. Her Monsters*, London, Routledge, 1998.
- Menegaldo, Gilles, "Le monstre court toujours...", in Gilles Menegaldo (dir.), *Frankenstein*, Paris, Éditions Autrement, 1998, p. 16-61.
- Reboul, Olivier, "Les Valeurs de L'Éducation", In André Jacob (Vol. dirigé par), I. *L'Univers Philosophique*, 2^e éd., Paris, PUF, 1991, p. 197-202.
- Plotin, *Ennéades*, trad. par Émile Bréhier, T. I. Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1954.
- Robineau-Weber, Anne-Gaëlle, "Frankenstein ou l'homme fabriqué", in Pierre Brunel (dir.), *L'Homme artificiel*, Paris, Didier Erudition/CNED, 1999, p. 203-241.
- Robineau-Weber, Anne-Gaëlle, "Frankenstein", in Brunel, Pierre et Vion-Dury, Juliette (dir.), *Dictionnaire des Mythes du Fantastique*, Limoges, Pulim, 2003, p. 139-144.
- Séchan, Louis, *Le mythe de Prométhée*, 2^e édition, Paris, PUF, 1985.
- Schor, Esther (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Mary Shelley*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Trousseau, Raymond, *Le thème de Prométhée dans la littérature européenne*, 2^e éd., Genève, Droz, 1967.
- Trousseau, Raymond, "Prométhée", in Pierre Brunel (Sous la dir. de), *Dictionnaire des Mythes Littéraires*, Monaco, Éditions du Rocher/ Jean Paul Bertrand Éditeur, 1988, p. 1139-1153.
- Wordsworth, William; Coleridge, Samuel T., *Lyrical Ballads and Other Poems*, London, Wordsworth Editions, 2003.
- Vierhaus, Rudolf, "Bildung", in Brunner, Otto Brunner; Werner Conze; Reinhard Koselleck (eds), *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*. Vol. 1 (A-D), Stuttgart, Klett-Cotta, 1972, p. 508-551.



Notes

¹ Ronald Carter, John McRae, *The Penguin Guide to English Literature: Britain and Ireland*, London, Penguin Books, 1996, p. 107.

² Lewis Carroll, *The Annotated Alice*, edited by Martin Gardner, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1981, p. 9.

³ Susan Tyler Hitchcock, *Frankenstein: as muitas faces de um monstro*, trad. de Henrique A. R. Monteiro. São Paulo, Larousse, 2010.

⁴ *Courrier Internacional*, Portuguese Edition, January 2014, p. 16.

⁵ Siv Jansson, "Introduction", in Shelley, Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus*, introduction and notes by Dr Siv Jansson, London, Wordsworth, 1999, p. VII.

⁶ *Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus*. The first edition was published anonymously in 1818 in three volumes, reprinted again anonymously in 1823 in a two-volume edition, and this edition was arranged by Mary Shelley's father, the radical philosopher and writer William Godwin, following the success of *Presumption*, the stage version of the novel. The 1831 single volume edition was extensively revised by Mary Shelley, especially in the earlier sections (cf. Joseph, in Shelley, 1998, p. XV). To Anne-Gaëlle Robineau-Weber "Le sous-titre du roman inscrit son histoire dans une généalogie scientifique et littéraire, celle du savant Vaucanson et celle du mythe de Prométhée" (1999: 204). And according to Gilles Menegaldo: "Le sous-titre du roman de Mary Shelley, 'Prométhée moderne', annonce son projet: revisiter un des grands mythes classiques à la lumière de la 'modernité' littéraire et esthétique (le mouvement romantique) et des préoccupations scientifiques, politiques et métaphysiques du moment" (1998, p. 16).

⁷ As defended by Daniel Hameline and Nanine Charbonnel talking about education implies the use of metaphors, namely the moulding or modeling metaphor. Inspired by the myth of Pygmalion and making use of their contribution, we propose the "sculpturing" metaphor which, in spite of requiring moulding or modeling in some way, it does not necessarily presuppose, as the moulding metaphor does, a pre-established or fixed model: that is, it leaves space to the educator's creativity or genius as a "Master Sculptor" animated by a productive or creative imagination. The use of these metaphors is in no way indifferent to the way in which we determine the end of education and its practices: the moulding metaphor transmits a traditional conception of pedagogy (the so-called *Traditional School*), while the sculpturing metaphor points to an innovative conception of pedagogy (the so-called *New School* or *New Education*) (Araújo, 2007, p. 69-82).

