MARY SHELLEY AS PROPHETESS
OF THE
HORROR OF MODERN-PROMETHEANISM: AN INTERPRETATION OF
FRANKENSTEIN

by

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August 3, 1977
My thesis attempts to discover the nature of the original spark of life which animated Frankenstein and his Monster, and thus perhaps to understand what keeps them alive. I found that though, in Frankenstein, Mary Shelley sets out to embody Godwinian radical arguments, her ambivalence permeates the novel. Though she is partially conscious of her inconsistencies, the dream-symbol which is the artistic prophecy of the novel, i.e., her creation of that horrifying image of "the pale student of the unhallowed arts" and his creation, "the hideous phantasm of a man," originates in her inarticulate state of mind which I have identified as conservative horror at the success of modern-Prometheanism (by which I mean modern man's attempt to become "divine," to make earth "heaven").

Chapter One uses Hazlitt's The Spirit of
the Age in order to set up the two poles of social tension which existed in the period 1790-1825, namely, the spirit of philosophical radicalism or "Modern Philosophy" and the spirit of conservatism or "Legitimacy". Mary Shelley's mother, Mary Wollstonecraft, her father, William Godwin, and her husband, Percy Shelley, were all committed defenders of the radical cause. In 1818, Mary Shelley consciously shared their viewpoint, but there is a strong under-current of conservatism in the novel which undermines Mary's sympathetic vindication of the rights of the wretched victim of social tyranny. Though the novel shows the social and domestic order to be unfit homes for either the physical or the intellectual misfit, both wretches, the Creature and Frankenstein, continually long to be part of the tranquil pattern of society and both condemn, as well as defend, their own anti-social behaviour.

Chapter Two explains why Mary subtitled *Frankenstein*: "the Modern Prometheus". Not only does Mary absorb the traditional associations we make with the Promethean archetype (from Greek,
Christian and Romantic thought), but she also makes her Prometheus "modern" by putting him into relationship with the Enlightenment image of Prometheus, the modern rational scientist, probably exemplified in her mind by the culture-hero Franklin. Moreover, I call Frankenstein the "abortive" modern-Prometheus because of the hesitancy Mary shows towards modern-Promethean ambitions and because of the fact that Mary attempts to put Frankenstein's efforts into relationship with a Godwinian belief in the gradual ascendancy of the community of men which Frankenstein in his haste and self-devotedness violates.

My third chapter presents the realization of Frankenstein's alchemical ambitions as a successful psychological experiment which discovers the internal "physical secrets" of his nature. At the same time, I see Mary Shelley as an artistic alchemist objectifying the patterns and findings of her own psychological explorations in Victor's act of creation and its after-math. The novel then is Mary's own "hideous progeny" patched together from the "bones" she collected from her biographical experiences and her cultural inheritances. Both Frankenstein and
Mary discovered their unconscious, irrational, conservative horror which made them recoil from the very success with which man could create and become divine. That her creations, Frankenstein and his Monster, took on mythological lives, indicates the extent to which she is the uncanny prophetess of conservative horror at the success of modern-Prometheanism.  

My fourth chapter, entitled "the Interior Fatality of Mary Shelley", briefly shows that once she is consciously articulating conservative attitudes in her writings, she is no longer able to write a living novel such as Frankenstein, in which liberal hopes and conservative fears of human advancement are allowed to be intertwined, as they are in reality, in vital relationship to each other.
Table of Contents

Chapter One:

*Frankenstein* as an Ambivalent Vindication of the Rights of Wretches  page 1

Chapter Two:

*Frankenstein: the abortive modern-Prometheus*  page 46

Chapter Three:

Mary Shelley as Artistic Alchemist  page 88

Chapter Four:

Mary Shelley's "Interior Fatality"  page 134

Notes for Chapter One  page 141
Notes for Chapter Two  page 146
Notes for Chapter Three  page 153
Notes for Chapter Four  page 160
Bibliography  page 161
Chapter One

**FRANKENSTEIN** **AS AN AMBIVALENT VINDICATION**

**OF THE RIGHTS OF WRETCHES**

Visions, you know, have always been my pasture; and so far from growing old enough to quarrel with their emptiness, I almost think there is no wisdom comparable to exchanging what is called the realities of life for dreams.  

Horace Walpole, 1766

When she was asked to write an introduction to the 1831 edition of Frankenstein explaining "how I, then a young girl, came to think of, and to dilate upon, so hideous an idea," Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin Shelley tells of the influence of being the daughter of "two persons of distinguished literary celebrity", and of having a husband who
was "from the first, very anxious that I should enrol myself on the page of fame."² Also she reports the conversations of that summer of 1816 at Byron's Villa Diodati in Switzerland from which the tale had its immediate origins. But the most important hint she gives is her claim that the embryonic scene, now chapter five of Frankenstein, emerged from a "waking dream":

I did not sleep, nor could I be said to think. My imagination, unbidden, possessed and guided me, gifting the successive images that arose in my mind with a vividness far beyond the usual bounds of reverie.

Mary emphasizes her own passivity during this dream-vision. She suspends her will and allows her dream to synthesize her contradictory feelings into the symbolic relationship between the "student of the unhallowed arts" and the "hideous phantasm of a man", between Frankenstein and his Creature. Later, when she expanded the transcript of her dream, she did not tamper with the original dream image (chapter three of this thesis develops this idea); moreover, as this chapter will emphasize, her articulation of the origins and development of the re-
relationship between Frankenstein and the Creature reveals even more clearly the ambivalent feelings Mary was able to reconcile symbolically in her waking-dream. It is in its very unevenness and ambiguity that Frankenstein expresses the contradictions of Mary's attitudes (and, as I shall claim, those of her contemporaries) towards the social order and towards the wretch or outcast. This chapter concludes that it is Frankenstein's essential Gothicness, its imperfections and irregularities, which gives the novel its vitality and beauty.

In her 1831 Introduction, Mary admits that she had already imbibed the raw materials which she used to expand the original dream-embryo of the novel (chapter five of the 1831 edition):

Invention, it must humbly be admitted, 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... Invention consists in the capacity for seizing on the capabilities of a subject, and in the power of moulding and fashioning ideas suggested to it.

