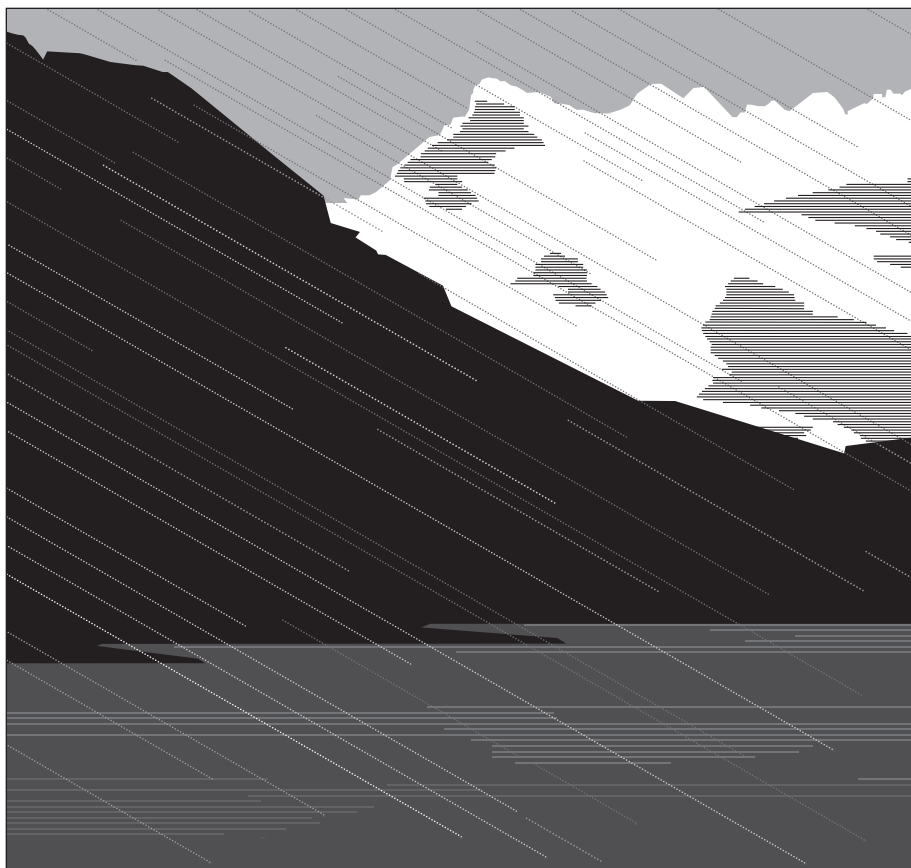


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PREFACE

The event on which this fiction is founded has been supposed, by Dr. Darwin,¹ and some of the physiological writers of Germany, as not of impossible occurrence. I shall not be supposed as according the remotest degree of serious faith to such an imagination; yet, in assuming it as the basis of a work of fancy, I have not considered myself as merely weaving a series of supernatural terrors. The event on which the interest of the story depends is exempt from the disadvantages of a mere tale of spectres or enchantment. It was recommended by the novelty of the situations which it develops; and, however impossible as a physical fact, affords a point of view to the imagination for the delineating of human passions more comprehensive and commanding than any which the ordinary relations of existing events can yield.

I have thus endeavoured to preserve the truth of the elementary principles of human nature, while I have not scrupled to innovate upon their combinations. The *Iliad*, the tragic poetry of Greece,—Shakespeare, in the *Tempest* and *Midsummer Night's Dream*,—and most especially Milton, in *Paradise Lost*, conform to this rule; and the most humble novelist, who seeks to confer or receive amusement from his labours, may, without presumption, apply to prose fiction a licence, or rather a rule, from the adoption of which so many exquisite combinations of human feeling have resulted in the highest specimens of poetry.

The circumstance on which my story rests was suggested in casual conversation. It was commenced, partly as a source of amusement, and partly as an expedient for exercising any untried resources of mind. Other motives were mingled with these, as the work proceeded. I am by no means indifferent to the manner in which whatever moral tendencies exist in the sentiments or characters it contains shall affect the reader; yet my chief concern in this respect has been limited to the avoiding the enervating effects of the novels of the present day, and to the exhibition of the amiableness of domestic affection, and the excellence of universal virtue. The opinions which naturally spring from the character and situation of the hero are by no means to be conceived as existing always in my own conviction; nor is any inference justly to be drawn from the following pages as prejudicing any philosophical doctrine of whatever kind.

1. Erasmus Darwin (1731–1802), a friend of Mary's father, William Godwin, was a physician, naturalist, philosopher, and poet. He contributed an early formulation of a single origin for all life, which undergirded what came to be known as the theory of evolution as elaborated by his grandson, Charles Darwin.

Jason Scott Robert.

It is a subject also of additional interest to the author, that this story was begun in the majestic region where the scene is principally laid, and in society which cannot cease to be regretted. I passed the summer of 1816 in the environs of Geneva. The season was cold and rainy, and in the evenings we crowded around a blazing wood fire, and occasionally amused ourselves with some German stories of ghosts, which happened to fall into our hands. These tales excited in us a playful desire of imitation. Two other friends (a tale from the pen of one of whom would be far more acceptable to the public than any thing I can ever hope to produce) and myself agreed to write each a story, founded on some supernatural occurrence.

The weather, however, suddenly became serene; and my two friends left me on a journey among the Alps, and lost, in the magnificent scenes which they present, all memory of their ghostly visions. The following tale is the only one which has been completed.²

LETTER I.

To Mrs. SAVILLE, England.

St. Petersburg, Dec. 11th, 17—.

You will rejoice to hear that no disaster has accompanied the commencement of an enterprise which you have regarded with such evil forebodings. I arrived here yesterday; and my first task is to assure my dear sister of my welfare, and increasing confidence in the success of my undertaking.

I am already far north of London; and as I walk in the streets of Petersburg, I feel a cold northern breeze play upon my cheeks, which braces my nerves, and fills me with delight. Do you understand this feeling? This breeze, which has travelled from the regions towards which I am advancing, gives me a foretaste of those icy climes. Inspirited by this wind of promise, my day dreams become more fervent and vivid. I try in vain to be persuaded that the pole is the seat of frost and desolation; it ever presents itself to my imagination as the region of beauty and delight. There, Margaret, the sun is for ever visible; its broad disk just skirting the horizon, and diffusing a perpetual splendour. There—for with your leave, my sister,

2. Lord George Gordon Byron (1788–1824) answered his own challenge that evening by writing the first paragraph of a vampire story inspired by the German ghost stories. John Polidori (1795–1821) later extended that beginning into “The Vampyre” (1819), a short story that went on to inspire Bram Stoker’s tremendously successful novel *Dracula* in 1897.

Ed Finn.

I will put some trust in preceding navigators—there snow and frost are banished; and, sailing over a calm sea, we may be wafted to a land surpassing in wonders and in beauty every region hitherto discovered on the habitable globe. Its productions and features may be without example, as the phænomena of the heavenly bodies undoubtedly are in those undiscovered solitudes. What may not be expected in a country of eternal light? I may there discover the wondrous power which attracts the needle;³ and may regulate a thousand celestial observations, that require only this voyage to render their seeming eccentricities consistent for ever. I shall satiate my ardent curiosity⁴ with the sight of a part of the world never

3. When Captain Walton talks about the “wondrous power [of] the needle,” he talks about magnetism and its very first application in a compass. For centuries, people ascribed magical powers to magnetite and lodestones, until William Gilbert (1540–1603) first discovered the basic features of magnetism and the fact that Earth itself is a weak magnet. The links between electricity and magnetism were a major subject of scientific investigation during Mary’s lifetime, and a number of expeditions departed for the North and South Poles in the hopes of discovering the secrets of the planet’s magnetic field.

Nicole Herbots.

4. For moderns, this comment may seem self-evident, if a little florid. But such Promethean ambition does not characterize all historical periods or all cultures or all individuals; rather, it reflects the interesting combination of curiosity, ambition, and historical perspective that coevolved with the European exploration of science and a profoundly multicultural world. Mary was writing at the close of the Age of Discovery, during which Europeans rounded the southern tip of Africa, “discovered” and colonized the New World, and circumnavigated the globe. Polar exploration was one remaining feat. It was also the age of romanticism, the paintings of Caspar David Friedrich (1774–1840) and Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863), as well as the music of Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827) and Hector Berlioz (1803–1869). This eagerness for exploration is express in “Ulysses,” the poem written in 1833 by Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809–1892):

I cannot rest from travel: I will drink
Life to the lees: All times I have enjoy'd
Greatly, have suffer'd greatly, both with those
That loved me, and alone, on shore, and when
Thro' scudding drifts the rainy Hyades
Vext the dim sea: I am become a name;
For always roaming with a hungry heart.

.....

I am a part of all that I have met;
Yet all experience is an arch wherethro'
Gleams that untravell'd world whose margin fades
For ever and forever when I move. (Tennyson 2004, 49)

The irony, at least to modern sensibilities, is that this romantic language befits the pursuit of art, not the rational pursuit of science.

Braden Allenby.

before visited, and may tread a land never before imprinted by the foot of man.⁵ These are my enticements, and they are sufficient to conquer all fear of danger or death, and to induce me to commence this laborious voyage with the joy a child feels when he embarks in a little boat, with his holiday mates, on an expedition of discovery up his native river. But, supposing all these conjectures to be false, you cannot contest the inestimable benefit which I shall confer on all mankind to the last generation, by discovering a passage near the pole to those countries, to reach which at present so many months are requisite; or by ascertaining the secret of the magnet, which, if at all possible, can only be effected by an undertaking such as mine.

These reflections have dispelled the agitation with which I began my letter, and I feel my heart glow with an enthusiasm which elevates me to heaven; for nothing contributes so much to tranquillize the mind as a steady purpose,—a point on which the soul may fix its intellectual eye. This expedition has been the favourite dream of my early years. I have read with ardour the accounts of the various voyages which have been made in the prospect of arriving at the North Pacific Ocean through the seas which surround the pole. You may remember, that a history of all the voyages made for purposes of discovery composed the whole of our good uncle Thomas's library. My education was neglected, yet I was passionately fond of reading. These volumes were my study day and night, and my familiarity with them increased that regret which I had felt, as a child, on learning that my father's dying injunction had forbidden my uncle to allow me to embark in a sea-faring life.

5. The phrase *manifest destiny* emerged in nineteenth-century America. It described the notion that the expansion of the American people, culture, and institutions across North America was a mission of divine Providence, not merely one driven by practical need for more land and resources. But the concept is much more deeply rooted and widespread, appearing in the earliest Western writings in the form of the Promised Land of Abraham and his Israelite descendants. Robert Walton invokes the concept implicitly in his exploration, which seems to need no justification other than that it might help him to “accomplish some great purpose” (p. 5). By the nineteenth century, the development of science and industry not only facilitated such explorations but also made the conquest of knowledge itself into a frontier that began to rival the conquest of land in importance—and that was similarly justified in terms of a manifest destiny. The story of *Frankenstein* mirrors this transformation as Walton's determination to visit that which has never before been visited is juxtaposed alongside Victor's determination to do that which has never before been done. We often use the metaphor of the frontier—for example, “frontiers of research”—in describing the reach of scientific inquiry. Worried that the American westward expansion and the manifest destiny that fueled it had run its course, MIT engineer and presidential adviser Vannevar Bush (1945) coined the phrase *the endless frontier* for the title of a report issued to President Harry Truman toward the end of World War II. The report advocated for continued strong support of scientific research by the federal government after the war ended because scientific research could provide the inspiration and economic benefits that westward expansion had previously provided.

Ariel Anbar.

These visions faded when I perused, for the first time, those poets whose effusions entranced my soul, and lifted it to heaven. I also became a poet, and for one year lived in a Paradise of my own creation; I imagined that I also might obtain a niche in the temple where the names of Homer and Shakespeare are consecrated. You are well acquainted with my failure, and how heavily I bore the disappointment. But just at that time I inherited the fortune of my cousin, and my thoughts were turned into the channel of their earlier bent.

Six years have passed since I resolved on my present undertaking. I can, even now, remember the hour from which I dedicated myself to this great enterprise. I commenced by inuring my body to hardship. I accompanied the whale-fishers on several expeditions to the North Sea; I voluntarily endured cold, famine, thirst, and want of sleep; I often worked harder than the common sailors during the day, and devoted my nights to the study of mathematics, the theory of medicine, and those branches of physical science from which a naval adventurer might derive the greatest practical advantage. Twice I actually hired myself as an under-mate in a Greenland whaler, and acquitted myself to admiration. I must own I felt a little proud, when my captain offered me the second dignity in the vessel, and entreated me to remain with the greatest earnestness; so valuable did he consider my services.

And now, dear Margaret, do I not deserve to accomplish some great purpose. My life might have been passed in ease and luxury; but I preferred glory to every enticement that wealth placed in my path. Oh, that some encouraging voice would answer in the affirmative! My courage and my resolution is firm; but my hopes fluctuate, and my spirits are often depressed. I am about to proceed on a long and difficult voyage; the emergencies of which will demand all my fortitude: I am required not only to raise the spirits of others, but sometimes to sustain my own, when their's are failing.

This is the most favourable period for travelling in Russia. They fly quickly over the snow in their sledges; the motion is pleasant, and, in my opinion, far more agreeable than that of an English stage-coach. The cold is not excessive, if you are wrapt in furs, a dress which I have already adopted; for there is a great difference between walking the deck and remaining seated motionless for hours, when no exercise prevents the blood from actually freezing in your veins. I have no ambition to lose my life on the post-road between St. Petersburg and Archangel.

I shall depart for the latter town in a fortnight or three weeks; and my intention is to hire a ship there, which can easily be done by paying the insurance for the owner, and to engage as many sailors as I think necessary among those who are accustomed to the whale-fishing. I do not intend to sail until the month of June: and when shall I return? Ah, dear sister, how can I answer this question? If I succeed, many, many months, perhaps years, will pass before you and I may meet. If I fail, you will see me again soon, or never.

Farewell, my dear, excellent, Margaret. Heaven shower down blessings on you, and save me, that I may again and again testify my gratitude for all your love and kindness.

Your affectionate brother,
R. WALTON.

LETTER II.

To Mrs. SAVILLE, England.
Archangel, 28th March, 17—.

How slowly the time passes here, encompassed as I am by frost and snow; yet a second step is taken towards my enterprise. I have hired a vessel, and am occupied in collecting my sailors; those whom I have already engaged appear to be men on whom I can depend, and are certainly possessed of dauntless courage.

But I have one want which I have never yet been able to satisfy; and the absence of the object of which I now feel as a most severe evil. I have no friend,⁶ Margaret: when I am glowing with the enthusiasm of success, there will be none to participate my joy; if I am assailed by disappointment, no one will endeavour to sustain me in dejection. I shall commit my thoughts to paper, it is true; but that is a poor medium for the communication of feeling. I desire the company of a man who could sympathize

6. Throughout the novel, the problem of companionship recurs for Walton, for Victor, and for Victor's creature. Friendship is one of the foundations for community because it connects the individual to a larger human endeavor—be it society, government, or scientific exploration. The novel explores the value of trust and camaraderie wherein one can divulge deep concerns, passions, and ambitions with another and so gain another's insight into one's own perspective. Throughout the novel, the failure to connect with a friend becomes a problem with serious consequences. Mary rarely has such companionship except, perhaps, with Percy Shelley. Percy's friendship with Lord Byron is well documented and acclaimed as an example of romantic poets and thinkers who shared ideas and artistic passion.

Ron Broglio.

with me; whose eyes would reply to mine. You may deem me romantic, my dear sister, but I bitterly feel the want of a friend. I have no one near me, gentle yet courageous, possessed of a cultivated as well as of a capacious mind, whose tastes are like my own, to approve or amend my plans. How would such a friend repair the faults of your poor brother! I am too ardent in execution, and too impatient of difficulties. But it is a still greater evil to me that I am self-educated: for the first fourteen years of my life I ran wild on a common, and read nothing but our uncle Thomas's books of voyages. At that age I became acquainted with the celebrated poets of our own country; but it was only when it had ceased to be in my power to derive its most important benefits from such a conviction, that I perceived the necessity of becoming acquainted with more languages than that of my native country. Now I am twenty-eight, and am in reality more illiterate than many school-boys of fifteen. It is true that I have thought more, and that my day dreams are more extended and magnificent; but they want (as the painters call it) *keeping*; and I greatly need a friend who would have sense enough not to despise me as romantic, and affection enough for me to endeavour to regulate my mind.

Well, these are useless complaints; I shall certainly find no friend on the wide ocean, nor even here in Archangel, among merchants and seamen. Yet some feelings, unallied to the dross of human nature, beat even in these rugged bosoms. My lieutenant, for instance, is a man of wonderful courage and enterprise; he is madly desirous of glory. He is an Englishman, and in the midst of national and professional prejudices, unsoftened by cultivation, retains some of the noblest endowments of humanity. I first became acquainted with him on board a whale vessel: finding that he was unemployed in this city, I easily engaged him to assist in my enterprise.

The master is a person of an excellent disposition, and is remarkable in the ship for his gentleness, and the mildness of his discipline. He is, indeed, of so amiable a nature, that he will not hunt (a favourite, and almost the only amusement here), because he cannot endure to spill blood. He is, moreover, heroically generous. Some years ago he loved a young Russian lady, of moderate fortune; and having amassed a considerable sum in prize-money, the father of the girl consented to the match. He saw his mistress once before the destined ceremony; but she was bathed in tears, and, throwing herself at his feet, entreated him to spare her, confessing at the same time that she loved another, but that he was poor, and that her father would never consent to the union. My generous friend reassured the suppliant, and on being informed of the name of her lover instantly abandoned his pursuit. He had already bought a farm with his money, on which he had

designed to pass the remainder of his life; but he bestowed the whole on his rival, together with the remains of his prize-money to purchase stock, and then himself solicited the young woman's father to consent to her marriage with her lover. But the old man decidedly refused, thinking himself bound in honour to my friend; who, when he found the father inexorable, quitted his country, nor returned until he heard that his former mistress was married according to her inclinations. "What a noble fellow!"⁷ you will exclaim. He is so; but then he has passed all his life on board a vessel, and has scarcely an idea beyond the rope and the shroud.

But do not suppose that, because I complain a little, or because I can conceive a consolation for my toils which I may never know, that I am wavering in my resolutions. Those are as fixed as fate; and my voyage is only now delayed until the weather shall permit my embarkation. The winter has been dreadfully severe; but the spring promises well, and it is considered as a remarkably early season; so that, perhaps, I may sail sooner than I expected. I shall do nothing rashly; you know me sufficiently to confide in my prudence and considerateness whenever the safety of others is committed to my care.

I cannot describe to you my sensations on the near prospect of my undertaking. It is impossible to communicate to you a conception of the trembling sensation, half pleasurable and half fearful, with which I am preparing to depart. I am going to unexplored regions, to "the land of mist and snow"; but I shall kill no albatross,⁸ therefore do not be alarmed for my safety.

7. There are two meanings to the word *nobility*, and they are often conflated. The first refers to possessing a character with the highest qualities found in human beings, such as integrity, decency, honor, and goodness. But these qualities are often attributed to persons of the highest social rank in society—the second meaning of the word. The lieutenant, who gives up the woman he is engaged to when she says she loves another and generously provides her lover with the financial means to gain the acceptance of her family, goes well beyond what is expected. Perhaps this behavior earns him the exclamation point? Mary gives these noble qualities to Walton's second in command, perhaps challenging the taken-for-granted hierarchy that typically ascribed these qualities to individuals at the top. Yet she qualifies this choice by stating that the lieutenant didn't know any better, given that he spent so much time aboard a ship, further hinting that in the end his sacrifice was no great loss to him. In real life, Mary marries into a noble family that opposes her union with their son because of her father's indebtedness.

