From Frankenstein’s Monster to Lester Ballard: The Evolving Gothic Monster

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SINCE THE FIRST GENETIC experiments by Gregor Mendel in the 1860s, eugenicists have tried to determine why some people have certain physical and behavioral traits and some do not. The nature-versus-nurture discussion has continued to thrive as scientists, historians, and sociologists debate why certain people fail and others succeed, even in the same environment. Those people who fail where other people flourish typically become stigmatized as the Other in a society, an outsider who does not conform to that society’s ideal image. In Child of God, Cormac McCarthy continues this nature-versus-nurture debate through Lester Ballard, a man who exists not just as a stigmatized Other but as a monstrous version of humanity. By presenting Lester’s descent into madness as a gradual process of social disenfranchisement, McCarthy rejects the argument that social outsiders are born deviants; in fact, he implicates society as a main contributor to this social deviance from which it yearns to separate itself.

To explore this topic of social injustice, McCarthy combines the tradition of British Gothicism with the realism of American Gothicism to create an updated version of Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein. Victor Frankenstein’s Monster is one of the most notable British Gothic monsters in literature; however, this creature cannot fully represent the Other. Even though British Gothicism is a genre set on challenging and destabilizing the existing ideologies that perpetuate social constructs such as “marriage, family, and home,” it is also based on an “anti-realistic” form (Riquelme, 585-86). As a
result of this lack of realism, representations of the Other such as Frankenstein’s Monster remain disconnected from readers and from society simply by their mythical nature. American Gothicism shares this goal of exposing the Other and society’s condemnation of this subset of outsiders; however, American Gothicism employs what Irving Malin calls “reality” as a “distorted mirror” (6). By representing the human Other, American Gothicism denies readers the opportunity to dismiss these outsiders completely.

By reinventing Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein, McCarthy grounds his argument in a historical pattern of social isolation and also forces his audience to pay attention to the progressive horror associated with allowing this system of social othering to continue. In a sense, Lester becomes a representative of all the Gothic monsters before him when McCarthy makes him a version of Frankenstein’s Monster. As Lester struggles through life, the reader must recognize that Lester’s story is a story shared by so many other outsiders. Although humans may not identify personally with Frankenstein’s Monster, they are able to see through Lester how even the Monster represents a being in constant search for personal companionship that neither his creators nor his community will provide for him. This lack of companionship becomes a catalyst for the desperate and violent attempts made by these Others to gain a sense of purpose and a sense of self in a world that has deemed them worthless. However, this pattern of social othering that McCarthy begins with Frankenstein’s Monster has become more violent as it has progressed to the life of Lester because, while Frankenstein’s Monster punishes man for social injustice through mythical horrors, Lester punishes society by threatening its actual ability to continue existing. As evolved human Gothic monster, Lester will not allow society to isolate him as the Other without first forcing society to recognize its own faults.

As one of the first mythical Gothic monsters, Frankenstein’s Monster represents a less threatening version of the social outsider than Lester because the Monster’s identity
disconnects him from humanity and because his desire for community never reaches the height of Lester’s desperation. Betty T. Bennett in *Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley: An Introduction* describes the Monster as “the living metaphor of [the] other” and asserts that he “expresses the position of anyone viewed as an outsider” (35-36); however, Bennett fails to account for the Monster’s inhumanity that actually separates him from the human “outsider.” As a being created from discarded body parts found in a “dissecting room and . . . [a] slaughter-house,” the Monster only has a connection to death and to trauma (Shelley, 315). Anne K. Mellor, in an attempt to pinpoint the Monster’s origin, remarks that the Monster “is of a different skin color and hence of a different race” than Frankenstein himself (2), but the search for the Monster’s origin seems futile because Frankenstein has used a conglomeration of races and people to make his creation. Shelley further disconnects the Monster from reality because Frankenstein never gives his creation a name, reinforcing the Monster’s lack of identity and connection to society. Along with belonging to no race and with having no complete history, the Monster also has outstanding qualities that most humans do not share with him. Towering above all the humans he encounters, the Monster stands “eight feet in height” (Shelley, 314) and often engages in extraordinary feats such as climbing mountains in a “flash” (338). Despite desiring acceptance into society, the Monster never has the opportunity to get beyond his horrifying physical appearance that so prominently overpowers his character. Paul Goetsch dehumanizes the Monster even further by comparing him to “a machine” (87). Instead of representing “the other,” the Monster actually represents a mythical form of dispossessed being society refuses to accept.

