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**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

## The Moral Impact of Social Order in *Frankenstein* and *Slaughterhouse-Five*

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**ABSTRACT**

This essay explores Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*, two novels that examine morality and the consequences of the protagonists' actions on their communities. Victor Frankenstein, driven by scientific ambition, creates and then abandons his creature, leading to devastating consequences. His misuse of knowledge highlights the dangers of unchecked scientific pursuit and the ethical dilemmas of creation. In contrast, Billy Pilgrim, shaped by his experiences in war, retreats into the realm of his imagination and time travel as a means of coping with trauma. His detachment from reality raises questions about free will, fate, and the psychological impact of war. The essay also explores moral dilemmas within both texts, analyzing how Victor and Billy grapple with their own sense of morality. While Victor seeks to unlock the secrets of life through science, Billy's journey is defined by his struggle to make sense of life's chaos. Despite their differing paths, both characters ultimately search for meaning, raising questions about personal responsibility and the consequences of human actions. Additionally, this essay discusses the literary concepts of centripetal and centrifugal forces, examining how these forces shape the characters and their actions. Victor's inward focus on his own ambitions contrasts with Billy's outward detachment from reality. By analyzing these forces, the essay uncovers how both protagonists navigate the complex interplay between individual choices and external influences, ultimately shaping their respective narratives.

**KEYWORDS**

Centripetal and Centrifugal Forces, Existential Inquiry, Imagination and Reality, Morality, Scientific Ethics, Trauma

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### Introduction

Throughout history, authors have attempted to explore and determine the secrets of life. However, the manner in which they approach these issues has varied dramatically in terms of theme, diction, and style. Mary Shelley, a British romantic author, and Kurt Vonnegut, an American postmodern author, try to consider life's elements under the umbrage of science fiction. However, their methods of presenting their protagonists' moral perceptions and imperatives differ significantly. In *Frankenstein*, Victor's creature relies on his observation of human activities in order to develop a sense of belonging and solitude, civilization and a lack thereof, and most importantly, a sense of morality that ultimately leads him to take revenge against his careless creator.

Meanwhile, Billy Pilgrim relies on his imagination to help him get revenge for the bitter situation he endured during World War II. The reason behind comparing *Frankenstein* and *Slaughterhouse-Five* is not spontaneous. Both novels were published during periods of intense sociopolitical unrest: the French Revolution and World War II. As traditional symbols of meaning became decentered within the confines of a violent, unstable society, artists and intellectuals sought to determine the perceived variance between the human nature of previous eras and the rapid descent and manifest destruction of humanity vis-à-vis moral collapse.

These two authors' cutting-edge ideas share many aspects, but their divergences will be the main topic of discussion in this paper. Victor and Billy have engaged in unethical behavior by participating in human obliteration; subsequently, their methods of

addressing these moral errors are dissimilar. In both novels, the protagonists seek to discover the secret of life. However, as mentioned earlier, they incorporate different approaches to facilitate the fruition of what they believe to be satisfactory outcomes.

Mary Shelley played a significant role in creating a new literary genre: science fiction. Simultaneously, she is recognized as one of the most influential novelists of gothic and romantic fiction, mainly due to her only novel of note, *Frankenstein*. Her father, William Godwin, and her husband, Percy Shelley, heavily influenced her. Although her mother passed away shortly after giving birth to her, her father, who was an early feminist, provided her with an informal, comprehensive education and raised her on her mother's memoirs and writings. She had a close relationship with her father and adopted many of his unorthodox views. By the time she passed away, she had established an excellent reputation as an eminent author independent of her prolific husband and remarkable father. Since she deals with supernatural and mysterious topics, her audience pays attention to her even though, during her time, women writers were not taken seriously, and their works were not considered worth reading. Some literary works are astonishing to readers only during a writer's life span; however, after death, his or her fame evaporates as water does in a burning desert. As for Mary Shelley, her work *Frankenstein* has been in print continuously for the past two hundred years and is still significant to modern readers. Shelley's literary debut has encouraged many authors to attempt and develop science fiction, a genre in which parallels between fictional worlds and societies and Earth as we know it are drawn. Kurt Vonnegut, a postmodern and science fiction (widely considered a postmodern genre) writer, is best known for his novel *Slaughterhouse-Five*, which shares some commonalities with romantic-era science fiction. Therefore, the first section of this paper focuses on some critics' claims that *Frankenstein* is a waste of time and does not teach any moral lesson. Without a doubt, the assertion that this novel is not worth reading simply because the writer is a woman should be driven from readers' and critics' minds. In the second part, the attention will be on Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*, in which the reader is provided a sense of human morality in an age where morality is almost impossible to find.