Mary Margaret Fonow.

8. Mary has Captain Walton allude to the poem *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1798), written by Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1834). In the poem, which Mary heard Coleridge reading during his many visits to the Godwin house, the title character kills an albatross that has been following his boat, turning a good luck sign into an ill omen.

David H. Guston.

Shall I meet you again, after having traversed immense seas, and returned by the most southern cape of Africa or America? I dare not expect such success, yet I cannot bear to look on the reverse of the picture. Continue to write to me by every opportunity: I may receive your letters (though the chance is very doubtful) on some occasions when I need them most to support my spirits. I love you very tenderly. Remember me with affection should you never hear from me again.

Your affectionate brother,
ROBERT WALTON.

LETTER III.

To Mrs. SAVILLE, England.
July 7th, 17—.

MY DEAR SISTER,

I write a few lines in haste, to say that I am safe, and well advanced on my voyage. This letter will reach England by a merchant-man now on its homeward voyage from Archangel; more fortunate than I, who may not see my native land, perhaps, for many years. I am, however, in good spirits: my men are bold, and apparently firm of purpose; nor do the floating sheets of ice that continually pass us, indicating the dangers of the region towards which we are advancing, appear to dismay them. We have already reached a very high latitude; but it is the height of summer, and although not so warm as in England, the southern gales, which blow us speedily towards those shores which I so ardently desire to attain, breathe a degree of renovating warmth which I had not expected.

No incidents have hitherto befallen us, that would make a figure in a letter. One or two stiff gales, and the breaking of a mast, are accidents which experienced navigators scarcely remember to record; and I shall be well content, if nothing worse happen to us during our voyage.

Adieu, my dear Margaret. Be assured, that for my own sake, as well as your's, I will not rashly encounter danger. I will be cool, persevering, and prudent.

Remember me to all my English friends.⁹

Most affectionately yours,
R. W.

9. Throughout *Frankenstein*, Mary utilizes an epistolary structure: significant sections of the novel are made up of letters exchanged among the characters. These letters are often long and tender, and they contain a wealth of personal details and endearments that do little to move the plot forward.

LETTER IV.

To Mrs. SAVILLE, England.

August 5th, 17—.

So strange an accident has happened to us, that I cannot forbear recording it, although it is very probable that you will see me before these papers can come into your possession.

Last Monday (July 31st), we were nearly surrounded by ice, which closed in the ship on all sides, scarcely leaving her the sea room in which she floated. Our situation was somewhat dangerous, especially as we were compassed round by a very thick fog. We accordingly lay to, hoping that some change would take place in the atmosphere and weather.

About two o'clock the mist cleared away, and we beheld, stretched out in every direction, vast and irregular plains of ice, which seemed to have no end. Some of my comrades groaned, and my own mind began to grow watchful with anxious thoughts, when a strange sight suddenly attracted our attention, and diverted our solicitude from our own situation. We perceived a low carriage, fixed on a sledge and drawn by dogs, pass on towards the north, at the distance of half a mile: a being which had the shape of a man, but apparently of gigantic stature, sat in the sledge, and guided the dogs. We watched the rapid progress of the traveller with our telescopes, until he was lost among the distant inequalities of the ice.

This appearance excited our unqualified wonder. We were, as we believed, many hundred miles from any land; but this apparition seemed to denote that it was not, in reality, so distant as we had supposed. Shut in, however,

This approach might seem like an inefficient storytelling strategy, but it is quite the opposite. Mary uses these letters strategically to emphasize the importance of the social bonds that give characters such as Victor and Captain Walton emotional sustenance during incredibly stressful times. The letters are tangible artifacts of emotional labor—the investments of time, wit, and emotional energy that make human relationships functional and rewarding. They contrast with the creature's life and reveal precisely what he is missing. He has no one with whom to share his experiences and frustrations, so his life becomes unbearable, and he lashes out violently.

Language is an important way that we show love and understanding as well as receive it. The laborious, solitary way that the creature acquires language, through scavenging books and eavesdropping, demonstrates just how removed he is from any form of nurturing social interaction.

Walton narrowly avoids making the same mistake as Victor, pursuing scientific discovery without considering the safety and well-being of the people around him. Walton is luckily in continuous written contact with his sister, Margaret, who lovingly discourages him from going through with his expedition to the North Pole. Their conversation, conducted through a series of letters, might be what saves his life and the lives of his crew.

Joey Eschrich.

by ice, it was impossible to follow his track, which we had observed with the greatest attention.

About two hours after this occurrence, we heard the ground sea; and before night the ice broke, and freed our ship. We, however, lay to until the morning, fearing to encounter in the dark those large loose masses which float about after the breaking up of the ice. I profited of this time to rest for a few hours.

In the morning, however, as soon as it was light, I went upon deck, and found all the sailors busy on one side of the vessel, apparently talking to some one in the sea. It was, in fact, a sledge, like that we had seen before, which had drifted towards us in the night, on a large fragment of ice. Only one dog remained alive; but there was a human being within it, whom the sailors were persuading to enter the vessel. He was not, as the other traveller seemed to be, a savage inhabitant of some undiscovered island, but an European. When I appeared on deck, the master said, "Here is our captain, and he will not allow you to perish on the open sea."

On perceiving me, the stranger addressed me in English, although with a foreign accent. "Before I come on board your vessel," said he, "will you have the kindness to inform me whither you are bound?"

You may conceive my astonishment on hearing such a question addressed to me from a man on the brink of destruction, and to whom I should have supposed that my vessel would have been a resource which he would not have exchanged for the most precious wealth the earth can afford. I replied, however, that we were on a voyage of discovery towards the northern pole.

Upon hearing this he appeared satisfied, and consented to come on board. Good God! Margaret, if you had seen the man who thus capitulated for his safety, your surprise would have been boundless. His limbs were nearly frozen, and his body dreadfully emaciated by fatigue and suffering. I never saw a man in so wretched a condition. We attempted to carry him into the cabin; but as soon as he had quitted the fresh air, he fainted. We accordingly brought him back to the deck, and restored him to animation by rubbing him with brandy, and forcing him to swallow a small quantity. As soon as he shewed signs of life, we wrapped him up in blankets, and placed him near the chimney of the kitchen-stove. By slow degrees he recovered, and ate a little soup, which restored him wonderfully.

Two days passed in this manner before he was able to speak; and I often feared that his sufferings had deprived him of understanding. When he had in some measure recovered, I removed him to my own cabin, and attended on him as much as my duty would permit. I never saw a more

interesting creature: his eyes have generally an expression of wildness, and even madness; but there are moments when, if any one performs an act of kindness towards him, or does him any the most trifling service, his whole countenance is lighted up, as it were, with a beam of benevolence and sweetness that I never saw equalled. But he is generally melancholy and despairing; and sometimes he gnashes his teeth, as if impatient of the weight of woes that oppresses him.

When my guest was a little recovered, I had great trouble to keep off the men, who wished to ask him a thousand questions; but I would not allow him to be tormented by their idle curiosity, in a state of body and mind whose restoration evidently depended upon entire repose. Once, however, the lieutenant asked, Why he had come so far upon the ice in so strange a vehicle?

His countenance instantly assumed an aspect of the deepest gloom; and he replied, "To seek one who fled from me."

"And did the man whom you pursued travel in the same fashion?"

"Yes."

"Then I fancy we have seen him; for, the day before we picked you up, we saw some dogs drawing a sledge, with a man in it, across the ice."

This aroused the stranger's attention; and he asked a multitude of questions concerning the route which the *dæmon*, as he called him, had pursued. Soon after, when he was alone with me, he said, "I have, doubtless, excited your curiosity, as well as that of these good people; but you are too considerate to make inquiries."

"Certainly; it would indeed be very impertinent and inhuman in me to trouble you with any inquisitiveness of mine."

"And yet you rescued me from a strange and perilous situation; you have benevolently restored me to life."

Soon after this he inquired, if I thought that the breaking up of the ice had destroyed the other sledge? I replied, that I could not answer with any degree of certainty; for the ice had not broken until near midnight, and the traveller might have arrived at a place of safety before that time; but of this I could not judge.

From this time the stranger seemed very eager to be upon deck, to watch for the sledge which had before appeared; but I have persuaded him to remain in the cabin, for he is far too weak to sustain the rawness of the atmosphere. But I have promised that some one should watch for him, and give him instant notice if any new object should appear in sight.

Such is my journal of what relates to this strange occurrence up to the present day. The stranger has gradually improved in health, but is

very silent, and appears uneasy when any one except myself enters his cabin. Yet his manners are so conciliating and gentle, that the sailors are all interested in him, although they have had very little communication with him. For my own part, I begin to love him as a brother; and his constant and deep grief fills me with sympathy and compassion. He must have been a noble creature in his better days, being even now in wreck so attractive and amiable.¹⁰

I said in one of my letters, my dear Margaret, that I should find no friend on the wide ocean; yet I have found a man who, before his spirit had been broken by misery, I should have been happy to have possessed as the brother of my heart.

I shall continue my journal concerning the stranger at intervals, should I have any fresh incidents to record.

August 13th, 17—.

My affection for my guest increases every day. He excites at once my admiration and my pity to an astonishing degree. How can I see so noble a creature destroyed by misery without feeling the most poignant grief? He is so gentle, yet so wise; his mind is so cultivated; and when he speaks, although his words are culled with the choicest art, yet they flow with rapidity and unparalleled eloquence.

He is now much recovered from his illness, and is continually on the deck, apparently watching for the sledge that preceded his own. Yet, although unhappy, he is not so utterly occupied by his own misery, but that he interests himself deeply in the employments of others. He has asked me many questions concerning my design; and I have related my little history frankly to him. He appeared pleased with the confidence, and suggested several alterations in my plan, which I shall find exceedingly useful. There is no pedantry in his manner; but all he does appears to spring solely from the interest he instinctively takes in the welfare of those who surround him. He is often overcome by gloom, and then he sits by himself, and tries to overcome all that is sullen or unsocial in his humour.

10. This is how Victor appears to the leader of the rescuing ship, Captain Robert Walton, though Walton knows only that Victor is European and not comparable to the seemingly "savage" (p. 11) creature he is chasing. Even in his much diminished state, Victor's noble qualities are apparent. Victor might become the noble friend Walton so longs for, someone of equal status who understands him and can provide wise counsel. Mary attributes both noble and not-so-noble qualities to Victor, but Walton will need to hear the full story before the complexities of Victor's character are revealed.

Mary Margaret Fonow.

These paroxysms pass from him like a cloud from before the sun, though his dejection never leaves him. I have endeavoured to win his confidence; and I trust that I have succeeded. One day I mentioned to him the desire I had always felt of finding a friend who might sympathize with me, and direct me by his counsel. I said, I did not belong to that class of men who are offended by advice. "I am self-educated, and perhaps I hardly rely sufficiently upon my own powers. I wish therefore that my companion should be wiser and more experienced than myself, to confirm and support me; nor have I believed it impossible to find a true friend."¹¹

"I agree with you," replied the stranger, "in believing that friendship is not only a desirable, but a possible acquisition. I once had a friend, the most noble of human creatures, and am entitled, therefore, to judge respecting friendship. You have hope, and the world before you, and have no cause for despair. But I—I have lost every thing, and cannot begin life anew."

As he said this, his countenance became expressive of a calm settled grief, that touched me to the heart. But he was silent, and presently retired to his cabin.

Even broken in spirit as he is, no one can feel more deeply than he does the beauties of nature. The starry sky, the sea, and every sight afforded by these wonderful regions, seems still to have the power of elevating his

11. Robert Walton, in letters to his sister, Mrs. Saville, revisits the conditions of his own early life: "[my] education was neglected, yet I was passionately fond of reading ... [and I] inherited the fortune of my cousin" (p. 4). The knowledge gained from understanding his own initial conditions may have inspired Walton's decision to set challenging goals for himself. He seems to have worked hard at addressing some of his educational shortcomings as well as his limited perspective on hard work and hardship. Albert Bandura reminds us that "people motivate and guide their actions by setting themselves challenging goals and then mobilizing their skills and effort to reach them. After people attain the goal they have been pursuing, those with a strong sense of efficacy set higher goals for themselves" (1994, 265). Walton does not appear to be an exception. His intellectual isolation grows during this fateful voyage, with the need for finding a wiser, highly experienced, caring "companion" becoming of paramount importance. His cry for intellectual companionship, a mentor or mentors, is rewarded in two ways, with approval and intimacy. The value that Walton places on approval is rather telling: "I must own I felt a little proud, when my captain offered me the second dignity in the vessel, and entreated me to remain with the greatest earnestness; so valuable did he consider my services" (p. 5). However, it is the arrival of an educated, enigmatic stranger that brings forward the excitement that Walton places on intellectual companionship (mentor-mentee dynamics): he worries that he "should find no friend on the wide ocean; yet I have found a man ... so gentle, yet so wise; his mind is so cultivated; and when he speaks, although his words are culled with the choicest art, yet they flow with rapidity and unparalleled eloquence" (p. 13). Walton finds a "true friend," an intellectual companion, a great mentor, a divine wanderer "a celestial spirit, that has a halo around him" (p. 15).

Carlos Castillo-Chavez.

soul from earth. Such a man has a double existence: he may suffer misery, and be overwhelmed by disappointments; yet when he has retired into himself, he will be like a celestial spirit, that has a halo around him, within whose circle no grief or folly ventures.

Will you laugh at the enthusiasm I express concerning this divine wanderer? If you do, you must have certainly lost that simplicity which was once your characteristic charm. Yet, if you will, smile at the warmth of my expressions, while I find every day new causes for repeating them.

August 19th, 17—.

Yesterday the stranger said to me, "You may easily perceive, Captain Walton, that I have suffered great and unparalleled misfortunes. I had determined, once, that the memory of these evils should die with me; but you have won me to alter my determination. You seek for knowledge and wisdom, as I once did; and I ardently hope that the gratification of your wishes may not be a serpent to sting you, as mine has been.¹² I do not know that the relation of my misfortunes will be useful to you, yet, if you are inclined, listen to my tale. I believe that the strange incidents connected with it will afford a view of nature, which may enlarge your faculties and understanding. You will hear of powers and occurrences, such as you have been accustomed to believe impossible: but I do not doubt that my tale conveys in its series internal evidence of the truth of the events of which it is composed."

You may easily conceive that I was much gratified by the offered communication; yet I could not endure that he should renew his grief by a recital of his misfortunes. I felt the greatest eagerness to hear the promised narrative, partly from curiosity, and partly from a strong desire to ameliorate his fate, if it were in my power. I expressed these feelings in my answer.

"I thank you," he replied, "for your sympathy, but it is useless; my fate is nearly fulfilled. I wait but for one event, and then I shall repose in peace. I understand your feeling," continued he, perceiving that I wished to interrupt him; "but you are mistaken, my friend, if thus you will allow me to name you; nothing can alter my destiny: listen to my history, and you will perceive how irrevocably it is determined."

12. "How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is / To have a thankless child!" Perhaps Mary has Victor make this apparent reference to Shakespeare's play *King Lear* (l.iv.288–289) to show that he recognizes his paternity of the creature, but, like Lear, he still does not recognize his own full measure of culpability and responsibility.

David H. Guston.

He then told me, that he would commence his narrative the next day when I should be at leisure. This promise drew from me the warmest thanks. I have resolved every night, when I am not engaged, to record, as nearly as possible in his own words, what he has related during the day. If I should be engaged, I will at least make notes. This manuscript will doubtless afford you the greatest pleasure: but to me, who know him, and who hear it from his own lips, with what interest and sympathy shall I read it in some future day!

FRANKENSTEIN; OR, THE MODERN PROMETHEUS.

CHAPTER I.

I am by birth a Genevese; and my family is one of the most distinguished of that republic.¹³ My ancestors had been for many years counsellors and syndics; and my father had filled several public situations with honour and reputation. He was respected by all who knew him for his integrity and indefatigable attention to public business. He passed his younger days perpetually occupied by the affairs of his country; and it was not until the decline of life that he thought of marrying, and bestowing on the state sons who might carry his virtues and his name down to posterity.

13. The setting for the story is Geneva, Switzerland, one of the oldest major capitals of Europe, and Victor is from one of its noblest families. He uses his scientific training to create a new life but then fails to take responsibility for loving and caring for that life. He is shocked and disgusted when his creation doesn't turn out as he planned. Yet he is also mostly unaware that his failure to take care of his creation in turn has created the creature he fears and rejects. Mary and her family traveled in more liberal and even radical circles, and she abhorred and flaunted the conventional mores of high society. In *Frankenstein*, is she calling attention to the propensity of those at the top to ignore the consequences of their actions? Social status cannot fully protect individuals from unintended consequences. Scientists and engineers who are often at the highest ranks of the academy need to be more mindful of the unintended consequences of their discoveries.

Mary Margaret Fonow.

As the circumstances of his marriage illustrate his character, I cannot refrain from relating them. One of his most intimate friends was a merchant, who, from a flourishing state, fell, through numerous mischances, into poverty. This man, whose name was Beaufort, was of a proud and unbending disposition, and could not bear to live in poverty and oblivion in the same country where he had formerly been distinguished for his rank and magnificence. Having paid his debts, therefore, in the most honourable manner, he retreated with his daughter to the town of Lucerne, where he lived unknown and in wretchedness. My father loved Beaufort with the truest friendship, and was deeply grieved by his retreat in these unfortunate circumstances. He grieved also for the loss of his society, and resolved to seek him out and endeavour to persuade him to begin the world again through his credit and assistance.

Beaufort had taken effectual measures to conceal himself; and it was ten months before my father discovered his abode. Overjoyed at this discovery, he hastened to the house, which was situated in a mean street, near the Reuss. But when he entered, misery and despair alone welcomed him. Beaufort had saved but a very small sum of money from the wreck of his fortunes; but it was sufficient to provide him with sustenance for some months, and in the mean time he hoped to procure some respectable employment in a merchant's house. The interval was consequently spent in inaction; his grief only became more deep and rankling, when he had leisure for reflection; and at length it took so fast hold of his mind, that at the end of three months he lay on a bed of sickness, incapable of any exertion.

His daughter attended him with the greatest tenderness; but she saw with despair that their little fund was rapidly decreasing, and that there was no other prospect of support. But Caroline Beaufort possessed a mind of an uncommon mould; and her courage rose to support her in her adversity. She procured plain work; she plaited straw; and by various means contrived to earn a pittance scarcely sufficient to support life.

Several months passed in this manner. Her father grew worse; her time was more entirely occupied in attending him; her means of subsistence decreased; and in the tenth month her father died in her arms, leaving her an orphan and a beggar. This last blow overcame her; and she knelt by Beaufort's coffin, weeping bitterly, when my father entered the chamber. He came like a protecting spirit to the poor girl, who committed herself to his care, and after the interment of his friend he conducted her to Geneva, and placed her under the protection of a relation. Two years after this event Caroline became his wife.

When my father became a husband and a parent, he found his time so occupied by the duties of his new situation, that he relinquished many of his public employments, and devoted himself to the education of his children. Of these I was the eldest, and the destined successor to all his labours and utility. No creature could have more tender parents than mine. My improvement and health were their constant care, especially as I remained for several years their only child. But before I continue my narrative, I must record an incident which took place when I was four years of age.

My father had a sister, whom he tenderly loved, and who had married early in life an Italian gentleman. Soon after her marriage, she had accompanied her husband into his native country, and for some years my father had very little communication with her. About the time I mentioned she died; and a few months afterwards he received a letter from her husband, acquainting him with his intention of marrying an Italian lady, and requesting my father to take charge of the infant Elizabeth, the only child of his deceased sister. "It is my wish," he said, "that you should consider her as your own daughter, and educate her thus. Her mother's fortune is secured to her, the documents of which I will commit to your keeping. Reflect upon this proposition; and decide whether you would prefer educating your niece yourself to her being brought up by a stepmother."