The chaos from which she was creating is largely that of the collective mind of Western culture as
her wide-ranging reading lists of her journal suggest.\(^3\)

William Hazlitt's *The Spirit of the Age*, first published in 1825, attempted to understand the tensions of the age, roughly from the 1790's to 1825, by giving brief sketches of its leading spokesmen and categorizing them as either creative or destructive of "the spirit of the age". According to Hazlitt, "the spirit of the age" was expressed by "Modern Philosophy" (by which he means the philosophical radicalism or the Enlightenment hopes which had not yet died in the 1790's in England), but this spirit was everywhere being threatened by the return to "Legitimacy" (the spirit of monarchy) which Hazlitt associated with "lawless power and savage bigotry".\(^4\) In his chapter on William Godwin, Hazlitt laments how the "vaulted edifice of Reason" has decayed, probably "undermined by rats and vermins":

Now scarce a shadow of it remains; it is crumbled to dust, nor is it even talked of... Was it to this that Mr Southey's "Inscriptions" pointed? to this that Mr Coleridge's "Religious Musings" tended? was it for this, that Mr Godwin himself sat with arms folded, and 'like Cato, gave his little senate laws'? Or rather, like another Prospero, uttered
syllables that with their enchanted breath
were to change the world, and might almost
stop the stars in their courses?

Oh! and is all forgot? Is this sun
of intellect blotted from the sky? Or has it suffered total eclipse? Or is it we who
make the fancied gloom, by looking at it through the paltry, broken, stained frag-
ments of our own interests and prejudices? Were we fools then, or are we dishonest now? Or was the impulse of mind less likely to be true and sound when it arose from high thought and warm feeling, then afterwards when it was warped and debased by example, the vices and follies of the world? 5

In other chapters, Hazlitt identifies some of the "vermin" who were trying to put out "the spirit of the age". Walter Scott's "zeal to restore the spirit of loyalty, of passive obedience and non-
resistance" is attacked, though Scott is "(by common consent) ... the finest, the most humane and accomplished writer of his age". 6 Mr Malthus wrote the Essay on Population which Hazlitt "can-
ot but consider... as one of the poisonous in-
gredients thrown into the cauldron of Legitimacy 'to make it thick and slab'." 7 Even Coleridge "sounded a retreat" for the poets who could not stand the frowns both of king and people. They did not like to be shut out when places and pensions, when the critic's praises, and the laurel wreath
were about to be distributed..." According to Hazlitt, though Coleridge retreated from "the spirit of the age," he himself did not enter the walls of Legitimacy, instead "pitching his tent upon the barren waste without, [had]... no abiding place nor city of refuge!"6

Mary Shelley could not help but be influenced both by "the spirit of the age" for which both her parents and later her husband were leading spokesmen in England and by the spirit of Legitimacy and conservatism which dominated in England during her adolescence and attempted to wipe out "modern philosophy" or "philosophical radicalism" as it was also called. As her journal indicates, Mary was particularly familiar with the writings of her parents and with those by which Shelley was influenced.9 Mary may have written consciously articulating a Godwinian concern for victims of an oppressive social order whether they be physical or intellectual misfits. But because the novel has its origins in dream, it incorporates a contradictory-mindedness: the "creature and Frankenstein, though clearly victims, condemn themselves and repent their
violation of the legitimate social order, just as the whole generation of English people during Mary's upbringing recoiled in horror from their hopes of the 1790's. This chapter intends to show that Mary's ambivalence permeates the novel. In 1815, she wrote of herself: "I never quarrel with inconsistency." Over twenty years later, after her writing had begun to tamper and preach, and her ideas had become reactionary against the "Radicals", she still described herself as an ambivalent type:

In the first place, with regard to "the good cause"—the cause of the advancement of freedom and knowledge, of the rights of women, &c.—I am not a person of opinions... Some have a passion for reforming the world; others do not cling to particular opinions. That my parents and Shelley were of the former class, makes me respect it... I have not argumentative powers; I see things pretty clearly, but cannot demonstrate them. Besides, I feel the counter-arguments too strongly. I do not feel that I could say aught to support the cause efficiently. (my italics).

To put this another way: when Shelley wanted to create his vision regarding the struggle between the redeeming rebel and the evil tyrant, he was able to polarize the two into Prometheus who is "exempt from the taints of ambition, envy, revenge, and a desire
for personal aggrandizement"\textsuperscript{12} and Jupiter who is the
social status-quo in all its oppressiveness and,
worst of all, in its mind-deceiving order by which
"all best things are thus confused to ill."\textsuperscript{13} Mary
lets three narrators speak, and all of them image,
in various shades and degrees, her own mind which
has Shelley's two poles forever intermingled \textit{within}
itself. This chapter intends to show this mainly
by emphasizing how, though the vindication of the most
wronged "wretch", is set up as reasonable by Mary,
it is, at the same time, perpetually undercut even
by the Creature's own contradictory attitudes.
The word "wretch" is used mainly because it is the
one most frequently used by the \textit{Creature} for himself
and by Victor for himself after his "fall". "Wretch"
has three meanings which overlap and reinforce its
appropriateness:

1) one driven out of or away from his native
country; a banished person; an exile, an
outcast.
2) one who is sunk in deep distress, sorrow, mis-
fortune of poverty; a miserable, unhappy or
unfortunate person.
3) one who is of vile, opprobious or reprehensible
character; a contemptible creature.

We note, even in the development of the word, how
becoming exiled from community is related first to misery, but also is somehow judged morally vile.

***

In the 1818 Preface to Frankenstein, Shelley, pretending to be Mary, wisely warned that no inference was to be drawn from the novel "as prejudicing any philosophical doctrine of whatever kind..."; however, he then went on to claim that its chief concern was "the exhibition of the amiableness of domestic affection and the excellence of universal virtue."

In his "review" of Frankenstein, published with his posthumous papers, he thought "the pictures of domestic manners are of the most simple and attaching character: the father's is irresistible and deep."

And obviously, all three main narrators do constantly praise the virtues of those more settled than they are, and often long to be part of this comfortable bliss. But the balance needs redressing because even from Victor's guilt-ridden narration, though he repeatedly claims to believe in the same good as the father, there emerges
an undercurrent of questioning of the justice of
the father's order and that of virtuous Geneva that
cannot be ignored. Although Victor emphasizes
the "spirit of kindness and indulgence" with which
he was brought up, and that his parents "were not
the tyrants to rule our lot according to their
caprice, but the agents and creators of all the many
delights which we enjoyed" (F: II, 41), Victor
himself, learns early that some of his joys—in this
case reading Cornelius Agrippa—are rejected by
his father as a waste of time, as "sad trash";
therefore, he hides part of his activity.