Although Shelley does not ground her Monster in reality, she does use the Monster as a way to reveal how human social acceptance has the power to determine the outcome of an individual’s life. As a creation of man, the Monster, from the beginning of his life, must suffer the scorn of human judg-
ment. Frankenstein, who, throughout the creation process, works himself into a frenzy of hatred for the Monster, abandons the Monster upon his first awakening and relates in disgust, "No mortal could support the horror of that countenance" (Shelley, 319). Even though Goetsch refers to the Monster as an "innocent" when he leaves Frankenstein’s house (87), the Monster never actually gets the chance to experience this innocence because of Frankenstein’s cruel and unwarranted revulsion of him. Instead of recognizing the Monster as an extension of himself, Frankenstein only sees how his human form differs from this monstrosity before him. This lack of underlying innocence in the Monster becomes evident when Frankenstein and the Monster reunite, and the Monster rebukes his "creator" saying, "You... detest and spurn me, thy creature, to whom thou art bound by ties only dissoluble by the annihilation of one of us" (Shelley, 363). While the Monster realizes the importance of his connection to Frankenstein, Frankenstein refuses to recognize how he has both created life and destroyed life simply by refusing any involvement with his creation. In fact, the only time that Frankenstein gives the Monster any attention comes when the Monster kills Frankenstein’s youngest brother, William, and this attention stems from hatred rather than from a creator’s love. Rather than recognizing his part in the destructive nature of the Monster, Frankenstein refuses to take any responsibility for the devastating effects of his creation: "Nothing in human shape could have destroyed that fair child. He was the murderer!" (338). Frankenstein, though fully responsible for the creation of this "murderer," still detaches himself from the Monster because he has no human physical features. Bennett argues that "Frankenstein remains locked in his insular world" (39), leaving the Monster even more detached from society because, just as the Monster has no history, he also has no creator to connect him to society.

After being totally abandoned by Frankenstein, the Monster attempts to create his own identity and to become an accepted member of society, although even he realizes that
his tumultuous beginning has put him at a disadvantage. Recounting the story of his awakening, the Monster actually weeps and refers to himself as “a poor, helpless, miserable wretch” who, upon his first entrance to the outside world, faces scorn when villagers chase him to an abandoned shack (Shelley, 367). Living in this shack, what the Monster refers to as a “kennel” (371), places the Monster even further on the outskirts of society because the low quality of his housing connects him to society’s lower class. The Monster only finds comfort in the shack from the family that lives beside him, a family that seems just as disconnected from mainstream society as the Monster. Through the loving relationship of Felix, Agatha, and De Lacey, the Monster pinpoints the reason for the “blind vacancy” that he constantly feels (387); he has never felt any type of familial love. Enamored by this family to which he feels connected, the Monster begins to lavish on them the love that he desires to obtain for himself by trying to ease their financial suffering. Despite the Monster’s efforts, however, even this family whom he has helped support scorns him and becomes frightened by his outer appearance, so instead of finding a brother in Felix, a sister in Agatha, and a father in De Lacey, the Monster only finds more heartache. Ironically, even the blind father, a man to whom the Monster has confessed his good deeds, refuses to save the Monster from the violent wrath of Felix. This inaction by De Lacey suggests an innate cruelty in humanity that reaches beyond just the fright of the Monster’s outer appearance. Felix and Agatha have a reason to fear the Monster, but De Lacey becomes the second father figure to disown the Monster seemingly for no reason. Rather than finding the love that he desires and that he tries to earn, the Monster learns that humans abound with cruelty regardless of what he does for them.

After losing his chance to join De Lacey’s family, the Monster makes one final attempt to obtain love and support from the human community. Instead of continuing to suffer at the hands of adult humans, the Monster resorts to children as his chance to find happiness. The Monster seems to recognize
in children this innocence that Frankenstein has denied him, and he hopes that they will not abuse him the way their older counterparts have. For this experiment, the Monster chooses Frankenstein’s brother William, a “beautiful child” whom he recognizes as “unprejudiced” and too young “to have imbibed a horror of deformity” (Shelley, 409). Much to the Monster’s own horror, he will not, however, have the chance to “educate” William to love unconditionally because, immediately, the boy begins to shout, “‘Let me go,’ . . . ‘monster! Ugly wretch’” (410). William obviously does not want the Monster “to adopt” him, as Mellor so generously states (22), and the Monster feels dismayed that even this young child does not have the capacity to look past his monstrous appearance. At this point, the Monster finally realizes that he has no place in this society and no chance to sway the human race to embrace him in spite of his deformity; he will forever exist as the despised Other. All humans, young and old, blind and innocent, have decided that the Monster does not belong and will never belong. This final act of human revulsion sends the Monster into a spasm of anger that he does not have the ability to control or to stop. When the Monster learns of the boy’s connection to his creator, Frankenstein, the Monster declares, “You shall be my first victim. . . . I too can create desolation.” Overcome with “despair” because of how humans judge him, the Monster finally succumbs to the pain that his creator and humanity have brought upon his existence (Shelley, 410).