My father did not hesitate, and immediately went to Italy, that he might accompany the little Elizabeth to her future home. I have often heard my mother say, that she was at that time the most beautiful child she had ever seen, and shewed signs even then of a gentle and affectionate disposition. These indications, and a desire to bind as closely as possible the ties of domestic love, determined my mother to consider Elizabeth as my future wife; a design which she never found reason to repent.

From this time Elizabeth Lavenza became my playfellow, and, as we grew older, my friend. She was docile and good tempered, yet gay and playful as a summer insect. Although she was lively and animated, her feelings were strong and deep, and her disposition uncommonly affectionate. No one could better enjoy liberty, yet no one could submit with more grace than she did to constraint and caprice. Her imagination was luxuriant, yet her capability of application was great. Her person was the image of her mind; her hazel eyes, although as lively as a bird's, possessed an attractive softness. Her figure was light and airy; and, though capable of enduring great fatigue, she appeared the most fragile creature in the world. While I admired her understanding and fancy, I loved to tend on her, as I should on a favourite animal; and I never saw so much grace both of person and mind united to so little pretension.

Every one adored Elizabeth. If the servants had any request to make, it was always through her intercession. We were strangers to any species of disunion and dispute; for although there was a great dissimilitude in our characters, there was an harmony in that very dissimilitude. I was more calm and philosophical than my companion; yet my temper was not so yielding. My application was of longer endurance; but it was not so severe whilst it endured. I delighted in investigating the facts relative to the actual world; she busied herself in following the aërial creations of the poets. The world was to me a secret, which I desired to discover; to her it was a vacancy, which she sought to people with imaginations of her own.

My brothers were considerably younger than myself; but I had a friend in one of my schoolfellows, who compensated for this deficiency. Henry Clerval was the son of a merchant of Geneva, an intimate friend of my father. He was a boy of singular talent and fancy. I remember, when he was nine years old, he wrote a fairy tale, which was the delight and amazement of all his companions. His favourite study consisted in books of chivalry and romance; and when very young, I can remember, that we used to act plays composed by him out of these favourite books, the principal characters of which were Orlando, Robin Hood, Amadis, and St. George.

No youth could have passed more happily than mine. My parents were indulgent, and my companions amiable. Our studies were never forced; and by some means we always had an end placed in view, which excited us to ardour in the prosecution of them. It was by this method, and not by emulation, that we were urged to application. Elizabeth was not incited to apply herself to drawing, that her companions might not outstrip her; but through the desire of pleasing her aunt, by the representation of some favourite scene done by her own hand. We learned Latin and English, that we might read the writings in those languages; and so far from study being made odious to us through punishment, we loved application, and our amusements would have been the labours of other children. Perhaps we did not read so many books, or learn languages so quickly, as those who are disciplined according to the ordinary methods; but what we learned was impressed the more deeply on our memories.

In this description of our domestic circle I include Henry Clerval; for he was constantly with us. He went to school with me, and generally passed the afternoon at our house; for being an only child, and destitute of companions at home, his father was well pleased that he should find associates at our house; and we were never completely happy when Clerval was absent.

I feel pleasure in dwelling on the recollections of childhood, before misfortune had tainted my mind, and changed its bright visions of extensive

usefulness into gloomy and narrow reflections upon self. But, in drawing the picture of my early days, I must not omit to record those events which led, by insensible steps to my after tale of misery: for when I would account to myself for the birth of that passion, which afterwards ruled my destiny, I find it arise, like a mountain river, from ignoble and almost forgotten sources; but, swelling as it proceeded, it became the torrent which, in its course, has swept away all my hopes and joys.¹⁴

Natural philosophy¹⁵ is the genius that has regulated my fate; I desire therefore, in this narration, to state those facts which led to my predilection for that science. When I was thirteen years of age, we all went on a party of pleasure to the baths near Thonon: the inclemency of the weather obliged us to remain a day confined to the inn. In this house I chanced to find a volume of the works of Cornelius Agrippa. I opened it with apathy; the theory which he attempts to demonstrate, and the wonderful facts which he relates, soon changed this feeling into enthusiasm. A new light seemed to dawn upon my mind; and, bounding with joy, I communicated my discovery to my father. I cannot help remarking here the many opportunities instructors possess of directing the attention of their pupils to useful knowledge, which they utterly neglect. My father looked carelessly at the

14. This passage is about perceived momentum: the past reconstructed from the viewpoint of the present always appears to have a structure, a momentum, and an obvious path. It is this deep misconception in part that leads to optimism regarding the ability to predict the future and to manipulate the present in such a way as to achieve desired future states. But the challenges of technology and governance in an increasingly complex world mean that such optimism is both hubristic and dysfunctional. It is hubristic because it dramatically overestimates the ability of anyone, technologist or policy maker, to predict future paths of sociotechnological systems, and it is dysfunctional because it leads to becoming lost in a haze of whimsical fantasy rather than to putting effort into the difficult and constantly changing challenge of dealing ethically, responsibly, and rationally with an ever-morphing, fundamentally unpredictable, real world. You can reach back and claim there is a clear stream from your deep past to your present situation, but what you are really doing is building an entirely normative reconstruction, an arbitrary and partial one at best.

Braden Allenby.

15. *Natural philosophy* and *natural philosopher* were broadly encompassing terms for the theoretical and empirical inquiry into the natural world and those who conducted such inquiries. The latter was used prior to the rise of the term *scientist*, which was not coined until 1834, although Mary does use the word *scientific*: “our family was not scientific,” says Victor in describing the Frankensteins (p. 22).

A biography of Humphry Davy (Golinski 2016, 1) that focuses on how Davy, who was acquainted with Mary’s father William Godwin and whose work was read by Mary, became “a scientist before there was such a thing,” uses quotations from Mary’s novel as the epigraphs to each chapter, as if to suggest that Davy’s difficulty in forging a scientific career is associated with and can be communicated by Mary’s portrayal of Victor’s similar difficulties.

David H. Guston.

title-page of my book, and said, “Ah! Cornelius Agrippa! My dear Victor, do not waste your time upon this; it is sad trash.”

If, instead of this remark, my father had taken the pains to explain to me, that the principles of Agrippa had been entirely exploded, and that a modern system of science had been introduced, which possessed much greater powers than the ancient, because the powers of the latter were chimerical, while those of the former were real and practical; under such circumstances, I should certainly have thrown Agrippa aside, and, with my imagination warmed as it was, should probably have applied myself to the more rational theory of chemistry¹⁶ which has resulted from modern discoveries. It is even possible, that the train of my ideas would never have received the fatal impulse that led to my ruin. But the cursory glance my father had taken of my volume by no means assured me that he was acquainted with its contents; and I continued to read with the greatest avidity.

When I returned home, my first care was to procure the whole works of this author, and afterwards of Paracelsus and Albertus Magnus.¹⁷ I read and studied the wild fancies of these writers with delight; they appeared to me treasures known to few beside myself; and although I often wished to communicate these secret stores of knowledge to my father, yet his

16. Alchemy has roots in the ancient world, although the word itself comes from Arabic. It was concerned primarily with the transformation of materials, notably the transmutation of base metals such as lead and tin into gold and silver. Much historical alchemy can usefully be conceived as protochemistry and included such practices as metallurgy and the making of dyes and imitation gems. Alchemy also had a strong connection with medicine, and for some in the Renaissance it came to be associated with astrology, mysticism, and even magic. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, alchemy was increasingly viewed as a pseudoscience and the domain of charlatans. Both Victor's father and Professor Krempe reflect this view and strongly distinguish between the modern science of chemistry and irrational, premodern alchemy.

Joel A. Klein.

17. Many European alchemists in the Middle Ages and Renaissance believed that it was possible to produce an “elixir” or medicine that could prolong life or even heal all diseases. Some, including Cornelius Agrippa (Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim, 1486–1535), associated such elixirs or medicines with the philosopher's stone: a substance of alchemical legend that could turn metals such as lead into gold. The medieval theologian Albertus Magnus (c. 1200–1280) did not officially support such views, but a text called the *Little Book on Alchemy* that falsely purported—but was widely believed—to be by Albertus did. The texts whose ideas on alchemy and life were most influential, however, were attributed to—although likely not penned by—the Renaissance physician and iconoclast Paracelsus (1493–1541). In one of these, a work titled *On the Nature of Things*, the author describes the artificial creation of a little human called a “homunculus” in a process vaguely similar to Victor's animation of “lifeless matter” (pp. 34, 37). Heating a sealed flask containing putrefying semen would produce a human form after forty days, and the fully formed homunculus—which would have marvelous powers and knowledge—would be complete after forty weeks of feeding with a preparation of human blood.

Joel A. Klein.

indefinite censure of my favourite Agrippa always withheld me. I disclosed my discoveries to Elizabeth, therefore, under a promise of strict secrecy; but she did not interest herself in the subject, and I was left by her to pursue my studies alone.

It may appear very strange, that a disciple of Albertus Magnus should arise in the eighteenth century; but our family was not scientific, and I had not attended any of the lectures given at the schools of Geneva.¹⁸ My dreams were therefore undisturbed by reality; and I entered with the greatest diligence into the search of the philosopher's stone and the elixir of life.¹⁹

18. This passage implies that formal education is superior to being self-educated. Further, there is a sentiment that formal schooling can ground someone in truth and that a person trying to learn on his or her own may not be able to separate fiction from fact because he or she hasn't been taught what is right by someone else. This is a particularly interesting way to view schooling because all schooling is biased in some way: by the curriculum developed, by the instructor's views on that curriculum, and even by what questions the instructor entertains in the classroom. There is an assumed unbiased truth associated with formal schooling, but this assumption is flawed.

Sara Brownell.

19. Cornelius Agrippa remains among the most intellectually compelling magical theologians and natural philosophers of his time. His magnum opus, *De occulta philosophia libri tres* (Three books of occult philosophy), occupied the majority of his life, starting with a juvenile manuscript dedicated to his teacher, Abbot Trithemius of Sponheim; it began to circulate in 1509–1510 and had a first printed edition in 1531 and a final edited edition in 1533. The book attained wide print circulation, appearing in German, Latin, and French editions before 1535 as well as in reprints and in English throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Agrippa's reputation as a dark magician also grew, despite the lack of evidence to support it, and a fourth book spuriously attributed to him was in fact a book of dark magic, appearing in English in the seventeenth century and outselling the original work through the nineteenth century.

It is not clear whether Victor Frankenstein read *De occulta philosophia*, but his appreciation for the "theory he [Agrippa] attempts to demonstrate" (p. 20) suggests he might have encountered the magical cosmology it contained. Agrippa embeds magic in the Creation, contending that God placed magic in the world as a system of connections, sympathies, and antipathies by which adepts could transcend the natural sphere and influence the superior realms. Although *De occulta philosophia* clearly engages with Neoplatonic philosophy and sees a clear path by which the study of God's work improves the adept, it is unique in that Agrippa also includes the possibility for the living adept to transcend the natural sphere through magical work and to re-enter the godhead. Through the spiritual improvement (requiring the adept to shed human desires and ambitions) required to attain such magical skills, Agrippa believes the adept would use his magical skills to continue the world order conceived by God—perhaps seeing the adept as an important source of defense in the case of an apocalypse. It is not clear, however, what would happen if a disciplined but evil adept achieved the godhead—perhaps he could derail the order of the world. At any rate, Victor's sense that he can equal God might have come from this text because he read it outside the context of Renaissance theology and without understanding the tremendous discipline required of a magical adept. His creature serves as an object lesson about the threats posed by undisciplined, ambition-fueled, and ego-driven science. It does not operate as a corrective to the problems of Renaissance natural philosophy solved by modern science but instead serves as evidence for the importance of the increasingly common peer-reviewed and institutionally defined investigations that came to be known as science in the early nineteenth century.

Allison Kavey.

But the latter obtained my most undivided attention: wealth was an inferior object; but what glory would attend the discovery, if I could banish disease from the human frame, and render man invulnerable to any but a violent death!²⁰

Nor were these my only visions. The raising of ghosts or devils was a promise liberally accorded by my favourite authors, the fulfilment of which I most eagerly sought; and if my incantations were always unsuccessful, I attributed the failure rather to my own inexperience and mistake, than to a want of skill or fidelity in my instructors.²¹

The natural phænomena that take place every day before our eyes did not escape my examinations. Distillation, and the wonderful effects of steam, processes of which my favourite authors were utterly ignorant, excited my astonishment; but my utmost wonder was engaged by some experiments on an air-pump, which I saw employed by a gentleman whom we were in the habit of visiting.

The ignorance of the early philosophers on these and several other points served to decrease their credit with me: but I could not entirely throw them aside, before some other system should occupy their place in my mind.

When I was about fifteen years old, we had retired to our house near Belrive, when we witnessed a most violent and terrible thunder-storm. It advanced from behind the mountains of Jura; and the thunder burst at once with frightful loudness from various quarters of the heavens. I remained, while the storm lasted, watching its progress with curiosity and delight. As I stood at the door, on a sudden I beheld a stream of fire issue from an old and beautiful oak, which stood about twenty yards from our house; and so soon as the dazzling light vanished, the oak had disappeared, and nothing remained but a blasted stump. When we visited it the next morning,

20. The young, rebellious, intelligent, and ambitious Victor is motivated by the search for glory and public renown. He wants to make a name for himself. He wants not just to be successful but to be brilliantly, notoriously successful. And he seeks that glorious reputation through modern natural philosophy, what we now call experimental science, the "genius that ... regulate[s] his fate" (p. 20). Victor's stated goal, to create a kind of immortality, is just the kind of thing that could bring him the renown he desperately seeks.

JJ LaTourelle.

21. Accepting the failure to learn as the student's responsibility can be described as a student-deficit model of instruction, where any gap in learning is the student's fault and instructors are presumed to be faultless in their teaching. This perspective also represents an instructor-centered approach to teaching, where it is the student's responsibility to listen to and learn from the instructor. It stands in stark contrast to how many view education today as a constructivist activity that should be student centered, where students are creating their own learning.

Sara Brownell.

we found the tree shattered in a singular manner. It was not splintered by the shock, but entirely reduced to thin ribbands of wood. I never beheld any thing so utterly destroyed.

The catastrophe of this tree excited my extreme astonishment; and I eagerly inquired of my father the nature and origin of thunder and lightning. He replied, "Electricity"; describing at the same time the various effects of that power. He constructed a small electrical machine, and exhibited a few experiments; he made also a kite, with a wire and string, which drew down that fluid from the clouds.²²

This last stroke completed the overthrow of Cornelius Agrippa, Albertus Magnus, and Paracelsus, who had so long reigned the lords of my imagination. But by some fatality I did not feel inclined to commence the study of any modern system; and this disinclination was influenced by the following circumstance.

My father expressed a wish that I should attend a course of lectures upon natural philosophy, to which I cheerfully consented. Some accident prevented my attending these lectures until the course was nearly finished. The lecture, being therefore one of the last, was entirely incomprehensible to me. The professor discoursed with the greatest fluency of potassium and boron, of sulphates and oxyds, terms to which I could affix no idea; and I became disgusted with the science of natural philosophy, although I still read Pliny²³ and Buffon²⁴ with delight, authors, in my estimation, of nearly equal interest and utility.

22. Dramatic encounters with natural phenomena are inspirations for scientific as well as literary imagination. This passage reconstructs the way that the philosopher Francis Bacon (1561–1626) thought that scientists come to understand natural phenomena and, in turn, use their understanding to construct technologies that make use of the same underlying processes. In describing how Victor's father translates the mechanisms of thunder and lightning into various technologies—a small electrical machine (perhaps a galvanic pile and Leyden jar) and a kite that attracts and conducts electricity (after Benjamin Franklin's experiment), both of which were part of Percy Shelley's education—the passage foreshadows Victor's eventual use of electricity to animate the creature he creates. The sense of wonder the narrator describes at witnessing the storm is important: delight, curiosity, awe, and other emotions motivate scientific inquiry by captivating the imagination and emotions. Mary likely shared some of her protagonist's emotions as she endured the relentless rains and thunderstorms that plagued Geneva in the summer of 1816. Dehlia Hannah.

23. Pliny the Elder (23–79 CE) was a Roman naturalist and natural philosopher who published the encyclopedic text *Naturalis historia* (Natural history). He died in the explosion of Mount Vesuvius while attempting to help friends escape.

David H. Guston.

24. Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon (1707–1788), was a French naturalist whose multivolume work *Histoire naturelle* (Natural history) echoed Pliny the Elder's. In a century in which natural historians were still attempting to understand whether and how species changed,

My occupations at this age were principally the mathematics, and most of the branches of study appertaining to that science. I was busily employed in learning languages; Latin was already familiar to me, and I began to read some of the easiest Greek authors without the help of a lexicon. I also perfectly understood English and German. This is the list of my accomplishments at the age of seventeen; and you may conceive that my hours were fully employed in acquiring and maintaining a knowledge of this various literature.

Another task also devolved upon me, when I became the instructor of my brothers. Ernest was six years younger than myself, and was my principal pupil. He had been afflicted with ill health from his infancy, through which Elizabeth and I had been his constant nurses: his disposition was gentle, but he was incapable of any severe application. William, the youngest of our family, was yet an infant, and the most beautiful little fellow in the world; his lively blue eyes, dimpled cheeks, and endearing manners, inspired the tenderest affection.

Such was our domestic circle, from which care and pain seemed for ever banished. My father directed our studies, and my mother partook of our enjoyments. Neither of us possessed the slightest pre-eminence over the other; the voice of command was never heard amongst us; but mutual affection engaged us all to comply with and obey the slightest desire of each other.

CHAPTER II.

When I had attained the age of seventeen, my parents resolved that I should become a student at the university of Ingolstadt. I had hitherto attended the schools of Geneva; but my father thought it necessary, for the completion of my education, that I should be made acquainted with other customs than those of my native country. My departure was therefore fixed at an early date; but, before the day resolved upon could arrive, the first misfortune of my life occurred—an omen, as it were, of my future misery.

Elizabeth had caught the scarlet fever; but her illness was not severe, and she quickly recovered. During her confinement, many arguments had been urged to persuade my mother to refrain from attending upon her.

Buffon proposed a theory that New World species, including humans, were degenerate compared to Old World species. His theory led to a heated correspondence with Thomas Jefferson, who sent samples of robust North American wildlife—including a stuffed moose—across the Atlantic to him. David H. Guston.

She had, at first, yielded to our entreaties; but when she heard that her favourite was recovering, she could no longer debar herself from her society, and entered her chamber long before the danger of infection was past. The consequences of this imprudence were fatal. On the third day my mother sickened; her fever was very malignant, and the looks of her attendants prognosticated the worst event. On her death-bed the fortitude and benignity of this admirable woman did not desert her. She joined the hands of Elizabeth and myself: "My children," she said, "my firmest hopes of future happiness were placed on the prospect of your union. This expectation will now be the consolation of your father. Elizabeth, my love, you must supply my place to your younger cousins. Alas! I regret that I am taken from you; and, happy and beloved as I have been, is it not hard to quit you all? But these are not thoughts befitting me; I will endeavour to resign myself cheerfully to death, and will indulge a hope of meeting you in another world."

She died calmly; and her countenance expressed affection even in death. I need not describe the feelings of those whose dearest ties are rent by that most irreparable evil,²⁵ the void that presents itself to the soul, and the despair that is exhibited on the countenance. It is so long before the mind can persuade itself that she, whom we saw every day, and whose very existence appeared a part of our own, can have departed for ever—that the brightness of a beloved eye can have been extinguished, and the sound of a voice so familiar, and dear to the ear, can be hushed, never more to be heard. These are the reflections of the first days; but when the lapse of time proves the reality of the evil, then the actual bitterness of grief commences.²⁶ Yet from whom has not that rude hand rent away some dear connexion;

25. The death of the mother is seen as evil, indeed as an "irreparable evil." As a child, Mary would sit by her mother's grave and read; this is a special form of grief that the created feel when they lose those who created them. Much of Victor's effort in making the creature is driven by his thoughts about the evil of death, the finitude of human life. The passage here then goes on to correlate the perception of an evil as evil with its emotional impact, in this case grief. Ironically, when he succeeds in making the creature, he makes a motherless one.