Alphonse Frankenstein's one chance to narrate
his viewpoint, a letter, confirms Victor's fears of
his propensity to maintain a tranquil rational sur-
face no matter what pain or chaos brews beneath.
Little William has just been brutally murdered:

Come, Victor; not brooding thoughts of vengeance
against the assassin, but with the feelings
of peace and gentleness, that will heal, instead
of festering, the wounds of our minds (F: VII, 76).

As his secrets become more complex, Victor is ever
aware how far beyond his father's homey morality
his behaviour has gone. When innocent Justine is
about to be convicted, Alphonse consoles Elizabeth: "...dry your eyes. If she is, as you believe, innocent, rely on the justice of our laws and the activity with which I shall prevent the slightest shadow of partiality." (F: VII, 83). Justine, now one of the outcasts, is even bullied to confess in order to avoid excommunication; the community seems content to rest on her lie. Victor repeatedly does not dare confide in his "deep" father for fear of being named "insane". After the death of Clerval, the father prefers to think of Victor as ill from grief; when Victor tries to confess his guilt in the deaths; he answers:

"My dearest Victor, what infaturation is this? My dear son. I entreat you never to make such an assertion again." ... He instantly changed the subject of our conversation and endeavoured to alter the course of my thoughts. (F: XXII, 187).

That Victor was right to fear his father's reaction becomes evident after the father's death when Victor finally goes before a judge and asks help in destroying the monster:

But to a Genevan magistrate, whose mind was occupied by far other ideas than those of devotion and heroism, this elevation of mind had much the appearance of madness. He en--
deavoured to soothe me as a nurse does a child, and reverted to my tale as the effects of delirium.

"Man," I cried, "how ignorant art thou in thy pride of wisdom! Cease; you know not what it is you say." (F: XXIII, 201; my italics).

This last indictment certainly includes the truth of his father.

Thus, though Victor tells his tale to Walton in order to teach "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" (F: IV, 86), Mary constantly undermines her own didacticism. This is made clear by the following brief contrasting quote taken from Ann Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho*. Radcliffe chooses the omniscient point of view, and ends the novel with:

> O! useful may it be to have shewn, that, though the vicious can sometimes pour affliction upon the good, their power is transient and their punishment certain; and that innocence, though oppressed by injustice, shall, supported by patience, finally triumph over misfortune. 15

Not only is this moral law fully operative in the novel, but St. Aubert, the father of Emily, is its
voice. The villain, Montoni, is relentlessly wicked; Emily never falters through all her horrifying trials; and Vallancourt, her true love, who appears to have been indiscreet during much of the novel, never really was. The novel ends returning Emily and Vallancourt to the father's ideal of happiness which existed at the beginning:

After suffering under the oppression of the vicious and the disdain of the weak, they were, at length, restored to each other—to the beloved landscapes of their native country,—to the securest felicity of the life, that of aspiring to moral and labouring for intellectual improvement—to the pleasures of enlightened society, and to the exercise of the benevolence, which had always animated their hearts; while the bowers of La Vallee became, once more, the retreat of goodness, wisdom and domestic blessedness. 16

There is no such simple defence of domestic felicity in Frankenstein: the father's advice is too narrow; the lover, Victor, is guilty; the villain, the Creature, is as sinned against as sinning; and the one who returns to domestic tranquility at the end, Walton, does so with bitter reluctance. Moreover, sweet Elizabeth, the guardian of what she calls the "immutable laws" of "our placid home and
our contented hearts" (F: VI, 67), is actually brutally murdered. Furthermore, all five of these characters, though two only in brief letters, get a chance to narrate their viewpoint in what Swingle has termed "a series of interlocked dramatic monologues."¹⁷

From the narrative of Victor Frankenstein, his beloved Elizabeth emerges as that predictable female entity which is loveliest when devoted to her family. Here is one of many examples of his praise: "Never was she so enchanting as at this time [Caroline Frankenstein had just died] when she recalled the sunshine of her smiles and spent them upon us. She forgot even her own regret in her endeavour to make us forget." (F: III, 48). In a novel which gives the feelings of three male narrators, Elizabeth articulates her attitudes in only two brief letters. In both cases, though Victor has abandoned her,—the first time for six years of study in Ingolstadt and the second, for two years of travel—her first concern is his well-being, since he also fell gravely ill during both separations from his home. In the first letter, she shows no direct
sign of anxiety about her own state, but does write herself "into better spirits" by recounting the gossip about the "good people of Geneva", all of which concerns which pretty (or ugly) woman married which prosperous (or unfortunate) man. She even mentions that sweet little William already prefers one five year old as his "wife" (F: VI, 69-70).

In the second letter, she confronts the issue. She is by now around twenty-five; it seems she has been too cowardly" to bring up this matter before; yet she has had all her hopes in this "favorite plan" of his parents. With characteristic "disinterested affection", as she calls it, she says she will be tranquil even if he does not marry her so long as he is happy (F: XXII, 188-89).

Mary herself probably admired Elizabeth's rational control of her feelings. Andre Maurois, one of Shelley's biographers, certainly disliked Mary's own "Godwinesque lack of any..." emotions. 18 And if we doubt that her father actually encouraged her to repress her feelings, we need only look to one of his letters to her, written when she was grief-stricken in 1819 after the death of her two-
year-old son, William. (She had already lost her
two others, Clara and the un-named infant):

You must, however, allow me the privilege of
a father, and a philosopher, in expostulating
with you on this depression. I cannot but
consider it as lowering your character in
a memorable degree, and putting you quite
among the commonality and mob of your sex,
when I had thought I saw in you symptoms
entitling you to be ranked among those noble
spirits that do honour to our nature. What
a falling off is here! How bitterly is so
inglorious a change to be deplored... (my
italics). 19

In his Enquiry concerning Political Justice, Godwin
similarly emphasizes the virtue of "disinterested
benevolence". 20

Only the Justine incident depicts Elizabeth
in any moral struggle to maintain equanimity.
Swingle points out that though Elizabeth is more
aware than Clerval of "the unsettling question...
of whether human thoughts conform to the nature of
things", and though, when Justine is executed, it
occurs to her that "falsehood can look so like the
truth", Elizabeth draws back from the abyss, from
facing Truth, to take comfort in the "shared" truth:
"I feel she was innocent; you are of the same opinion,
and that confirms me." 21 In fact, she immediately
rousing herself out of these painful questions because she sees Victor suffer as a result of her doubts, and devotes herself again to rendering him happy, thus renewing her role as conserver of the "immutable laws" of "our placid home and our contended hearts".

