

## THE DESTRUCTIVE POWER OF AMOUR-PROPRE: ANALYZING SELF-LOVE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES IN FRANKENSTEIN, RAPPACCINI'S DAUGHTER AND THE BIRTHMARK

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### Abstract

This study utilizes Rousseau's concept of Amour-Propre or distorted self-love as a theoretical lens to analyze the destructive consequences of characters' self-obsession in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Rappaccini's Daughter* and *The Birthmark*. The research aims to uncover how the characters' desire for recognition, lack of empathy and relentless pursuit of personal goals lead to tragic outcomes in each narrative. By exploring the characters' actions and decisions, the study identifies thematic similarities in how self-love manifests across the texts. While previous studies have explored individual themes of ambition and isolation, this study fills a gap by focusing specifically on Amour-Propre as a unifying theory that links the works. Findings suggest that in all three narratives, Amour-Propre drives characters to prioritize personal desires over ethical responsibilities ultimately leading to isolation, death and destruction. The conclusion emphasizes that Rousseau's concept not only connects these diverse texts but also offers insight into the psychological and moral consequences of unchecked ambition. The significance of this study lies in its contribution to understanding the pervasive influence of self-centeredness on human behavior and its tragic ramifications in literature.

**Keywords:** *Amour Propre, Frankenstein, Rappaccini's Daughter, The Birthmark, Tragic Consequences*

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## 1. Introduction

The theme of self-love and its consequences has been a recurring topic in literature reflecting the complexities of human desires and moral dilemmas. As noted by scholars such as Jennifer Mensch, literary characters driven by unchecked ambition and the need for validation often face tragic downfalls highlighting the dangers of prioritizing personal goals over ethical responsibilities (Mensch, 2019). During the 19th century many writers including Mary Shelley and Nathaniel Hawthorne explored these themes within the broader context of Romanticism and Gothic literature genres known for their emphasis on human emotion and the darker sides of ambition (Hume, 1969). Their works frequently depict characters struggling with internal conflicts driven by obsessions that ultimately lead to destructive outcomes. Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Hawthorne's *Rappaccini's Daughter* and *The Birthmark* are prime examples of narratives where characters' relentless pursuit of their desires results in tragic consequences serving as a critique of unchecked ambition and self-centeredness (Hogle, 2010).

In this research, Rousseau's concept of *Amour-Propre* (distorted self-love) is employed as the primary theoretical framework. *Amour-Propre*, according to Rousseau refers to the need for external validation and the pursuit of selfish desires at the expense of moral integrity and empathy (Rousseau, 2018). This theory has been widely discussed in academic circles with scholars such as Maurice Cranston and Leo Damrosch arguing that individuals driven by *Amour-Propre* often act in ways that prioritize their personal gains leading to isolation, alienation and destruction (Cranston, 1991; Damrosch, 2005). This theory provides a valuable lens through which to analyze the self-obsessed characters in the selected texts allowing a deeper exploration of the ethical consequences of such behavior.

By applying Rousseau's theory, this study examines how the characters in *Frankenstein*, *Rappaccini's Daughter* and *The Birthmark* embody the destructive consequences of *Amour-Propre*. Victor Frankenstein's obsessive quest for scientific achievement, Giovanni and Aylmer's control over the women in their lives and the central theme of distorted love in all three narratives are explored in light of this concept (Novak, 1979). Through this analysis, the research uncovers how the characters' lack of empathy, desire for external praise and pursuit of personal ambitions lead to devastating outcomes revealing the enduring relevance of Rousseau's theory in understanding human behavior and literary depictions of self-love.

### **1.1.Nathaniel Hawthorne**

Born in Salem, Massachusetts, American author Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864) is renowned for his contributions to the romanticism literary movement. His literary career commenced in 1828 whilst he wrote his first work underneath the penname Fanshawe. After the collection of short stories *Twice-Told Tales* was published in 1837, Hawthorne became well-known. He wed Sophia Peabody in 1842 and the two of them had three children together. With the release of *The Scarlet Letter* in 1850 and *The House of the Seven Gables* in 1851 Hawthorne attained critical recognition (Baym, 1982). These pieces like his previous books and short tales are distinguished by their examination of sin, guilt and evil as fundamental human traits. His writings which combine surrealist and historical romance elements to convey recurring themes of ancestral evil, shame and punishment are regarded as cautionary tales. He left behind a substantial literary legacy that is being studied and valued today (Meltzer, 2006).

### **1.2.Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley**

Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley (1797-1851) was an English novelist most renowned for her innovative Gothic writing especially for her 1818 publication of the beloved novel *Frankenstein: or The Modern Prometheus*. Mary started a romantic relationship with her father's political ally and poet Percy Bysshe Shelley in 1814 (Feldman, 1978). Mary and Percy got married in 1816 and stayed with Lord Byron in Switzerland during the summer of 1816 that Mary had the inspiration for *Frankenstein*. Other tragedies occurred the couple inclusive of Percy's drowning in 1822 and the death of their kids. After her husband handed away Mary Shelley lower back to England to raise Percy Florence Shelley their surviving son. Despite her contamination she endured to jot down professionally and produced numerous books including *Lodore* (1835), *The Last Man* (1826), and *Valperga* (1823). Although *Frankenstein* is Shelley's most famous work, latest studies have highlighted her other literary achievements and her continued impact on social and political discourse (Bennett, 1998).