Finding himself unable to gain acceptance, the Monster becomes the horrific being that each human he has encountered has assumed him to be. This final rejection strips the Monster of the kindness that has previously led him to chop wood for the destitute family and to save a girl from drowning. He now feels “the fiend within” him, the “fiend” that everyone has assumed existed in him from the start (Shelley, 411). From this moment of change, the Monster begins to terrorize society. After killing William, he frames Justine, Frankenstein’s family friend, for the murder; then, he kills
Henry Clerval, Frankenstein's best friend; and finally, he kills Elizabeth, Frankenstein's beloved wife. Goetsch contends that each of these horrific acts occurs as a result of a "creature that rebels against his creator" (89). Obviously, the Monster plots these actions because he knows that Frankenstein will suffer immensely without these friends and family. At the beginning of his killing spree, the Monster actually says, "My enemy [Frankenstein] is not invulnerable; this death will carry despair to him, and a thousand other miseries shall torment and destroy him" (Shelley, 410). Since the Monster has no chance at happiness, he decides that Frankenstein should not have happiness either. Although these murders do reveal how the Monster "rebels" against Frankenstein, they also reveal how the Monster "rebels" against society's beloved: innocent children, devoted friends, and virtuous women. Since society refuses him community, the Monster takes away these people whom society has deemed worthy of saving. Justine has survived a cruel mother, Henry has survived a "narrow-minded" father (304), and Elizabeth has survived her early childhood as an orphan. These three people have survived what the Monster could not, the lack of a loving family. Society has overlooked their histories and embraced them, so the Monster chooses to strip them of their good fortune just as Frankenstein and society choose to strip the Monster of his chance at happiness.

The Monster realizes that his only chance of gaining membership into a community will come if he has another creature like himself with whom to share his life. When the Monster finally speaks to Frankenstein since the first time that the scientist abandons him, the Monster requests that Frankenstein create another being "as deformed and horrible as" himself because she "would not deny herself to [him]" (Shelley, 411). Jane Blocker expands on the Monster's request by stating, "He asks for a creature no better, not purer, not more eugenic, but one that is, like himself, degenerate" (194). This pitiful request by the Monster demonstrates the horror that he feels toward his own self and the reality that he now un-
derstands how truly different he appears to people around him. However, the true horror of his lack of community extends even further because the Monster must depend upon Frankenstein, who has already stolen the Monster’s innocence at birth, to create the only community that he knows he will ever have. Frankenstein, still unwilling to correct his mistakes against his creation, refuses to build a companion for the Monster, reasoning that he “cannot . . . do an act of wickedness” (Shelley, 437). With this judgment by Frankenstein, the Monster must wander the outer regions of the Earth alone, but the Monster’s desperate need for companionship will not even allow him to hate Frankenstein truly. At Frankenstein’s death, the Monster mourns for Frankenstein, a man the Monster has once referred to as his “slave” (437), by calling him a “[g]enerous and self-devoted being” (492). For all of the sorrow that Frankenstein has caused him, the Monster still desires Frankenstein’s acceptance, making the Monster the real “slave.” As the Monster disappears into “darkness and distance” (497), he becomes completely immersed in his lost and lonely reality. Having no community or companion, neither from the lowest class of humans nor from a creature like himself, the Monster drifts away from society as a creature driven first by kindness, then by hatred, and finally by desperation, only to continue to live alone.