Yet, in both the 1818 and 1831 editions, Elizabeth herself begins as an orphan who is redeemed into society and is entirely vulnerable, dependent on the Frankensteins for her happiness. In 1818, she is rescued from the fate particularly wretched to the author, that of being brought up by a stepmother. In 1831, she is "an orphan and a beggar," but not really one of the wretches, since she is such a beauty "of a distinct species, a being heaven-sent and bearing a celestial stamp in all her features", and though in a "rude abode" among "dark-eyed hardy little vagrants", she is actually the daughter of a Viennese nobleman (F: I, 38). The same pattern of the socially-redeemed female occurs in Caroline, the mother, who was found by Alphonse Frankenstein "an orphan and a beggar" (again beautiful) as she knelt by her father's coffin "weeping bitterly" (F: I, 36). Alphonse married her into prosperity,
and even had the "historical" moment of their meeting made into a painting which hangs over the mantel-piece in the library (F: VII, 80). Caroline, then one of the happy, became "the guardian angel of the afflicted" often entering the cottages of the poor (F: I, 32), and later educated Justine into the family (F: VI, 68). That Justine was worthy of her choice shows in Justine's reaction to her unjust sentence to die. Here she consoles Elizabeth: "Learn from me, dear lady, to submit in patience to the will of heaven." (F: VIII, 90).

Agatha and Safie are also ever-forgiving, socially-vulnerable women.

As flat as she may be to us, Elizabeth is to Victor his moral half (or social half, since Victor never implies any good beyond the social). As a child, she is given as "a pretty present" to him and he claims her as his creature (F: I, 39). Later, "she was the living spirit of love to soften and attract: I might become sullen in my study, rough through the ardour of my nature, but that she was there to subdue me to a semblance of her own gentleness." (F: II, 42). But the limitations
of her love are apparent when Victor, the curious mind, attempts to go beyond the pale. When he becomes interested in alchemy, he has to withdraw from her. (In the 1818 edition, he confides in her, but she takes no interest.) Throughout the novel, he expresses his remorse and self-hatred in terms of his anti-social withdrawal from the ones he should have loved, especially Elizabeth; as Scheler has said, the failure to love is guilt.

In her childhood, Mary experienced three life alternatives: "the well-ordered, cheerful family life of the Baxters" of Scotland where Mary spent her early teens; the "Bohemianism" of Godwin's community of Skinner Street; and her voluntary retreat from both of these into her own waking-dreams. In Scotland, she escaped into the "eyry (sic) of freedom" in solitary walks on the dreary shores near Dundee (see her 1831 Introduction to Frankenstein); back in London, her refuge from other people was her mother's grave in St. Pancras cemetery. The Godwin "family" was somewhat irregular from its outset; Godwin brought into his second marriage two girls: one Fanny, the daughter of Wollstonecraft and her lover, Gilbert Imlay and the other, Mary,
his own daughter by Wollstonecraft who died just after the birth. Mary Jane Clairmont, who passed herself off as a widow, brought two children, Charles and Jane. The fifth child, William, was the only child in the family who had two parents living in the house. Mary's dislike for her step-mother is well-known, and perhaps the disagreeable rivalry between the two prompted Godwin to send his young Mary away to live with the stable Baxter family for a time. Rieger speculates that nostalgia for the Baxter's "bourgeois tranquility" is reflected in the portrayal of the Frankenstein and Clerval families. Mary's own family, in spite of Godwin's and Mary Jane's efforts, was not wholly respectable, and Godwin himself was subject to all kinds of unfair attacks; for example, in 1801, he was accused publicly of favouring infanticide:

There is a settled and systematical plan in certain persons to render me an object of horror and aversion to my fellow-men. 27

Hazlitt best describes Godwin's fall to infamy and
then oblivion:

The Spirit of the Age was never more fully shown than in its treatment of this writer—its love of paradox and change, its dastard submission to prejudice and to the fashion of the day. Five-and-twenty years ago he was in the very zenith of a sultry and unwholesome popularity; he blazed as a sun in the firmament of reputation; no one was more talked of, more looked up to, more sought after, and wherever liberty, truth, justice was the theme, his name was not far off. Now he was sunk below the horizon, and enjoys the serene twilight of a doubtful immortality.

Mr. Godwin, during his lifetime, has secured to himself the triumphant mortification of an extreme notoriety and a sort of posthumous fame... Fatal reverse! Is truth so variable? ... Is it at a burning heat in 1793, and below zero in 1814? 28

After Godwin published her Memoirs (revealing the details of her private life), the name of Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley's mother, became synonymous with philosophical and moral wantonness. 29

When she was not yet seventeen years of age, Mary chose to live according to the spirit of Wollstonecraft and the philosophy of Godwin by eloping with an atheist, who also happened to be a married man, Shelley. (They took Clare Clairmont with them.) Mary knew Shelley was seduced by the very idea of her: the offspring of such "glorious
They had their first love-meetings on the grave of Wollstonecraft. Mary willingly became a social outcast; however, she was unprepared for rejection by her family and friends who supposedly shared her ideas. Godwin refused to have anything to do with her for her violation of social respectability. Mary protected herself somewhat by blaming her step-mother:

I detest Mrs Godwin; she plagues my father out of his life; and then—well no matter—Why will not Godwin follow the obvious bent of his affections & be reconciled to us—no his prejudices, the world and she—do you not hate her my love—

In spite of his caution, rumour still had it that Godwin had sold his two daughters. Fanny, Mary's half-sister, was particularly devoted to her "father", and, in obedience to Godwin's wishes, refused to communicate with her rebel sister. Mary termed her behaviour "slavish". Her best friend, Isabel Baxter, who supposedly "adored... the shade of my mother" broke off her friendship with Mary on the insistence of her fiancé. "Ah! Isabel; I did not think you would act thus," Mary wrote. Mary's disappointment at being spurned is expressed directly
only in a few muted comments: ("Oh! philosophy!" against Godwin's narrow behaviour) as she is comforted by her community with Shelley and with the writings of her mother and father (as her reading list for 1814 clearly shows.) She is able at this time to sublimate her confused reactions into the fabric of Frankenstein.