### **1.3.Hawthorne's Short Stories: The Birthmark and Rappaccini's Daughter**

The fascinating short story by Hawthorne *The Birthmark* centers on Aylmer a scientist and Georgiana his wife who bears a touch birthmark on her face. Because Aylmer perceives this birthmark as an illness, she is fixated on getting rid of it. He works tirelessly toward his aim, even carrying out dangerous medical experiments which in the long run have disastrous outcomes. The tale explores themes of ambition, the irrationality of looking to modify human nature's imperfections and the tragic outcome from seeking to manage it. Hawthorne cautions against the hubris of meddling with nature's harmonious shape via Aylmer's relentless pursuit (Wentersdorf, 1963).

The setting of Hawthorne's engrossing Gothic short story *Rappaccini's Daughter* is Padua, Italy. The protagonist of the narrative is Giacomo Rappaccini a talented scientific researcher who maintains a lawn full of toxic plants. Being raised surrounded by using this deadly vegetation Rappaccini's daughter Beatrice will become proof against their tragic outcomes. But due to the poisoning she will become deadly to other humans. As the unconventional progress's topics of forbidden love, loneliness and the aftermath of medical experimentation come to be increasingly more salient. In this unsettling story that explores the issue of human nature and the perils of tampering with nature Hawthorne skillfully blends mystery and tragedy. *Rappaccini's Daughter* never fails to enthrall readers with its timeless themes and ominous appeal (Hawthorne, 2022).

#### **1.4.Shelley's Novella: Frankenstein**

The captivating story *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley follows the driven scientist Victor Frankenstein as he creates a creature of his own devising. But as it turns out Victor's creation is a hideous misunderstood creature who is despised by both his maker and society at large. The creature driven by loneliness and misery carries out murderous and destructive deeds in an attempt to exact revenge on Victor and humanity. The story explores issues of human nature's complexity the fallout from playing god and scientific ambition. The timeless classic *Frankenstein* captivates readers with its examination of moral accountability and the quest for knowledge (Shelley, 2018).

Understanding the significance of this study which is to examine Shelley's *Frankenstein* Hawthorne's *The Birthmark* and *Rappaccini's Daughter* the use of Rousseau's idea of 'Amour- Propre' or distorted self-love requires an expertise of the foundational background provided by way of this studies. This approach looks for the tactics wherein all tale's tragic outcomes are because of the protagonists' lack of empathy, want for reward from others and passion with reaching their own goals. Hawthorne's works, particularly *Rappaccini's Daughter* and *The Birthmark* are nicely identified for exploring human weak spot and the consequences of unchecked ambition.

## **2. Textual Literature Review**

This textual literature review provides an overview of previous studies related to Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Hawthorne's *Rappaccini's Daughter* and *The Birthmark*. It explores how scholars have engaged with themes of self-love ambition and moral consequences in these works. By examining the existing interpretations, this review identifies gaps in the literature in relation to the application of Rousseau's concept of *Amour-Propre*. This paves the way for the current study to offer a fresh perspective on the destructive effects of distorted self-love in the selected texts.

### **2.1.The Birthmark: Previous Studies**

(Goldenberg and Roberts, 2011), provide a perceptive examination of the existential ramifications of the story's objectification of women. They draw attention to Georgiana's red birthmark, portraying it as a representation of her earthly flaws that causes worry for both her and her spouse (Marshall, 2011). The researchers contend that when viewed through an existential perspective, men's sexual attraction to women and their imperfect physiological functions represent existential challenges which are reflected in the dual reactions towards women's bodies: fear of their natural functions and idealized assessments of physical appearance. Within the context of existentialism, they propose that the sexualization and objectification of women's bodies (Bernard et. al., 2015); which emphasizes an idealized attractiveness while removing natural possibly dangerous aspects, acts to lessen these existential concerns. But in the end, this defensive behavior dehumanizes women by treating them like inanimate objects. They highlight the need for a greater knowledge of the complexity surrounding gender by shedding attention on the persistent cultural demands placed on women to have faultless beauty and the psychological pain that results from this pressure through their investigation.

Conducting a protagonist analysis of Hawthorne's, *The Birthmark*, (Anwar, 2020), concentrates on Aylmer's character. The study explores Aylmer's representation as a bright and driven scientist whose enthusiasm for science is only rivaled by his commitment to his wife, Georgiana using a descriptive research approach. The study looks into Aylmer's obsession with Georgiana's red birthmark which he believes to be her one flaw. Anwar analyzes how the story's plot is driven by Aylmer's concern with getting rid of the birthmark using a descriptive technique. The protagonist's internal struggle between his love for Georgiana and his desire to become a scientist serves as the analytical lens (Resetarits, 2012); illuminating the intricacies of human nature and the quest of perfection. By means of this study, Anwar offers a deeper comprehension of the issues and reasons that underpin *The Birthmark* as well as insights into the character of Aylmer and his role in crafting the plot (Liu, 2015).