⁸ As Anne-Gaëlle Robineau-Weber points out the "vox populi, en baptisait la créature du nom de son créateur, c'est-à-dire enlevant au créateur sa part d'humanité pour l'offrir à la créature, a tranché. Ce glissement du nom est sans doute le symptôme de la difficulté qu'il y a dans le texte de Mary Shelley à définir exactement le apport qui uni créateur et créature" (1999, p. 204-205).

⁹ Etymologically "monster" comes from the Latin word *monstrum* which, according to Christine Berthin, "évoque l'idée de prodige et l'étonnement suscite par un phénomène surprenant et exceptionnel. L'irrégularité radicale désigne une exception singulière à l'ordre de la nature. Il est l'inclassable qui détonne et étonne. Mais au sens de 'prodige' se trouve parfois rattaché une nuance qui surdétermine l'origine du terme 'monster': certains étymologistes le font provenir de *monestrum*, dérivé du latin *monere* qui signifie 'avertir, avenir, annoncer'. L'appar-



rition du monstre est donc alors le signe précurseur d'événements destinés, par une décision transcendante, à bouleverser l'ordre naturel du monde. Le 'monstre' annonce un châtement à venir" (1997, p. 101).

¹⁰ Gilles Menegaldo writes on the theme of "La science et les limites du savoir": "Le couple savant/ créature forme les héros d'un roman qui s'inscrit à une époque où la communauté scientifique s'inquiète des grands changements annoncés par la société industrielle, mais s'interroge également sur la nature de l'homme, leur apport entre corps et esprit, la possibilité de prolonger la vie au-delà des limites naturelles par le truchement d'une nouvelle forme d'énergie, l'électricité" (1998, p. 24).

¹¹ Gilles Menegaldo points out that "Le thème de la création artificielle d'un être possède en soi un potentiel de fascination, d'autant qu'il implique une certaine forme de subversion du mythe inaugural" (1998, p. 16).

¹² Ronald Carter; John McRae, *The Penguin Guide to English Literature: Britain and Ireland*, London, Penguin Books, 1996, p. 108.

¹³ Jean-Jacques Lecercle, Le monstre de Frankenstein n'avait pas de carte d'identité, in Gilles Menegaldo (Dirigé par), *Frankenstein*, Paris, Éditions Autrement, 1998, p. 78-79.

¹⁴ Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus*, edited, introduction and notes by Maurice Hindle, London, Penguin Classics, 2003, p. 116-117.

¹⁵ Maurice Hindle, "Introduction", in Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus*, 2003, p. XXXII.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. XXVIII-XXXI.

¹⁷ Anne-Gaëlle Robineau-Weber refers that "L'éducation empirique du monstre qui passe d'abord par la perception des sensations,

puis par la différenciation des objets et la construction de la conscience, illustre les théories empiristes de Locke. Le récit de l'acquisition par la créature du langage visant d'abord à exprimer les besoins directs, puis les sentiments constitue une véritable paraphrase non seulement des *Essais* de Locke, mais aussi de *l'Essai sur l'origine des langues* et du *Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité* de Rousseau. Le monstre a de nombreux points communs avec 'l'homme à l'état de nature' de Rousseau, corrompu par la société" (1999: 211-212).

¹⁸ Anne-Gaëlle Robineau-Weber, "Frankenstein ou l'homme fabriqué", in Pierre Brunel (sous la dir.), *L'Homme artificiel*, Paris, Didier Erudition/ CNED, 1999, p. 212.

¹⁹ M. K. Joseph, "Introduction", in Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus*, edited, introduction and notes by M. K. Joseph, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1998, p. X.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, p. XI.

²¹ Maurice Hindle, "Introduction", in Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus*, 2003, p. XXVII.

²² Anne-Gaëlle Robineau-Weber, "Frankenstein ou l'homme fabriqué", p. 213.