### Literature Review

Critics tend to focus on the drawbacks of literary works and allow the weaknesses of the texts to overshadow what such remarkable works aim to accomplish. For instance, Croker, a writer for the "Quarterly Review," stated: "[o]ur taste and our judgment similar to revolt at this kind of writing, and the greater the ability with which it may be executed the worse it is—it inculcates no lesson of conduct, manners, or morality; it cannot mend, and will not even amuse its readers unless their taste has been deplorably vitiated" (Croker 377) when critiquing *Frankenstein*. Such an underestimation of *Frankenstein* is prejudiced and mistaken, and before deconstructing such a harsh critique of *Frankenstein*, a summary is necessary.

### Methodology

Scientist Victor has been fascinated with alchemy since childhood. Because his family is concerned with humanitarian issues, Victor desires to create a living being. He produces a hideous monster out of many corpses. Horrified by what he has created, Victor abandons his creation. Victor's abandonment fosters a deep sense of loneliness and confusion in the creature, so he demands that Victor create a soul mate for him. Its request enrages Victor, who is convinced that another such creature would be a disaster to the world; therefore, he denies the monster's wish. Due to Victor's denial, the creature vows revenge and kills Victor's brother and wife, resulting in Victor feeling tremendous guilt.

To say that *Frankenstein* imparts no moral lessons is a mistake. For example, one may interpret Victor's creation, the cause of his undoing and death, as an adequate lesson. Mary Shelley was not trying to show that Victor spending time on his creation is a moral example. However, she alluded that one should be careful of his or her actions and consider the consequences. Shelley elaborated on the mistake that Victor, a godlike figure, commits by creating a living being and abandoning it when she said, "Treat a person ill, and he will become wicked. Requite affection with scorn;—let one being be selected, for whatever cause, as the refuse of his kind—divide him, a social being, from society, and you impose upon him the irresistible obligations—malevolence and selfishness." One should expect consequences for his or her actions; one must predict the consequences of one's negative or positive dealings with others. In other words, people should treat others as they would want to be treated. Victor has thoughtlessly created a monster that kills innocent people; therefore, the scenario should be repeated for Victor. As the creator of this destruction, he should be killed as the others were killed. In fact, what kills Victor is that he is grief-stricken due to the horrible revenge the monster has exacted.

Throughout the novel, Shelley implies that Victor's attempt at playing God is immoral. She believes that humans should not control life. Victor cannot justify his unforgivable error, and once he has created the monster through his secular viewpoint, he does not attempt to fix his mistake. Rather than try to rectify his action, he leaves his creation wholly unseen to the outside world to fend for itself.

Shelley believed that science and technology were moving too quickly during the Industrial Revolution and decided to use *Frankenstein* and Victor's experimentation as a platform to show what she thought to be morally wrong. People act immorally; this is unfixable. Shelley indicates it is unethical and unacceptable to treat people so severely because it ultimately leads to further destruction. Therefore, the moral significance of *Frankenstein* is that the novel criticizes Victor for creating life, which is the job of God, not humans. Additionally, once Victor creates life, he abandons it without offering support and guidance, and that is morally wrong as well. People are responsible for their children. It is their job to raise them, to support them, and to care for them until they are able to live independently. Victor merely leaves his creation, which is not only an injustice to the creature itself but also an injustice to the entire world. This injustice culminates when the creature avenges itself upon Victor's family. Consequently, there are lessons to be learned from the novel: one should try to correct his or her mistakes, one should think before acting, and one should not neglect his or her responsibilities as they will eventually cause one's downfall if not societal destruction.