### **2.2.Rappaccini's Daughter: Previous Studies**

In his article, Rosenberry concentrates on revealing the story's metaphorical depths. He draws attention to how challenging it is for readers to understand the story's deeper connotations even though Hawthorne makes clear that he loves allegory. In an effort to promote a better comprehension and appreciation of the story, he acknowledges the intricacy of the narrative and the range of interpretations it has prompted. Two fundamental presumptions form the basis of the analysis: first that Beatrice Rappaccini, the title character is the main source of meaning (Brenzo, 1976); especially in light of her function as her father's daughter (Buonomo, 2020). Second, Giovanni Guasconti's persona establishes the narrative perspective particularly in his role as a student. Using these presumptions as a guide, Rosenberry (1960) offers a coherent allegorical reading of the

narrative with the goal of clearly defining the metaphorical recommendations. The analysis lens is centered on the roles and relationships that the characters have within the story, with an emphasis on deciphering underlying symbolic meanings.

Evans (1964) observes in his research paper the mid-20th century surge in academic interest in Hawthorne's writings. Similar to Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw*, the story and especially Rappaccini's Daughter becomes a focus of critical interpretation demonstrating its importance as a test subject for subsequent critical interpretations (Liebman, 1968). Evans draws attention to the lack of agreement among academics regarding the story's ultimate significance and the consistency of its allegory, highlighting the variety of interpretations that currently exist (Samuels, 1968). The key characters' metaphorical identities are frequently the subject of controversy, thus it's important to establish their identities clearly in order to understand Hawthorne's goal. Evans highlights the author's attempt to create parallels with the biblical story by calling attention to Hawthorne's references to Eden throughout the text (Ross, 1971). The scholar draws attention to Hawthorne's direct references in Giovanni's assessment of Rappaccini's reluctance to make physical touch with his grown flowers. This line raises questions about whether Rappaccini and Adam should be equated a theory that even Hawthorne himself suggests. The analytical lens utilized centers on identifying allegorical identities and themes within the story, namely by examining biblical similarities and symbolic interpretations.

### **2.3. Frankenstein: Previous Studies**

(London, 1993), despite the strong feminist legacy that has transformed readings of the text, points out in his paper a notable gap in the current research by highlighting the novel's relative disregard of masculinity's portrayal (Paternotte, 2023). London contends that whereas feminist interpretations of Frankenstein have appropriately highlighted the book's female topic, they have unintentionally hidden the work's purposeful and dramatic portrayal of masculinity. London proposes that a greater knowledge of masculinity in Frankenstein could challenge current concepts of gendering in both the book itself and literary history by exploring how the male body is used within the novel and its larger cultural context (Nyborg, 2016). According to him, the spectacle of masculinity that pervaded late nineteenth-century depictions of Shelley and her writings has impacted scholarly readings, including significant works such as James Rieger's textual and biographical reconstructions of Frankenstein. London uses a feminist lens to suggest that by highlighting the complexity and inconsistencies inherent in masculine authority analyzing Frankenstein's portrayal of masculinity helps enhance feminist critique (Purinton, 1993).

In his paper, Bugg (2005) explores the novel's intricate issues of schooling, exile, and the geopolitics of physical difference. By utilizing the historical background furnished by Mary Wollstonecraft's literary works, specifically her analysis of Olaudah Equiano's

"Interesting Narrative," Bugg clarifies the intricate connection among language, social structure, and the understanding of race and gender (Smith, 2004). Like her later arguments in "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman," Bugg highlights Wollstonecraft's careful analysis of Equiano's argumentative technique as a foundation for arguing for his assimilation into British culture (Wakefield, 2020). This connection between the persecution of Caribbean slaves and the subjection of women lays the groundwork for comprehending Shelley's examination of these topics in *Frankenstein*. The scholar draws attention to Shelley's emphasis on race and slavery in *Frankenstein*, following its literary and cultural ramifications from modern critiques to film adaptations (Mulvey-Roberts, 2016). Shelley's story becomes a forum for examining the geopolitics of physical difference and the consequences of somatically-based societal institutions as viewed through the lenses of race and empire. In order to determine how Shelley's book addresses questions of race, slavery, and imperialism, Bugg's analysis is centered on critical race theory and postcolonial studies.

The literature review makes it abundantly glaring that earlier research on *The Birthmark*, Rappaccini's Daughter and *Frankenstein* turned into carried out using more than a few techniques together with crucial racial idea, feminist idea, existentialist concept and allegory. However, applying Rousseau's idea of Amour-Propre to the evaluation of these selected writings leaves out an important detail.