Joel Gereboff.

26. When Victor describes his grief at the death of his mother, he focuses on its impact on him. He grieves her absence rather than feeling sorrow for the pain she experienced in dying or for the experiences of life she will now miss. Victor's grief at his mother's death plays a central role in shaping his character going forward. It is the mirror of the creature's experience in the novel. Victor grieves the presence of an absence—that is, his mother. The creature grieves the presence of an absence—that is, a friend, fellow, and mate. Given all that Victor knows of grief and loss, we would expect him to be more sympathetic to the creature's plight. He seems blind to the many things he has in common with his creation. Perhaps he is willfully blind because he must continue to dehumanize his creation in order to distance himself from it and from his responsibility for it.

and why should I describe a sorrow which all have felt, and must feel? The time at length arrives, when grief is rather an indulgence than a necessity; and the smile that plays upon the lips, although it may be deemed a sacrilege, is not banished. My mother was dead, but we had still duties which we ought to perform; we must continue our course with the rest, and learn to think ourselves fortunate, whilst one remains whom the spoiler has not seized.

My journey to Ingolstadt, which had been deferred by these events, was now again determined upon. I obtained from my father a respite of some weeks. This period was spent sadly; my mother's death, and my speedy departure, depressed our spirits; but Elizabeth endeavoured to renew the spirit of cheerfulness in our little society. Since the death of her aunt, her mind had acquired new firmness and vigour. She determined to fulfil her duties with the greatest exactness; and she felt that that most imperious duty, of rendering her uncle and cousins happy, had devolved upon her. She consoled me, amused her uncle, instructed my brothers; and I never beheld her so enchanting as at this time, when she was continually endeavouring to contribute to the happiness of others, entirely forgetful of herself.

The day of my departure at length arrived. I had taken leave of all my friends, excepting Clerval, who spent the last evening with us. He bitterly lamented that he was unable to accompany me: but his father could not be persuaded to part with him, intending that he should become a partner with him in business, in compliance with his favourite theory, that learning was superfluous in the commerce of ordinary life.²⁷ Henry had a refined mind; he had no desire to be idle, and was well pleased to become his father's partner, but he believed that a man might be a very good trader, and yet possess a cultivated understanding.

We sat late, listening to his complaints, and making many little arrangements for the future. The next morning early I departed. Tears gushed from the eyes of Elizabeth; they proceeded partly from sorrow at my departure, and partly because she reflected that the same journey was to have taken place three months before, when a mother's blessing would have accompanied me.

It remains to be seen whether scientists and engineers, as creators, can afford to recognize themselves in their work or can afford not to.

Sean A. Hays.

27. Much of education now is focused on applied learning, in particular technical degrees, and is intended to prepare a skilled workforce. This view was not the dominant one in Mary's time, when learning was thought to be for the privileged and not all that useful for everyday life.

Sara Brownell.

I threw myself into the chaise that was to convey me away, and indulged in the most melancholy reflections. I, who had ever been surrounded by amiable companions, continually engaged in endeavouring to bestow mutual pleasure, I was now alone. In the university, whither I was going, I must form my own friends, and be my own protector. My life had hitherto been remarkably secluded and domestic; and this had given me invincible repugnance to new countenances. I loved my brothers, Elizabeth, and Clerval; these were “old familiar faces”; but I believed myself totally unfitted for the company of strangers. Such were my reflections as I commenced my journey; but as I proceeded, my spirits and hopes rose. I ardently desired the acquisition of knowledge. I had often, when at home, thought it hard to remain during my youth cooped up in one place, and had longed to enter the world, and take my station among other human beings. Now my desires were complied with, and it would, indeed, have been folly to repent.

I had sufficient leisure for these and many other reflections during my journey to Ingolstadt, which was long and fatiguing. At length the high white steeple of the town met my eyes. I alighted, and was conducted to my solitary apartment, to spend the evening as I pleased.

The next morning I delivered my letters of introduction, and paid a visit to some of the principal professors, and among others to M. Krempe, professor of natural philosophy. He received me with politeness, and asked me several questions concerning my progress in the different branches of science appertaining to natural philosophy. I mentioned, it is true, with fear and trembling, the only authors I had ever read upon those subjects. The professor stared: “Have you,” he said, “really spent your time in studying such nonsense?”

I replied in the affirmative. “Every minute,” continued M. Krempe with warmth, “every instant that you have wasted on those books is utterly and entirely lost. You have burdened your memory with exploded systems, and useless names. Good God! in what desert land have you lived, where no one was kind enough to inform you that these fancies, which you have so greedily imbibed, are a thousand years old, and as musty as they are ancient? I little expected in this enlightened and scientific age to find a disciple of Albertus Magnus and Paracelsus. My dear Sir, you must begin your studies entirely anew.”²⁸

28. This passage is meant to illustrate a problem with self-learning: the autodidact (someone who teaches himself or herself) may not know the appropriate texts to read or the appropriate way to evaluate them. But the passage also raises the question of whether there is any benefit to be had in reading about ways of thinking that are considered inaccurate in the current time. Are we so certain in the dominant viewpoint of the time that previous ways of thinking do not hold any use?

Sara Brownell.

So saying, he stepped aside, and wrote down a list of several books treating of natural philosophy, which he desired me to procure, and dismissed me, after mentioning that in the beginning of the following week he intended to commence a course of lectures upon natural philosophy in its general relations, and that M. Waldman, a fellow-professor, would lecture upon chemistry the alternate days that he missed.

I returned home, not disappointed, for I had long considered those authors useless whom the professor had so strongly reprobated; but I did not feel much inclined to study the books which I procured at his recommendation. M. Krempe was a little squat man, with a gruff voice and repulsive countenance; the teacher, therefore, did not prepossess me in favour of his doctrine. Besides, I had a contempt for the uses of modern natural philosophy. It was very different, when the masters of the science sought immortality and power;²⁹ such views, although futile, were grand: but now the scene was changed. The ambition of the inquirer seemed to limit itself to the annihilation of those visions on which my interest in science was chiefly founded. I was required to exchange chimeras of boundless grandeur for realities of little worth.³⁰

29. Many scholars argue that science and technology, especially as practiced in the West, have always been about achieving “immortality and power” (see, e.g., *The Religion of Technology* [1997], where David Noble notes that from the early Middle Ages “technology came to be identified more closely with both lost perfection and the possibility of renewed perfection, and the advance of the arts took on new significance, not only as evidence of grace, but as a means of preparation for, and a sure sign of, imminent salvation” [12]). The Enlightenment in some ways was a profound assertion of a humanistic perspective, and the end goals of that assertion, often not stated as clearly as in this passage of the novel, have not changed that much. But before we challenge the obvious hubris, it bears remembering that the opposite has also not changed: those who do not seek immortality and power too often suffer, die young, and serve under another’s yoke.
Braden Allenby.

30. Victor suggests a change in the ways that natural philosophy is currently employed as compared to the past. The history he creates suggest that scientists of the past held higher aspirations than his contemporaries, who, according to him, are interested in what science can show is *not* possible rather than pressing the human imagination forward. Because this comparison was made two centuries ago, it raises questions for modern readers about the common idea that the sciences of the past had more scope for imagination (“boundless grandeur,” as Victor puts it) than the sciences of today.

Despite his conviction about the impossibility of the quest of the masters of science for “immortality and power,” Victor finds himself drawn to the “chimeras of boundless grandeur.” The term *chimera* has two potential meanings captured here: the mythological Greek fire-breathing monster with a lion’s head, a goat’s body, and a serpent’s tail or an illusory or impossible goal. Mary’s careful word selection allows readers to see both definitions in her usage. The concept of the chimera in modern biology (which of course would not have been known to Mary) is a single organism composed of different zygotes, which is the merger of multiple fertilized eggs; this multiple composition may happen through tissue transplant or mutation.

Hannah Rogers.

Such were my reflections during the first two or three days spent almost in solitude. But as the ensuing week commenced, I thought of the information which M. Krempe had given me concerning the lectures. And although I could not consent to go and hear that little conceited fellow deliver sentences out of a pulpit, I recollected what he had said of M. Waldman, whom I had never seen, as he had hitherto been out of town.

Partly from curiosity, and partly from idleness, I went into the lecturing room, which M. Waldman entered shortly after. This professor was very unlike his colleague. He appeared about fifty years of age, but with an aspect expressive of the greatest benevolence; a few gray hairs covered his temples, but those at the back of his head were nearly black. His person was short, but remarkably erect; and his voice the sweetest I had ever heard. He began his lecture by a recapitulation of the history of chemistry and the various improvements made by different men of learning, pronouncing with fervour the names of the most distinguished discoverers. He then took a cursory view of the present state of the science, and explained many of its elementary terms. After having made a few preparatory experiments, he concluded with a panegyric upon modern chemistry, the terms of which I shall never forget:—

“The ancient teachers of this science,” said he, “promised impossibilities, and performed nothing. The modern masters promise very little; they know that metals cannot be transmuted, and that the elixir of life is a chimera. But these philosophers, whose hands seem only made to dabble in dirt, and their eyes to pore over the microscope or crucible, have indeed performed miracles. They penetrate into the recesses of nature, and shew how she works in her hiding places. They ascend into the heavens; they have discovered how the blood circulates, and the nature of the air we breathe. They have acquired new and almost unlimited powers; they can command the thunders of heaven, mimic the earthquake, and even mock the invisible world with its own shadows.”

I departed highly pleased with the professor and his lecture, and paid him a visit the same evening. His manners in private were even more mild and attractive than in public; for there was a certain dignity in his mien during his lecture, which in his own house was replaced by the greatest affability and kindness. He heard with attention my little narration concerning my studies, and smiled at the names of Cornelius Agrippa, and Paracelsus, but without the contempt that M. Krempe had exhibited. He said, that “these were men to whose indefatigable zeal modern philosophers were indebted for most of the foundations of their knowledge. They had left to us, as an easier task, to give new names, and arrange in

connected classifications, the facts which they in a great degree had been the instruments of bringing to light. The labours of men of genius, however erroneously directed, scarcely ever fail in ultimately turning to the solid advantage of mankind.”³¹ I listened to his statement, which was delivered without any presumption or affectation; and then added, that his lecture had removed my prejudices against modern chemists; and I, at the same time, requested his advice concerning the books I ought to procure.

“I am happy,” said M. Waldman, “to have gained a disciple; and if your application equals your ability, I have no doubt of your success. Chemistry is that branch of natural philosophy in which the greatest improvements have been and may be made; it is on that account that I have made it my peculiar study; but at the same time I have not neglected the other branches of science. A man would make but a very sorry chemist, if he attended to that department of human knowledge alone. If your wish is to become really a man of science, and not merely a petty experimentalist, I should advise you to apply to every branch of natural philosophy, including mathematics.”

He then took me into his laboratory, and explained to me the uses of his various machines; instructing me as to what I ought to procure, and promising me the use of his own, when I should have advanced far enough in the science not to derange their mechanism. He also gave me the list of books which I had requested; and I took my leave.

Thus ended a day memorable to me; it decided my future destiny.

CHAPTER III.

From this day natural philosophy, and particularly chemistry, in the most comprehensive sense of the term, became nearly my sole occupation. I read with ardour those works, so full of genius and discrimination, which modern inquirers have written on these subjects. I attended the lectures, and cultivated the acquaintance, of the men of science of the university; and I found even in M. Krempe a great deal of sound sense and real information, combined, it is true, with a repulsive physiognomy and manners, but not on that account the less valuable. In M. Waldman I found a true friend.

31. A major rationale for the autonomy of science and scientists—that is, their ability to make their own choices free from interference by governments or lay people—in their pursuit of knowledge is the presumed certainty of the superior instrumental outcome of that pursuit, regardless of the potential presence of error or bias. According to chemist and philosopher of science Michael Polanyi, the ideal organization is “scientists, freely making their own choice of problems and pursuing them in the light of their own personal judgment” (1962, 54).

David H. Guston.

His gentleness was never tinged by dogmatism; and his instructions were given with an air of frankness and good nature, that banished every idea of pedantry. It was, perhaps, the amiable character of this man that inclined me more to that branch of natural philosophy which he professed, than an intrinsic love for the science itself. But this state of mind had place only in the first steps towards knowledge: the more fully I entered into the science, the more exclusively I pursued it for its own sake.³² That application, which at first had been a matter of duty and resolution, now became so ardent and eager, that the stars often disappeared in the light of morning whilst I was yet engaged in my laboratory.

As I applied so closely, it may be easily conceived that I improved rapidly. My ardour was indeed the astonishment of the students; and my proficiency, that of the masters. Professor Krempe often asked me, with a sly smile, how Cornelius Agrippa went on? whilst M. Waldman expressed the most heartfelt exultation in my progress. Two years passed in this manner, during which I paid no visit to Geneva, but was engaged, heart and soul, in the pursuit of some discoveries, which I hoped to make. None but those who have experienced them can conceive of the enticements of science. In other studies you go as far as others have gone before you, and there is nothing more to know; but in a scientific pursuit there is continual food for discovery and wonder. A mind of moderate capacity, which closely pursues one study,

32. The idea of a having a single scientific mentor is not ideal, and Victor knows this well. He is mentored by two complementary, imperfect, and valuable individuals—namely, M. Krempe and M. Waldman. We see that scientific mentoring does not take place in a vacuum. Developmental psychologist Jean Piaget described the process of intellectual development with the words “intelligence organizes the world by organizing itself” (quoted in Chess and Hassibi 1978, 63). One reading of Piaget suggests that he models learning as a complex adaptive system, and so as the human body experiences stimuli, it begins to organize and anticipate stimuli, creating complex systems of mental actions and anticipated results in an effort to predict and control stimuli to generate more favorable results. As a result, collaborative interactions among individuals with different perspectives and experiences (mentor and mentee) provide conversational stimuli for developing new understandings. L. S. Vygotsky, citing Piaget, describes a similar process: “Such observations [of child argumentation] prompted Piaget to conclude that communication produces the need for checking and confirming thoughts, a process that is characteristic of adult thought” (1978, 90). Mentor–mentee dynamics create the stimuli that drive Victor’s curiosity, creativity, and learning. M. Waldman, who loves chemistry, notes that “I have not neglected the other branches of science” (p. 31), impressing the importance of interdisciplinary learning on Victor. As this passage shows, passion for learning is also the outcome of dual mentorship: “natural philosophy, and particularly chemistry, in the most comprehensive sense of the term, became nearly my sole occupation.” Finally, the search for knowledge, regardless of direction, drives Victor’s research. Discipline, passion, focus, and effective diverse mentorship philosophies characterize Victor’s status at this time.

Carlos Castillo-Chavez.

must infallibly arrive at great proficiency in that study; and I, who continually sought the attainment of one object of pursuit, and was solely wrapt up in this, improved so rapidly, that, at the end of two years, I made some discoveries in the improvement of some chemical instruments, which procured me great esteem and admiration at the university. When I had arrived at this point, and had become as well acquainted with the theory and practice of natural philosophy as depended on the lessons of any of the professors at Ingolstadt, my residence there being no longer conducive to my improvements, I thought of returning to my friends and my native town, when an incident happened that protracted my stay.

One of the phænomena which had peculiarly attracted my attention was the structure of the human frame, and, indeed, any animal endued with life. Whence, I often asked myself, did the principle of life proceed? It was a bold question, and one which has ever been considered as a mystery; yet with how many things are we upon the brink of becoming acquainted, if cowardice or carelessness did not restrain our inquiries. I revolved these circumstances in my mind, and determined thenceforth to apply myself more particularly to those branches of natural philosophy which relate to physiology. Unless I had been animated by an almost supernatural enthusiasm, my application to this study would have been irksome, and almost intolerable. To examine the causes of life, we must first have recourse to death. I became acquainted with the science of anatomy: but this was not sufficient; I must also observe the natural decay and corruption of the human body. In my education my father had taken the greatest precautions that my mind should be impressed with no supernatural horrors. I do not ever remember to have trembled at a tale of superstition, or to have feared the apparition of a spirit. Darkness had no effect upon my fancy; and a church-yard was to me merely the receptacle of bodies deprived of life, which, from being the seat of beauty and strength, had become food for the worm. Now I was led to examine the cause and progress of this decay, and forced to spend days and nights in vaults and charnel houses. My attention was fixed upon every object the most insupportable to the delicacy of the human feelings. I saw how the fine form of man was degraded and wasted; I beheld the corruption of death succeed to the blooming cheek of life; I saw how the worm inherited the wonders of the eye and brain. I paused, examining and analysing all the minutiae of causation, as exemplified in the change from life to death, and death to life, until from the midst of this darkness a sudden light broke in upon me—a light so brilliant and wondrous, yet so simple, that while I became dizzy with the immensity of the prospect which it illustrated, I was surprised that among so many men of

genius, who had directed their inquiries towards the same science, that I alone should be reserved to discover so astonishing a secret.³³

Remember, I am not recording the vision of a madman. The sun does not more certainly shine in the heavens, than that which I now affirm is true. Some miracle might have produced it, yet the stages of the discovery were distinct and probable. After days and nights of incredible labour and fatigue, I succeeded in discovering the cause of generation and life; nay, more, I became myself capable of bestowing animation upon lifeless matter.³⁴

The astonishment which I had at first experienced on this discovery soon gave place to delight and rapture. After so much time spent in painful labour, to arrive at once at the summit of my desires, was the most gratifying consummation of my toils. But this discovery was so great and overwhelming, that all the steps by which I had been progressively led to it were obliterated, and I beheld only the result. What had been the study and desire of the wisest men since the creation of the world, was now within my grasp. Not that, like a magic scene, it all opened upon me at once: the information I had obtained was of a nature rather to direct my endeavours so soon as I should point them towards the object of my search, than to exhibit that object already accomplished. I was like the Arabian who had been buried with the dead, and found a passage to life aided only by one glimmering, and seemingly ineffectual, light.

I see by your eagerness, and the wonder and hope which your eyes express, my friend, that you expect to be informed of the secret with which I am acquainted; that cannot be: listen patiently until the end of my story,

33. Biologists can seem godlike in their laboratory research, making decisions pertaining to animal and human life while having little immediate need to answer to anyone save their conscience. What kind of ethics does practicing applied biological science require? A personal ethics of individual morality pertaining to, for example, dishonesty and irresponsibility in observing humane practice? A research ethics pertaining to, for example, what specific “raw” material is used, what the source of the “raw” material is, and what the individual researcher or group of researchers is doing with the “raw” material? Or a social ethics pertaining to the positive and negative social impacts the biological research might have at present and in the future? Because the gradations between personal research and social ethics are rarely so distinct, how should biologists relate to them? How does Victor relate to his raw “materials” (p. 36)?

Miguel Astor-Aguilera.

34. Victor here claims to have invented a way to instill life. The narrative does not delve into questions of ownership or patenting, but future narratives building on Frankenstein do, in novels (e.g., *Next* by Michael Crichton [2006]), film (*Blade Runner* [Ridley Scott, 1986]), and television (*Orphan Black* [BBC, 2013–]). Patenting adds the motivation of financial reward to scientific fame and glory, and it can provide motivations for both holding something secret, until rights are secured, and publicizing it after rights are granted.

Robert Cook-Deegan.

and you will easily perceive why I am reserved upon that subject. I will not lead you on, unguarded and ardent as I then was, to your destruction and infallible misery. Learn from me, if not by my precepts, at least by my example, how dangerous is the acquirement of knowledge, and how much happier that man is who believes his native town to be the world, than he who aspires to become greater than his nature will allow.