Furthermore, the reader can note that the creature begins to acquire a sense of morality through observing other people's actions. The birth of Frankenstein's morality contrasts with his creator's since Victor's actions display immorality. At first, the creature struggles to perceive humankind and what it means to be human. Clearly, the creature's new and mysterious existence places it in a thoughtful and indefinite state of curiosity. After observing people who are living in a cottage, readers catch a glimpse of the monster's nascent morality when the creature remarks, "I admired virtue and good feelings, and loved the gentle manners and amiable qualities of my cottagers; but I was shut out from intercourse with them, except through means which I obtained by stealth when I was unseen and unknown, and which rather increased than satisfied the desire I had of becoming one among my fellows" (Shelley 108). In this quotation, one can see that the creature is full of conflicting desires. He is unable to place himself among people, yet the creature must continue to keep constant observation of the cottagers in order to create its own human identity. The creature wants to reflect the humanity of those whom it is observing. These passages show that despite the creature's isolation, its desires and actions provide it with some framework of morality.

The creature continues to observe people and believes that it is destined to be an outsider with the statement, "I required kindness and sympathy, but I did not believe myself utterly unworthy of it" (120). At this point, the monster thinks that it is individualistic and "human" enough to express its own emotional and psychological feelings and to want to participate in the community. The creature makes further attempts to communicate with people to define its place in society, and it educates itself on morals. This education is seen clearly through the creature's sentiment: "I read of men concerned in public affairs, governing or massacring their species. I felt the greatest ardor for virtue rise within me, and abhorrence for vice, as far as I understood the signification of those terms, relative as they were, as I applied them, to pleasure and pain alone" (118).

Victor's immorality can be read as a critique of British society during the aftermath of the French Revolution since some tyrants sought to have power over society. Thus, Victor indirectly represents the oppressors who cannot represent or teach the oppressed the proper morals due to their arrogant actions and attitudes. Mary Shelley mockingly compares Victor and the creature to a tyrannical government and its citizens when Victor haughtily says: "a new species would bless me as its creator and source; many happy and excellent natures would owe their being to me" (50). However, when the creature encounters some inexplicable rejection by society, it acquires some immorality and starts to kill the innocent people around it. Such immoral actions are due to the creature's lack of a partner or, more significantly, a lack of a person who can teach it about life and provide it with some sense of morality and worthiness. The monster is under the mistaken belief that the people around him are able to create another creature, and, to the monster, everyone resembles his creator.

After the damage transpired and it was too late to fix his mistake, Victor said, "I seemed to have lost all soul or sensation but for this one pursuit" (52). He admits that he was pursuing creation for the sake of his satisfaction without caring about the consequences to society. Critic Andrew McCulloch writes that "education not only as the way to wisdom and self-knowledge but, consequently, to social and political progress as well" that Victor fails to understand and then apply. Therefore, one individual's immortality can lead to the destruction of political and social constructions.

In spite of Crocker's review, *Frankenstein* has been considered a bestseller since its first publication, and it will likely endure popularity for generations. Additionally, some film adaptations of *Frankenstein* highlight the morality and themes of the novel, proving that contrary to Crocker's criticism, others can find morals within the text. Both audiences and critics praise adaptations that show the novel's morality. While Shelley wrote *Frankenstein* during a time when morality was more questionable and when logic and science tended to prevail over more abstract notions, the underlying messages are there for careful readers, and they are still applicable today. A good piece of literature does not always present its messages clearly.

On the other hand, readers can explore the rich subtext. For example, Shakespeare's *Hamlet* contains hidden messages along with its ghost and horror scenes; yet, critics have not underestimated its worthiness; instead, they praise its significance. Similarly, Shelley's *Frankenstein* offers admirable moral messages that should be discussed positively by both readers and critics. These messages should be buried in texts, allowing readers to enjoy reading the subtext and discovering what the novel is trying to say.

Meanwhile, Kurt Vonnegut attempted to write about his bitter experience during World War II using Billy Pilgrim as his protagonist in *Slaughterhouse-Five*. An entire chapter is dedicated to describing the difficulty of writing about a war experience. Richard Giannone agreed with that sentiment with the statement: "The problem of writing about it rivals the problem of living through the fire-bombing of Dresden." This critique caused Vonnegut to believe his novel was a failure. Vonnegut created a character who shows that reality is incomplete, partial, and subjective, as will be elaborated on later. Therefore, since reality is looked at from one's perspective of how one grasps it, Vonnegut challenges his readers to identify with reality through a character who travels with time, Billy Pilgrim.

Readers learn that Billy has been through many shocking and unpleasant events that play a significant role in causing Billy to act differently from others in his surroundings. He suffered a childhood trauma when his father pushed him into the pool, brain damage from the airplane crash; "he dreamed millions of things, some of them true," and a shattered psyche from his war experience (Vonnegut 157). All of these incidents result in Billy drifting away from his perceived cruel world and into his imagination.