### 3. Research Methodology

The analysis of human nature and societal dynamics in the chosen stories *The Birthmark*, Rappaccini's Daughter and *Frankenstein* is theoretically underpinned by Rousseau's concept of Amour-Propre which he described as the root cause of human enslavement, conflict, vice, suffering and alienation in civil society (Rousseau, 1952). Rousseau's principle of Amour-Propre refers to the sense of self-worth that arises from others' recognition and admiration. It denotes a form of self-concept that relies more on peer comparison and external endorsement than on an intrinsic sense of value (Neuhouser, 2010). Rousseau argues that the emphasis civil society places on social norms and expectations fosters the development of Amour-Propre at the expense of an individual's innate sense of self (Dent, 2008). The social self is influenced by Amour-Propre leading individuals to focus on how they are perceived by others. This results in an insatiable desire for validation from others and a sense of superiority. Constantly comparing oneself to others breeds feelings of egoism, competitiveness and inadequacy which in turn foster moral degeneration and social instability (Rousseau, 2018). Rousseau also contends that in the absence of Amour-Propre, human faults would either cease to exist entirely or occur far less frequently as individuals would be driven more by an authentic sense of self-worth that originates internally rather than externally.

This study applies Rousseau's idea of Amour-Propre to the selected narratives in order to analyze how the characters' actions and motivations are influenced by their pursuit

of external validation and supremacy. Aylmer's obsession with eliminating his wife's birthmark in *The Birthmark* stems from his need for perfection and social approval which has disastrous consequences (Schaner, 1917). In *Rappaccini's Daughter*, the effects of Rappaccini's quest for scientific recognition which ultimately results in his daughter's destruction are explored. Similarly, Victor in *Frankenstein* creates the monster in an attempt to showcase his scientific prowess and defy the limitations imposed by nature which leads to horrific consequences for both society and him.

### 3.1. Research Design

The current study makes use of a qualitative comparative analysis of the narratives with an emphasis on analyzing how *Amour-Propre* manifests itself within the relationships and behaviors of the characters and what that means for both individual autonomy and societal harmony. During the information gathering step textual proof from the narratives ought to be received to support the analysis. The lines, declarations and conversations between characters that emphasize the effects and expressions of *amour-propre*. Following this, the Data Analysis stage includes classifying the information that has been obtained consistent with *Amour-Propre* subject matters, consisting of the characters' pursuit of outside reputation the results of appearing out of ego and the portrayal of social influences. This study compares and contrasts the methods in which *amour-propre* is portrayed in every story through close textual analysis. It also looks at how this analysis' theme pertains to our information of human nature and social dynamics.

By putting the stories in Rousseau's theoretical framework this study pursuits to offer light at the dangers of unchecked ego and self-interest as indorsed in *The Birthmark*, *Rappaccini's Daughter* and *Frankenstein*. The theoretical framework that Rousseau's philosophy built within the component; data analysis ought to be taken into consideration whilst deciphering the outcomes. This way reading how the tales illustrate Rousseau's warnings against the dangers of unchecked ego and self-interest in addition to weighing the theories' applicability to contemporary society.

## 4. Data Analysis

In the information analytical phase of the study, a qualitative comparative analysis of the stories *The Birthmark*, *Rappaccini's Daughter* and *Frankenstein* is carried out the usage of Rousseau's idea of *amour-propre*. This analysis, which is based totally on Rousseau's theoretical framework seems for *Amour-Propre* inside the events and interactions of the characters and examines the way it affects the dynamics of society and individual autonomy in each story. This research seeks out scenarios wherein people's moves are pushed by using their need for approval from others and a sense of superiority. This study tries to elucidate the thematic importance of Rousseau's theory for understanding human nature and the social environment presented in *The Birthmark*, *Rappaccini's Daughter* and *Frankenstein* thru a comparative analysis of the representation

of Amour-Propre in every narrative. Here are some passages from all three stories that demonstrate how the protagonists' warped love ultimately led them to catastrophe. For instance, in *The Birthmark*:

*"The scientist's name was Aylmer. He had so totally given himself to scientific studies that he could not be weakened by a second love. His love for his young wife could only be the stronger of the two if it could link itself with his love of science."* (Hawthorne, 1843, p. 3)

This remark perfectly captures the essence of Aylmer's personality in Hawthorne's *The Birthmark* as well as his unusual dedication to science. When viewed via the prism of Rousseau's notion of 'Amour-Propre,' or distorted self-love Aylmer's fixation with science becomes a reflection of his ego and need for approval from others. Aylmer's main passion is his scientific research rather than his wife Georgiana. His zeal for science becomes so great that it eclipses all of his other feelings, even his love for Georgiana. According to Rousseau, 'Amour-Propre refers to the erroneous feeling of self-love that people experience when they look to other people or outside sources for validation and affirmation such as society or in Aylmer's case, his quest for scientific perfection. Aylmer's misguided self-love is evident in his unwavering concentration on his scientific research and his wish to have Georgiana's birthmark removed. Rather than viewing Georgiana's birthmark as a characteristic that enhances his scientific reputation, he views it as a defect. His obsession with eradicating the birthmark is pushed greater by way of a desire to establish his personal brilliance and skill than by means of a real problem for Georgiana's nicely-being. Throughout the whole story Aylmer's moves are driven by his ego and his preference to show that he is an advanced scientist.

