Nothing Will Hinder Success

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Dear Parents and English IV Honors/AP Literature students,

North Wilkes High School summer reading for the 2017-2018 English IV Honors/AP Literature courses is now available. Copies of the novels required for the summer reading are available at the high school if students choose not to purchase their own copies. Novels are limited so they will be checked out to students on a first come, first serve basis. Novels will be checked out to students using their student ID number, and students are responsible for returning the novel during the fall semester (fines will be applied if the novel is returned late or lost). Ideally, a student should purchase their own copy of the novel. Students are expected to complete the reading of their novel(s) prior to the first day of class and turn in the required summer assignment. The assignment is 20% of their overall grade. Any student failing to complete the summer assignment by the first day of class will have to accept the outcome of a zero for their grade. If you have any questions about the novel(s) you may contact the main office at North Wilkes High School at 903-4041 and ask to speak to Ms. Sorel (email sorelj@wilkes.k12.nc.us) who is available throughout the summer. The summer assignment is attached to this letter. Below are the assigned novels based on which courses students have been registered for in the fall semester:

English IV Honors (Fall semester): Students will read *Frankenstein; or the Modern Prometheus* by Mary Shelley for the course. The summer assignment is due on the first day of class.

Advanced Placement Literature and Composition (Spring semester): Students will read *Invisible Man* by Ralph Ellison for the course. This course begins in the spring semester and students must have this novel read by January 1, 2018. An assignment for the novel will be distributed in December 2017.

Thank you,

Jennifer M. Sorel

Jennifer M. Sorel
English Department/Graduation Project Coordinator/North Wilkes High School

Summer Assignment for *Frankenstein; or the Modern Prometheus*

Novel:
Students are expected to have thoroughly read the novel *Frankenstein; or the Modern Prometheus* by Mary Shelley. Students can check a copy of the novel out from the school library and are responsible for keeping up with the book's return date. Students who purchase their own copy of the novel can earn extra credit by annotating their novel as they read. Those students wishing to submit their own novels for extra credit should see the handout on annotations and follow those guidelines attached.

Summer Assignment:
The summer assignment for *Frankenstein; or the Modern Prometheus* by Mary Shelley is listed below:

(1)-Read and annotate the attached scholarly journal article "Problems of Perception" by Anne K. Mellor. Be sure to make your notes legible on the article. A guide to annotating a text is attached.

(2)-Compose a 3-6 page essay using both the novel and the journal article. You are required to follow MLA format (see https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/24/ for information about MLA format) and include a Works Cited page. After reading both the novel and the article, you will need to create your own unique thesis statement and compose an essay supporting your argument. You are required to use supportive evidence from both the novel and the journal article. Your essay must be printed with your thesis statement highlighted in yellow. The article will also be submitted with your essay.

How to Annotate a Text

1. At the top of the page or on a post-it, mark the important plot events. Every page will not necessarily be marked.
2. Be sure to figure out any unfamiliar words through context or by using a dictionary. You can write the definitions right in the text for yourself.
3. Highlight and mark any conflicts that occur with the protagonist. Note your ideas about these conflicts in the text (who/what is involved, attempts to resolve conflicts, etc.)
4. Highlight and mark words and phrases that help describe the personality of characters. Note your ideas about the characters right in the text (personality, motivation, fears, dreams, etc.).
5. Highlight any symbolism and note your ideas in the text as to what abstract ideas or concepts these tangible objects may represent.
6. Don't mark too much. If you mark everything, nothing will stand out.

Annotation is a key component of close reading. Since we will annotate texts all year, you need to develop a system that works for you. Effective annotating is both economical and consistent. Use any **combination** of the following:

- Make brief comments in the margins. Use any white space available—inside cover, random blank pages, etc.
- Make brief comments between or within lines of the text. Do not be afraid to mark within the text itself. In fact, you must.
- Circle or put boxes, triangles, or clouds around words or phrases.
- Use abbreviations or symbols—brackets, stars, exclamation points, question marks, numbers, etc.
- Connect words, phrases, ideas, circle, boxes, etc. with lines or arrows.
- Underline—CAUTION: Use this method sparingly. Underline only a few words. Always combine with another method such as comment. Never underline an entire passage. Doing so takes too much time and loses effectiveness. If you wish to mark an entire paragraph or passage, draw a line down the margin or use brackets.
- Highlight—CAUTION: Don't highlight everything!!
- Create your own code.
- Use post-it notes only if you have exhausted all available space.

Close Reading: What should you annotate? Again, the possibilities are limitless, Keep in mind the reasons we annotate. Your annotations **must** include comments. I want to see evidence of thinking.

- ➔ Have a conversation with the text. Talk back to it.
- ➔ Ask questions.
- ➔ Comment on the actions or development of a character. Does the character change? Why? How? What is the result?
- ➔ Comment on lines/quotations you think are especially significant, powerful, or meaningful. Express agreement or disagreement.
- ➔ Summarize key events. Make predictions.
- ➔ Connect ideas to each other or to other texts.
- ➔ Note if you experience an epiphany.
- ➔ Note anything you would like to discuss or do not understand.
- ➔ Note how the author uses language. Note the significance if you can:
    - ★ Effects of diction or syntax
    - ★ Point of view/effect
    - ★ Repetition of words, phrases, actions, events, or patterns
    - ★ Narrative pace/time/sequence of events
    - ★ Irony
    - ★ Contrasts/contradictions/juxtapositions/shifts
    - ★ Allusions
    - ★ Any other figure of speech or literary device
    - ★ Reliability of the narrator
    - ★ Motifs or cluster ideas
    - ★ Tone/mood
    - ★ Imagery
    - ★ Themes
    - ★ Setting/historical period
    - ★ Symbols

The most common complaint about annotating is that it slows down your reading. Yes, it does; that is the point. If annotating as you read annoys you, read a small section, then go back and annotate. Reading any text a second time is preferable.