When I found so astonishing a power placed within my hands,³⁵ I hesitated a long time concerning the manner in which I should employ it. Although I possessed the capacity of bestowing animation, yet to prepare a frame for the reception of it, with all its intricacies of fibres, muscles, and veins, still remained a work of inconceivable difficulty and labour.³⁶

35. Victor engages materiality in a much different manner than his not-so-distant pre-Enlightenment European brethren. He equates “life” with animate human bodies; however, animated life is found throughout Earth in a variety of organic forms. Do not simple cells move and have life? Plants also move, though most of them quite slowly, and have frames composed of “fibres, muscles, and veins” conceptually analogous to those of animals. What of plants’ visible animation, seeming to indicate volition: vines creeping along the sides of buildings toward where there is more light, sunflowers’ “faces” following the path of the sun, predatory Venus flytraps moving quite quickly to ensnare their victims, and the *Mimosa pudica*, the “sleepy plant” in Mesoamerica (also found in Melanesia and Africa), shying away when touched and then recomposing itself after apparent danger has subsided? When do we, if we do, grant plants, nonhuman animals, and human animals volition and at what stage of life? Do only human animals have emotions and volition? Do simple cells shy away if they are nudged or pricked and move away if they bump into another mobile simple cell?

Miguel Astor-Aguilera.

36. Victor finds himself chasing a “frame” of flesh and its union with life. His ambition reflects several forms of mechanistic thought current at the time Mary wrote *Frankenstein*: an understanding of biological systems as physical machines controlled solely by physical laws. Nineteenth-century biology and physiology embraced and developed mechanistic perspectives while at the same time discarding earlier kindred understandings of the body. In the seventeenth century, the conceptualization of the human body by René Descartes (1596–1650) was similarly mechanistic, but he explained the transition from physical machine to a living, thinking entity as an act of God. The deity endowed otherwise idle material with consciousness. By Mary’s time, the latter part of Descartes’s argument had lost favor, but mechanistic ideas had gained scientific prominence.

Victor’s “frame” is a product of part-by-part fabrication and lacks “animation”—then a term for the state of being alive. His power makes the idle machine something living. In a sense, the story presents a separation between body and consciousness similar to the one championed by Descartes. And yet no deity is at work. Victor installs life into his constructed “frame” using only his scientific prowess.

Mechanistic thought remains an important part of the life sciences, and the ambition to build frames for life is found in twenty-first-century efforts to produce so-called protocells or, in the language of some synthetic biologists, the “chassis.” The structures, built with basic chemicals “from the ground up,” are envelopes for biological phenomena. Although present-day research is unlikely to deliver anything like Mary’s creature, it holds to a similar concept of life as machine. Descartes long ago lost his place in the natural sciences, and Victor’s power has yet to be realized, but mechanistic thinking persists.

Pablo Schyfter.

I doubted at first whether I should attempt the creation of a being like myself or one of simpler organization; but my imagination was too much exalted by my first success to permit me to doubt of my ability to give life to an animal as complex and wonderful as man.³⁷ The materials at present within my command hardly appeared adequate to so arduous an undertaking; but I doubted not that I should ultimately succeed. I prepared myself for a multitude of reverses; my operations might be incessantly baffled, and at last my work be imperfect: yet, when I considered the improvement which every day takes place in science and mechanics, I was encouraged to hope my present attempts would at least lay the foundations of future success. Nor could I consider the magnitude and complexity of my plan as any argument of its impracticability. It was with these feelings that I began the creation of a human being.³⁸ As the minuteness of the parts formed a great

37. Although Victor begins this passage hesitant of his ability to create a creature like himself, he says that his imagination overtakes his questions. He pictures his imagination as an element of his personality motivated by its own success. The idea of imagination as internal to the self might remind the modern reader of the concept of the ego as developed by psychologist Sigmund Freud more than one hundred years after Mary wrote *Frankenstein (The Ego and the Id* [(1923) 1960]). Freud's ego is that part of the human psyche modified by external forces. The success of his initial work leaves Victor unable to doubt this ability to create a human life. In a cyclical fashion, detached from material realities, this type of imagination is empowered by its own interplay internally. The ability to act based on imagination and the changing of the imagination itself in relation to those actions are fundamental to Victor's understanding of the concept.

Hannah Rogers.

38. With "creation," Mary draws on some of the widest possible literary themes, and the biblical resonances are emphasized by the creature himself. But creativity and the labor of one's hands had multiple significances within wider nineteenth-century society, as they do today. It is not often recognized, for instance, that creativity and labor play a crucial role in legitimizing the idea of "property." How do we justify establishing ownership over something? One important argument, most directly associated with the political philosophy of John Locke (1632–1704), stated that applying one's labor to nature through writing, crafting, and so on made that creation one's property (see Locke 1821). For example, earthen clay, once owned by everyone, through a transformative act of labor and creativity (so the argument goes) becomes a single person's property.

Through *Frankenstein*, we can therefore question scientific work and its ownership. Although we might arbitrarily decide that humans are exempt from being classed as property—a decision not yet achieved in Mary's time—what of the creature? Is it right to think of the term *creation* as implying ownership? Or what of the ownership of children created by parents? Or what of the ownership of any nonhuman organism for that matter? Should it be the case that merely the act of laboring on something makes it property? The existence of Victor's potential proprietary rights in his work and his (irresponsible?) refusal to acknowledge those rights allow us to generalize the significance of his creative act. Perhaps it is not in the creation of a human that he errs but in the conceptualization of his labors.

Dominic Berry.

hindrance to my speed, I resolved, contrary to my first intention, to make the being of a gigantic stature; that is to say, about eight feet in height, and proportionably large. After having formed this determination, and having spent some months in successfully collecting and arranging my materials, I began.

No one can conceive the variety of feelings which bore me onwards, like a hurricane, in the first enthusiasm of success. Life and death appeared to me ideal bounds, which I should first break through, and pour a torrent of light into our dark world. A new species would bless me as its creator and source;³⁹ many happy and excellent natures would owe their being to me.⁴⁰ No father could claim the gratitude of his child so completely as I should deserve theirs. Pursuing these reflections, I thought, that if I could bestow animation upon lifeless matter, I might in process of time (although I now

39. The religious language of this passage connects Victor's ambitions to a long tradition of humans playing god. In Jewish folklore, for instance, several great rabbis are said to have made clay animate, much as Adam was formed from clay according to biblical legend. These animated clay creatures are known as golems, and they resemble men except for the fact that they are mindlessly obedient. Following orders literally, they inevitably become destructive, revealing their creators' arrogance by showing those creators' limited foresight and the perils of hubris. Similar patterns play out in many cautionary tales about technology, such as *R.U.R.* by Karel Čapek and Josef Čapek (1920), a play in which robots confound the expectations of their builders by becoming violently rebellious. And yet although we are philosophically attuned to our arrogance, and although hubris is a persistent theme in mythology and literature (including *Frankenstein*), the temptation to play god seems only to increase with the increasing power of science and technology. This phenomenon is especially evident in two fields of active research: synthetic biology and artificial intelligence (AI). Central to the agenda of synthetic biology is a literal desire to create new species: for example, bespoke organisms such as *Mycoplasma mycoides* JCVI-syn1.0, which the J. Craig Venter Institute made in 2010 by inserting a lab-assembled genome into a bacterium. The promise of synthetic biology is total genetic control of organisms that can bless us with new foods, drugs, and fuels. The peril is that the future behavior of such bespoke organisms, like that of the Čapeks' robots, cannot be completely predicted. AI is arguably even more hubristic—and perilous—because of the potential for machine intelligence to exceed—or be incomprehensible by—human intelligence. From a superhuman AI's perspective, arrogant *Homo sapiens* might be deemed as dangerously irrational as Victor's creature or golems.

Jonathon Keats.

40. There is a notion that scientists become so engrossed in their own pursuits that they forget that they are "standing on the shoulders of giants," as Sir Isaac Newton (1642–1726) put it, and instead feel overweening pride of ownership in the science they are studying and in the results of their research. Such an attitude, occurring time and again in the history of science, impedes scientific progress. In science, knowledge cannot be owned by anyone. Knowledge must be shared, must be questioned, must be built upon. Here Victor gets lost in his own ability as a scientist. He forgets that although he may create something new (be it knowledge or life), he is not truly the owner of those creations.

Melissa Wilson Sayres.

found it impossible) renew life⁴¹ where death had apparently devoted the body to corruption.⁴²

These thoughts supported my spirits, while I pursued my undertaking with unremitting ardour. My cheek had grown pale with study, and my person had become emaciated with confinement. Sometimes, on the very brink of certainty, I failed; yet still I clung to the hope which the next day or the next hour might realize. One secret which I alone possessed was the hope to which I had dedicated myself; and the moon gazed on my midnight labours, while, with unrelaxed and breathless eagerness, I pursued nature to her hiding places.⁴³ Who shall conceive the horrors of my secret toil,

41. Victor here implies flesh-and-blood immortality because the universe inherently and automatically renews life from death. All life on Earth depends on things cyclically dying as other things, including humans, procreate, live, flourish, and eventually die as the cycle continues. Victor, due to the very emotional personal experience of having a person he loves pass unto death, desires that humans need not have to die and hence is driven to seek the “secret” to life regeneration. Life renewing from death is present in biblical scripture (Genesis 3:19, 18:27; Job 30:19; Ecclesiastes 3:20) as well as in the Anglican Christian Book of Common Prayer (Burial Rite 1:485, 2:501) and is a topic highly present, though different ontologically from Judeo-Christian-Muslim views, in indigenous cosmologies (Astor-Aguilera 2010). Some of the world’s societies have been known to practice infanticide or care for their elderly only up until they become too much of a burden on the younger population, which needs a certain amount of resources to survive. How old is old enough for a human to live and at what cost to Earth’s resources? Should humans not die at all and be perpetually regenerated through scientific breakthroughs?

Miguel Astor-Aguilera.

42. Victor articulates a set of hypothesized or imagined consequences for his research should it succeed, including the conquering of death and the creation of a race of beings who would worship him. These “imaginaries” are fictions that follow, reasonably but not necessarily, from success in his research. Perhaps at this point, Victor might have explored what fictions might reasonably but not necessarily follow from failure or from a different or incomplete kind of success.

David H. Guston.

43. Victor chooses to conduct his experiments with life in secret; he isolates himself from friends, family, and colleagues at his university. The isolation is both geographical and social. During the period of feverish research and creation, he doesn’t exchange correspondence or share his ideas with anyone.

Isolation makes it possible for Victor to undertake his grisly and socially unacceptable project. Certainly, his colleagues and family would have intervened to stop him. But Victor’s self-imposed isolation also makes it impossible for the creature to gain access to the social resources he needs to construct a livable life (J. Butler 2010). He is cut off from the possibility of family, friends, and membership in society. He removes himself from the structured and institutionalized relationships that we depend on for sustenance, fellowship, and relief, such as education, health care, and a humane justice system.

An individual depends in countless ways on being recognized as a social being—as a person with feelings and rights, enjoying fellowship in social groups, relying on institutions to provide support, to safeguard our rights, and to care for us when we are in need. Victor’s decision to conduct his work in isolation and his abandonment of the creature at birth makes it impossible for the creature ever to achieve this social legibility and to participate functionally in society.

as I dabbled among the unhallowed damps of the grave, or tortured the living animal to animate the lifeless clay?⁴⁴ My limbs now tremble, and my eyes swim with the remembrance; but then a resistless, and almost frantic impulse, urged me forward; I seemed to have lost all soul or sensation but for this one pursuit. It was indeed but a passing trance, that only made me feel with renewed acuteness so soon as, the unnatural stimulus ceasing to operate, I had returned to my old habits. I collected bones from charnel houses; and disturbed, with profane fingers, the tremendous secrets of the human frame. In a solitary chamber, or rather cell, at the top of the house, and separated from all the other apartments by a gallery and staircase, I kept my workshop of filthy creation; my eyeballs were starting from their sockets in attending to the details of my employment. The dissecting room and the slaughter-house furnished many of my materials; and often did my human nature turn with loathing from my occupation, whilst, still urged on by an eagerness which perpetually increased, I brought my work near to a conclusion.⁴⁵

As a result, we see the creature as a vagrant, an outlaw, and a vigilante throughout the novel. All of these identities are built on a foundation of social exclusion. Victor's isolation means that the creature has little choice but to become a monster. He is left with no pathways into a peaceful life inside of human society.

Joey Eschrich.

44. Victor's grave robbing and torture of animals raise the following questions: Do the ends ever justify the means in research or in other areas? If useful data can be gathered through unethical means, should they be? And if such data are so gathered, ought they to form part of the evidence base of science? Analysis of the history of human experimentation in the twentieth century comes solidly down on the negative answer, based on experiences like those of concentration camp inmates experimented on by Nazi doctors during World War II and of African Americans and Guatemalans experimented on by US Public Health Service researchers in the decades following the war. The principles of bioethics hold that human beings may never be used solely as experimental means to a scientific end, but human autonomy can also create an affirmative role for self-sacrifice, allowing people ethically to volunteer for dangerous experiments. Some bioethicists also argue that if a practice is physically or viscerally repugnant—"the horrors of my secret toil," in Victor's words (p. 38)—then the practice is at least suspect of being morally repugnant. For a time, the ethical debate about human embryonic stem cell research focused on whether medical science should be permitted to progress based on research that was putatively unethical in its destruction of human embryos to derive human pluripotent stem cells. Is such research always spoiled as the fruit of evil exploits?

David H. Guston and Jason Scott Robert.

45. Victor here expresses pangs of conscience as he reflects on his singular goal of animating life. To what extent he sees his conscience as a reliable guide is not clear, for in the end he continues his activities despite these reservations. A sharp emotional reaction of loathing cannot overcome his intense drive, his eagerness, to complete his task of animating life. Here the novel gives expression to the tension between emotional, morally significant reactions and human desire and drive.

Joel Gereboff.

The summer months passed while I was thus engaged, heart and soul, in one pursuit. It was a most beautiful season; never did the fields bestow a more plentiful harvest, or the vines yield a more luxuriant vintage: but my eyes were insensible to the charms of nature. And the same feelings which made me neglect the scenes around me caused me also to forget those friends who were so many miles absent, and whom I had not seen for so long a time. I knew my silence disquieted them; and I well remembered the words of my father: "I know that while you are pleased with yourself, you will think of us with affection, and we shall hear regularly from you. You must pardon me, if I regard any interruption in your correspondence as a proof that your other duties are equally neglected."

I knew well therefore what would be my father's feelings; but I could not tear my thoughts from my employment, loathsome in itself, but which had taken an irresistible hold of my imagination.⁴⁶ I wished, as it were, to procrastinate all that related to my feelings of affection until the great object, which swallowed up every habit of my nature, should be completed.

I then thought that my father would be unjust if he ascribed my neglect to vice, or faultiness on my part; but I am now convinced that he was justified in conceiving that I should not be altogether free from blame. A human being in perfection ought always to preserve a calm and peaceful mind, and never to allow passion or a transitory desire to disturb his tranquillity. I do not think that the pursuit of knowledge is an exception to this rule. If the study to which you apply yourself has a tendency to weaken your affections, and to destroy your taste for those simple pleasures in which no alloy can possibly mix, then that study is certainly unlawful, that is to say, not befitting the human mind. If this rule were always observed; if no man allowed any pursuit whatsoever to interfere with the tranquillity of his domestic affections, Greece had not been enslaved; Cæsar would have spared his country; America would have been discovered more gradually; and the empires of Mexico and Peru had not been destroyed.

But I forget that I am moralizing in the most interesting part of my tale; and your looks remind me to proceed.

My father made no reproach in his letters; and only took notice of my silence by inquiring into my occupations more particularly than before.

46. Victor's unease at dealing with body parts from the dead is overpowered by the force of his imagination propelling him to complete his work. The relationship between imagination, creativity, and conventional views expressed in this case as strongly negative emotions recurs throughout the novel. And in sticking with his project, Victor overcomes his own feelings and dismisses his father's. At hand is the question of to what extent feelings express with accuracy what ought to be done morally.

Joel Gereboff.

Winter, spring, and summer, passed away during my labours; but I did not watch the blossom or the expanding leaves—sights which before always yielded me supreme delight, so deeply was I engrossed in my occupation. The leaves of that year had withered before my work drew near to a close; and now every day shewed me more plainly how well I had succeeded. But my enthusiasm was checked by my anxiety, and I appeared rather like one doomed by slavery to toil in the mines, or any other unwholesome trade, than an artist occupied by his favourite employment. Every night I was oppressed by a slow fever, and I became nervous to a most painful degree; a disease that I regretted the more because I had hitherto enjoyed most excellent health, and had always boasted of the firmness of my nerves. But I believed that exercise and amusement would soon drive away such symptoms; and I promised myself both of these, when my creation should be complete.

CHAPTER IV.

It was on a dreary night of November, that I beheld the accomplishment of my toils. With an anxiety that almost amounted to agony, I collected the instruments of life around me, that I might infuse a spark of being into the lifeless thing⁴⁷ that lay at my feet. It was already one in the morning; the rain pattered dismally against the panes, and my candle was nearly burnt out, when, by the glimmer of the half-extinguished light, I saw the dull yellow eye of the creature open; it breathed hard, and a convulsive motion agitated its limbs.

How can I describe my emotions at this catastrophe, or how delineate the wretch whom with such infinite pains and care I had endeavoured to form?⁴⁸

47. Mary refers to a “spark” that animates Victor’s creature and brings him to life. This reference alludes to the use of electricity to reanimate a body, a relatively new idea at the time of this novel’s publication. Toward the end of the eighteenth century, Luigi Galvani (1737–1798) had demonstrated the use of electrical current to activate muscle, a discovery he made on dissected frog legs. Mary was well aware of these experiments, and Galvani’s work was one of her main influences in generating the idea for her novel. Furthermore, these principles have endured in medicine. Today, electric stimulation is used to aid millions of human bodies with everything from defibrillators and pacemakers to partial treatments for paralysis and systems that link prosthetic limbs and cameras to the brain.

Stephanie Naufel.

48. Emotions again serve to express assessments. On the surface, they are assumed to be correct moral judgments, though in the end their accuracy is questioned implicitly when Victor’s rejection and horror drive the creature away and lead over time to the creature’s loneliness. The experience of isolation and deprivation of basic social relations turn the creature from a natural disposition toward goodness to a disposition toward evil that impels him to engage in horrific and destructive acts.

Joel Gereboff.

His limbs were in proportion, and I had selected his features as beautiful. Beautiful!—Great God! His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath; his hair was of a lustrous black, and flowing; his teeth of a pearly whiteness; but these luxuriations only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes, that seemed almost of the same colour as the dun white sockets in which they were set, his shrivelled complexion, and straight black lips.⁴⁹

The different accidents of life are not so changeable as the feelings of human nature. I had worked hard for nearly two years, for the sole purpose of infusing life into an inanimate body.⁵⁰ For this I had deprived myself of rest and health. I had desired it with an ardour that far exceeded moderation; but now that I had finished, the beauty of the dream vanished, and breathless horror and disgust filled my heart. Unable to endure the aspect of the being I had created, I rushed out of the room, and continued a long time traversing my bed-chamber, unable to compose my mind to sleep. At length lassitude succeeded to the tumult I had before endured; and I threw myself on the bed in my clothes, endeavouring to seek a few moments of forgetfulness. But it was in vain: I slept indeed, but I was disturbed

49. Victor characterizes the moment he succeeds in bringing his creation to life—when the creation opens his eyes and gazes back—as a “catastrophe.” Contrast this scene with the same moment of creation of intelligence noted in Genesis 1:32: “God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.” An enduring conversation in the philosophy of beauty asks whether beauty is more an innate property of the “thing” being considered or resides instead in the eye of the beholder. Conflations of beauty and goodness are also quite common in both popular culture and philosophical inquiry. In many ways, this entire novel explores the relationship between beauty, goodness, and perceptions. In the end, Victor’s characterization of his creature depends more on Victor himself than on the creature’s identity. Outward perceptions of beauty or the lack thereof influence how others understand the creature and whether they perceive his actions as “good” or “evil.” Imagine how the story would unfold if Victor were instead to have looked upon his creature at this very moment and felt that it “was good.” In the scene as given in the novel, Victor looks for himself in the creature’s eyes and finds someone else.