*"No; that garden is cultivated by the own hands of Signor Giacomo Rappaccini the famous doctor who I warrant him, has been heard of as far as Naples"* (Hawthorne, 1844, p. 4).

The quote from Hawthorne's *Rappaccini's Daughter* sheds light on Doctor Rappaccini's personality and his commitment to his scientific endeavors. By examining Rappaccini's experiments and obsession with his garden through the prism of Rousseau's 'Amour-Propre,' or distorted self-love these can be seen as expressions of his ego and need for approval from others. The fact that Doctor Rappaccini tended to the garden himself it is said to have been done entirely by hand evidences how deeply committed he was to his scientific pursuits. The fact that his fame extends to Naples emphasizes how much he wants the scientific world as a whole to acknowledge and validate him. Rappaccini's garden is a reflection of his warped sense of self-love as well as a laboratory. Using his scientific knowledge and natural manipulation skills he creates dangerous plants with amazing qualities. His preoccupation with his experiments takes precedence over everything else even Beatrice his own daughter and her welfare.

*“I was capable of a more intense application and was more deeply smitten with the thirst for knowledge” (Shelley, 1818, p. 36).*

In Shelley’s *Frankenstein* this quote captures the narrator Victor Frankenstein's fierce desire and voracious appetite for knowledge. Using Rousseau's idea of ‘Amour-Propre,’ as a framework Victor's obsessive search for scientific knowledge can be seen as an expression of his ego and desire for fame. Victor's assertion demonstrates his unquenchable curiosity and sense of intellectual superiority. His thirst for knowledge and intense application pushes the limits of science as he looks to discover the mysteries of life itself. But Victor's desire to establish himself as a leading scientist and gain fame for his ground-breaking findings fuels this quest more than his sincere need for knowledge. Victor's fixation with going beyond the bounds of human knowledge and life and death is a clear indication of his twisted self-love. His ambition consumes him to the point where he disregards morality and doesn't think through the repercussions of his actions. Despite being sparked by scientific curiosity at first his creation of the monster ultimately results in tragedy as he neglects his duty to it and disregards the possible consequences of giving it life.

The aforementioned three quotations from *Rappaccini's Daughter*, *The Birthmark* and *Frankenstein* illustrate how a character's concern with their goals be they ambition or scientific knowledge can cloud their perception of love and relationships. Aylmer becomes so engrossed in his scientific studies that he begins to feel that his love for Georgiana his wife can only become stronger if it is linked to his passion for science. Dr. Rappaccini is portrayed as a scientist who is more preoccupied with his research and experiments than he is with morals or human relationships. His poisoned lawn is a metaphor for his isolation in addition to the dangerous consequences of his ambition. Victor Frankenstein’s relentless pursuit of understanding and ambition in creating lifestyles results in a similar distortion of responsibility and love. He would not consider the ability outcomes of his activities for the reason that he is too focused on pushing the boundaries of inquiry.

*“She said. I will drink whatever you make for me even if it is a poison.” (p.6)*

In *The Birthmark*, Georgiana boldly publicizes that she can do something it takes to satisfy her husband Aylmer’s demands even if it was setting her very own lifestyles in chance. Georgiana’s bold decision to drink despite the fact that its far poison indicates that she is willing to position Aylmer’s desires ahead of her own safety. A deep-seated sense of Amour-Propre or self-distorted love is found out in Georgiana’s decision. Her motivation stems from her preference to fulfill Aylmer’s needs and win his affection which she cherishes beyond all else. Her willingness to make use of doubtlessly dangerous materials shows that she is ready to visit large measures in order to meet his demands. Georgiana’s audacious declaration highlights her internalized sense of value and self-perception. She might think that by doing as Aylmer asks even if it puts her in danger, she will gain his love and attention. Her readiness to go above and beyond to satisfy his needs

illustrates the power dynamics in a relationship and the extent people will go to in order to preserve or deepen their bonds with their partners.

*“His patients are interesting to him only as subjects for some new experiment. He would sacrifice human life his own among the rest or whatever else was dearest to him for the sake of adding so much as a grain of mustard seed to the great heap of his accumulated knowledge.” (p.7)*

Rappaccini, the main character in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Rappaccini's Daughter* represents a warped conception of love and an unwavering obsession with his own ambitions. Rappaccini's contempt for human existence and his unrelenting pursuit of expertise at any cost are highlighted in this citation. Rappaccini treats his patients as a tool for his study simplest to be understood via the lens of technological knowledge in place of humans deserving of compassion. His willingness to endanger the lives of others, including those closest to him indicates how steadfastly he is committed to attaining his personal targets. Apart from all of this the above-mentioned quote highlights Rappaccini's ravenous thirst for knowledge. He is inclined to do something it takes to similarly his very own instructional pursuits even though it manner endangering relationships or different human beings' lives. Rappaccini's actions exhibit a self-distorted love in which his personal pursuits and dreams take priority over the desires of others. Because of his obsession with knowledge and his contempt for the outcomes of his movements' tragic occurrences befall Rappaccini and those near to him.