²³ *Ibidem*, p. 213.

²⁴ Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus*, 2003, p. 223.

²⁵ M. K. Joseph, "Introduction", in Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus*, p. IX.

²⁶ Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus*, 2003, p. 222.

²⁷ Philippe Meirieu, *Frankenstein pédagogue*, Paris, ESF, 1996, p. 51.

²⁸ Here is Philippe Meirieu's commentary: "Fabriquer un homme et l'abandonner, c'est prendre, en effet, le risque terrible d'en faire 'un monstre'. Car la créature n'est 'un monstre' que parce qu'elle est abandonnée par



'son père'. Certes elle a la possibilité de découvrir le monde grâce à ses sens; certes, elle a l'opportunité d'accéder à la culture grâce à une rencontre miraculeuse avec des situations qui lui permettent des apprentissages tout à fait essentiels. Mais il manque à cela quelque chose d'encore plus essentiel: la créature apprend beaucoup *mais personne*, à proprement parler, *ne fait son éducation*. Aucun médiateur n'est là pour la présenter aux hommes et lui présenter les hommes. Alors, ce qui devait arriver, arriva: la rencontre a lieu... mais sous forme d'un véritable choc qui engendrera de nombreux cataclysmes" (1996, p. 52).

²⁹ Philippe Meirieu, *Frankenstein pédagogue*, p. 52-53.

³⁰ Philippe Meirieu, *Frankenstein pédagogue*, p. 53.

³¹ Maurice Hindle, "Introduction", in Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus*, 2003, p. XXV.

³² Anne-Gaëlle Robineau-Weber, "Frankenstein ou l'homme fabriqué", p. 217-221.

³³ Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus*, edited, introduction and notes by M. K. Joseph, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 36. In James Whale's *Frankenstein* movie (1931) "La scène de la création est encore plus significative. Au moment où la créature, encore allongée et couverte de bandages comme une momie, crisper faiblement la main, le docteur s'exclame: "It's alive! It's alive!", et il ajoute dans la première version du scénario, coupée par la censure: 'Now I know what it feels to be God!' (Menegaldo, 1998, p. 34). In Christine Berthin's study we also find this idea: "Frankenstein est l'histoire de l'homme moderne confronté à de nouvelles responsabilités dans un âge où l'humain a le pouvoir de prendre la place de Dieu, de recréer le monde et son environnement natu-

rel, social et politique. Quelles sont alors les frontières de l'humain? Jusqu'où peut-on aller?" (1997, p. 100). Let's also remember Percy B. Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* (1820) that expresses the force of the romantic optimism personified in the romantic "titanism" which means "le rejet de toute soumission et la croyance en la liberté et en la responsabilité totale de l'homme" (1997, p. 126). P.B. Shelley's poem also points to the idea that man is really a god on earth: "Le drame de Shelley retrace cette quête intérieure qui mène à la libération de soi et à l'affirmation que l'homme est son propre Dieu. Prométhée est l'homme de génie qui redécouvrant l'amour, apprend à aimer et à comprendre le monde, la nature et les hommes et à créer partout l'harmonie" (1977, p. 126). Dominique Lecourt also comments that "Victor Frankenstein parce qu'il a voulu, par orgueil et égoïsme, se faire l'égal du Dieu créateur, a réalisé une œuvre satanique" (1996, p. 102).

³⁴ Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus*, 2003, p. 55.

³⁵ Anne-Gaëlle Robineau-Weber, "Frankenstein ou l'homme fabriqué", p. 217.

³⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 223.

³⁷ Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus*, 2003, p. 52.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 51.

³⁹ M. K. Joseph, "Introduction", in Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus*, 1998, p. XXVI.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, p. XIII.

⁴¹ Maurice Hindle, "Introduction", in Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus*, 2003, p. XXIV; Siv Jansson, "Introduction", in Shelley, Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus*, 1999, p. IX-X. We can see behind these words the influence of the Bacon's conception of science: modern science with unlimited power:



“La science a doté l’homme de pouvoirs que nous pouvons presque qualifier de créateurs, qui l’ont rendu capable de changer et de modifier les êtres qui l’entourent, et par ses expérimentations d’interroger puissamment la nature non seulement comme un étudiant qui cherche passivement à en comprendre les opérations, mais plutôt comme un maître, actif avec ses instruments...” (Lecourt, 1996, p. 91).