Before reading:

1. Examine the front and back book cover
2. Read the title and any subtitles
3. Examine the illustrations
4. Examine the print (bold, italic, etc.)
5. Examine the way the text is set up (book, short story, diary, dialogue, etc.)

As you examine and read these, write questions and make predictions and/or connections near these parts of the text.

During reading:

1. Mark in the text
- *A. Characters (Who)*
- *B. Setting (When)*
- *C. Setting (Where)*
- *D. Vocabulary*
- *E. Important ideas or information*

2. Write in the margins:
- *A. Summarize*
- *B. Make predictions*
- *C. Formulate opinions*
- *D. Make connections*
- *E. Ask questions*
- *F. Analyze the author's craft*
- *G. Write reflections, reactions, and comments*

After reading:

1. Reread annotations—draw conclusions

2. Reread introduction and conclusion—try to figure out something new

3. Examine: patterns/repetitions—determine possible meanings

4. Determine what the title might mean

Annotation Instructions and Rubric

Print this page and cut out the attached bookmark. Use it to help you read for important information.

Obviously, annotation is as personal as reading, and there are many ways to annotate a book. This system is just a suggestion. For example, some people prefer to use colors to differentiate elements, and some prefer to use Post-Its. If you already have a system, feel free to use what you are comfortable with.

What I will be looking for when I collect your books is the level of critical thinking that went into your reading. So no matter what system you use, make your thinking visible.

To make an **A**
For an annotated book to receive an A, I expect to see markings and written commentary throughout the entire book. There will probably be something significant noted in nearly every chapter.

To make a **B**
A B book may be lacking in written commentary, but the "highlighted" areas will reflect significant elements discussed at left.

To make a **C**
A C book may be missing some significant elements, but will still be highlighted generally throughout the book showing your basic understanding of the characters and plot.

Lower grades will reflect a lack of reading, possibly in skipped sections or random highlights of insignificant material.

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Problems of Perception

Anne K. Mellor

Chapter 7 of *Mary Shelley: Her Life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters* (New York: Methuen, 1988), 127-40

{127} My discussion of the moral and aesthetic dimensions of Mary Shelley's conceptions of nature and the family leads us back to an even more basic philosophical question. How does Mary Shelley conceive of nature as such? In other words, what is nature, both the external world and human nature? *Frankenstein* insistently raises this question. It is the question that Victor is trying to answer, namely, "whence . . . did the principle of life proceed?" (46). And it is the question that haunts his creature, who repeatedly asks "Who was I? What was I? Whence did I come? What was my destination?" (124).

As the characters wrestle with this ontological problem, the novel presents diametrically opposed answers. The creature insists that his innate nature is innocent, benevolent, loving. He is Rousseau's noble savage, born free but everywhere in chains, a Blakean man of innocent energy. Confronting Frankenstein for the first time, he asserts "I was benevolent and good; misery made me a fiend" (95). At the end of his autobiographical narration, the creature repeats that "My vices are the children of a forced solitude that I abhor; and my virtues will necessarily arise when I live in communion with an equal" (143). Frankenstein, in opposition, claims that his creature is innately evil, a vile insect, a devil: "Abhorred monster! fiend that thou art! the tortures of hell are too mild a vengeance for thy crimes. Wretched devil!" (94). If the creature represents innate human nature, as Mary Shelley's persistent authorial denomination of him as "creature" and Percy Shelley's editorial revision of "creature" to "being" suggest, then is a human being innately good or innately evil, a romantic child of innocence or an Augustinian child of original sin?

The question is vividly focused in the symbolic scene when the {128} creature first sees himself. "How was I terrified, when I viewed myself in a transparent pool! At first I started back, unable to believe that it was indeed I who was reflected in the mirror; and when I became fully convinced that I was in reality the monster that I am, I was filled with the bitterest sensations of despondence and mortification" (109). This important passage suggests that in this novel identity is a process not so much of knowing (recognition) as of *seeing*. Even though the creature is unable to recognize himself, "unable to believe it was indeed I," his eyes convince him that "I was in reality the monster that I am."

As a unique being, an original, the creature functions in the novel as the sign of the unfamiliar, the unknown. He is a sign detached from a visual or verbal grammar, without diachronic or synchronic context, without precursor or progeny.[1] As such, he poses the fundamental epistemological problem: how is he to be perceived? In the novel, all the characters impose a semiotic construction upon the creature. They read his features or interpret his appearance as having a determinate meaning. In effect, they endorse the contemporary theories of Johann Caspar Lavater and Franz Gall. Lavater's treatise on physiognomy argued that the innate soul or character of the individual manifested itself in the person's physical appearance. The properly trained physiognomist could therefore determine a person's moral nature by correctly reading the meaning of his or her physical characteristics. Dr. Gall and his English-based disciple Johann Christoph Spurzheim reversed Lavater's theory and argued instead that the actual physical formation of the newborn infant determined its later moral nature. One could therefore identify a person's character by correctly reading the shape of his or her skull and body. This new "science" of phrenology was familiar to Mary Shelley. She had herself been physiognomically diagnosed as a three-week-old infant and had learned the basic tenets of Dr. Gall's system in 1814 from her friend Henry Voisey.[2]

The creature's unfamiliar physiognomy is consistently interpreted by the characters in the novel as monstrous, threatening, or evil. Victor Frankenstein, already prejudiced by his youthful "invincible repugnance to new countenances" (40), immediately construes his animated creature as a "wretch": "I beheld the wretch -- the miserable monster whom I had created" (53). As his creature, grinning, leans forward to embrace his father, Frankenstein sees the gesture as an attempt "seemingly to detain me" (53) and quickly "escapes" from "the demoniacal corpse to which I had so miserably given life," exclaiming that "no mortal could support the horror of that countenance" (53).