*“I loved spend vain sorrow upon the graves of William and Justine, the first hapless victims to my unhallowed arts.” (p. 58)*

This line demonstrates how Victor Frankenstein comes to an introspective perception approximately the consequences of his deeds. His admiration of William and Justine as the primary unfortunate victims of my unholy arts shows the lousy outcome of his obsession with knowledge and ambition. Frankenstein's unrelenting quest for self-distorted love or Amour-Propre is validated by his unwavering desire of employing technology to unravel the mysteries of life. Driven by means of conceit and a thirst for fame he embarks on a journey that sooner or later culminates in the advent of the beast, which wreaks havoc on his existence and the lives of those around him. On the other hand, Frankenstein's sorrows are ultimately in vain due to the fact that they do not mitigate the suffering he has prompted. His commitment to his very own suffering is a reflection of his self-centered obsession along with his very own disgrace and sorrow, not an authentic take care of the well-being of others. Shelley consequently highlights the perils of unfettered ambition in addition to the difficulties of blindly following knowledge without considering its moral and ethical implications.

These quotes from *Frankenstein*, *Rappaccini's Daughter* and *The Birthmark* emphasize the concept of Amour-Propre or self-distorted love in which the characters'

obsession with gaining knowledge of or research has horrible consequences for different humans. Georgiana's willingness to drink any liquid that Aylmer inspires, poison or not shows how dedicated and unwaveringly she loves her partner. However, this love ultimately proves fatal as Aylmer conducts risky scientific experiments due to the fact he becomes obsessed with eliminating her birthmark. Because of her deep love for Aylmer Georgiana is blind to the effects of his actions which in the long run consequences in her impulsive death. Dr. Rappaccini's perverse love for studies and his experiments are obtrusive in his willingness to sacrifice human life to be able to enhance medical understanding. He perspectives his sufferers as little greater than items to be studied and shows little empathy for them. His obsession with manipulating his daughter Beatrice for his scientific purposes in the end results in her demise, underscoring the deadly effects of his delusional ardor for science. The creature is created as a result of Victor's passion for science and his ambition but in the end his loved ones including his brother William and friend Justine die in this creative process. Victor's regret for the murders brought about by his unhallowed arts emphasizes the terrible results of his misguided devotion to research.

*"I do not need proof, Georgiana said quietly. Give me the glass. I am happy to put my life in your hands. She drank the liquid and immediately fell asleep."* (p. 12)

In Hawthorne's *The Birthmark*, Georgiana's choice to take the potion even though there was no evidence to support its safety does in fact show her readiness to entrust her life to him not out of mindless compliance but rather out of a deep sense of love and confidence. Georgiana's choice to drink the liquid is inspired by using her personal desires and issues in place of just following patriarchal norms. Georgiana's quest for perfection that's pushed by way of her own experience of conceitedness and self-worth, is clear throughout the entire story. Her simple need for love and splendor is pondered in her willingness to put her life in chance in the hopes of getting the birthmark removed. She doesn't experience being forced to satisfy this intention by Aylmer or social norms; as an alternative it originates from within her and is motivated by using her own feeling of pride and self-confidence. In this example, Georgiana's decision to drink the potion is seen as an act of power rather than a give up. She deliberately chooses to pursue her very own definition of perfection no matter the unknowable results. Though Aylmer's preference to take away the birthmark impacts Georgiana's behavior her selections are ultimately pushed by using her personal goals and experiences.

*"There was an awful doom, she continued the effect of my father's fatal love of science which estranged me from all society of my kind. Until Heaven sent thee dearest Giovanni oh how lonely was thy poor Beatrice!"* (p.13)

The quote from Rappaccini's Daughter in particular to Beatrice and her father Dr. Rappaccini correctly conveys the subject matters of alienation and the aftermath from *Amor-Proprie* as Beatrice's mourning over her father's terrible enthusiasm for science and the terrible outcomes it reasons indicates how an awful Rappaccini's love of science

impacted her life. She is confined to her father's backyard remote from the outdoor world and not able to engage with people on a daily basis. Because of this type of alienation, she felt alone, and she tried to find someone who takes her out of this situation. But Rappaccini's amour propre his severe satisfaction and his devotion to science have additionally made things worse for Beatrice. His unrelenting awareness of his scientific research suggests a mistaken feel of importance and a loss of situation for his daughter no matter the impact on her. His efforts have alienated Beatrice from both society and him as she turns increasingly privy to the sacrifices she has made in pursuit of his scientific goals. A prime illustration of amour propre or self-distorted love is Beatrice's preference to get out of her captivity and discover the outdoor world. Even though she is probably in chance she longs to go away to her father's lawn and make new friends.