Stephani Etheridge Woodson.

50. Victor constantly equates “life” with animation. Does animacy provide life, or is that function served by the metaphysical soul purportedly found within active human bodies? Within Judeo-Christian-Muslim religions, it is the sacred soul placed within the human body during fetal development by a divine God that makes life different in humans from other animals. Nonhuman animals are treated differently from humans in Western society, whereas many non-Western societies do not make a striking difference from human to animal to plant (Astor-Aguilera 2010). For Western humans, the divine soul is what makes life sacrosanct, but nonhuman animal life is typically not as important. Is Victor playing God in his laboratory research, trying to infuse life or the spark of a soul within a human body composed of inactive tissue? When is the “soul” present in humans, if at all? Is soul matter inherent to human tissue at conception and therefore present in stem cells?

Miguel Astor-Aguilera.

by the wildest dreams. I thought I saw Elizabeth, in the bloom of health, walking in the streets of Ingolstadt. Delighted and surprised, I embraced her; but as I imprinted the first kiss on her lips, they became lurid with the hue of death; her features appeared to change, and I thought that I held the corpse of my dead mother in my arms; a shroud enveloped her form, and I saw the grave-worms crawling in the folds of the flannel. I started from my sleep with horror; a cold dew covered my forehead, my teeth chattered, and every limb became convulsed; when, by the dim and yellow light of the moon, as it forced its way through the window-shutters, I beheld the wretch—the miserable monster whom I had created. He held up the curtain of the bed; and his eyes, if eyes they may be called, were fixed on me. His jaws opened, and he muttered some inarticulate sounds, while a grin wrinkled his cheeks. He might have spoken, but I did not hear; one hand was stretched out, seemingly to detain me, but I escaped, and rushed down stairs. I took refuge in the court-yard belonging to the house which I inhabited; where I remained during the rest of the night, walking up and down in the greatest agitation, listening attentively, catching and fearing each sound as if it were to announce the approach of the demoniacal corpse to which I had so miserably given life.

Oh! no mortal could support the horror of that countenance. A mummy again endued with animation could not be so hideous as that wretch.⁵¹ I had gazed on him while unfinished; he was ugly then; but when those muscles and joints were rendered capable of motion, it became a thing such as even Dante could not have conceived.

51. Egyptian mummies were present in the British Museum since the mid-1750s, donated by private antiquity collectors. British attention to ancient Egypt broadened during Napoleon's campaign of 1798–1801; his inclusion of scholars with his army was mocked in England as wartime propaganda, but the French documented and exported antiquities that were later transferred to London after their defeat. Probably more important than these events to the interpretation of Mary's text, however, is the use of the purported curative powder "mumma" or "mummy," which had been available throughout Europe since the twelfth century. Referred to as both medicine and pigment by early English writers including Edmund Spenser, William Shakespeare, and John Donne, mumma was either the bituminous substance used in mummification to dry out body cavities after the removal of organs or the ground-up body parts of mummies themselves when this bituminous substance was in short supply. Mary's reference to mummies here and later in Walton's characterization of the texture and color of the creature's hand (p. 183) may serve several purposes: (1) Ancient mummification enabled the preserved body to be available for use by the spirit in the afterlife—another kind of reanimation of a dead body. (2) The creature's mummylike hand would have exhibited the characteristic darkened skin produced by the drying material, whereas the creature's facial skin is elsewhere described as yellow, further highlighting his patchwork nature. (3) In light of the mutilation of mummified bodies for questionable medicinal treatments, is it possible that Mary used the term *mummy* to enhance her ethical critique?

Judith Guston.

I passed the night wretchedly. Sometimes my pulse beat so quickly and hardly, that I felt the palpitation of every artery; at others, I nearly sank to the ground through languor and extreme weakness. Mingled with this horror, I felt the bitterness of disappointment: dreams that had been my food and pleasant rest for so long a space, were now become a hell to me; and the change was so rapid, the overthrow so complete!

Morning, dismal and wet, at length dawned, and discovered to my sleepless and aching eyes the church of Ingolstadt, its white steeple and clock, which indicated the sixth hour. The porter opened the gates of the court, which had that night been my asylum, and I issued into the streets, pacing them with quick steps, as if I sought to avoid the wretch whom I feared every turning of the street would present to my view.⁵² I did not dare return to the apartment which I inhabited, but felt impelled to hurry on, although wetted by the rain, which poured from a black and comfortless sky.

I continued walking in this manner for some time, endeavouring, by bodily exercise, to ease the load that weighed upon my mind. I traversed the streets, without any clear conception of where I was, or what I was doing. My heart palpitated in the sickness of fear; and I hurried on with irregular steps, not daring to look about me:

Like one who, on a lonely road,
Doth walk in fear and dread,
And, having once turn'd round, walks on,
And turns no more his head;
Because he knows a frightful fiend
Doth close behind him tread.⁵³

Continuing thus, I came at length opposite to the inn at which the various diligences and carriages usually stopped. Here I paused, I knew not why; but I remained some minutes with my eyes fixed on a coach that was coming towards me from the other end of the street. As it drew nearer, I observed that it was the Swiss diligence: it stopped just where I was standing; and, on the door being opened, I perceived Henry Clerval, who, on seeing me, instantly sprung out. "My dear Frankenstein," exclaimed he,

52. It is understandable that Victor would experience feelings of fear and awe after realizing he successfully created life, especially given the strength and power of his creation. However, abandoning and then "avoid[ing] the wretch" because of this fear means he also avoids taking responsibility for his creature's life and suffering. Victor's avoidance does not lead to the protection of himself and his loved ones, and it intensifies the creature's anguish and destructive behavior.

Nicole Piemonte.

53. Coleridge's "Ancient Mariner." [Mary's note]

“how glad I am to see you! how fortunate that you should be here at the very moment of my alighting!”

Nothing could equal my delight on seeing Clerval; his presence brought back to my thoughts my father, Elizabeth, and all those scenes of home so dear to my recollection. I grasped his hand, and in a moment forgot my horror and misfortune; I felt suddenly, and for the first time during many months, calm and serene joy. I welcomed my friend, therefore, in the most cordial manner, and we walked towards my college. Clerval continued talking for some time about our mutual friends, and his own good fortune in being permitted to come to Ingolstadt. “You may easily believe,” said he, “how great was the difficulty to persuade my father that it was not absolutely necessary for a merchant not to understand any thing except book-keeping; and, indeed, I believe I left him incredulous to the last, for his constant answer to my unwearied entreaties was the same as that of the Dutch school-master in the Vicar of Wakefield: ‘I have ten thousand florins a year without Greek, I eat heartily without Greek.’ But his affection for me at length overcame his dislike of learning, and he has permitted me to undertake a voyage of discovery to the land of knowledge.”

“It gives me the greatest delight to see you; but tell me how you left my father, brothers, and Elizabeth.”

“Very well, and very happy, only a little uneasy that they hear from you so seldom. By the bye, I mean to lecture you a little upon their account myself.—But, my dear Frankenstein,” continued he, stopping short, and gazing full in my face, “I did not before remark how very ill you appear; so thin and pale; you look as if you had been watching for several nights.”

“You have guessed right; I have lately been so deeply engaged in one occupation, that I have not allowed myself sufficient rest, as you see: but I hope, I sincerely hope, that all these employments are now at an end, and that I am at length free.”

I trembled excessively; I could not endure to think of, and far less to allude to the occurrences of the preceding night. I walked with a quick pace, and we soon arrived at my college. I then reflected, and the thought made me shiver, that the creature whom I had left in my apartment might still be there, alive, and walking about. I dreaded to behold this monster; but I feared still more that Henry should see him. Entreating him therefore to remain a few minutes at the bottom of the stairs, I darted up towards my own room. My hand was already on the lock of the door before I recollected myself. I then paused; and a cold shivering came over me. I threw the door forcibly open, as children are accustomed to do when they expect a spectre to stand in waiting for them on the other side; but nothing appeared. I

stepped fearfully in: the apartment was empty; and my bed-room was also freed from its hideous guest. I could hardly believe that so great a good-fortune could have befallen me; but when I became assured that my enemy had indeed fled, I clapped my hands for joy, and ran down to Clerval.

We ascended into my room, and the servant presently brought breakfast; but I was unable to contain myself. It was not joy only that possessed me; I felt my flesh tingle with excess of sensitiveness, and my pulse beat rapidly. I was unable to remain for a single instant in the same place; I jumped over the chairs, clapped my hands, and laughed aloud. Clerval at first attributed my unusual spirits to joy on his arrival; but when he observed me more attentively, he saw a wildness in my eyes for which he could not account; and my loud, unrestrained, heartless laughter, frightened and astonished him.

“My dear Victor,” cried he, “what, for God’s sake, is the matter? Do not laugh in that manner. How ill you are! What is the cause of all this?”

“Do not ask me,” cried I, putting my hands before my eyes, for I thought I saw the dreaded spectre glide into the room; “*he* can tell.—Oh, save me! save me!” I imagined that the monster seized me; I struggled furiously, and fell down in a fit.

Poor Clerval! what must have been his feelings? A meeting, which he anticipated with such joy, so strangely turned to bitterness. But I was not the witness of his grief; for I was lifeless, and did not recover my senses for a long, long time.

This was the commencement of a nervous fever, which confined me for several months. During all that time Henry was my only nurse. I afterwards learned that, knowing my father’s advanced age, and unfitness for so long a journey, and how wretched my sickness would make Elizabeth, he spared them this grief by concealing the extent of my disorder. He knew that I could not have a more kind and attentive nurse than himself; and, firm in the hope he felt of my recovery, he did not doubt that, instead of doing harm, he performed the kindest action that he could towards them.

But I was in reality very ill; and surely nothing but the unbounded and unremitting attentions of my friend could have restored me to life. The form of the monster on whom I had bestowed existence was for ever before my eyes, and I raved incessantly concerning him. Doubtless my words surprised Henry: he at first believed them to be the wanderings of my disturbed imagination; but the pertinacity with which I continually recurred to the same subject persuaded him that my disorder indeed owed its origin to some uncommon and terrible event.

By very slow degrees, and with frequent relapses, that alarmed and grieved my friend, I recovered. I remember the first time I became capable of observing outward objects with any kind of pleasure, I perceived that the fallen leaves had disappeared, and that the young buds were shooting forth from the trees that shaded my window. It was a divine spring; and the season contributed greatly to my convalescence. I felt also sentiments of joy and affection revive in my bosom; my gloom disappeared, and in a short time I became as cheerful as before I was attacked by the fatal passion.

“Dearest Clerval,” exclaimed I, “how kind, how very good you are to me. This whole winter, instead of being spent in study, as you promised yourself, has been consumed in my sick room. How shall I ever repay you? I feel the greatest remorse for the disappointment of which I have been the occasion; but you will forgive me.”

“You will repay me entirely, if you do not discompose yourself, but get well as fast as you can; and since you appear in such good spirits, I may speak to you on one subject, may I not?”

I trembled. One subject! what could it be? Could he allude to an object on whom I dared not even think?

“Compose yourself,” said Clerval, who observed my change of colour, “I will not mention it, if it agitates you; but your father and cousin would be very happy if they received a letter from you in your own hand-writing. They hardly know how ill you have been, and are uneasy at your long silence.”

“Is that all? my dear Henry. How could you suppose that my first thought would not fly towards those dear, dear friends whom I love, and who are so deserving of my love.”

“If this is your present temper, my friend, you will perhaps be glad to see a letter that has been lying here some days for you: it is from your cousin, I believe.”

CHAPTER V.

Clerval then put the following letter into my hands.

To V. FRANKENSTEIN.

“MY DEAR COUSIN,

“I cannot describe to you the uneasiness we have all felt concerning your health. We cannot help imagining that your friend Clerval conceals the extent of your disorder: for it is now several months since we have seen your hand-writing; and all this time you have been obliged to dictate your

letters to Henry. Surely, Victor, you must have been exceedingly ill; and this makes us all very wretched, as much so nearly as after the death of your dear mother. My uncle was almost persuaded that you were indeed dangerously ill, and could hardly be restrained from undertaking a journey to Ingolstadt. Clerval always writes that you are getting better; I eagerly hope that you will confirm this intelligence soon in your own hand-writing; for indeed, indeed, Victor, we are all very miserable on this account. Relieve us from this fear, and we shall be the happiest creatures in the world. Your father's health is now so vigorous, that he appears ten years younger since last winter. Ernest also is so much improved, that you would hardly know him: he is now nearly sixteen, and has lost that sickly appearance which he had some years ago; he is grown quite robust and active.

“My uncle and I conversed a long time last night about what profession Ernest should follow. His constant illness when young has deprived him of the habits of application; and now that he enjoys good health, he is continually in the open air, climbing the hills, or rowing on the lake. I therefore proposed that he should be a farmer; which you know, Cousin, is a favourite scheme of mine. A farmer's is a very healthy happy life; and the least hurtful, or rather the most beneficial profession of any. My uncle had an idea of his being educated as an advocate, that through his interest he might become a judge. But, besides that he is not at all fitted for such an occupation, it is certainly more creditable to cultivate the earth for the sustenance of man, than to be the confidant, and sometimes the accomplice, of his vices; which is the profession of a lawyer. I said, that the employments of a prosperous farmer, if they were not a more honourable, they were at least a happier species of occupation than that of a judge, whose misfortune it was always to meddle with the dark side of human nature. My uncle smiled, and said, that I ought to be an advocate myself, which put an end to the conversation on that subject.

“And now I must tell you a little story that will please, and perhaps amuse you. Do you not remember Justine Moritz? Probably you do not; I will relate her history, therefore, in a few words. Madame Moritz, her mother, was a widow with four children, of whom Justine was the third. This girl had always been the favourite of her father; but, through a strange perversity, her mother could not endure her, and, after the death of M. Moritz, treated her very ill. My aunt observed this; and, when Justine was twelve years of age, prevailed on her mother to allow her to live at our house. The republican institutions of our country have produced simpler and happier manners than those which prevail in the great monarchies that surround it. Hence there is less distinction between the several classes

of its inhabitants; and the lower orders being neither so poor nor so despised, their manners are more refined and moral. A servant in Geneva does not mean the same thing as a servant in France and England. Justine, thus received in our family, learned the duties of a servant; a condition which, in our fortunate country, does not include the idea of ignorance, and a sacrifice of the dignity of a human being.

“After what I have said, I dare say you well remember the heroine of my little tale: for Justine was a great favourite of your’s; and I recollect you once remarked, that if you were in an ill humour, one glance from Justine could dissipate it, for the same reason that Ariosto gives concerning the beauty of Angelica—she looked so frank-hearted and happy. My aunt conceived a great attachment for her, by which she was induced to give her an education superior to that which she had at first intended. This benefit was fully repaid; Justine was the most grateful little creature in the world: I do not mean that she made any professions, I never heard one pass her lips; but you could see by her eyes that she almost adored her protectress. Although her disposition was gay, and in many respects inconsiderate, yet she paid the greatest attention to every gesture of my aunt. She thought her the model of all excellence, and endeavoured to imitate her phraseology and manners, so that even now she often reminds me of her.

“When my dearest aunt died, every one was too much occupied in their own grief to notice poor Justine, who had attended her during her illness with the most anxious affection. Poor Justine was very ill; but other trials were reserved for her.

“One by one, her brothers and sister died; and her mother, with the exception of her neglected daughter, was left childless. The conscience of the woman was troubled; she began to think that the deaths of her favourites was a judgment from heaven to chastise her partiality. She was a Roman Catholic; and I believe her confessor confirmed the idea which she had conceived. Accordingly, a few months after your departure for Ingolstadt, Justine was called home by her repentant mother. Poor girl! she wept when she quitted our house: she was much altered since the death of my aunt; grief had given softness and a winning mildness to her manners, which had before been remarkable for vivacity. Nor was her residence at her mother’s house of a nature to restore her gaiety. The poor woman was very vacillating in her repentance. She sometimes begged Justine to forgive her unkindness, but much oftener accused her of having caused the deaths of her brothers and sister. Perpetual fretting at length threw Madame Moritz into a decline, which at first increased her irritability, but she is now at peace for ever. She died on the first approach of cold weather,

at the beginning of this last winter. Justine has returned to us; and I assure you I love her tenderly. She is very clever and gentle, and extremely pretty; as I mentioned before, her mien and her expressions continually remind me of my dear aunt.

“I must say also a few words to you, my dear cousin, of little darling William. I wish you could see him; he is very tall of his age, with sweet laughing blue eyes, dark eye-lashes, and curling hair. When he smiles, two little dimples appear on each cheek, which are rosy with health. He has already had one or two little *wives*, but Louisa Biron is his favourite, a pretty little girl of five years of age.

“Now, dear Victor, I dare say you wish to be indulged in a little gossip concerning the good people of Geneva. The pretty Miss Mansfield has already received the congratulatory visits on her approaching marriage with a young Englishman, John Melbourne, Esq. Her ugly sister, Manon, married M. Duvillard, the rich banker, last autumn. Your favourite school-fellow, Louis Manoir, has suffered several misfortunes since the departure of Clerval from Geneva. But he has already recovered his spirits, and is reported to be on the point of marrying a very lively pretty Frenchwoman, Madame Tavernier. She is a widow, and much older than Manoir; but she is very much admired, and a favourite with every body.

“I have written myself into good spirits, dear cousin;⁵⁴ yet I cannot conclude without again anxiously inquiring concerning your health. Dear Victor, if you are not very ill, write yourself, and make your father and all of us happy; or—I cannot bear to think of the other side of the question; my tears already flow. Adieu, my dearest cousin.

“ELIZABETH LAVENZA.

“Geneva, March 18th, 17—.”

“Dear, dear Elizabeth!” I exclaimed when I had read her letter, “I will write instantly, and relieve them from the anxiety they must feel.” I wrote, and this exertion greatly fatigued me; but my convalescence had commenced, and proceeded regularly. In another fortnight I was able to leave my chamber.

54. Narrative reflection has transformative power—the process of writing one’s story can actually change one’s understanding of the story. Because reflecting on and writing about an experience can influence how a person feels about the experience, it is possible for Victor to “write himself” into better spirits. Note in this regard that Mary does not at this point describe Victor as having made any notes on his experiments, even for his private use, if not for publication. For more on reflective writing, see Bolton 2014.

Nicole Piemonte.

One of my first duties on my recovery was to introduce Clerval to the several professors of the university. In doing this, I underwent a kind of rough usage, ill befitting the wounds that my mind had sustained. Ever since the fatal night, the end of my labours, and the beginning of my misfortunes, I had conceived a violent antipathy even to the name of natural philosophy.⁵⁵ When I was otherwise quite restored to health, the sight of a chemical instrument would renew all the agony of my nervous symptoms. Henry saw this, and had removed all my apparatus from my view. He had also changed my apartment; for he perceived that I had acquired a dislike for the room which had previously been my laboratory. But these cares of Clerval were made of no avail when I visited the professors. M. Waldman inflicted torture when he praised, with kindness and warmth, the astonishing progress I had made in the sciences. He soon perceived that I disliked the subject; but, not guessing the real cause, he attributed my feelings to modesty, and changed the subject from my improvement to the science itself, with a desire, as I evidently saw, of drawing me out. What could I do? He meant to please, and he tormented me. I felt as if he had placed carefully, one by one, in my view those instruments which were to be afterwards used in putting me to a slow and cruel death. I writhed under his words, yet dared not exhibit the pain I felt.⁵⁶ Clerval, whose eyes and feelings were always quick in discerning the sensations of others, declined the subject, alleging, in excuse, his total ignorance; and the conversation took a more general turn. I thanked my friend from my heart, but I did not speak. I saw plainly that he was surprised, but he never attempted to draw my secret from me; and although I loved him with a mixture of affection and reverence that knew no bounds, yet I could never persuade myself to confide to him that event which was so often present to my recollection, but which I feared the detail to another would only impress more deeply.