That Frankenstein's response is an *arbitrary* semantic construction is made clear when he next encounters his creature. Seeing his gigantic {129} form approach across the Mer de Glace, Frankenstein observes that "his countenance bespoke bitter anguish, combined with disdain and malignity" (94). But the creature resists this consistently negative reading of his appearance. When Frankenstein again violently rejects his offspring -- "Begone! relieve me from the sight of your detested form" -- his creature responds: "'Thus I relieve thee, my creator,' he said, and placed his hated hands before my eyes" (96). The creature thus draws our attention to the possibility that Frankenstein is *misreading* his countenance, judging a mere appearance rather than the hidden reality.

Not only Frankenstein but all the other people the creature encounters immediately see his physiognomy as evil. The old man in his hut, "perceiving me, shrieked loudly, and, quitting the hut, ran across the fields with a speed of which his debilitated form hardly appeared capable" (100). The inhabitants of the nearby village "shrieked . . . fainted . . . attacked me, until, grievously bruised by stones and many other kinds of missile weapons, I escaped to the open country" (101). When Felix, Agatha and Safie finally see him:

> Who can describe their horror and consternation on beholding me? Agatha fainted; and Safie, unable to attend to her friend, rushed out of the cottage. Felix darted forward, and with supernatural force tore me from his father, to whose knees I clung: in a transport of fury, he dashed me to the ground, and struck me violently with a stick. (131)

The rustic whose drowning girlfriend he saves both tears her from the creature's arms and then shoots the creature. And even the young eyes of William Frankenstein, as the creature embraces him, instantly see the creature as evil: "As soon as he beheld my form, he placed his hands before his eyes, and uttered a shrill scream. . . 'Let me go,' he cried; 'monster! ugly wretch! you wish to eat me, and tear me to pieces -- You are an ogre'--" (139).

Only two characters in the novel do not immediately interpret the creature as evil. The first of course is blind. Father De Lacey, unable to see the creature kneeling at his feet, listens instead to his eloquent speech and *hears* truth in the creature's assertion that "I have good dispositions; my life has been hitherto harmless, and, in some degree, beneficial; but a fatal prejudice clouds their eyes, and where they ought to see a feeling and kind friend, they behold only a detestable monster" (130). Father De Lacey replies, "I am blind, and cannot judge of your countenance, but there is something in your words which persuades me that you are sincere" (130). Here Father De Lacey articulates the reader's own response. The reader (as opposed to the filmgoer) has not {130} *seen* the Monster, but only *heard* descriptions of his appearance. At this point in the novel, the reader's sympathies have shifted away from the horrified Frankenstein and toward the speaking creature, whose language is at least as powerful as the words earlier spoken about him. Mary Shelley gives the reader -- through Father De Lacey -- the opportunity to choose between two competing sets of information: that provided by those characters who see the monster but don't listen to him and that provided by Father De Lacey who listens to the creature but can't see him. But whether the blind De Lacey reads the creature's character correctly, we as readers can never know, for he is ripped out of the novel by his prejudging son.

Walton, because he has listened to the creature's autobiography, does not immediately reject him on the basis of a first impression, a single reading of his face. Confronting the creature for the first time at Frankenstein's deathbed, Walton is both repulsed -- "Never did I behold a vision so horrible as his face, of such loathsome, yet appalling hideousness. I shut my eyes involuntarily . . ." -- and, because he has thus eliminated his visual image of the creature, attracted to him: "I called on him to stay" (216). Hearing the creature's remorse, Walton's "first impulses, which had suggested to me the duty of obeying the dying request of my friend, in destroying his

enemy, were now suspended by a mixture of curiosity and compassion" (217). Walton's responses to the creature continue to veer between sympathy -- "I was at first touched by the expressions of his misery" -- and hostility -- "when I again cast my eyes on the lifeless form of my friend, indignation was rekindled within me" (218). But Walton's final judgment on the creature is mute. After the creature's impassioned apologia pro vita sua, Walton says nothing. In the last sentence of the manuscript, he significantly loses "sight" of the creature "in the darkness and distance."

This last sentence thus underlines the basic problem of perception in the novel: how are we to *see* the innate being of the creature? Walton, who of all the characters knows him best, has "lost sight" of him. The creature's self-analysis acknowledges that he is both good and evil, but perhaps like King Lear more sinned against than sinning:

> Once I falsely hoped to meet with beings, who, pardoning my outward form, would love me for the excellent qualities which I was capable of bringing forth. I was nourished with high thoughts of honour and devotion. But now vice has degraded me beneath the meanest animal. No crime, no mischief, no malignity, no misery, can be found comparable to mine . . . the fallen angel becomes a malignant devil. . . . Am I to be thought the only criminal, when all human kind sinned against me? (219)

{131} But neither Walton nor the author confirms the creature's self-analysis. At the end he remains lost "in darkness and distance."