*"Remember that I am thy creature; I ought to be thy Adam but I am rather the fallen angel whom thou drivest from joy for no misdeed. Everywhere I see bliss from which I alone am irrevocably excluded. I was benevolent and good; misery made me a fiend. Make me happy and I shall again be virtuous."* (p. 98)

The Creature in Frankenstein expresses his severe pain and passionate preference for happiness, love and reputation thru his mournful laments. This study uncovers the complicated rationale behind the creature's goals and moves. The creature's assertion that he ought to be thy Adam conveys his desire for validation and an experience of self from Victor Frankenstein the person who created him. He feels that he is Frankenstein's creation inherently deserving of love and care similar to Adam in Christian mythology. He feels extra like a fallen angel cut off from pleasure regardless of his kindness and innocence. His plea for happiness stems from each a choice for success on a non-public level and a recognition of his very own inherent real worth and dignity. The creature believes that his ache and loneliness have turned him into a fiend a false illustration of himself. He sees happiness as the answer to his suffering and a way to get returned the integrity and righteousness he formerly had. The fact that the creature asks Victor to make me satisfied in addition demonstrates his perception that his creator has the secret to his salvation. To varying degrees all human beings long for love, recognition and happiness; those are the things that encourage the creature's movements and aspirations. In The Birthmark, Rappaccini's Daughter and Frankenstein a number of characters show off amour propre, or self-distorted love which causes them to place their very own needs beforehand of those of others. Compare and comparison the ways in which every of the three stories makes use of this subject matter:

In these quotations, Georgiana's preference for her husband Aylmer to like and accept her is the foundation of her amour propre. She willingly beverages the potion he produces due to the fact she believes it will make her extra appealing and worthy of his love regardless of the imaginable dangers. Her willingness to position her personal safety in risk to win her husband's love demonstrates the intensity of her self-distorted love. The main idea of Beatrice's amour propre is her longing for affection and companionship

outdoor of her father's secluded lawn. She feels alone and lonely due to her father's obsession with technological knowledge and longs for companionship. Her longing to be cherished by Giovanni and her eventual willingness to depart the lawn with him suggest the depth of her need for human connection and freedom from her father's control. The creature's primary source of amour propre is his desire for friendship and attractiveness from Victor Frankenstein. His need to be understood is robust, making him feel like the creature from Frankenstein. His request for a friend from Frankenstein illustrates his misguided understanding of love and acceptance and his conviction that having a partner will make him happy and moral. The amour propre of the three protagonists pushes them to stop at nothing to have what they want to be, it beauty, love or companionship. Their misguided conceptions of love have disastrous results for both them and everyone around them.

*"Blinded by a meaningless imperfection and an impossible goal Aylmer had thrown away her life and with it his chance for happiness. In trying to improve his lovely wife, he had failed to realize she had been perfect all along."* (p.13)

Throughout Hawthorne's *The Birthmark*, Aylmer's fixation on getting rid of his wife Georgiana's birthmark acts as a visceral representation of his warped sense of self-worth or amour propre. Aylmer is unable to recognize his wife's intrinsic beauty and value because he is too preoccupied with his need for perfection and is motivated by an unreachable ideal. He ignores Georgiana's inherent perfection physically and spiritually in his unwavering pursuit of getting rid of the birthmark. Aylmer's obsession on Georgiana's birthmark is going beyond a simple bodily flaw; it betrays his illogical choice to mildew her into his imagined concept of splendor. He becomes obsessed at the notion that casting off the birthmark will decorate her splendor and purity for this reason appeasing his personal narcissistic inclinations. However, Aylmer loses sight of Georgiana's inherent worth and the glory that lies underneath her imperfections in his steadfast pursuit of this purpose. As Aylmer becomes an increasing number of enthralled with his test, he alas jeopardizes each his happiness and properly-being in addition to Georgiana's. His unwillingness to simply accept Georgiana for who she is causes her demise, symbolizing the disastrous results of his twisted self-love. Aylmer wastes a chance at true happiness and fulfillment in addition to losing sight of his wife's true nature in his pursuit of perfection.

*"Behold! There is a medicine... 'I will drink; but do thou await the result...' 'I would fain have been loved, not feared,' murmured Beatrice sinking down upon the ground. 'But now it matters not. I am going father where the evil which thou hast striven to mingle with my being will pass away like a dream-like the fragrance of these poisonous flowers which will no longer taint my breath among the flowers of Eden.'"* (p. 20)

In Hawthorne's *Rappaccini's Daughter* Beatrice finally meets her tragic fate due to her longing for love and independence. Beatrice knows her father is a manipulator and a

poison, yet she still wants to be free of his hold and be loved by Giovanni. She accepts Giovanni's offer of the antidote without hesitation since she is ready to leave her father's shadow and live outside of her toxic garden. Beatrice's acts are motivated by her amour propre or sense of pride and self-worth. Not only does she want freedom, but she also wants Giovanni to love and accept her. Her yearning to finally experience the freedom and love she so desperately wants makes her oblivious to the possible repercussions of taking the antidote. But in the end, Beatrice's quest for love and independence brings about her demise. She is freed from her father's toxic influence by the antidote, but it also ends her life. Beatrice considers her want to be liked rather than feared in her last moments, but she accepts her fate and knows it no longer matters. Beatrice's terrible demise serves as a lesson about the perils of unbridled desire and the results of compromising one's morals in the name of freedom and love.