55. It is only in hindsight that Victor recognizes the consequences of engaging in unreflective “natural philosophy” or scientific study. Had he seriously considered the ethical consequences of making his creature, and had these considerations outweighed his hubris and desire for personal success, it is unlikely he would have proceeded. This healthy fear of unchecked scientific progress (that Victor develops too late) highlights the need for attention to the scientist’s personal and professional development as well as the need for scientists to engage in self-reflection to consider ethical issues before they commence scientific studies.

Nicole Piemonte.

56. Maintaining his secret and keeping positive human interactions cause Victor distress, but his failure to have positive interactions with the creature causes the creature distress as well. The challenge not to allow feelings to be visible in normal bodily reactions is immense. Cultural systems see emotions as embodied. From shortly after birth, infants are able to read approval and disapproval on their parents’ faces.

Joel Gereboff.

M. Krempe was not equally docile; and in my condition at that time, of almost insupportable sensitiveness, his harsh blunt encomiums gave me even more pain than the benevolent approbation of M. Waldman. “D—n the fellow!” cried he; “why, M. Clerval, I assure you he has outstript us all. Aye, stare if you please; but it is nevertheless true. A youngster who, but a few years ago, believed Cornelius Agrippa as firmly as the gospel, has now set himself at the head of the university; and if he is not soon pulled down, we shall all be out of countenance.—Aye, aye,” continued he, observing my face expressive of suffering, “M. Frankenstein is modest; an excellent quality in a young man. Young men should be diffident of themselves, you know, M. Clerval; I was myself when young; but that wears out in a very short time.”

M. Krempe had now commenced an eulogy on himself, which happily turned the conversation from a subject that was so annoying to me.

Clerval was no natural philosopher. His imagination was too vivid for the minutiae of science.⁵⁷ Languages were his principal study; and he sought, by acquiring their elements, to open a field for self-instruction on his return to Geneva. Persian, Arabic, and Hebrew, gained his attention, after he had made himself perfectly master of Greek and Latin. For my own part, idleness had ever been irksome to me; and now that I wished to fly from reflection, and hated my former studies, I felt great relief in being the fellow-pupil with my friend, and found not only instruction but consolation in the works of the orientalisists. Their melancholy is soothing, and their joy elevating to a degree I never experienced in studying the authors of any other country. When you read their writings, life appears to consist in a warm sun and garden of roses,—in the smiles and frowns of a fair enemy, and the fire that consumes your own heart. How different from the manly and heroic poetry of Greece and Rome.

Summer passed away in these occupations, and my return to Geneva was fixed for the latter end of autumn; but being delayed by several accidents,

57. Victor's observation about Clerval underscores the romantic interest in the problem of the degree of imaginative power necessary to the arts versus the sciences. In *Biographia literaria* (1817), Samuel Taylor Coleridge, for example, defines a difference between the active “imaginative” act and the “fancy,” the recounting of a memory that may be altered or extended but that is always passive. Clerval is described as having too much imagination for science because imagination is defined in opposition to details. Yet earlier Victor has detailed his belief that his attraction to science comes in part from its visionary quality (see p. 29). This apparent contradiction in Victor's position, which may be Mary's way of showing the character's limitations, remains unresolved. However, it is notable that by the 1831 edition, this point about the imagination being too vivid for science had been omitted (see “Introduction to *Frankenstein* [1831],” pp. 189–193).

Hannah Rogers.

winter and snow arrived, the roads were deemed impassable, and my journey was retarded until the ensuing spring. I felt this delay very bitterly; for I longed to see my native town, and my beloved friends. My return had only been delayed so long from an unwillingness to leave Clerval in a strange place, before he had become acquainted with any of its inhabitants. The winter, however, was spent cheerfully; and although the spring was uncommonly late, when it came, its beauty compensated for its dilatoriness.

The month of May had already commenced, and I expected the letter daily which was to fix the date of my departure, when Henry proposed a pedestrian tour in the environs of Ingolstadt that I might bid a personal farewell to the country I had so long inhabited. I acceded with pleasure to this proposition: I was fond of exercise, and Clerval had always been my favourite companion in the rambles of this nature that I had taken among the scenes of my native country.

We passed a fortnight in these perambulations: my health and spirits had long been restored, and they gained additional strength from the salubrious air I breathed, the natural incidents of our progress, and the conversation of my friend. Study had before secluded me from the intercourse of my fellow-creatures, and rendered me unsocial; but Clerval called forth the better feelings of my heart; he again taught me to love the aspect of nature, and the cheerful faces of children. Excellent friend! how sincerely did you love me, and endeavour to elevate my mind, until it was on a level with your own. A selfish pursuit had cramped and narrowed me, until your gentleness and affection warmed and opened my senses; I became the same happy creature who, a few years ago, loving and beloved by all, had no sorrow or care. When happy, inanimate nature had the power of bestowing on me the most delightful sensations. A serene sky and verdant fields filled me with ecstasy. The present season was indeed divine; the flowers of spring bloomed in the hedges, while those of summer were already in bud: I was undisturbed by thoughts which during the preceding year had pressed upon me, notwithstanding my endeavours to throw them off, with an invincible burden.

Henry rejoiced in my gaiety, and sincerely sympathized in my feelings: he exerted himself to amuse me, while he expressed the sensations that filled his soul. The resources of his mind on this occasion were truly astonishing: his conversation was full of imagination; and very often, in imitation of the Persian and Arabic writers, he invented tales of wonderful fancy and passion. At other times he repeated my favourite poems, or drew me out into arguments, which he supported with great ingenuity.

We returned to our college on a Sunday afternoon: the peasants were dancing, and every one we met appeared gay and happy. My own spirits were high, and I bounded along with feelings of unbridled joy and hilarity.

CHAPTER VI.

On my return, I found the following letter from my father: —

“*To* V. FRANKENSTEIN.

“MY DEAR VICTOR,

“You have probably waited impatiently for a letter to fix the date of your return to us; and I was at first tempted to write only a few lines, merely mentioning the day on which I should expect you. But that would be a cruel kindness, and I dare not do it. What would be your surprise, my son, when you expected a happy and gay welcome, to behold, on the contrary, tears and wretchedness? And how, Victor, can I relate our misfortune? Absence cannot have rendered you callous to our joys and griefs; and how shall I inflict pain on an absent child? I wish to prepare you for the woeful news, but I know it is impossible; even now your eye skims over the page, to seek the words which are to convey to you the horrible tidings.

“William is dead!—that sweet child, whose smiles delighted and warmed my heart, who was so gentle, yet so gay! Victor, he is murdered!

“I will not attempt to console you; but will simply relate the circumstances of the transaction.

“Last Thursday (May 7th) I, my niece, and your two brothers, went to walk in Plainpalais. The evening was warm and serene, and we prolonged our walk farther than usual. It was already dusk before we thought of returning; and then we discovered that William and Ernest, who had gone on before, were not to be found. We accordingly rested on a seat until they should return. Presently Ernest came, and inquired if we had seen his brother: he said, that they had been playing together, that William had run away to hide himself, and that he vainly sought for him, and afterwards waited for him a long time, but that he did not return.

“This account rather alarmed us, and we continued to search for him until night fell, when Elizabeth conjectured that he might have returned to the house. He was not there. We returned again, with torches; for I could not rest, when I thought that my sweet boy had lost himself, and was exposed to all the damps and dews of night: Elizabeth also suffered extreme anguish. About five in the morning I discovered my lovely boy, whom the night before I had seen blooming and active in health, stretched

on the grass livid and motionless: the print of the murderer's finger was on his neck.

"He was conveyed home, and the anguish that was visible in my countenance betrayed the secret to Elizabeth. She was very earnest to see the corpse. At first I attempted to prevent her; but she persisted, and entering the room where it lay, hastily examined the neck of the victim, and clasping her hands exclaimed, 'O God! I have murdered my darling infant!'

"She fainted, and was restored with extreme difficulty. When she again lived, it was only to weep and sigh. She told me, that that same evening William had teased her to let him wear a very valuable miniature that she possessed of your mother. This picture is gone, and was doubtless the temptation which urged the murderer to the deed. We have no trace of him at present, although our exertions to discover him are unremitting; but they will not restore my beloved William.

"Come, dearest Victor; you alone can console Elizabeth. She weeps continually, and accuses herself unjustly as the cause of his death; her words pierce my heart. We are all unhappy; but will not that be an additional motive for you, my son, to return and be our comforter? Your dear mother! Alas, Victor! I now say, Thank God she did not live to witness the cruel, miserable death of her youngest darling!

"Come, Victor; not brooding thoughts of vengeance against the assassin, but with feelings of peace and gentleness, that will heal, instead of festering the wounds of our minds. Enter the house of mourning, my friend, but with kindness and affection for those who love you, and not with hatred for your enemies.

"Your affectionate and afflicted father,
ALPHONSE FRANKENSTEIN.
"Geneva, May 12th, 17—."

Clerval, who had watched my countenance as I read this letter, was surprised to observe the despair that succeeded to the joy I at first expressed on receiving news from my friends. I threw the letter on the table, and covered my face with my hands.

"My dear Frankenstein," exclaimed Henry, when he perceived me weep with bitterness, "are you always to be unhappy? My dear friend, what has happened?"

I motioned to him to take up the letter, while I walked up and down the room in the extremest agitation. Tears also gushed from the eyes of Clerval, as he read the account of my misfortune.

“I can offer you no consolation, my friend,” said he; “your disaster is irreparable. What do you intend to do.”

“To go instantly to Geneva: come with me, Henry, to order the horses.”

During our walk, Clerval endeavoured to raise my spirits. He did not do this by common topics of consolation, but by exhibiting the truest sympathy. “Poor William!” said he, “that dear child; he now sleeps with his angel mother. His friends mourn and weep, but he is at rest: he does not now feel the murderer’s grasp; a sod covers his gentle form, and he knows no pain. He can no longer be a fit subject for pity; the survivors are the greatest sufferers, and for them time is the only consolation. Those maxims of the Stoics, that death was no evil, and that the mind of man ought to be superior to despair on the eternal absence of a beloved object, ought not to be urged. Even Cato wept over the dead body of his brother.”

Clerval spoke thus as we hurried through the streets; the words impressed themselves on my mind, and I remembered them afterwards in solitude. But now, as soon as the horses arrived, I hurried into a cabriole, and bade farewell to my friend.

My journey was very melancholy. At first I wished to hurry on, for I longed to console and sympathize with my loved and sorrowing friends; but when I drew near my native town, I slackened my progress. I could hardly sustain the multitude of feelings that crowded into my mind. I passed through scenes familiar to my youth, but which I had not seen for nearly six years. How altered every thing might be during that time? One sudden and desolating change had taken place; but a thousand little circumstances might have by degrees worked other alterations which, although they were done more tranquilly, might not be the less decisive. Fear overcame me; I dared not advance, dreading a thousand nameless evils that made me tremble, although I was unable to define them.

I remained two days at Lausanne, in this painful state of mind. I contemplated the lake: the waters were placid; all around was calm, and the snowy mountains, “the palaces of nature,” were not changed. By degrees the calm and heavenly scene restored me, and I continued my journey towards Geneva.

The road ran by the side of the lake, which became narrower as I approached my native town. I discovered more distinctly the black sides of Jura, and the bright summit of Mont Blanc; I wept like a child: “Dear mountains! my own beautiful lake! how do you welcome your wanderer? Your summits are clear; the sky and lake are blue and placid. Is this to prognosticate peace, or to mock at my unhappiness?”

I fear, my friend, that I shall render myself tedious by dwelling on these preliminary circumstances; but they were days of comparative happiness, and I think of them with pleasure. My country, my beloved country! who but a native can tell the delight I took in again beholding thy streams, thy mountains, and, more than all, thy lovely lake.

Yet, as I drew nearer home, grief and fear again overcame me. Night also closed around; and when I could hardly see the dark mountains, I felt still more gloomily. The picture appeared a vast and dim scene of evil, and I foresaw obscurely that I was destined to become the most wretched of human beings. Alas! I prophesied truly, and failed only in one single circumstance, that in all the misery I imagined and dreaded, I did not conceive the hundredth part of the anguish I was destined to endure.⁵⁸

It was completely dark when I arrived in the environs of Geneva; the gates of the town were already shut; and I was obliged to pass the night at Secheron, a village half a league to the east of the city. The sky was serene; and, as I was unable to rest, I resolved to visit the spot where my poor William had been murdered. As I could not pass through the town, I was obliged to cross the lake in a boat to arrive at Plainpalais. During this short voyage I saw the lightnings playing on the summit of Mont Blanc in the most beautiful figures. The storm appeared to approach rapidly; and, on landing, I ascended a low hill, that I might observe its progress. It advanced; the heavens were clouded, and I soon felt the rain coming slowly in large drops, but its violence quickly increased.

I quitted my seat, and walked on, although the darkness and storm increased every minute, and the thunder burst with a terrific crash over my head. It was echoed from Salève, the Juras, and the Alps of Savoy; vivid flashes of lightning dazzled my eyes, illuminating the lake, making it

58. Victor links his feelings of foreboding to the romantic notion of the sublime, combining that era's captivation with the immense beauty of the natural world with a perception of its dangers and a willingness to entertain the possibility of personal annihilation. Just before this passage, Victor speaks with tremendous affection and pride about the impressive mountains surrounding his home, using the salutation "Dear" and the possessive pronoun phrase "my own." However, in his encounter with the sublime, he fails to achieve what philosopher Edmund Burke (1729–1797) called "sublime transcendence," which means to experience a sudden relief from horror. Because Victor views the sublime from a position of great personal risk, he can see in this natural vista only his personal suffering and ultimate destruction. This passage also highlights an essential contradiction in Victor's personality: he is both tremendously confident and self-effacing, both a director of his own fate and a passive object at the mercy of uncontrollable forces. As with his renegade approach to scientific discovery, here he simultaneously lauds his powers of prophesy and admits to their deficiencies. Egoism, a flaw that greatly facilitates Victor's hubris, also surfaces here with the repeated use of the first-person pronoun *I*, used to emphasize both his vulnerability and his power.

April Miller.

appear like a vast sheet of fire; then for an instant every thing seemed of a pitchy darkness, until the eye recovered itself from the preceding flash. The storm, as is often the case in Switzerland, appeared at once in various parts of the heavens. The most violent storm hung exactly north of the town, over that part of the lake which lies between the promontory of Belrive and the village of Copêt. Another storm enlightened Jura with faint flashes; and another darkened and sometimes disclosed the Môle, a peaked mountain to the east of the lake.

While I watched the storm, so beautiful yet terrific, I wandered on with a hasty step. This noble war in the sky elevated my spirits; I clasped my hands, and exclaimed aloud, "William, dear angel! this is thy funeral, this thy dirge!" As I said these words, I perceived in the gloom a figure which stole from behind a clump of trees near me; I stood fixed, gazing intently: I could not be mistaken. A flash of lightning illuminated the object, and discovered its shape plainly to me; its gigantic stature, and the deformity of its aspect, more hideous than belongs to humanity, instantly informed me that it was the wretch, the filthy dæmon to whom I had given life. What did he there? Could he be (I shuddered at the conception) the murderer of my brother? No sooner did that idea cross my imagination, than I became convinced of its truth; my teeth chattered, and I was forced to lean against a tree for support.⁵⁹ The figure passed me quickly, and I lost it in the gloom. Nothing in human shape could have destroyed that fair child. *He* was the murderer! I could not doubt it. The mere presence of the idea was an irresistible proof of the fact. I thought of pursuing the devil; but it would have been in vain, for another flash discovered him to me hanging among the rocks of the nearly perpendicular ascent of Mont Salève, a hill that bounds Plainpalais on the South. He soon reached the summit, and disappeared.

I remained motionless. The thunder ceased; but the rain still continued, and the scene was enveloped in an impenetrable darkness. I revolved in my mind the events which I had until now sought to forget: the whole train

59. In Greek myth, Prometheus fashions the clay into which Athena, goddess of wisdom, breathes life, creating the human race. Over the objections of Zeus, Prometheus then provides humans with fire, an element essential for human life. Similarly, Victor uses electricity, a form of fire, to animate his creation. Flashes of light recur throughout the novel, often leading to perceptions by Victor. He continues to characterize the creature as physically "hideous," which he equates with the demonic. The latter is by nature found amid darkness and filth. Victor labors at times to balance what he sees in dreams and what he sees in actual physical existence. Both, however, are for the romantic age sources of knowledge. But having realized he is not simply observing a phantom in the glimpses he catches of the creature, Victor immediately reacts to the "hideous" being as a demon. His realization results in his bodily response of fear as his teeth chatter. (Contrast this interpretation with Charles E. Robinson's; see pp. xxii-xxxiii.)

Joel Gereboff.

of my progress towards the creation; the appearance of the work of my own hands alive at my bed side; its departure. Two years had now nearly elapsed since the night on which he first received life; and was this his first crime? Alas! I had turned loose into the world a depraved wretch, whose delight was in carnage and misery; had he not murdered my brother?

No one can conceive the anguish I suffered during the remainder of the night, which I spent, cold and wet, in the open air. But I did not feel the inconvenience of the weather; my imagination was busy in scenes of evil and despair. I considered the being whom I had cast among mankind, and endowed with the will and power to effect purposes of horror, such as the deed which he had now done, nearly in the light of my own vampire, my own spirit let loose from the grave, and forced to destroy all that was dear to me.

Day dawned; and I directed my steps toward the town. The gates were open; and I hastened to my father's house. My first thought was to discover what I knew of the murderer, and cause instant pursuit to be made. But I paused when I reflected on the story that I had to tell. A being whom I myself had formed, and endued with life, had met me at midnight among the precipices of an inaccessible mountain. I remembered also the nervous fever with which I had been seized just at the time that I dated my creation, and which would give an air of delirium to a tale otherwise so utterly improbable. I well knew that if any other had communicated such a relation to me, I should have looked upon it as the ravings of insanity. Besides, the strange nature of the animal would elude all pursuit, even if I were so far credited as to persuade my relatives to commence it. Besides, of what use would be pursuit? Who could arrest a creature capable of scaling the overhanging sides of Mont Salève? These reflections determined me, and I resolved to remain silent.

It was about five in the morning when I entered my father's house. I told the servants not to disturb the family, and went into the library to attend their usual hour of rising.

Six years had elapsed, passed as a dream but for one indelible trace, and I stood in the same place where I had last embraced my father before my departure for Ingolstadt. Beloved and respectable parent! He still remained to me. I gazed on the picture of my mother, which stood over the mantle-piece. It was an historical subject, painted at my father's desire, and represented Caroline Beaufort in an agony of despair, kneeling by the coffin of her dead father. Her garb was rustic, and her cheek pale; but there was an air of dignity and beauty, that hardly permitted the sentiment of pity. Below this picture was a miniature of William; and my tears flowed when I looked upon it. While I was thus engaged, Ernest entered: he had

heard me arrive, and hastened to welcome me. He expressed a sorrowful delight to see me: "Welcome, my dearest Victor," said he. "Ah! I wish you had come three months ago, and then you would have found us all joyous and delighted. But we are now unhappy; and, I am afraid, tears instead of smiles will be your welcome. Our father looks so sorrowful: this dreadful event seems to have revived in his mind his grief on the death of Mamma. Poor Elizabeth also is quite inconsolable." Ernest began to weep as he said these words.