In Child of God, McCarthy revisits the Monster’s pattern of regression through a human monster, Lester Ballard. Just as Frankenstein’s Monster borrows from a “dissecting room and . . . [a] slaughter-house” to create his Monster (Shelley, 315), McCarthy borrows the traits of Frankenstein’s Monster to create Lester; however, unlike with the Monster, society does not have the ability to disconnect from Lester because of his lack of humanity. Lester actually epitomizes the typical American Gothic “hero,” the “weakling” (Malin, 5). When McCarthy first introduces Lester, he appears at the auction of his home as a “small, unclean, [and] unshaven” beggar hoping not to lose his only possession and his family heritage (McCarthy, 4). While a man in form, his description
makes him seem helpless and situates him securely in the lowest economic class in America; he seems simply to exist in a world in which he does not belong. Even the title of the book, *Child of God*, seems disconnected from the reality that Lester faces. Although God may have created Lester, the townspeople create the main version of Lester that the reader encounters. In the first section of the novel, McCarthy allows the history of Lester’s family, Lester’s childhood, and Lester’s adulthood to become known only through the townspeople’s gossip. Apparently, Lester has emerged from a group of ancestors known for breaking the rules, a father who “killed hisself” (21), and a mother who “run off” (21). Since Lester lacks a definitive history other than this miniscule amount of information, one gossiper simply declares, “I’ll say one thing about Lester though. You can trace em back to Adam if you want and goddamn if he didn’t outstrip em all” (81). The townspeople even speak of Lester as if he has terrorized their community his entire life, even as a young child, and as an adult, Lester intrigues them and frightens them by carrying a gun wherever he goes and by his ability to shoot the gun so accurately. These people piece together a version of Lester that makes him seem like a creature of disorder, rebellion, and displacement, traits that do not exactly attract acceptance from society.

Beneath this created, mythical image of Lester that the townspeople share, however, lies a man, much like the Monster, just wanting society to accept him despite his faults. In spite of the horrible stories told about him in town, Lester does try to associate with the townspeople and even attends church with them one Sunday, but instead of greeting him, the townspeople see him as a distraction: “Ballard had a cold and snuffled loudly through the service but nobody expected he would stop if God himself looked back askance so no one looked” (McCarthy, 32). Aside from not finding any relief from his loneliness by attending church, Lester also has no real friends, and the people whom he does talk to treat Lester the same way that the Monster’s neighbors treat him. Want-
ing to befriend the daughter of a man he knows, Lester brings her mentally deficient brother a baby robin to play with, yet the girl criticizes the present and then blames Lester when the boy kills the bird. Despite the horrible outcome of the present, Lester has good intentions and even feels “uneas[y]” when the bird dies (79). Also, just as the Monster saves the young girl from drowning, Lester attempts to help a woman whom he finds in the woods. When he tries to help her, she calls him a “son of a bitch” and throws a rock at him (42). Later, at the police station, she accuses Lester of rape and then beats him while the police officers watch. While Vereen M. Bell seems correct when she argues that Lester becomes “literally dispossessed” after he loses his father and his mother (58), this pattern of dispossession continues with each interaction he attempts to have within the community. They choose to believe the version of Lester that they have created in their own minds rather than see the real version of Lester that just wants to become a member of their community. Their version of Lester does not allow him to feel loneliness as a human does because, for the townspeople, their image of him depends totally on his continued isolation; he could not possibly want or deserve their acceptance.

Although the Monster erupts into a violent, murderous rage the day he realizes that society will never accept him, Lester first tries to combat society’s disrespect for him with his own form of disrespect towards society. Unlike the Monster, Lester does not feel as though he must hide and cower from those people who treat him so poorly, and each time a member of this community reminds him of his unworthiness, Lester gets bolder with his retaliation. Just as the Monster watches the family living next to him, Lester also watches people as they come to have sex at the local parking area, Frog Mountain; however, Lester does not watch out of a desire to gain acceptance like the Monster. Since women always reject Lester sexually, he fulfills his sexual desires through these unsuspecting people. One night while on Frog Mountain, Lester uses the scene of two people having sex to plea-
sure himself and also to condemn the racially mixed couple whom he watches. Even though Lester gets caught watching them and runs away, this detached interaction with these teens allows him to control them, even if just for a few minutes, and allows him to bolster his own feeling of self-importance by ridiculing or, in a sense, weakening these people by invading their privacy. Later, Lester’s deviance escalates even further when the woman he tries to help in the woods throws the rock at him. In response to her attack, he subordinates her by ripping her dress and exposing her. By taking her dress and leaving her naked in the woods, Lester not only personally invades her privacy but he also exposes her to the rest of society. Just as the townspeople have put him on display by gossiping constantly about him, Lester puts this woman on display in an attempt to strip her of whatever dignity she may have left. In his final act of deviance before he begins his murder spree, Lester approaches one last woman, but not to assist her as he does the woman in the woods; this time he unleashes all semblance of acceptable behavior and simply focuses on getting what he wants from her. When he returns to the house of the young girl and her mentally deficient brother, she disrespects him again by saying, “You ain’t even a man. You’re just a crazy thing” (McCarthy, 117). Lester, instead of cowering at these cruel words, replies, “I might be more than you think... Why don’t you show me them nice titties?” (117, 118). After he succeeds in making her uncomfortable, she kicks him out, and then the killing spree begins when he shoots her and burns her brother alive in the house. This gradual escalation of hatred that Lester enacts finally ends with Lester becoming exactly what the townspeople have always thought of him as, a dangerously degenerate man.