When she died just after giving birth to Mary Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft was working on a novel which Godwin later put together and published as Maria or the Wrongs of Woman. What is uncanny about one long section of the fragment is that a mother, Maria, addresses it to her daughter because she fears she will die before she is able to love and educate her infant:

Addressing these memoirs to you, my child, uncertain whether I shall ever have and opportunity of instructing you, which only a mother—schooled in misery, could make... Death may snatch me from you, before you can weigh my advice, or enter into my reasoning... 37

Maria recounts the injustices of her life (the outline of which is highly suggestive of Wollstonecraft's own life), in order to prepare her daughter for the ills she must encounter in a world which is
a "vast prison" for women who are born slaves. 38

Though Wollstonecraft could not have foreseen that she would be snatched away from her daughters, Mary Shelley must have felt the directness of Maria's addresses to the daughter she would never see, bequeathing the struggle against tyranny to her. One character especially seems to have reached her.

Amidst a whole range of female "outlaws of the world", 39 Jemima is the ultimate in outcasts: bastard, orphan, pauper, prostitute, criminal, "hunted from hole to hole, as if she had been a beast of prey or inflicted with a moral plague." 40 When Jemima is given the chance to narrate her own story, the vital justice of her rage against the exclusiveness of society becomes evident:

The chicken has a wing to shelter under; but I had no bosom to nestle in, no kindred warmth to foster me. Left in dirt, to cry with cold and hunger till I was weary, and sleep without ever being prepared by exercise, or lulled by kindness to rest; could I be expected to become any thing but a weak and rickety babe? Still in spite of neglect, I continued to exist, to learn to curse existence, (her countenance grew ferocious as she spoke) and the treatment that rendered me miserable, seemed to sharpen my wits... No wonder then, treated like a creature of another species, that I began to envy and at length to hate... I was an egg dropped on the sand; a pauper by nature,
hunted from family to family, who belonged to no one—and nobody cared for me. I was despised from my birth, and denied the chance of obtaining a footing for myself in society. Yes; I had not even the chance of being considered as a fellow creature—

We look in vain for this tone of fierce outrage in the females of Frankenstein; there is not a trace of it in the "gentleness, docility and spaniel-like affection" of Elizabeth or in the wronged Justine. But in the Creature, we find a worthy descendant of Jemima, the passionate voice of rage protesting his exclusion from society and his loneliness. Like Jemima, he is by nature benevolent but is forced to his criminality by injustice. Mary Shelley's decision to make the Creature male does not violate the spirit of Wollstonecraft since it is clear from the "dedication" to Talleyrand in Vindication of the Rights of Woman that her arguments for woman's rights and duties are for all humans, and are part of her commitment to a war against all forms of social tyranny. But although, as I shall demonstrate, the Creature speaks in the spirit of Wollstonecraft, it needs then to be shown that everywhere this spirit is qualified by the caution
and doubts of Mary Shelley's own attitudes and temperament.

In fact, Mary's creature also resembles Godwin's fictional creation, Caleb Williams. As Brailford has pointed out, Mary embodies in her novel a typical Godwinian situation which sets up tension between a victim and social tyranny:

Godwin's imagination was haunted by a persistent nightmare, in which a lonely individual finds arrayed against him all the prejudices of society, all forms of convention, all the forces of law... It was a hereditary nightmare, and with less pedestrian imagination, his daughter, Mary Shelley, used the same theme of a remorseless pursuit in *Frankenstein*. 44

But like Godwin, Mary also understands that kind of painful division we find in Caleb's mind when he is faced with the choice between forcing his old friend Collins to consider the truth that his virtuous master, Falkland, is a murderer, and thereby vindicating his own honour at least in the mind of one man, or letting the old man keep his happy illusions. Collins argues against his demand for a hearing:

"What justice? The justice of proclaiming your innocence?... But I do not believe I shall"
find you innocent. If you even succeed in perplexing my understanding, you will not succeed in enlightening it. Such is the state of mankind, that innocence, when involved in circumstances of suspicion, can scarcely ever make out a demonstration of its purity; and guilt can often make us feel an insurmountable reluctance to the pronouncing it guilt. Meanwhile, for the purchase of this uncertainty, I must sacrifice all the remaining comforts of my life... 45

Caleb decides that it would be a vice to involve Collins in his own sufferings, but he goes on to decide to entrust the papers on which he has written the tale of his innocence to old Collins. It is while Caleb is putting all his hopes and efforts into preserving his vindication of his innocence, that he realizes that Falkland is probably trying to do the same thing by hiding his own written vindication of his murder of Tyrrel in the trunk Caleb had tried to break into:

I once thought it contained some murderous instrument or relic connected with the fate of the unhappy Tyrrel. I am now persuaded that the secret it encloses, is a faithful narrative of that and its concomitant transactions, written by Mr. Falkland, and reserved in case of the worst, that, if by any unforeseen event his guilt should come to be fully disclosed, it might contribute to redeem the wreck of his reputation. 46

In this line of reflection, Caleb is foreboding his
own reversal of attitude, of the Postscript of the novel, in which he is able to identify with Falkland as murderer and victim, and realize how, in both their cases, laudable intentions turned into destructive vindictiveness. (For further discussion of the ambivalence shown in Caleb Williams, see chapter two of this thesis).

The Creature is also at once the victim and destroyer of the social order (as is Frankenstein). On a simple level, the Creature can be seen as Victor's anti-social, irrational side, while Elizabeth is Victor's social, rational side. Indeed, Elizabeth and the Creature are given interlocking fates. She first came to the family as Victor's "pretty present" and he claimed her as "mine" (F: I, 39); the Creature is Victor's "species" (F: IV, 57). They are rivals for his attention: when Victor becomes obsessed with one, he abandons the other. She reacts with reasonable passivity; the Creature with murderous revenge. Victor loves Elizabeth because she is the part of himself he has learned to handle: he writes confidently before their wedding when he will tell all his secrets: "But until then, I
conjure you, do not mention or allude to it...

I know you will comply (F: XXII, 191). The Creature is "monster," "fiend," "devil" to Victor because he is neither predictable nor controllable. Also, it is only at the moment of her murder that the Creature commits himself totally to evil:

Then I was not miserable. I had cast off all feeling, subdued all anguish, to riot in the excess of my despair. Evil thenceforth became my good.