"Do not," said I, "welcome me thus; try to be more calm, that I may not be absolutely miserable the moment I enter my father's house after so long an absence. But, tell me, how does my father support his misfortunes? and how is my poor Elizabeth?"

"She indeed requires consolation; she accused herself of having caused the death of my brother, and that made her very wretched. But since the murderer has been discovered——"

"The murderer discovered! Good God! how can that be? who could attempt to pursue him? It is impossible; one might as well try to overtake the winds, or confine a mountain-stream with a straw."

"I do not know what you mean; but we were all very unhappy when she was discovered. No one would believe it at first; and even now Elizabeth will not be convinced; notwithstanding all the evidence. Indeed, who would credit that Justine Moritz, who was so amiable, and fond of all the family, could all at once become so extremely wicked?"

"Justine Moritz! Poor, poor girl, is she the accused? But it is wrongfully; every one knows that; no one believes it, surely, Ernest?"

"No one did at first; but several circumstances came out, that have almost forced conviction upon us: and her own behaviour has been so confused, as to add to the evidence of facts a weight that, I fear, leaves no hope for doubt. But she will be tried to-day, and you will then hear all."

He related that, the morning on which the murder of poor William had been discovered, Justine had been taken ill, and confined to her bed; and, after several days, one of the servants, happening to examine the apparel she had worn on the night of the murder, had discovered in her pocket the picture of my mother, which had been judged to be the temptation of the murderer. The servant instantly shewed it to one of the others, who, without saying a word to any of the family, went to a magistrate; and, upon their deposition, Justine was apprehended. On being charged with the fact, the poor girl confirmed the suspicion in a great measure by her extreme confusion of manner.

This was a strange tale, but it did not shake my faith; and I replied earnestly, "You are all mistaken; I know the murderer. Justine, poor, good Justine, is innocent."

At that instant my father entered. I saw unhappiness deeply impressed on his countenance, but he endeavoured to welcome me cheerfully; and, after we had exchanged our mournful greeting, would have introduced some other topic than that of our disaster, had not Ernest exclaimed, "Good God, Papa! Victor says that he knows who was the murderer of poor William."

"We do also, unfortunately," replied my father; "for indeed I had rather have been for ever ignorant than have discovered so much depravity and ingratitude in one I valued so highly."

"My dear father, you are mistaken; Justine is innocent."

"If she is, God forbid that she should suffer as guilty. She is to be tried to-day, and I hope, I sincerely hope, that she will be acquitted."

This speech calmed me. I was firmly convinced in my own mind that Justine, and indeed every human being, was guiltless of this murder. I had no fear, therefore, that any circumstantial evidence could be brought forward strong enough to convict her; and, in this assurance, I calmed myself, expecting the trial with eagerness, but without prognosticating an evil result.

We were soon joined by Elizabeth. Time had made great alterations in her form since I had last beheld her. Six years before she had been a pretty, good-humoured girl, whom every one loved and caressed. She was now a woman in stature and expression of countenance, which was uncommonly lovely. An open and capacious forehead gave indications of a good understanding, joined to great frankness of disposition. Her eyes were hazel, and expressive of mildness, now through recent affliction allied to sadness. Her hair was of a rich dark auburn, her complexion fair, and her figure slight and graceful. She welcomed me with the greatest affection. "Your arrival, my dear cousin," said she, "fills me with hope. You perhaps will find some means to justify my poor guiltless Justine. Alas! who is safe, if she be convicted of crime? I rely on her innocence as certainly as I do upon my own. Our misfortune is doubly hard to us; we have not only lost that lovely darling boy, but this poor girl, whom I sincerely love, is to be torn away by even a worse fate. If she is condemned, I never shall know joy more. But she will not, I am sure she will not; and then I shall be happy again, even after the sad death of my little William."

"She is innocent, my Elizabeth," said I, "and that shall be proved; fear nothing, but let your spirits be cheered by the assurance of her acquittal."

“How kind you are! every one else believes in her guilt, and that made me wretched; for I knew that it was impossible: and to see every one else prejudiced in so deadly a manner, rendered me hopeless and despairing.” She wept.

“Sweet niece,” said my father, “dry your tears. If she is, as you believe, innocent, rely on the justice of our judges, and the activity with which I shall prevent the slightest shadow of partiality.”

CHAPTER VII.

We passed a few sad hours, until eleven o'clock, when the trial was to commence. My father and the rest of the family being obliged to attend as witnesses, I accompanied them to the court. During the whole of this wretched mockery of justice, I suffered living torture. It was to be decided, whether the result of my curiosity and lawless devices would cause the death of two of my fellow-beings: one a smiling babe, full of innocence and joy; the other far more dreadfully murdered, with every aggravation of infamy that could make the murder memorable in horror. Justine also was a girl of merit, and possessed qualities which promised to render her life happy: now all was to be obliterated in an ignominious grave; and I the cause! A thousand times rather would I have confessed myself guilty of the crime ascribed to Justine; but I was absent when it was committed, and such a declaration would have been considered as the ravings of a madman, and would not have exculpated her who suffered through me.

The appearance of Justine was calm. She was dressed in mourning; and her countenance, always engaging, was rendered, by the solemnity of her feelings, exquisitely beautiful. Yet she appeared confident in innocence, and did not tremble, although gazed on and execrated by thousands; for all the kindness which her beauty might otherwise have excited, was obliterated in the minds of the spectators by the imagination of the enormity she was supposed to have committed. She was tranquil, yet her tranquillity was evidently constrained; and as her confusion had before been adduced as a proof of her guilt, she worked up her mind to an appearance of courage. When she entered the court, she threw her eyes round it, and quickly discovered where we were seated. A tear seemed to dim her eye when she saw us; but she quickly recovered herself, and a look of sorrowful affection seemed to attest her utter guiltlessness.

The trial began; and after the advocate against her had stated the charge, several witnesses were called. Several strange facts combined against her, which might have staggered any one who had not such proof

of her innocence as I had. She had been out the whole of the night on which the murder had been committed, and towards morning had been perceived by a market-woman not far from the spot where the body of the murdered child had been afterwards found. The woman asked her what she did there; but she looked very strangely, and only returned a confused and unintelligible answer. She returned to the house about eight o'clock; and when one inquired where she had passed the night, she replied, that she had been looking for the child, and demanded earnestly, if any thing had been heard concerning him. When shewn the body, she fell into violent hysterics, and kept her bed for several days. The picture was then produced, which the servant had found in her pocket; and when Elizabeth, in a faltering voice, proved that it was the same which, an hour before the child had been missed, she had placed round his neck, a murmur of horror and indignation filled the court.

Justine was called on for her defence. As the trial had proceeded, her countenance had altered. Surprise, horror, and misery, were strongly expressed. Sometimes she struggled with her tears; but when she was desired to plead, she collected her powers, and spoke in an audible although variable voice:—

“God knows,” she said, “how entirely I am innocent. But I do not pretend that my protestations should acquit me: I rest my innocence on a plain and simple explanation of the facts which have been adduced against me; and I hope the character I have always borne will incline my judges to a favourable interpretation, where any circumstance appears doubtful or suspicious.”

She then related that, by the permission of Elizabeth, she had passed the evening of the night on which the murder had been committed, at the house of an aunt at Chêne, a village situated at about a league from Geneva. On her return, at about nine o'clock, she met a man, who asked her if she had seen any thing of the child who was lost. She was alarmed by this account, and passed several hours in looking for him, when the gates of Geneva were shut, and she was forced to remain several hours of the night in a barn belonging to a cottage, being unwilling to call up the inhabitants, to whom she was well known. Unable to rest or sleep, she quitted her asylum early, that she might again endeavour to find my brother. If she had gone near the spot where his body lay, it was without her knowledge. That she had been bewildered when questioned by the market-woman, was not surprising, since she had passed a sleepless night, and the fate of poor William was yet uncertain. Concerning the picture she could give no account.

"I know," continued the unhappy victim, "how heavily and fatally this one circumstance weighs against me, but I have no power of explaining it; and when I have expressed my utter ignorance, I am only left to conjecture concerning the probabilities by which it might have been placed in my pocket. But here also I am checked. I believe that I have no enemy on earth, and none surely would have been so wicked as to destroy me wantonly. Did the murderer place it there? I know of no opportunity afforded him for so doing; or if I had, why should he have stolen the jewel, to part with it again so soon?"

"I commit my cause to the justice of my judges, yet I see no room for hope. I beg permission to have a few witnesses examined concerning my character; and if their testimony shall not outweigh my supposed guilt, I must be condemned, although I would pledge my salvation on my innocence."

Several witnesses were called, who had known her for many years, and they spoke well of her; but fear, and hatred of the crime of which they supposed her guilty, rendered them timorous, and unwilling to come forward. Elizabeth saw even this last resource, her excellent dispositions and irreproachable conduct, about to fail the accused, when, although violently agitated, she desired permission to address the court.

"I am," said she, "the cousin of the unhappy child who was murdered, or rather his sister, for I was educated by and have lived with his parents ever since and even long before his birth. It may therefore be judged indecent in me to come forward on this occasion; but when I see a fellow-creature about to perish through the cowardice of her pretended friends, I wish to be allowed to speak, that I may say what I know of her character. I am well acquainted with the accused. I have lived in the same house with her, at one time for five, and at another for nearly two years. During all that period she appeared to me the most amiable and benevolent of human creatures. She nursed Madame Frankenstein, my aunt, in her last illness with the greatest affection and care; and afterwards attended her own mother during a tedious illness, in a manner that excited the admiration of all who knew her. After which she again lived in my uncle's house, where she was beloved by all the family. She was warmly attached to the child who is now dead, and acted towards him like a most affectionate mother. For my own part, I do not hesitate to say, that, notwithstanding all the evidence produced against her, I believe and rely on her perfect innocence. She had no temptation for such an action: as to the bauble on which the chief proof rests, if she had earnestly desired it, I should have willingly given it to her; so much do I esteem and value her."

Excellent Elizabeth! A murmur of approbation was heard; but it was excited by her generous interference, and not in favour of poor Justine, on whom the public indignation was turned with renewed violence, charging her with the blackest ingratitude. She herself wept as Elizabeth spoke, but she did not answer. My own agitation and anguish was extreme during the whole trial. I believed in her innocence; I knew it. Could the dæmon, who had (I did not for a minute doubt) murdered my brother, also in his hellish sport have betrayed the innocent to death and ignominy. I could not sustain the horror of my situation; and when I perceived that the popular voice, and the countenances of the judges, had already condemned my unhappy victim, I rushed out of the court in agony. The tortures of the accused did not equal mine; she was sustained by innocence, but the fangs of remorse tore my bosom, and would not forego their hold.⁶⁰

I passed a night of unmingled wretchedness. In the morning I went to the court; my lips and throat were parched. I dared not ask the fatal question; but I was known, and the officer guessed the cause of my visit. The ballots had been thrown; they were all black, and Justine was condemned.

I cannot pretend to describe what I then felt. I had before experienced sensations of horror; and I have endeavoured to bestow upon them adequate expressions, but words cannot convey an idea of the heart-sickening despair that I then endured. The person to whom I addressed myself added, that Justine had already confessed her guilt. "That evidence," he observed, "was hardly required in so glaring a case, but I am glad of it; and, indeed, none of our judges like to condemn a criminal upon circumstantial evidence, be it ever so decisive."

When I returned home, Elizabeth eagerly demanded the result.

"My cousin," replied I, "it is decided as you may have expected; all judges had rather that ten innocent should suffer, than that one guilty should escape. But she has confessed."

This was a dire blow to poor Elizabeth, who had relied with firmness upon Justine's innocence. "Alas!" said she, "how shall I ever again believe in human benevolence? Justine, whom I loved and esteemed as my sister,

60. The encounter between Justine and Elizabeth is filled with passion. Justine comes to accept her execution, even if unjust, because she sees it as necessary for her ultimate salvation, and Elizabeth, convinced now of Justine's innocence, is relieved because her trust in Justine has not been betrayed. Such feelings trump concerns for justice. By contrast, Victor's anguish at the injustice and his realization that it is his creation that committed the murder fill him with remorse, an intense correlate of guilt. In current moral thinking, feeling and expressing remorse are essential for seeking forgiveness. But Victor can only hold these feelings within himself because he cannot disclose the truth about his efforts and their impact.

Joel Gereboff.

how could she put on those smiles of innocence only to betray; her mild eyes seemed incapable of any severity or ill-humour, and yet she has committed a murder.”

Soon after we heard that the poor victim had expressed a wish to see my cousin. My father wished her not to go; but said, that he left it to her own judgment and feelings to decide. “Yes,” said Elizabeth, “I will go, although she is guilty; and you, Victor, shall accompany me: I cannot go alone.” The idea of this visit was torture to me, yet I could not refuse.

We entered the gloomy prison-chamber, and beheld Justine sitting on some straw at the further end; her hands were manacled, and her head rested on her knees. She rose on seeing us enter; and when we were left alone with her, she threw herself at the feet of Elizabeth, weeping bitterly. My cousin wept also.

“Oh, Justine!” said she, “why did you rob me of my last consolation. I relied on your innocence; and although I was then very wretched, I was not so miserable as I am now.”

“And do you also believe that I am so very, very wicked? Do you also join with my enemies to crush me?” Her voice was suffocated with sobs.

“Rise, my poor girl,” said Elizabeth, “why do you kneel, if you are innocent? I am not one of your enemies; I believed you guiltless, notwithstanding every evidence, until I heard that you had yourself declared your guilt. That report, you say, is false; and be assured, dear Justine, that nothing can shake my confidence in you for a moment, but your own confession.”

“I did confess; but I confessed a lie. I confessed, that I might obtain absolution; but now that falsehood lies heavier at my heart than all my other sins. The God of heaven forgive me! Ever since I was condemned, my confessor has besieged me; he threatened and menaced, until I almost began to think that I was the monster that he said I was. He threatened excommunication and hell fire in my last moments, if I continued obdurate. Dear lady, I had none to support me; all looked on me as a wretch doomed to ignominy and perdition. What could I do? In an evil hour I subscribed to a lie; and now only am I truly miserable.”

She paused, weeping, and then continued—“I thought with horror, my sweet lady, that you should believe your Justine, whom your blessed aunt had so highly honoured, and whom you loved, was a creature capable of a crime which none but the devil himself could have perpetrated. Dear William! dearest blessed child! I soon shall see you again in heaven, where we shall all be happy; and that consoles me, going as I am to suffer ignominy and death.”

“Oh, Justine! forgive me for having for one moment distrusted you. Why did you confess? But do not mourn, my dear girl; I will every where proclaim your innocence, and force belief. Yet you must die; you, my playfellow, my companion, my more than sister. I never can survive so horrible a misfortune.”

“Dear, sweet Elizabeth, do not weep. You ought to raise me with thoughts of a better life, and elevate me from the petty cares of this world of injustice and strife. Do not you, excellent friend, drive me to despair.”

“I will try to comfort you; but this, I fear, is an evil too deep and poignant to admit of consolation, for there is no hope. Yet heaven bless thee, my dearest Justine, with resignation, and a confidence elevated beyond this world. Oh! how I hate its shews and mockeries! when one creature is murdered, another is immediately deprived of life in a slow torturing manner; then the executioners, their hands yet reeking with the blood of innocence, believe that they have done a great deed. They call this *retribution*. Hateful name!⁶¹ When that word is pronounced, I know greater and more horrid punishments are going to be inflicted than the gloomiest tyrant has ever invented to satiate his utmost revenge. Yet this is not consolation for you, my Justine, unless indeed that you may glory in escaping from so miserable a den. Alas! I would I were in peace with my aunt and my lovely William, escaped from a world which is hateful to me, and the visages of men which I abhor.”

61. This passage reflects the type of justice known as retributive, which relies on punishment to balance the wrong done to the victim and his or her family and to act as a deterrent to others from future acts of wrong-doing. In this worldview, justice is served when someone pays for the suffering caused to another. Mary is warning the reader that a rush to judgment, especially if revenge is the driving motive, might hurt innocent people, creating a new form of injustice. This is what happens when the innocent Justine is wrongly executed for the death of William. Science and technology are also implicated in the apparatus of crime and punishment in a number of ways, including the creation of various tools of execution, such as the guillotine—which was a terrible new invention at the time of the French Revolution—the electric chair, lethal injections, and so on. In modern capital punishment in the United States, medical personnel are present to verify the prisoner’s death, and psychiatrists play a role in determining whether someone is mentally healthy enough to stand trial or if there are mitigating circumstances due to mental defect. Fingerprinting, handwriting analysis, DNA testing, and other forensic sciences have had disputatious histories, both in terms of how they have been received as evidence in the courtroom and how they have called on courts to understand scientific evidence. Scientific studies have also cast light on the fallibility of eyewitness testimony, and many convictions have been overturned by exculpatory DNA evidence. The power of forensic evidence is such in the public imagination, however, that a “CS/ effect”—named after the popular television show about crime scene investigators using high-tech forensic analysis—has been identified in jurors who want to see scientific evidence of guilt even if those scientific standards are derived from fiction.

Mary Margaret Fonow.

Justine smiled languidly. "This, dear lady, is despair, and not resignation. I must not learn the lesson that you would teach me. Talk of something else, something that will bring peace, and not increase of misery."

During this conversation I had retired to a corner of the prison-room, where I could conceal the horrid anguish that possessed me. Despair! Who dared talk of that? The poor victim, who on the morrow was to pass the dreary boundary between life and death, felt not as I did, such deep and bitter agony. I gnashed my teeth, and ground them together, uttering a groan that came from my inmost soul. Justine started. When she saw who it was, she approached me, and said, "Dear Sir, you are very kind to visit me; you, I hope, do not believe that I am guilty."

I could not answer. "No, Justine," said Elizabeth; "he is more convinced of your innocence than I was; for even when he heard that you had confessed, he did not credit it."

"I truly thank him. In these last moments I feel the sincerest gratitude towards those who think of me with kindness. How sweet is the affection of others to such a wretch as I am! It removes more than half my misfortune; and I feel as if I could die in peace, now that my innocence is acknowledged by you, dear lady, and your cousin."

Thus the poor sufferer tried to comfort others and herself. She indeed gained the resignation she desired. But I, the true murderer, felt the never-dying worm alive in my bosom, which allowed of no hope or consolation. Elizabeth also wept, and was unhappy; but her's also was the misery of innocence, which, like a cloud that passes over the fair moon, for a while hides, but cannot tarnish its brightness. Anguish and despair had penetrated into the core of my heart; I bore a hell within me, which nothing could extinguish. We staid several hours with Justine; and it was with great difficulty that Elizabeth could tear herself away. "I wish," cried she, "that I were to die with you; I cannot live in this world of misery."

Justine assumed an air of cheerfulness, while she with difficulty repressed her bitter tears. She embraced Elizabeth, and said, in a voice of half-suppressed emotion, "Farewell, sweet lady, dearest Elizabeth, my beloved and only friend; may heaven in its bounty bless and preserve you; may this be the last misfortune that you will ever suffer. Live, and be happy, and make others so."

As we returned, Elizabeth said, "You know not, my dear Victor, how much I am relieved, now that I trust in the innocence of this unfortunate girl. I never could again have known peace, if I had been deceived in my reliance on her. For the moment that I did believe her guilty, I felt an anguish that I could not have long sustained. Now my heart is lightened.

The innocent suffers; but she whom I thought amiable and good has not betrayed the trust I reposed in her, and I am consoled.”

Amiable cousin! such were your thoughts, mild and gentle as your own dear eyes and voice. But I—I was a wretch, and none ever conceived of the misery that I then endured.

END OF VOL. I.