In the midst of all this swelling rage, Lester’s desperation becomes so overwhelming that he resorts to necrophilia in order to have some sort of human interaction. While the Monster must wait for Frankenstein to create a female monster for him, Lester alleviates his own loneliness and lack of
companionship by creating his own companion. When he finds a dead man and woman at Frog Mountain, he thinks of the woman as his chance for love. Positioning himself to have sex with her, Lester "pour[s] into [her] waxen ear everything he'd ever thought of saying to a woman. Who could say she did not hear him?" (McCarthy, 88-89). Edwin T. Arnold argues that this act "is not about violence but about companionship" because he "woos" the dead woman before he has sex with her (53). In fact, Lester never treats this woman with any disrespect; she seems to become the lover whom he has always wished to have. He makes sure to take with him the woman's "lipstick and rouge" before he takes her from the car (McCarthy, 90). Then, once back at his shack, Lester creates for the woman a romantic scene as they lie together in front of the blazing fireplace with only a blanket covering them. The next day he even buys her a new dress so that she will not have to wear the dress that he has previously taken from the woman in the woods. Although all of these passionate and loving acts with the dead woman seem demented, they actually reveal a sensitive side of Lester. This woman, though dead, allows Lester to share his love with someone and, in some ways, to feel love from another person. However, this companionship does not last long because she burns inside his shack when it catches on fire. No matter what Lester does or how he acts, he always seems to end up alone, so when he shoots the girl and burns her mentally deficient brother, he saves her body from the fire in an effort to replace his lost love. Exiting the burning house with the girl slung over his shoulder, Lester loses the innocent, romantic side of himself. Now, instead of waiting for society to accept him or for chance to provide him with another partner, he seems intent upon creating his own companionship, even if that means resorting to violence.

With this first murder and his move into the caves after his shack burns, Lester begins to take control of his life by creating his own identity and by creating his own community. Now living in the caves, Lester has completely separated him-
self from humanity; however, he uses this isolation to his advantage so that he has the power to start a new world. Since he has so much success feeling connected to the first dead woman, he decides to kill people and to bring them to his cave in order to start his own small “underworld” community (Combest, 14). Ironically, even though Lester begins the book as “[a] child of God” (McCarthy, 4), he becomes the god of his own world. He even begins to imagine how he would change God’s world: “Disorder in the woods, trees down, new paths needed. Given charge Ballard would have made things more orderly in the woods and in men’s souls” (136). Lester wants to change all of the aspects of life that he thinks God has abandoned, just as he has decided to change his own wretched life. He even has dreams associating him with Jesus riding a mule before his crucifixion. Ashley Combest argues that Lester’s connections to Jesus through this dream do not make Lester “a savior” but a “product of a doomed world, one of many” (15), but Combest fails to recognize that Lester does try to become “a savior” for himself and for the world. He becomes Jean-Paul Sartre’s existential man, a “man in possession of himself” and, therefore, “responsible for himself . . . [and] for all men” (208). Through this cave community of dead people whom he thinks look like “saints” (McCarthy, 135), Lester seems to succeed in relieving his loneliness and in creating a sense of order with people from a society that has continuously treated him with cruelty. Although Lester follows the pattern of the Monster as he evolves from a kind person to a murderous villain, Lester decides to use this cruel human society to create his own version of reality. While the Monster retreats to the most desolate places on Earth after Frankenstein chooses not to create him a companion and then dies, Lester does not fear the human race because he is one of them, and he feels as though he has the right to transform society as he sees necessary.