⁴² Anne-Gaëlle Robineau-Weber, “Frankenstein ou l’homme fabriqué”, p. 224.

⁴³ Christine Berthin, “Frankenstein ou le Prométhée moderne”, in *L’humain et l’inhumain*, Paris, Belin, 1997, p. 130-135. We are confronted here with the classic theme of the relationship between science and society that Christine Berthin refers to in her study *L’humain et l’inhumain dans Frankenstein ou le Prométhée Moderne de Mary Shelley*: “Derrière la question de l’humain et de l’inhumain se profile le débat entre nature et société, et derrière ce débat-là, c’est toute la question de l’essence de l’homme qui se pose. L’homme naît-il ou devient-il bon? Qu’est-ce qu’être humain” (1997, p. 131).

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 128.

⁴⁵ Anne-Gaëlle Robineau-Weber, “Frankenstein ou l’homme fabriqué”, p. 225-226.

⁴⁶ Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus*, 2003, p. 150.

⁴⁷ Anne-Gaëlle Robineau-Weber, “Frankenstein ou l’homme fabriqué”, p. 234-236. The words of Anne-Gaëlle Robineau-Weber are disturbing: “Victor pourrait n’être qu’un fou monomane, et le monstre l’expression de cette folie” (1999, p. 236).

⁴⁸ Christine Berthin has asked the same question: “Peut-on voir en lui [Victor] une figure prométhéenne, ainsi que le suggère le sous-titre du roman qui semble faire de Frankenstein un ‘Prométhée moderne’?” (1977, p. 124). It should not be forgotten the

Romantic vision of Prometheus which makes of him “le symbole de la révolte dans l’ordre métaphysique. Il incarne le refus de la condition humaine et l’idée de progrès d’une humanité en marche. (...) Frankenstein est aussi associé à l’image du feu qui dans le texte devient à la fois étincelle de vie et lumière de l’esprit éclairé par la science (...) Le texte intègre donc nombre des valeurs que prend au cours des siècles, et en particulier au début du XIX^e siècle, la figure de Prométhée maître de la matière et de la science qui, grâce au feu du savoir, tire l’homme de l’obscurantisme. (...) Son rêve est celui du progrès de la science et de la civilisation.” (1997, p. 126-127). However, in spite of the optimistic affinity of Victor Frankenstein with the promethean myth, such has not hindered that his ultimate interpretation of the myth was not pessimistic and here Mary Shelley tends to an interpretation where Prometheus is guilty because of the hubris: “Dans sa réécriture du mythe de Prométhée comme mythe de la science, *Frankenstein* nous montre les dangers qu’il y a à donner libre cours à son orgueil et à se prendre pour Dieu. L’image de Prométhée sert donc à récuser le progrès des sciences lorsque ce progrès donne à l’homme un sens trompeur de sa puissance. L’interprétation conservatrice du mythe que choisit Mary Shelley est une mise en garde contre la science toute-puissante” (1997, p. 127). Dominique Lecourt has also tackled the question of the modernity of Prometheus in Mary Shelley’s novel: “Le ‘Prométhée moderne’ de Mary Shelley apparaît comme porteur non du feu de la civilisation, mais de la flamme d’un désir inextinguible à laquelle l’humanité, si elle ne s’en garde, risque de se consumer” (1996, p. 96, 93-97), having written before: “Mais de quel ‘Prométhée’ la jeune romancière pense-t-elle avoir ainsi



donné la figure moderne? Sans aucun doute, il s'agit de Prométhée latinisé comme 'plasticator', celui qui façonne la race des mortels humains avec de l'argile et du feu. Les historiens le confirment: la jeune fille avait lu la traduction par l'écrivain anglais John Dryden (1631-1700) des métamorphoses d'Ovide qui présente cette version du mythe grec" (1996, p. 87-88).