However, there is a weakness in seeing him merely as Elizabeth's counter-balance or Victor's "deviant self" because throughout the novel he struggles to be benevolent and only gives in to maleficent urges to revenge wrongs done to him. Though, on one hand, he argues vehemently for the justice of his "crimes"; on the other hand, he condemns himself, showing the extent to which he acquired his moral perceptions, as well as his ability to speak and read, from eavesdropping on the DeLacey family. Before he found the three books he read, "the cottage of my protectors had been the only school in which I had studied human nature." The Sorrows of Werther reinforced his experience of the domestic gentleness of the cottagers; Plutarch's Lives made him abhor vice in the arena.
of public affairs; only in *Paradise Lost* did he find
that though he tried to identify with Adam, Satan
was "the fitter emblem of my condition" (F: XV,
130-2).

Though his vindication and self-prosecution
cannot be untangled from each other in the novel,
I shall separate out the case for his defence.
Firstly, his viewpoint casts even further doubt
upon the "innocence" of his victims. Indeed, he
claims to be the victim. They are all self-satis-
fied partakers in a social system which thrives--
or better, which stagnates--on excluding all wretches.
The Creature is so grotesque, that, as Shelley
implies, his rejection by such a society is a
necessity:

He was an abortion and an anomaly; and though
his mind was such as its first impressions
framed it, affectionate and full of moral
sensibility, yet the circumstances of his
existence are so monstrous and uncommon,
that, when the consequences of them became
developed in action, his original goodness
was gradually turned into inextinguishable
misanthropy and revenge. 48

The other wretches: the poor, the ugly, the criminal,
the foreigner, the unmotherly woman (Justine’s mother),
even the intellectual wretch, are all redeemable, if they can conform. But, as the Creature recognizes, "the human senses are insurmountable barriers to our union." (F: XVII, 147). Yet his cries to be loved in spite of his absolute wretchedness, act as a moral demand not only that Victor acknowledge his creation but that social community be fluid and dynamic, that it accommodate itself perpetually to the aberrations outside its "love", that it strive to be in relationship to all the living and not content itself with sterile and selective ideas of community. To include the Monster, in principle, demands an expansiveness of love. Shelley tried to define such a love in his essay "On Love":

[Love]... is that powerful attraction toward all we conceive, or fear, or hope beyond ourselves, when we find within our own thoughts the chasm of an insufficient void, and seek to awaken in all things that are, a community with what we experience within ourselves... [Love]... is the bond and the sanction which connects not only man with man, but with everything which exists. 49

Whenever the Creature reaches out to man, he is met with flight or violent attack (except by "blind" DeLacey). Victor's first description of
him suggests that "new-born" though he was, he tried to make friends:

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 stretched out, seemingly to detain me, but I escaped, and rushed down the stairs. (F: V, 61).

Here Victor is no longer able to repress the horror he had fought to overcome while creating the Creature; the social side of his psyche asserts itself and he flees the responsibility of his creativeness.

The first fellow the Creature meets, a shepherd, runs off leaving a breakfast, but soon a whole village drives him out with stones and missiles. Despite this, he does not decide to get revenge but instead sets about trying to make himself more tolerable:

I formed in my imagination a thousand pictures of presenting myself to them [the cottagers], and their reception of me. I imagined that they would be disgusted, until, by my gentle demeanor and conciliating words, I should first win their favour, and afterwards their love. These thoughts exhilarated me, and held me to apply with fresh ardour to the acquiring of the art of language... (F: XII, 117).
Even after his hopes are dashed when his Delacey "protectors" repel him—Agatha fainting in horror and Felix beating him with a stick—, and he has burned down his "paradise" cottage, and the rustic has wounded him though he saved a little girl, the Creature still approaches baby William with hope:

As I gazed on him, an idea seized me, that this little creature was unprejudiced, and had lived too short a time to have imbibed a horror of deformity. If, therefore, I could seize him, and educate him as my companion and friend, I should not be so desolate in this peopled earth... (F: XVI, 144).

Unfortunately, William has already been taught to spurn the ugly—perhaps by fairy tale indoctrination by his surrogate mother, Elizabeth—as he curses the Creature as "ogre"; perhaps it is not so odd that Elizabeth claims "I have murdered my darling child!" (F: VII, 75). The child pathetically invokes the social prestige of his father to frighten the Creature and thus is already a party to the society's intolerance.

Again, with ruthless logic drawn from his experiences, the Creature connects Agatha, Caroline and Justine (and later, Elizabeth) as beauties who would abhor him and he condemns them for their
cruelty. Here he plants the proof of Justine's "guilt" on the sleeping woman:

And then I bent over her, and whispered, 'Awake, fairest, thy lover is near-- he who would give his life to obtain one look of affection from thine eyes: my beloved, awake!'

The sleeper stirred; a thrill of terror ran through me. Should she indeed awake, and see me, and curse me, and denounce the murderer? Thus would she assuredly act, if her darkened eyes opened and she beheld me. The thought was madness; it stirred the fiend within me--not I, but she shall suffer: the murder I have committed because I am forever robbed of all that she could give me, she shall atone. The crime had a source in her: be hers the punishment! (F: XVI, 145-6).

Elizabeth reflects only once on the injustices of the community her "love" supports, and then only when Justine's execution directly causes her pain:

Before, I looked upon the accounts of vice and injustice, that I read in books or heard from others, as tales of ancient days, or imaginary evils; at least they were remote, and more familiar to reason than to the imagination; but now misery has come home, and men appear to me as monsters thirsting for each other's blood. (F: IX, 95).

"In Clerval," Victor notes, "I saw the image of my former self; he was inquisitive," but Clerval is not developed in this direction and seems a mas-
culine Elizabeth in that his main role in the plot is nursing Victor back to composed normality. There is little reason to exempt him from the Creature's wrath. The complexity of Victor's guilt, the next chapter will explore, but he shares the communal culpability on its basic level.