Consequently, there are many differences between Billy and Victor as they are different characters constructed during entirely different literary movements. Postmodernism, the literary movement that was taking place when Kurt Vonnegut's novel was published, is defined by Bran Nicol in the introduction section of *The Cambridge Introduction to Postmodern Fiction* as the "practice of recycling previous artistic style...or a valid form of political critique." In *Slaughterhouse Five*, technology is presented in greater detail than in *Frankenstein*, which presents only scientific aspects. However, Vonnegut seems to recycle the artistic style of *Frankenstein* since Billy, like Victor, is searching for the secret of life. Since technology has advanced immensely from the time that Shelley wrote to the time that Vonnegut wrote, the concept of reality has advanced as well.

In addition to technology, other things change the meaning of reality and cause Billy Pilgrim to become "alienated from those aspects of life we might consider authentic or *real*" and to choose to hide from the cruelty of his reality through his expansive imagination (4). In other words, Billy is "engaging with symbolic representations rather than real, tangible objects," as not seen in *Frankenstein*. Richard Giannone, in his essay *Vonnegut: A Preface to His Novels*, informs readers that they should look at Billy Pilgrim as a "moral scout," which is in opposition to Victor, who is immoral and fancies himself to be godlike. Billy makes himself an outsider of society instead of creating a monster who becomes an outsider like Victor. Ironically, Billy shows how non-humans are better than humans through his involvement with imaginary creatures - the Tralfamadorians. Rather than ignore him the way humans ignored the creature, the Tralfamadorians teach Billy key lessons. When the Tralfamadorians ask Billy what he has learned from them, Billy replies: "[h]ow the inhabitants of a whole planet can live in peace! As you know, I am from a planet that has been engaged in senseless slaughter since the beginning of time" (Vonnegut 116). Billy is able to adapt and adjust to the Tralfamadorians' way of life. At the same time, Victor callously abandons the creature and leaves it to adjust to the world of humans without any guidance. Billy allows himself to explore a different way to exist and adjusts to others. In contrast, Victor cruelly forces others, both the creature and the general population, to adjust to each other on Victor's absentee terms. Billy and Victor are two significantly different personalities, and this paper will use the concept of centrifugal and centripetal force to analyze and elaborate on the significant dissimilarity between these two morality-driven novels.

"Billy Pilgrim has come unstuck in time," and he uses his imagination rather than trying to alter reality as Victor does (23). The Tralfamadorians teach Billy excellent lessons about time and death through his imagination. These imaginary beings do not consider death a significant event because when a person dies, he or she "is still very much alive in the past" (71). Billy's traumatic understanding of death leads him to imagine these pretend creatures with whom he can reduce his unwanted psychological baggage regarding death. Billy accepts the Tralfamadorians' piece of advice "to concentrate on happy moments of life, and to ignore the unhappy ones" (71). Unfortunately, during and after World War II, Billy finds it impossible to concentrate on happy moments, as there are barely any. Consequently, Billy retreats to his imagination out of an intense desire to find "happy moments." Billy's unhappiness and sense of loss are reflected in his best friend, O'Hare. When Billy reunites with O'Hare after the war, "neither one of [them] could remember anything good" (13). This realization forces Billy to use his imagination to run away from the "unhappy" moments. Rather than creating a physical monster to run away from "unhappy moments" or discover any secrets about life, Billy creates an entire planet of peaceful creatures. Billy's morality is twofold: he does not wish to hurt anyone around him, and he desires to escape into a peaceful world because he dislikes the violence that exists in reality. Billy would rather harm himself through his isolation and withdrawal from society than destroy others through thoughtless, self-centered, and arrogant actions.

As one of the significant tenets of postmodernism, Julie Nerad states that "no one can give reality, but one can give representations...reality is partial and incomplete... [because] there is no objective reality." In fact, the very beginning of *Slaughterhouse-Five* accentuates this postmodernist tenet when Vonnegut begins this novel with "[a]ll this happened, more or less" (1). This is not a statement of truth; rather, it is only an "existing reality in the author's perspective" (Nerad). Therefore, readers cannot expect an objective reality as is narrated in *Frankenstein* with *Slaughterhouse Five* because that novel operates with a subjective reality. The narrator is unreliable and frequently operates within his imagination. Billy uses a "symbolic representation"

of reality because that is how he wishes it would be. The Tralfamadorians have nothing to do with Billy's "coming unstuck. They were simply able to give him insights into what was really going on," so these insights become symbolic representations of realities of his own shattered and traumatized perceptions of the world. One of these significant "insights" was utilized earlier when the Tralfamadorians explained their perception of death.