*“I thought of Elizabeth, of my father, and of Clerval—all left behind, on whom the monster might satisfy his sanguinary and merciless passions...The death of William, the execution of Justine, the murder of Clerval, and lastly of my wife.” (p. 180)*

The devastating effects of amour propre, or self-distorted love, are vividly shown in this moving scene from *Frankenstein*, for both Victor Frankenstein and his creation. Driven by ambition and a desire for glory, Frankenstein's unrelenting quest for scientific knowledge results in a sad chain of events that takes the lives of his loved ones. Because of his conceit he is oblivious to the possible repercussions of his activities and is preoccupied with his experiments, disregarding the welfare of others around him. Comparatively, the creature's amour propre is proven by his insistent pursuit of his own goals irrespective of the harm he causes to others. Despite appearing in a selfish and callous manner his movements stem from his want for approval and connection. He becomes obsessed with his own goals and loses sight of the suffering he causes in his quest for success. Their very own amour propre renders Frankenstein and his creation leading them down tragic and hostile paths. Their actions are pushed simplest by self-interest without any consideration for the consequences to others. In their pursuit of contentment and happiness they ultimately purpose the suffering and death of everyone around them.

The idea of amour propre leads a number of characters to tragic end into *The Birthmark*, Rappaccini's Daughter and *Frankenstein*. Aylmer, for example gets obsessed on his spouse Georgiana's birthmark and sees it as a flaw that takes far away from her perfection; due to his unwavering efforts to have the birthmark removed he's not able to understand Georgiana's natural beauty and perfection and he in the long run loses his happiness when he learns too overdue that his tries to make her better have induced her dying. Beatrice suffered significantly as a result of her father's misplaced love for technology and his experiments. She distances herself from humans and longs to be with a person who is not in her father's poisonous garden. She is keen to take the antidote despite the fact that she is aware of it may kill her expressing her desire to get away her father's impact and find peace of thoughts. But in the end, her father's acts seal her terrible

destiny, so she turns to tragic death in the hopes of finding freedom from the poison that has consumed her existence. Victor's misplaced ambition and love of technology lead to the creation of the monster who looks to his master for companionship and approval. Victor rejects his creation, nonetheless, out of worry and hatred. The following violent and spiteful movements of the monster result in the deaths of numerous cherished ones including Elizabeth, Victor's wife. Victor's self-distorted love of technology drives him to be blind to the implications of his actions which end up in tragedy for all and miscellaneous around him as well as for himself.

These three stories *The Birthmark*, *Rappaccini's Daughter* and *Frankenstein* have many themes in common along with ego, ambition and the desire for personal desires over moral ideas. The characters in every story exhibit a steadfast recognition of their own goals often at the expense of others. Their erroneous self-love leads humans to prioritize their very own interest over moral responsibilities and empathy which in the long run effects disastrous results like isolation, loss of life and destruction. These stories emphasize the terrible effects of misdirected self-love in the provider of one's personal dreams serving as cautionary stories at the risks of unbridled ego and self-interest. These tales emphasize the significance of keeping a stability between ambition, moral obligation and empathy for others from the perspective of Rousseau's *Amour-Propre*.

## 5. Conclusion

To be concluded, this study has effectively applied Rousseau's concept of *Amour-Propre* as a theoretical framework to analyze the destructive consequences of self-obsession in Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Hawthorne's *Rappaccini's Daughter* and *The Birthmark*. By using a comparative analysis, the research has demonstrated how the characters' relentless pursuit of their personal ambitions driven by the need for external validation and a lack of empathy leads to tragic outcomes in each narrative. The central figures in all three texts i.e., Victor Frankenstein, Aylmer and Rappaccini are consumed by their desire for recognition which ultimately results in death, destruction and isolation. The study highlights how these characters prioritize their self-interests over moral responsibilities, illustrating the broader implications of *Amour-Propre* as a source of moral degeneration and social instability.

While this research has provided significant insights into the thematic intersections between these works through the lens of *Amour-Propre*, it is not without its limitations. Future research could expand the scope by applying Rousseau's concept to other literary works or by examining how gender, race or class play a role in the manifestation of *Amour-Propre*. Moreover, this research underscores the enduring relevance of Rousseau's ideas in understanding human behavior and the consequences of unchecked ambition and self-centeredness in literature. It offers a compelling framework for exploring how individual desires for external validation can lead to moral and social collapse, suggesting that a

balance between personal ambition and ethical responsibility is essential for both personal fulfillment and societal harmony.

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