What does Victor have against his Creature? He showed the same prejudice against Mr. Krempe, who though brilliant in natural sciences, "was a little squat man, with a gruff voice and a repulsive countenance; therefore, did not prepossess me in favour of his pursuits." (F: III, 50). He overcame Krempe's "repulsive physiognomy and manners", but even when both his sense of reason and mercy feel the justice of the Creature's plea for a companion—"You could deny it only in the wantonness of power and cruelty"—he is barely able to overcome his repugnance (and then only for a short while):

His words had a strange effect upon me. I compassioned him, and sometimes felt a wish to console him; but when I looked upon him, when I saw the filthy mass that moved and talked, my heart sickened, and my feelings were altered to those of horror and hatred. I tried to stifle these sensations... (F: XVII, 149).
Moreover, the Creature confronts Victor with his own murderous intentions: "You purpose to kill me. How dare you sport thus with life..." (F: X, 101), and again he reasons infallibly:

You would not call it murder if you could precipitate me into one of those ice-ripts and destroy my frame; the work of your own hands. Shall I respect man when he contemns me? (F: XVII, 147).

If the Creature's logic were pure, Mary's thematic intent in presenting his case could be as single-minded as that of Shelley in the **Assassins**. In that prose fragment, written in 1814, "an unostentatious community" of early Christians, "attached from principle to peace, despising and hating the pleasures and the customs of the degenerate mass of mankind" and especially the tyranny of insolent Rome, withdraws and initiates a new society in the valley of Bethzatanai:

Thus securely excluded from an abhorred world, all thought of its judgements was cancelled by the rapidity of their fervid imaginations. They ceased to acknowledge; or deigned not to avert to, the distinctions with which the majority of base and vulgar minds control the longings and struggles of the soul towards its place of rest. A new and sacred fire was kindled in their hearts and sparkled in their
eyes... They were already inhabitants of paradise. 52

Bethzatanai followed the spirit of its founder: unifying "the devoutest submission to the law of Christ" with an "intrepid spirit of inquiry", in a harmony with Nature and in communal sharing with each other. Needless to say, the Assassin, unpolluted by the monstrous wickedness of civilization, would, against an outside society,

... wage unremitting hostility from principle. He would find himself compelled to adopt means which they would abhor, for the sake of an object which they could not conceive that he should propose to himself. Secure and self-enshrined in the magnificence and pre-eminence of his conceptions, spotless as the light of heaven, he would be victim among the men of calumny and persecution. Incapable of distinguishing his motives, they would rank him among the vilest and most atrocious criminals. Great, beyond all comparison with them, they would despise him on the presumption of their ignorance... 53

For Shelley, violence against tyranny is justified from the uncompromising viewpoint of a more loving order—or better—disorder. Shelley is able to imagine the Assassin, a man who is not tainted by the customs of human civilization, but the Creature is given no "self-enshrined" confidence from
a vision of Bethzatanai. His paradise was the DeLacey cottage, and his moral reflections on his own defence of his crimes usually end as judgements against himself. He argues to Walton at the end of the novel that he is the victim driven to his crimes by the "good":

Was there no injustice in this? Am I to be thought the only criminal when all human kind sinned against me? Why do you not hate Felix who drove his friend from his door with contumely? Why do you not execrate the rustic who sought to destroy the saviour of his child? Nay, these are virtuous and immaculate beings! I, the miserable and the abandoned, am an abortion, to be spurned at, and kicked and trampled on. Even now my blood boils at the recollection of this injustice.

Then before Walton can respond, he attacks himself:

But it is true that I am a wretch. I have murdered the lovely and helpless; I have strangled the innocent as they slept, and grasped to death his throat who never injured me... You hate me; but your abhorrence cannot equal that with which I regard myself. (F: XXIV, 222).

He has learned the value system of the cottagers well. For instance, though his features are grotesque, he is apparently more agile and strong than humans are. He even brags that he is superior
because "I do not destroy the lamb and the kid to glut my appetite; acorns and berries afford me sufficient nourishment." (F: XVII, 148). He could behold himself as beautiful, but instead, he comes to see himself as deformed by comparison to his "protectors":

I had admired the perfect forms of my cottagers—their grace, beauty, and delicate complexions: but how was I terrified when I viewed myself in a transparent pool! At first I started back, unable to believe that it was I indeed 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. (F: XII, 116).

Nor can he avoid reaching out. Shelley wrote that:

... in solitude, or that deserted state when we are surrounded by human beings and yet they sympathize not with us, we love the flowers, the grass, the waters and the sky. 55

The Creature loves the first object he distinguishes, the moon. But Mary makes it clear that he can only really learn in association with humans. He cannot figure out how to relight fire, and, more poignantly, he longs for language:
Sometimes I tried to imitate the songs of
the birds, but was unable. Sometimes I wished
to express my sensations in my own mode, but
the uncouth and unarticulate sounds which broke
from me frightened me into silence again. (F:
XI, 106).

Part of Mary's success in creating the Creature
is in the maintaining of paradoxical attitudes
within the Creature. Compare the Creature to the
single-minded Bethlam Gabor of Godwin's St. Leon.
Gabor finds a despised fellow-wretch in St. Leon,
a Victor-like character who is guilt-ridden because
he has betrayed Margarite and domestic propriety
by receiving the philosopher's stone, but St. Leon
is trying to get back into the community. Gabor
rages against his inconsistencies:

Instead of, like me, seeking occasions of
glorious mischief and vengeance, you took upon
yourself to be the benefactor and parent
of mankind. What vocation had you to the
task? With the spirit of a slave who, the
more he is beaten, becomes the more servile
and submissive, you remunerated injuries
with benefits... chicken-hearted wretch!
poor soulless poltroon!... I hate the man
in whom kindness produces no responsive
affection, and injustice no swell, no glow
of resentment. I hated you the more, because,
having suffered what I had suffered, your
feelings and conduct on the occasion have
been the reverse of mine. 56

The Creature, though repeatedly rejected, always
seeks a companion even in his most hateful moments. He echoes the totally counter-social: "Evil thenceforth became my good" of Milton's Satan only when he kills Elizabeth; but, in a sense, in this act, he ensuring that Victor will be his companion in misery until death. (Note how he leaves marks on trees and a dead hare for food for his pursuer.)