The creature thus represents the confrontation of the human mind with an unknowable nature, with the experience that eighteenth-century philosophers called the sublime. The creature, in fact, inhabits those landscapes that Edmund Burke explicitly identified as the sources of the sublime. In his *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1757), Burke characterised the sublime as "whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain and danger; that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the *sublime*; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotions which the mind is capable of feeling."[3] A sublime landscape is one which seems to threaten the viewer's life. Burke defined the typical qualities of a sublime landscape as greatness of dimension (especially as contrasted with the finite limits of the human body) which gives rise to an idea of infinity; obscurity (which blurs the definition of boundaries); profound darkness or intense light; and sudden, sharp angles. Confronted with such overwhelming objects as towering mountains, huge dark caves, gloomy architectural ruins, or sudden blinding light, the human mind first experiences terror or fear and then, as the instinct of self-preservation is gradually relaxed, astonishment ("that state of the soul in which all its motions are suspended with some degree of horror"[4]), admiration, reverence, and respect. For one thus receives, according to Burke, a sensible impression of the Deity by whose power these overwhelming scenes are created.

The appearances of the creature in the novel are simultaneous with the revelation of the sublime. Approaching Secheron as night encloses the Alps, Frankenstein encounters a violent storm: "thunder burst with a terrific crash over my head. It was echoed from Saleve, the Juras, and the Alps of Savoy; vivid flashes of lightning dazzled my eyes, illuminating the lake, making it appear like a vast sheet of fire; then for an instant every thing seemed of a pitchy darkness" (71). As lightning flashes, Frankenstein's terrified eyes recognize in this landscape of Satan's Pandemonium the creature he had abandoned, "hanging among the rocks," the creature who is again lost in obscurity as the scene is "enveloped in an impenetrable darkness" (72). Frankenstein first speaks to his creature on the Mer de Glace above Chamounix, a landscape defined by eighteenth-century travellers as the locus of the sublime. The creature then follows him to an equally threatening, desolate landscape, the remotest of the Orkneys, "a rock, whose high sides were continually beaten upon by the waves" (161). The sublime nature of this northern Scottish coast was captured by Turner in his {132} drawings of mountain torrents, stormy seas, Ben Arthur, and Ailsa Rock for his "Scottish Pencils" series done in 1801. The creature finally ends his existence among "the mountainous ices of the ocean" at the North Pole, in that frozen wasteland imaged in Caspar David Friedrich's *The Wreck of the "Hope"* (1821) as the ultimate apocalyptic sublime, where he is "lost in darkness and distance" (221).

The creature himself embodies the human sublime. His gigantic stature, his physical strength (as great as "the winds" or "a mountain stream," acknowledges Frankenstein [74]), his predilection for desert mountains and dreary glaciers (where he alone finds "refuge" [95]), and above all his origin in the transgression of the boundary between life and death, all render him both "obscure" and "vast," the touchstones of the sublime. Moreover, the creature's very existence seems to constitute a threat to human life. His appearance throughout the novel rouses "the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling," a Gothic *frisson* of pure terror.

But Mary Shelley's calculated association of the creature with Burke's sublime is intended to do more than rouse a powerful aesthetic response in the reader. Thomas Weiskel has drawn our attention to the semiotic significance of sublime landscapes.[5] Encountering such a landscape, the human mind attempts to determine the meaning of the image before it. Burke and Kant suggested that the meaning of such an immense landscape is the infinite and incomprehensible power of God or nature (the thing-in-itself). In this reading, what is signified (divine omnipotence or the *Ding-an-sich*) is greater than the signifier (the landscape and our linguistic descriptions of it). Weiskel has called this the "negative" sublime, since the human mind is finally overwhelmed or negated by a greater, even transcendent power. In contrast, Wordsworth in the Mount Snowdon episode of *The Prelude* or Coleridge in "This Lime-tree Bower My Prison" suggested that the meaning of a sublime landscape may lie in its capacity to inspire the poetic imagination to a conception of its own power as a "mighty mind" or "almighty spirit."[6] In this reading, what is signified (the land-scape) is less than the signifier (the poetic language produced by the creative imagination). Weiskel has called this the "positive" sublime, since the human mind finally confronts its own linguistic power.

With this distinction in mind, we can see that in semiotic terms, Frankenstein's creature brilliantly represents both the negative and the positive modes of the sublime. On the one hand, he is a vast power beyond human linguistic control. Like the wrath of God on judgment day, his revenge is boundless, imageless. His physical appearance is only a metaphor for the havoc he can wreak on the entire human race. As he warns Frankenstein {133}:

> Slave, I before reasoned with you, but you have proved yourself unworthy of my condescension. Remember that I have power; you believe yourself miserable, but I can make you so wretched that the light of day will be hateful to you. You are my creator, but I am your master; -- obey! (165)