Furthermore, in the Tralfamadorians' books, "[t]here is no beginning, no middle, no end, no suspense, no moral, no causes, no effects" (88). Vonnegut replicated this approach as he wrote the novel, causing each characteristic to be seen. Notably absent from this list is morality. A lack of morals is the cause of Billy's abandonment of reality for his imagination. Billy acts as a "moral scout" because he believes that he has an alternate perception of war and that all the other soldiers are immoral due to their active participation in war. Billy has "no helmet, no overcoat, no weapon, and no boots" (47) and sees himself as "a broken kite" (97).

Most crushing to his already fragile psyche, Billy has seen many people die and many dead people around him. This causes him to be grief-stricken and traumatized over death. As a result, he latches onto the belief that there "is no beginning, no middle, no end" with life, lessening the trauma of death. Once a person dies, he is still alive.

Accordingly, the concept of time becomes more manageable for Billy as he learns not to be concerned about death since dead people are always alive, and the past, present, and future are all happening simultaneously. Many incidents prove that Billy has been influenced by the Tralfamadorian concept of time. On one occasion, his daughter, Barbara, warns him that if he is "going to act like a child, maybe [they] will just have to treat [him] like a child;" however, Billy replies with confidence that "that is not what happens next" (131). This situation indicates that Billy has wholly embraced the concept that time happens simultaneously and that it is constantly shifting back and forth without warning. In another intriguing moment, the reader can see the influence of this concept of time on Billy when he was able to predict that "with his memories in the future... that the city would be smashed to smithereens and then burned—in about thirty more days. He knew, too, that most of the people watching him would soon be dead" (150-151).

Billy Pilgrim possesses a centrifugal force that causes other characters in the text to influence him. These characters are primarily the Tralfamadorians since Billy lives and relates to the world entirely through his imagination for most of the novel. Billy can absorb traits from others that he can then use to help himself handle reality. On the other hand, Victor possesses an innately centripetal force that causes havoc and disconnection with other characters. Unlike Billy, Victor does not absorb other's traits. Instead, he relies upon himself to develop his personality and achieve his goals. This can be seen primarily through the creation of the creature. The use of centrifugal force and how it relates to Billy's relationship with the Tralfamadorians to propel textual action will be explored later in this essay.

Luis Aviles defines the above-mentioned centrifugal feature as "a mode of writing with a strong need to represent movement, to observe and inform distant places, to interact with unknown subjects. It is the language of adventure... [and] the perils of travel." Aviles's quote can be ascribed to Vonnegut's writing since Vonnegut's protagonist, Billy, is searching for a better or more palatable existence – even if he is using the realm of his imagination and a different construct of time. Contrarily, the centripetal feature represents "the need to establish strong centers that serve as magnets for certain characters, corrective statements done by means of contrasts between spaces and cultures, and changes of characters transported from the periphery to the center." One can utilize these definitions of centrifugal and centripetal forces to analyze the relationship between Billy and Victor. As a character possessing centripetal force, Victor wants to attract characters who wish to become involved with unknown subjects. The unknown character would be the creature, and the characters who are drawn to it maintain centrifugal force.

Additionally, the creature itself possesses centrifugal force. Since the character who possesses a centripetal force stands "as [a] magnet for certain characters," and since the centrifugal and centripetal forces should work "side-by-side," the reader can see how Victor and the creature interact with a typical centrifugal and centripetal relationship. The Tralfamadorians and Billy mirror this relationship to an extent. However, the primary difference between Victor and Billy is that Billy is a centripetal force and allows himself to be influenced by the Tralfamadorians. He allows himself to be influenced by others' terms, whereas Victor is a centripetal force that enforces his terms upon others.