⁴⁹ Basically, there are two versions of the Prometheus story: 1) The Greek version where Prometheus, as *pyroforos*, appears as a rebellious Titan who steals the fire from Olympus to help and save mankind. It focus on his revolt against the gods, against "destiny" and his desire to benefit and save humanity (something akin and close to both Lord Byron and Percy B. Shelley); and 2) the Roman elaboration of Prometheus by Ovid in his *Metamorphoses*, which Mary Shelley read in 1815, where Prometheus is presented as *plasticator*, someone who creates and manipulates men into life rather than saving them (Hindle, in Shelley, 2003, p. XXIV; cf. also Joseph, in Shelley, 1998, p. VI-VII).

About this myth, we suggest among other authors, Raymond Trousson (1988, p. 1139-1153, 1976); Duchemin, 1974, Séchan, 1985. Prometheus is not only the creator of humanity and the one who gives fire to men in order that they may see, warm themselves and cook their food, as he also is the initiator of civilization, of the arts and the technics. The titan has freed men from death and gave them the fire that enables them to develop *technè*.

⁵⁰ Anne-Gaëlle Robineau-Weber remembers that "La scène de création hante le récit, elle n'en n'est pas seulement un point de départ, elle en est un point nodal. Victor Frankenstein est condamné à faire toujours renaître une 'hideuse progéniture'" (1999, p. 209).

⁵¹ This is how Anne-Gaëlle Robineau-Weber refers to the myth of Frankenstein: "Tout comme le 'bon sauvage' de Rousseau, Frankenstein est un mythe, un être de fiction dont la naissance est due autant à l'expérience d'un savant qu'à lecture des philosophes" (1999, p. 212). However, this author does not acknowledge that this myth is not just another individual and limited fiction work, originated in a determined socio-historical, cultural and biographical context of its author (Menegaldo, 1998, p. 19-21), but this same myth goes far beyond its time and space and becomes an universal and trans-historical theme with philosophical, pedagogical, psychological and prophetic implications as it is a common feature of the nature of the great myths there are truly so and are accepted as such.. If Mary Shelley's work has as an original intention to alert the reader of the novel to the perils of science ("Le récit des aventures de Frankenstein a donc d'abord une fonction morale: il doit démontrer à un jeune savant que 'science sans conscience n'est que ruine de l'âme'" (1999, p. 215), for the same reason it became a prophetic work at a scientific and philosophical level, namely on the relationship between ethics and science (Menegaldo, 1998, p. 24-25). It is also important to emphasize that its thematic plot went beyond this same intention and now situates itself in the mythical space. Besides, Victor at the end of the text is a prisoner of his own obsession and wants Walton to finish his mission and no more...

⁵² On the experience of solitude, let us remind the syllogism that the creature develops in order to convince Victor to create a female companion: "je tue parce que je souffre, je souffre parce que je se suis seul, donc je tue parce que je suis seul" (Robineau-Weber, 1999, p. 213). And Robineau-Weber concludes: "L'histoire du monstre est



celle d'une créature abandonnée qui se cherche un père" (1999, p. 215).

⁵³ Anne-Gaëlle Robineau-Weber, *Frankenstein ou l'homme fabriqué*, p. 235.

⁵⁴ Anne-Gaëlle Robineau-Weber writes that "Victor n'a rien du rebelle romantique et il faut bien constater que le Prométhée moderne de Mary Shelley diffère radicalement du *Prometheus Unbound* écrit en 1820 par le poète [Percy Shelley], ou même du *Prométhée* de Goethe écrit en 1773. Prométhée incarne pour le poète romantique la révolte métaphysique de l'artiste contre les dieux qu'il a lui-même créés. Victor, lui, ne s'en prend jamais aux dieux, il subit son destin" (1999, p.210-211). It is also important to know that "Le Prométhée de Shelley est une figuration optimiste de l'humanité triomphante du mal grâce au pouvoir de la raison; la croyance en la perfectibilité de l'être, en son éducation d'essence godwinienne ou rousseauiste, anime les familles libérales d'où Victor, le savant, est issu, dans la république éclairée des magistrats de Genève. (...) Victor Frankenstein travaille donc sous les auspices du dieu ami et bienfaiteur de l'humanité" (Duperray, 1998, p. 63).