In this reading of the creature as the negative sublime, he signifies the power of universal human destruction, the unthinkable, unimaginable, unspeakable, experience of a deluge or a holocaust. He is the thing-in-itself, the elemental "chaos" of external nature, those "dark, shapeless substances" which precede and annihilate the forms of life.[7] As Mary Shelley reminded her readers in her Preface to the 1831 edition of *Frankenstein*: "Invention . . . does not consist in creating out of void, but out of chaos; the materials must, in the first place, be afforded: it can give form to dark, shapeless substances, but cannot bring into being the substance itself." (226) As the *Ding-an-sich*, the dark shapeless substance itself, the creature is forever displaced by the mind's own "inventions," its categorizing or structuring perceptual processes. In this sense, the creature represents the positive sublime, an arbitrary semantic system, that invented meaning which the human mind imposes on the chaos of nature. The creature is that which is "always already" linguistically structured in visual or verbal signs, his countenance both "bespoke" and "expressed". Mary Shelley here relies on a Kantian anthropology even as she anticipates its most sophisticated modern revisions. Like Sapir, Whorf, Levi-Strauss, and Derrida, she suggests that the basic Kantian categories which structure the mind's phenomenological perceptions of nature are not space, time, unity, and causality, but rather the conventions of visual and verbal languages. Victor Frankenstein construes the unknown in linguistic terms: his creature's countenance "bespoke bitter anguish, combined with disdain and malignity"; it "expressed the utmost extent of malice and treachery" (94, 164). In this novel, such linguistic readings become social realities. The interpretations of nature that human minds supply become ideologies, phenomenological constructions of their material existence.

The semiotic significance of *Frankenstein* was recognized in the first dramatic production of the novel. H. M. Milner's playbill for *Frankenstein: or, The Man and the Monster. A Romantic Melo-Drama, in Two Acts*, first performed at the Royal Cobourg Theatre in London on July 3, 1826, listed the monster in the dramatis personae thus: "********** [played by] Mr. O. Smith." Milner thus drew attention to the unknowability, the purely

fictive semantic significance, of the creature. Mary Shelley commented approvingly when she saw {134} Thomas Cooke in the role on August 29 that "this nameless mode of naming the unnameable is rather good."[8] But Milner imposed his own reading upon the creature in his description of scene 2 as "Friendly Intentions of the Monster misinterpreted from his tremendous appearance, and met with Violence." Like most readings of Mary Shelley's text, this one radically simplifies the semiotic significance of the creature.

But Mary Shelley's purposes are primarily ethical rather than epistemological or aesthetic. She wishes us to see that human beings typically interpret the unfamiliar, the abnormal, and the unique as evil. In other words, humans use language, their visual and verbal constructions of reality, to name or image the human and the nonhuman and thus to fix the boundaries between us and them. In so doing, as Foucault has pointed out in *Madness and Civilization* and *Discipline and Punish*, we use language as an instrument of power, to define the borderline between reason and madness, between the socially acceptable and the criminal, and thus to control the terrors of the unknown.[9]

As Mary Shelley's novel illustrates, this linguistic process of naming or imaging becomes a discourse of power that results in the domination of the ideology of a ruling class and leads directly to the creation of evil. By consistently seeing the creature's countenance as evil, the characters in the novel force him to *become* evil. Whatever his innate nature might be, the creature becomes a monster because he, like Polyphemus before him,[10] has been denied access to a human community, denied parental care, companionship, love. His violent rage and malignant murders -- of William, Justine, Clerval, Elizabeth, and finally, in consequence, of Alphonse and Victor Frankenstein -- are the result of a humanly engendered semiotic construction of the creature as terrifying and horrible. Mary Shelley strikingly shows us that when we see nature as evil, we make it evil. What is now proved was once only imagined, said Blake. The moment Victor Frankenstein sees his creature again, he conceives him to be the murderer of his brother: "No sooner did that idea cross my imagination, than I became convinced of its truth" (71). Having conceived his creature as a "devil" and his "enemy," Frankenstein has made him so.

Moreover, because we can consciously know only the linguistic universes we have ourselves constructed, if we read or image the creature as evil, we write ourselves as the authors of evil. In Blake's pithy phrase, "we become what we behold." Victor Frankenstein becomes the monster he semiotically construes. As Victor confesses, "I considered the being whom I had cast among mankind . . . nearly in the light of my own vampire, my own spirit let loose from the grave, {135} and forced to destroy all that was dear to me" (72). Frankenstein becomes the monster he names, just as in the popular imagination informed by the cinematic versions of Mary Shelley's novel, his name "Frankenstein" becomes the monster.

Victor's identification with his creature is underlined by the novel's persistent association of both men with the fallen Adam and with Satan. Reading Elizabeth's letter, Victor "dared to whisper paradisiacal dreams of love and joy; but the apple was already eaten, and the angel's arm bared to drive me from all hope" (186); "like the archangel who aspired to omnipotence," he confesses to Walton, "I am chained in an eternal hell" (208). The creature too is both Adam and Satan, as he explicitly reminds Victor: "I ought to be thy Adam; but I am rather the fallen angel, whom thou drivest from joy for no misdeed" (95). Increasingly, Victor resembles his creature: "When I thought of him, I gnashed my teeth, my eyes became inflamed" (87). Finally, the boundary between Victor and his creature is annihilated. In his nightmare, the creature literally enters his body. "I felt the fiend's grasp *in* my neck, and could not free myself from it; groans and cries rung *in* my ears" (181; italics mine). Metaphorically, the creature becomes Frankenstein's "own vampire" (72), cannibalistically devouring his creator.