Conversely, one should bear in mind that each of these two forces "deploys its language, its own set of codes, but at the same time--and this is crucial--they exist side by side, they intermingle and exchange images, they are completely interdependent" (Aviles). Thus, while Billy and the Tralfamadorians may be destined to interact due to their assigned centrifugal and centripetal forces, many additional internal and external forces influence the characters and cause interdependency. For instance, Billy is traumatized from the war, resulting in severe issues with death and time. This is a condition independent of Billy's centripetal force, but it allows him to be influenced by the Tralfamadorians' concept of both. Since these imaginary beings teach Billy that time is a continuous condition, not a linear progression, he feels a sense of interdependency with them since "[a]ll moments, past, present and future, always have existed, always will exist" (Vonnegut 71). Resultantly, death loses some of its power as one can exist in various modes of time at once. However, this interdependency and harmony is impossible for Victor and Frankenstein because

Victor abandons his helpless creation and generates the conditions for a catastrophe. Victor's own failing humanity prevents him from being a force from which the creature can learn. Victor and the creature failed to reach the same state of interdependency as Billy and the Tralfamadorians because Victor was unwilling to teach the monster how to live peaceably. Kurt Vonnegut and Mary Shelley deliver an intriguing message that, perhaps, outsiders to the human race would be more adept at creating a peaceful world. Hence, humans should be open to potentially peaceful creatures and operate with more of a centrifugal force to allow peaceful traits and thoughts to be absorbed into all of humankind.

Billy Pilgrim does not discover his identity alone; rather, he attempts to develop his personality through other characters, his surroundings, and his belongings. Unfortunately, Billy is surrounded by a world that he believes to be cruel, so he retreats into his imagination to find admirable characters who have centripetal forces. He longs to discover the secret of life. On the other hand, the Tralfamadorians want Billy to come to them on their terms; they want him to love them, and they demand that he accept them as they are. The Tralfamadorians possess a deep, internal longing and a centripetal force that matches Billy's nature as a centrifugal force. Billy quickly absorbs the Tralfamadorians' lessons because he needs their support and guidance to find the secret and the meaning of life. His reliance on others indicates that he is a character with centrifugal force. Therefore, Billy is willing to be shaped by other individuals if they satisfy his psychological needs, which they do.

### Results/Findings

Although both works search for the secret of life, they differ in many ways. *Frankenstein* and *Slaughterhouse Five* approach the concepts of death and time differently. Additionally, both novels have been interpreted as critiques of social and political reforms or as representations of political unrest. While *Frankenstein* was written during the French and Industrial Revolution and *Slaughterhouse-Five* was written during World War II, they share the theme of dissatisfaction with the social and political climate. Scientific knowledge is critiqued with Victor's thoughtless application of it, and patriotism is critiqued with Billy's suffering after the war.

### Conclusion

While science and patriotism may be important, they can ultimately lead to destruction and chaos if misapplied. Victor discovers the secret to life through a physical sense and utilizes his knowledge to create a monster. Then, he reacts to his situation in an irresponsible and cowardly way. Meanwhile, Billy becomes traumatized from the war and uses his imagination to create a group of beings to teach him the meaning of life. Billy's internal struggle and desire for peace cause him to be a more moral character than Victor, even though he is still running away from his problems. The primary difference is that Billy's abandonment of reality hurts himself, while Victor's abandonment of the monster hurts everyone else. Billy's journey ends with him adopting the idea that death occurs in the past, present, and future for humans all at once, "so it goes" (Vonnegut 214).

Both Vonnegut and Shelley offer fascinating insight into the human psyche and create didactic lessons for readers. Shelley's Victor possesses a centripetal force and utilizes his force thoughtlessly, creating a monster, abandoning it, and creating unbelievable problems for his community and society. Vonnegut's Billy possesses a centrifugal force, and his willingness to learn from his mistakes after participating in human suffering through war grants him greater humanity and morality than Victor. While Billy does practice escapism, it is to help his shattered psyche and to make him a better person for society – he wants to be more peaceful and work through his various traumas. Victor's main excuse for his behavior is his ego.

Shelley and Vonnegut's vastly different approaches grant their characters wildly dissimilar behaviors and reactions despite the similar desires of their characters. Victor and Billy are both searching for the secret to life. While they both find this secret, their methods and journeys are incredibly distinctive – differences in style, moral prerogatives, and advances in technology and knowledge have created vastly different protagonists. Shelley's Victor is the protagonist whom the reader does not wish to resemble. Vonnegut's Billy is more relatable and teaches the reader about the true immorality of war and war's effect on soldiers. Each novel alludes to various aspects of human nature and teaches the reader about morality, mainly focusing on the issues of the novelists' respective times.

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