⁵⁵ Gaston Bachelard, *La psychanalyse du feu*, Paris, Gallimard, 1985.

⁵⁶ Anne-Gaëlle Robineau-Weber, "Frankenstein ou l'homme fabriqué" p. 230-233. On this subject is important to quote Maurice Lévy: "Bien sûr, Frankenstein est aussi une histoire de double, double comme le mythe de Prométhée (*pyrophoros* et *plasticator*), double comme le couple créateur-créature qui s'entre-déchire dans un décor devenu mythique à force de s'étirer vers les confins du globe – sans qu'on sache vraiment lequel des deux est la projection mentale de l'autre, ni surtout lequel poursuit l'autre" (1998: 14). When Gilles Menegaldo analyses James Whale's movie, he writes: "Le film souligne

un autre trait distinctif du roman, la notion de double. Celle-ci s'exprime d'abord par la suggestion que la créature représente certains traits inavoués ou refoulés de la personnalité du créateur, en particulier en ce qui concerne la sexualité. L'idée du double est aussi illustrée dans la séquence de confrontation à l'intérieur du moulin. Le montage alterne des gros plans de Frankenstein et de sa créature filmés dans des cadrages analogues, suggérant une identification" (1998, p. 38).

⁵⁷ "Plus généralement, la version grecque d'Eschyle en avait fait le Prométhée 'Pyrophore' alors que la version latine insiste sur le démiurge, le créateur de l'homme, le Prométhée 'Plasticator'. En fondant les deux, créateur et usurpateur ne faisaient qu'un; paradoxalement le feu dérobé est devenu celui-là même qui donne la vie" (Duperray, 1998, p. 64).

⁵⁸ Gilbert Durand, "Pérennité, dérivations et usure du mythe", in Danièle Chauvin (Textes réunis par), *Champs de l'imaginaire*, Grenoble, Ellug, 1996, p. 91.

⁵⁹ Anne-Gaëlle Robineau-Weber, "Frankenstein ou l'homme fabriqué", p. 141; Christine Berthin, "Frankenstein ou le Prométhée moderne", in *L'humain et l'inhumain*, p. 127-128.

⁶⁰ Anne-Gaëlle Robineau-Weber, "Frankenstein ou l'homme fabriqué", p. 229. Let us remember the words of Anne-Gaëlle Robineau-Weber: "Victor, contrairement à cet autre grand mythe de la transgression qu'est Faust, ne fait pas de pacte avec le diable" (1999, p. 229).

⁶¹ *Ibidem*, p. 228-230. These words must be softened because he intends to be, like Prometheus, a benefactor to humanity, that is, to free humanity from the shackles of death and disease: "La première motivation de Victor consiste à vaincre la mort pour



combler le manque laissé par la disparition soudaine et brutale de la mère adorée. Son projet démiurgique est ancré dans cet impossible travail du deuil; même s'il affirme sa volonté de puissance, il se veut bienfaiteur de l'humanité, et se rêve comme une figure divine, objet de l'adoration d'une nouvelle race" (Menegaldo, 1998, p. 26).

⁶² *Ibidem*, p. 228-230.

⁶³ Gilbert Durand, "Pérennité, dérivations et usure du mythe", p. 82-83.

⁶⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 41-56.

⁶⁵ Philippe Meirieu, *Frankenstein pédagogue*, p. 13.

⁶⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 14.

⁶⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 41.

⁶⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 41-56.

⁶⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 12.

⁷⁰ Philippe Meirieu tell us: "Comme Frankenstein, l'éducateur 'qui ne sait pas ce qu'il fait', parvenant à donner vie à un être qui lui ressemble suffisamment pour qu'il soit réussi et qui, au nom même de cette ressemblance, et parce que la liberté lui a été donnée, échappe inéluctablement au contrôle de son 'fabricateur'. Pour le meilleur mais, surtout, pour le pire" (1996, p. 13).

⁷¹ Helvétius, *Œuvres complètes D'Helvétius. De l'homme et de ses facultés intellectuelles et de son éducation*, Paris, chez Mme Ve. Lepetit, Librairie, L'Imprimerie de Crapelet, 1818, p. 210.