During their final chase across the frozen Arctic wastes, Frankenstein and his creature are indistinguishable. Hunter and hunted blur into one consciousness, one spirit of revenge, one despair, one victim. Victor swears on the grave of William, Elizabeth, and his father to live in order "to execute this dear revenge": "Let the cursed and hellish monster drink deep of agony; let him feel the despair that torments me." He is immediately echoed by the loud and fiendish laugh of his creature: "I am satisfied: miserable wretch! you have determined to live, and I am satisfied" (200). Victor both pursues and is pursued by his creature. Not only does the monster leave marks to guide Frankenstein, but he enters Frankenstein's very soul. As Victor says, "I was cursed by some devil, and

carried about with me my eternal hell" (201). Even those "good spirits" who leave food for Frankenstein and whom he had "invoked to aid" him are in fact his own monster, equally bent on revenge. Finally, both Frankenstein and his creature are lost in darkness among the frozen Arctic wastes. By the end of the novel, we cannot separate the wretched, solitary Frankenstein from the wretched, solitary monster. Even Frankenstein's passionate suffering, which has led at least one critic to hail him as a romantic hero,[11] has been more than shared by his creature. As the monster addresses the corpse of Victor, in the original manuscript, "Blasted as you wert, my agony is superior to yours; for remorse is the bitter sting that rankles in {136} my wounds and tortures me to madness" (220:34-221:2). The creature has become his creator, the creator has become his creature.

Many readers have noticed that the monster becomes an alter-ego or double for Victor Frankenstein, a pattern of psychological mirroring that Mary Shelley borrowed from her father's doubles, Caleb Williams and Falkland. But to date these readings have focused on the monster as a manifestation of Frankenstein's repressed desires, whether Oedipal, egotistical, narcissistic, or masochistic.[12] It is true that the monster acts out Frankenstein's subliminal hostility to women by killing his bride on his wedding night. But such psychological interpretations do not account for the larger philosophical questions centrally at issue in the novel. What, finally, is being? Whence did the principle of life proceed? By reading his creation as evil, Frankenstein constructs a monster. The novel itself however leaves open the question of what the creature essentially is. Clearly, this being has the capacity to do good; equally clearly, it has the capacity to do evil. But whether it was born good and corrupted by society, or born evil and justly subjected to the condemnation of society, or neither, the novel does not tell us.

Instead *Frankenstein* shows us that in the world that human beings phenomenologically construct, the unknown is imaged, read, and written as "malignant." We thereby create the injustice and evil that we imagine. This is Mary Shelley's final critique of the Romantic ideology. By empowering the imagination as the final arbiter of truth and the poet as the (unacknowledged) legislator of the world, this ideology frees the imagination to construct whatever reality it desires. But the human imagination, left to its own devices, as the rationalist Theseus warned in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, sees "more devils than vast hell can hold" or in the night, "imagining some fear," supposes every bush a bear. As *Frankenstein* illustrates, the abnormal is more likely to be seen as monstrous than with Titania's eyes of love which "can transpose to form and dignity . . . things base and vile, holding no quantity."

Mary Shelley's answer to the ontological and epistemological issues raised in *Frankenstein*, then, is a radical skepticism, a skepticism that she derived from David Hume and Immanuel Kant, whose ideas she had discussed with Percy Shelley. Since the human mind can never know the thing-in-itself, it can know only the constructs of its own imagination. As the creature says, "the human senses are insurmountable barriers to our union" (141). Because the mind is more likely to respond to the unknown with fear and hostility than with love and acceptance, an unfettered imagination is more likely to construct evil than good. Thus we can finally identify the monster with the poetic {137} imagination itself, as Irving Massey has suggested: "the monster is the imagination, which reveals itself as a hideous construct of the dead parts of things that were once alive when it tries to realize itself, enter the world on the world's terms."[13] The liberation of the imagination advocated by the Romantic poets was regarded by Mary Shelley as both promiscuous and potentially evil. For imaginative creation is not necessarily identical with moral responsibility, as Walter Pater and Oscar Wilde later demonstrated, or closer to home, as Byron and Percy Shelley illustrated. Mary Shelley firmly believed that the romantic imagination must be consciously controlled by love, specifically a mothering love that embraces even freaks. As Victor Frankenstein admits: "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." (51)

In advocating this ideal of self-control, of moderation and domestic decorum, Mary Shelley is endorsing an ideology grounded on the trope of the loving and harmonious bourgeois family. She is taking a considered ethical, political, and aesthetic position, a position that is essentially conservative. Human nature may not *be* evil, but human beings are more likely to *construe* it as evil than as good. Since the imagination is motivated by fears, frustrated desires, and fantasies of power, it must be curbed by a strenuous commitment to the preservation of a moral society. In Mary Shelley's view, that moral order traditionally based itself on a reading of nature as sacred. So long as human beings see nature as a loving mother, the source of life itself, they will

preserve organic modes of production and reproduction within the nuclear family and will respect the inherent rights of every life-form. They will, moreover, protect and nurture all the products of nature -- the old, the sick, the handicapped, the freaks -- with love and compassion.

At the aesthetic level, this ideology entails the privileging of the beautiful over the sublime and a reversal of the eighteenth-century ordering of the arts. For as Burke wrote, the sublime appeals to the instinct of self-preservation and rouses feelings of terror that result in a lust for power, domination, and continuing control. But the beautiful appeals to the instinct of self-procreation and rouses sensations of both erotic and affectional love. Significantly, in Mary Shelley's novel, the idealized figure of Clerval consistently prefers the gently undulating and brightly colored landscapes of the beautiful, as painted by Claude Lorraine and Richard Wilson, and the variegated picturesque landscapes celebrated by Uvedale Price and William Gilpin. In a moment of innocence regained, Frankenstein and Clerval find ecstasy in "a serene {138} sky and verdant fields" and "the flowers of spring" (65). Clerval explicitly rejects the landscapes of the sublime (as painted by Salvator Rosa or John Martin):