However, despite Lester’s efforts to create a better world for himself and for those whom he kills, even he fails to sus-
tain this self-reliant existentialism that he hopes to achieve. Even though Lester tries to become his own “savior” in this world, he becomes like the Monster, a “slave” to the community that does not want him. While Lester seems in control of his own life, he repeatedly succumbs to moments when he becomes his old, desiring self: “Whatever voice spoke him was no demon but some old shed self that came yet from time to time in the name of sanity, a hand to gentle him back from the rim of his disastrous wrath” (McCarthy, 158). As if questioning Lester’s motivation, this “voice” specifically comes to him while he drags his community of dead people to a new location in order to save them. Later, when he dreams of riding on a mule as Jesus does, Lester cries, indicating that he realizes that an end soon approaches for him as well. The next day Lester emerges from his cave wearing his victims’ clothes and one of his victim’s scalps, ready to kill John Greer, the man who now lives on Lester’s auctioned farm. Arnold recognizes Lester’s descent into madness as an indication of Lester beginning “to lose himself” (53). In fact, Lester reveals just how impossible his task of creating his own community has become for him. By wearing the identities of his murdered community, he no longer seems like the creator because he, in a distorted way, has actually just assimilated his actions and his appearance to become more like his companions, just as members of mainstream society conform to become more like the people in their communities. No matter how hard Lester has tried to differentiate himself from that man who once wanted to join society so badly, he still desires that human connection that only living people have the power to provide for him. Dressing up like his victims becomes Lester’s final, desperate act to get attention and to change his life of solitude.

Although Lester’s cave community and his madness do garner him attention, they do not help him to gain sympathy from those around him. In fact, Lester actually goes from an outsider that society chooses to ignore to a true Gothic monster because society no longer willingly lets Lester live in
peace. Once the townspeople figure out what Lester has
done, they react violently towards him even after the police
have confined him to a hospital. In an attempt to teach Lester
a lesson and to find the cave community, a group of men
takes Lester from the hospital so that he will show them the
bodies. Despite the forcefulness of the men, Lester leads
them to the wrong cave where he escapes through some tun-
nels. Finally, Lester has a chance to rejoin his community,
but he chooses not to return there. Instead, when Lester
emerges from the cave, he sees a young boy on a bus looking
out a window who reminds Lester of himself because, even
though "there was nothing" for the boy to see, "he was look-
ing anyway" (McCarthy, 191). Regardless of what Lester has
done to society or what society has done to him, Lester keeps
looking for that sign of hope that he still has a chance for
acceptance into a community. Then, although he knows that
punishment awaits him, Lester returns to the hospital and
tells a nurse, "I'm supposed to be here" (192). Bell remarks
that, by coming back to the hospital, Lester reveals a "dim
acknowledgement of an idea of home" (60). Lester realizes
that his cave community will never sustain him and that this
living human society still remains the "home" that he needs.
Even though society has abandoned Lester, he seems to know
when he gives himself back to the authorities that he must
suffer for his crimes against society just as he made them
suffer. Like the Monster, Lester gives himself over com-
pletely to society and essentially sentences himself to seclu-
sion, and society once again reigns as the victor over any out-
sider hoping for acceptance.

With a human American Gothic monster, society does not
have the ability simply to disconnect and to destroy a creature
with whom it refuses to identify. In Lester, each member of
society must see his or her own participation in his degener-
grating life. While both the Monster and Lester face a horrific
and lonely ending that denies them not just a place in society
but also a living future, the Monster spares society from
watching him suffer, but by returning to the hospital, Lester
forces society to deal with his suffering and its role in his suffering. No pity ever comes for Lester, however, because they lock him “in a cage” at a “state hospital,” even though the police never convict him of a crime (McCarthy, 193). Later, after he dies, they send him to a “state medical school” where his body gets “slayed, eviscerated, [and] dissected” (194). This dismemberment of Lester’s body hearkens back to Frankenstein’s creation of the Monster and, thus, suggests the death of the Monster as well. With the death of Lester and the symbolic death of the Monster, the Gothic monster, the ultimate Other in society, sees the end of hope. However, while society has destined these monsters to stay forever confined to the outside, the visions of “monsters worse to come” that the medical students see in Lester’s body reveal that this vicious cycle of violence will not end (194), and just as the violence has worsened from Frankenstein’s Monster to Lester, the future “monsters” will only increase in their rage against society. As long as these Gothic monsters remain imprisoned in the role of the Other, the cycle of violence will continue to plague this unapologetic and unforgiving society that has created and then demonized these outsiders simply because they do not fit the ideal image that society has designed.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