⁷² According to Phillippe Meirieu Frankenstein's creature not withstanding its monstrous apperance, "Ce serait un homme profondément bon, à l'écart des dépravations sociales et des préjugés culturels, un homme qui découvrirait progressivement le monde et s'en construirait une représentation à partir des premières visions et impressions qui s'inscriraient dans sa conscience... un homme qui apprendrait ce qu'il faut savoir

des choses elles-mêmes, un homme qui ne demanderait qu'à être utile, à servir, à être aimé et estimé, un homme qui tendrait la main vers l'autre, nom point pour l'agresser mais pour témoigner de sa 'volonté bonne'... qui est bien autre chose que de la 'bonne volonté'. Ce serait, en d'autres termes, la créature de Frankenstein" (1996, p. 49-50).

⁷³ Philippe Meirieu, *Frankenstein pédagogue*, p. 50-51.

⁷⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 54.

⁷⁵ Cf. note 2.

⁷⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 54. Meirieu writes on this subject: "Le corps n'est qu'un ensemble d'organes, la formation une combinaison efficace de sensations et de connaissances, le sujet le simple résultat de procédures techniques qu'il suffit de mettre en œuvre à partir des principes élémentaires de la 'philosophie naturelle'. La physiologie et la psychologie, la construction du corps et le dressage social, cela suffit à 'faire un homme'" (1996, p. 55).

⁷⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 54.

⁷⁸ Olivier Reboul (1989), "Les Valeurs de L'Éducation", In André Jacob (Vol. dirigé par), I. *L'Univers Philosophique*, 2^e éd., Paris, PUF, 1991, p. 200.

⁷⁹ Rudolf Vierhaus, "Bildung", in Brunner, Otto Brunner; Werner Conze; Reinhard Koselleck (eds), *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*. Vol. 1 (A-D), Stuttgart, Klett-Cotta, 1972, p. 508-551.

⁸⁰ Plotin, *Ennéades*, trad. par Émile Bréhier, T. I. Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1954, p. 105.

⁸¹ Daniel Hameline, *L'éducation, ses images et son propos*, Paris, Éditions ESF, 1986, p. 145-147; Nanine Charbonnel, *La Tâche Aveugle. Philosophie du Modèle. T. III*, Strasbourg, Presses Universitaires de Strasbourg, 1993, p. 5-54. The moulding metaphor starts with the postulate of the total malleability of



the pupil who is subject to the educator as a malleable object. The educator, wanting to give the pupil a human form, most of the time ends by moulding the pupil at his own image disrespecting the pupil's right to his own difference and autonomy: "Le schème, tout ensemble cognitif et moral, impose d'attribuer à un seul des partenaires de l'interface didactique, la qualité d'acteur. Le sujet de l'éducation est bel et bien un assujetti, objet malléable dans les mains de qui le travail pour lui conférer forme humaine" (Hameline, 1986, p. 145).

⁸² Philippe Meirieu, *Frankenstein pédagogue*, p. 56. Frankenstein "Dans l'espoir de s'épargner les épreuves de l'imprévisibilité de l'éducation, il s'est infligé les épreuves, bien plus terribles, de la lutte acharnée entre la créature et son créateur. Au lieu d'une histoire, certes complexe et difficile, par laquelle un homme en introduit un autre dans

le monde et l'aide à se construire dans sa différence, il s'est engagé dans un projet infernal de maîtrise et d'abandon qui ne pouvait que les conduire, sa créature et lui, à cette course à la mort sur les solitudes désertiques du pôle où règnent définitivement 'le froid et la désolation'" (Shelley, 1978, p. 18)".

⁸³ Philippe Meirieu, *Frankenstein pédagogue*, p. 12.

⁸⁴ This is Philippe Meirieu's commentary: "Comme Frankenstein, l'éducateur 'qui ne sait pas ce qu'il fait', parvenant à donner vie à un être qui lui ressemble suffisamment pour qu'il soit réussi et qui, au nom même de cette ressemblance, et parce que la liberté lui a été donnée, échappe inéluctablement au contrôle de son 'fabricateur'. Pour le meilleur mais, surtout, pour le pire" (1996, p. 13).

⁸⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 14.