> I have seen this lake agitated by a tempest, when the wind tore up whirlwinds of water, and gave you an idea of what the waterspout must be on the great ocean, and the waves dash with fury the base of the mountain, where the priest and his mistress were overwhelmed by an avalanche, and where their dying voices are still said to be heard amid the pauses of the nightly wind; I have seen the mountains of La Valais, and the Pays de Vaud: but this country, Victor, pleases me more than all these wonders. The mountains of Switzerland are more majestic and strange; but there is a charm in the banks of this divine river, that I never before saw equalled. Look at that castle which overhangs yon precipice; and that also on the island, almost concealed amongst the foliage of those lovely trees; and now that group of labourers coming from among their vines; and that village half-hid in the recess of the mountain. Oh, surely, the spirit that inhabits and guards this place has a soul more in harmony with man, than those who pile the glacier, or retire to the inaccessible peaks of the mountains of our own country. (153)

By valuing the picturesque and the beautiful above the sublime, Clerval affirms an aesthetic grounded on the family and the community rather than on the individual. Images of cooperation (between human beings -- the village; between man and nature -- the laborers among the vines) are of a higher aesthetic order than images of isolation and destruction (the dying priest and his forbidden mistress; the inaccessible mountain peaks).

Clerval thus prefers an aesthetic grounded on the female rather than on the male. Isaac Kramnick has shown us that a gender division is imbedded in Burke's descriptions of the sublime and the beautiful. The sublime is masculine, the beautiful is feminine. The sublime has the qualities Burke associated with his powerful, demanding, violent, unloving father. It is vast, dark, and gloomy; "great, rugged and negligent;" "solid and ever massive;" awesome in its infinite power; capable of arousing only fear, terror, and abject admiration. In contrast, the beautiful is associated with Burke's gentle, shy, devoted mother. It is "small," "smooth and polished," "light and delicate," gently undulating, regular. It produces in the beholder only feelings of affection and tenderness, a nurturant sense of well-being.[14] Clerval's aesthetic of the beautiful is thus grounded in a conscious sympathy between the human mind and a benevolent female nature.

When Mary Shelley first saw the Alps, an experience she recorded in her *History of a Six Weeks Tour* (1817), she responded to their {139} grandeur, not with terror or a conviction of human finitude, but with a wholeness of vision that discovered the vital and life-giving among the frozen wastes, the beautiful within the sublime, the female within the male:

> The scenery of this days journey was divine, exhibiting piny mountains barren rocks, and spots of verdure surpassing imagination. After descending for nearly a league between lofty rocks, covered with pines, and interspersed with green glades, where the grass is short, and soft, and beautifully verdant, we arrived at the village of St. Sulpice. (41)

And at the "desolate" summit of Montanvert, her eyes passed over the barren ice-fields to seek out the life which struggled to survive in their midst:

> We went on the ice; it is traversed by irregular crevices, whose sides of ice appear blue, while the surface is of a dirty white. We dine on the mountain. The air is very cold, yet many flowers grow here, and, among others, the rhododendron, or *Rose des Alpes*, in great profusion.[15]

Even among the most conventionally sublime landscapes, Mary Shelley typically sought out the elements of the beautiful, systematically construing nature not as a punishing or death-dealing force but as a maternal, nurturing, life-giving power, just as, in *Frankenstein*, she construed Mont Blanc and the attendant Alps as mighty images of female fertility. Clerval's reading of mother nature is here, in 1818, her own.

Frankenstein promotes the belief that the moment we forswear an ecological reading of mother earth, the moment we construe nature as Frankenstein does, as the dead mother or as inert matter, at that moment we set in motion an ideology grounded on patriarchal values of individualism, competition, aggression, egoism, sexism, and racism. We set in motion the imperialist ideology that, as Mary Shelley reminds us, enslaved Greece and destroyed Mexico and Peru (51). We legislate a society capable both of developing and of exploding an atomic bomb, of annihilating itself in a nuclear holocaust. "You are my creator, but I am your master!"

Significantly, at the end of Mary Shelley's novel, the monster is still alive. Victor Frankenstein has vowed to return his creature to the cemetery whence he came, but that vow is fulfilled by neither Frankenstein nor his double, Walton. We have only the monster's word that he will destroy himself on a fiery pile at the North Pole. To {140} believe him may be to engage in a fantasy as deceptive as Walton's vision of a coming together of fire and ice, a tropical paradise, at the North Pole. Mary Shelley left the ending of her novel open. The creature is "lost sight of . . . in the darkness and distance," lost in the unnameable, yet still present as the power of the unknown. But she has taught us that if we do not consciously embrace the unknown with nurturing affection, we may unconsciously construe it as the Other -- alien, threatening, sublime. The absence of a mothering love, as *Frankenstein* everywhere shows, can and does make monsters, both psychological and technological. Mary Shelley's mythic vision of a manmade monster reverberates even more frighteningly today than it did in 1818.

Notes

1. On the epistemological issues raised by the monster, see L. J. Swingle, "Frankenstein's Monster and Its Romantic Relatives: Problems of Knowledge in English Romanticism," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 15 (1973): 51-65; and Joseph H. Gardner, "Mary Shelley's Divine Tragedy," *Essays in Literature* 4 (1977): 182-97. On the semiotic implications, see Peter Brooks, "'Godlike Science/Unhallowed Arts': Language, Nature and Monstrosity," *Endurance of Frankenstein*, ed. George Levine and U. C. Knoepflmacher (Berkeley and Los Angeles, and London: University of Chicago Press, 1979), pp. 205-20; and Jerrold E. Hogle, "Otherness in Frankenstein: The Confinement/Autonomy of Fabrication," *Structuralist Review* 2 (1980): 20-48.

2. For Lavater's physiognomical theories, see Johann Caspar Lavater, *Essays on Physiognomy, Designed to Promote the Knowledge and Love of Mankind*, 4 Vols., trans. Henry Hunter (London, 1789-98). For the physiognomical analysis of the infant Mary Godwin, see R. Glynn Grylls, *Mary Shelley -- A Biography* (London: Oxford University Press, 1938), pp. 10-11: the physiognomist Mr. Nicholson reported on September 18, 1797, that the three-week-old Mary Godwin's skull "possessed considerable memory and intelligence," while her forehead, eyes and eyebrows manifested a "quick sensibility, irritable, scarcely irascible" and her "too much employed" mouth showed "the outlines of intelligence. She was displeased, and it denoted much more of resigned vexation than either scorn or rage." Franz Joseph Gall's phrenological system was expounded by Johann Christoph Spurzheim in *The Physiognomical System of Drs. Gall and Spurzheim* (London, 1815). For Mary Shelley's familiarity with Dr. Gall's system, see her *Journal*, ed. Frederick L. Jones (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1947), p. 15; and *The Journals of Claire Clairmont 1814-1827*, ed. Marion Kingston Stocking (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), p. 44.

3. Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (London, 1757; repr. Philadelphia, 1806), p. 47.

4. Edmund Burke, *The Sublime and the Beautiful*, p. 77.

5. Thomas Weiskel, *The Romantic Sublime* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976).

6. For further discussion of this point, see my "Coleridge's 'This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison' and the Categories of English Landscape," *Studies in Romanticism* 18 (1979): 253-270.

7. We should recall here Mary Shelley's fascination with Poussin's *Deluge* (or *Winter*), the only painting she mentioned from her visit to the Louvre in 1814 (*Mary Shelley's Journal*, ed. Frederick L. Jones, p. 6). On the creature as an image of elemental Chaos, readers might wish to consult Frances Ferguson's "Legislating the Sublime," in *Studies in Eighteenth-Century British Art and Aesthetics*, ed. Ralph Cohen (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), pp. 128-47, which reaches rather different conclusions from mine.

8. *The Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley*, ed. Betty T. Bennett (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980, 1983), 1:378.

9. Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Vintage Books, 1961; *Discipline and Punish -- The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1977, 1979).

10. Mary Shelley described *Frankenstein* as a defense of Polyphemus. Replying to Leigh Hunt's remark that "Polyphemus . . . always appears to me a pathetic rather than a monstrous person, though his disappointed sympathies at last made him cruel," Mary Shelley commented, "I have written a book in defence of Polypheme -- have I not?" (*Letters of Mary Shelley*, ed. Betty T. Bennet[t], I:91, dated April 6, 1819). the allusion is to the one-eyed, uncouth, giant Cyclops Polyphemus, whose passionate love for the beautiful nymph Galatea is rejected; the story is recounted in Book 12 of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. The scorned Polyphemus, in jealousy and despair, murders Galatea's lover Acis. I owe this observation to Aija Ozolins, "Dreams and Doctrine: Dual Stands in Frankenstein," *Science-Fiction Studies* 6 (1975): 106.

11. Robert Kiely, *The Romantic Novel in England* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), p. 158. Kiely has been misled by the association of Victor Frankenstein with Percy Shelley into seeing the character of Frankenstein too positively, as a romantic "hero" whose "fault is more nature's than his." While Kiely acknowledges Frankenstein's egoism, he gives too much credit to Frankenstein's "superiority through suffering" and mistakenly identifies as a major theme in the novel the "idea that the genius, even in his failures, is unique, noble, and isolated from other men by divine right" (pp. 156, 158, 172).

12. On the relation of *Frankenstein* to *Caleb Williams*, see Katherine Richardson Powers, *The Influence of William Godwin on the Novels of Mary Shelley* (New York: Arno Press, 1980); Gay Clifford, "*Caleb Williams* and *Frankenstein*: First-Person Narration and Things as They Are," *Genre* 10 (1977): 601-17; and A. D. Harvey, "Frankenstein and Caleb Williams," *Keats-Shelley Journal* 29 (1980): 21-27. On Frankenstein and his creature as psychological doubles or alter-egos, see among others, Masao Miyoshi, *The Divided Self* (New York: New York University Press, 1969), pp. 79-89; Martin Tropp, *Mary Shelley's Monster* (Boston: Houghton, 1976); J. M. Hill, "Frankenstein and the Physiognomy of Desire," *American Imago* 32 (1975): 335-58; Harold Bloom, "Afterword" to *Frankenstein* (New York: New American Library, 1965), pp. 212-23; Paul A. Cantor, *Creator and Creature: Myth-making and English Romanticism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 115-24; and William Veeder, *Mary Shelley and Frankenstein -- The Fate of Androgyny* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), pp. 89-92, passim. Paul Sherwin both develops and criticizes such Freudian interpretations in "Frankenstein: Creation as Catastrophe," *PMLA* 96 (1981): 883-903.

13. Irving Massey, *The Gaping Pig -- Literature and Metamorphosis* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1976), p. 129.

14. On the gender division in Burke's aesthetic theory, see Isaac Kramnick, *The Rage of Edmund Burke -- Portrait of an Ambivalent Conservative* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), pp. 92-98.

15. *Mary Shelley's Journal*, ed. Frederick L. Jones, p. 53. I am indebted to Gary Harrison for bringing the importance of this passage to my attention.