The emotional undercurrent of the Creature's demands is always that the wretch must be treated as an equal: in South America, "the sun will shine on us as on man, and will ripen our food." (F: XVII, 148). What really comes through is his right to life, his right to joys of relationship with the rest of living beings. He lastly laments: "I shall no longer see the sun or stars or feel the winds play on my cheeks." Levine claims that all the Creature ever really wanted was for Victor to love him and care for him as Alphonse does for his son, "what each nineteenth century fictional orphan wants--new parents, someone to love and rely on, justice, a place in which to define himself and be happy." But the novel forces us to face that neither Victor nor the Creature can find a home in
such a limited social order. They are both homeless wretches, one by his physical and the other by his intellectual deformity. Georg Lukács has written that "crime and madness are objectivations of transcendental homelessness—the homelessness of an action in the human order of social relations." 58 Socially, the Creature is a "criminal"; Victor is "mad". Neither can fit in the human home as it is, but while the Creature must face the agony of this throughout, Victor is nearly always duplicitous, pretending that he fits in even to the extent of letting Justine die to protect himself from the charge of madness. This caution is justified perhaps in the case of the magistrate or his father, but there are others living on the fringes of society who might vouch for the reality of his claims; for instance, his teacher, Waldeman, or the English scientist who has some knowledge of his subject—the Arctic explorer Walton, after all, does not judge him mad. By the end, he has retreated so far from defending his attempt to go beyond what is, that he becomes the hateful avenger for the unfit home and imagines himself to be involved in a heavenly task in seeking to destroy a wretch. Yet his last words indicate
that he is still vacillating: "another may succeed."

Though Victor becomes cowardly, Mary Shelley is still essentially interested in the plight of the intellectual wretch; if this were not so, the Creature's demands would be the Christian one—that we love the lepers. The Creature's plea works best when seen as amplifying Victor's plight, as demonstrating how the social order breaks down the potential for creativity in mankind. It is for this reason that if Frankenstein urges anything, it is for a kind of Gothic spirit of social structure. In his essay, "The Nature of the Gothic", John Ruskin tries to characterize the spirit of Gothicness in contrast to that of Classicism. He ends up praising the irregularities of the Gothic style because they are the expression of human freedom, because "imperfection is in some sort essential to all that we know of life. It is the sign of life in a mortal body, that is to say, of a state of progress and change. Nothing that lives is, or can be, rigidly perfect..." If a society comes to see itself as a blissful, "good" community and its members try to exclude or destroy what is outside and therefore
threatening to its social patterns, that society becomes slavish and moribund. Every possibility of regenerating life comes from outside, from the "imperfect" ones, not from tranquillity or certainty but from what Ruskin describes as "the strange disquietude":

that restlessness of the dreaming mind, that wanders hither and thither among the niches, and flickers around the pinnacles, and frets and fades in labyrinthine knots and shadows along wall and roof, and yet is not satisfied, nor shall be satisfied. 60

The only energy in the novel is generated from gargoyles of human thought: from Victor (and Mary) going beyond the pale into "wretchedness", and not from the predictable patterns, Elizabeth's "immutable laws" of home and lake. But the internal ambivalence is maintained right till the end because, though the Creature knows that he is superior even to Victor by virtue of his agony, in remorse he plans to sacrifice himself by burning so that his remains "afford no light to any curious and unhallowed wretch who would create such another as I have been."

In his preface to "Prometheus Unbound", Shelley
wrote: "I was averse from a catastrophe so feeble as that of reconciling the Champion with the Oppressor of mankind." But Frankenstein demands that we find a dynamics of reconciliation because the champion and the oppressor are not only external but are battling from within.
Chapter Two

FRANKENSTEIN: THE ABORTIVE MODERN-PROMETHEUS

A symbol... always partakes of the reality which it renders intelligible; and while it enunciates the whole, abides itself as a living part in that unity, of which it is representative.


When Mary Shelley subtitled Frankenstein "the Modern Prometheus", she made it clear that she intended her novel to enter into the historical conversation which has used the symbol of Prometheus to articulate its feelings and opinions. I have called this chapter "Frankenstein: the abortive modern-Prometheus" in order to underline the fact
that Mary Shelley doubted whether the time had come for the triumph of "modern-Prometheanism". The Promethean symbol had acquired "modern" possibilities of meaning in the hopes of Enlightenment thought for the perfectibility of man; and to this general faith, Mary added the Godwinian insistence that the route to improvement of the human condition was a slow process. Frankenstein is, in the novel and in our twentieth-century mythology, the symbol for a failed modern-Prometheus, for the willful scientist, a would-be benefactor of the species, who uses his technical skills to create something which neither he nor human society is prepared to control or live with, and which recoils destructively back on us.¹

When she chose the Promethean archetypal situation, she inherited the moral ambiguity spawned by the variety of its ectypal progeny.² Much of the unevenness of Frankenstein is due to the contradictory elements which have become associated with the Promethean symbol through the history of Western thought, and which Mary Shelley in keeping with her own ambiguous feelings did not prune out.

Hesiod, in the Theogony, tells how Prometheus,
though one of the gods, sides with mortals and tricks Zeus, the ruler of the universe, into selecting the fat and bones of the animal sacrifice, thus leaving the flesh for mankind. In his *Prometheus: Archetypal Image of Human Existence*, Karl Kerényi illustrates the close relationship between the myth and what actually happens in the religious rituals of sacrifice to the gods. He also further comments that the *Theogony*:

... presupposes the polarity of the Greek world view, here mankind, there the gods. It is accepted and stated, but like two pristine mythological beings who come together and engage in a contest, not for any reason known to human psychology but because they are as they are and cannot be otherwise.3

As this paper will go on to illustrate, it is the eternality of this archetypal Prometheus-Zeus relationship, i.e., of this primordial mental image inherited by the species, that Mary Shelley is gropping to redefine when she places her ectypal Prometheus in a process of possible human ascendancy.

For Hesiod, *Prometheus is culpable; he is a devious thief who stole fire from the heavens in a muddled attempt to better man's lot. One Titan*
brother, Menoitics, is rightfully struck by a thunderbolt for his exceeding pride and another brother, Atlas, is made to uphold the heavens by a wise Zeus.\textsuperscript{4}

Aeschylus retains the polarity between Zeus and Prometheus in \textit{Prometheus Bound},\textsuperscript{5} but his drama demands their synthesis. Max Scheler writes that: "the great art of the tragedian is to set each value of the conflicting elements in its fullest light, to develop completely the intrinsic rights of each party."\textsuperscript{6} Accordingly, although Zeus is a cruel tyrant whose justice is a "thing he keeps by his own standard,"\textsuperscript{7} he is new to his throne and must learn; moreover, Prometheus deserves his punishment as he "sinned against the immortals, giving honour to the creatures of a day"\textsuperscript{8} by stealing heaven's fire; he "gave honour to mortals beyond what was just."\textsuperscript{9} On the other hand, Prometheus is the benefactor of both Zeus and man. He initiated the human struggle towards knowledge: "I found them witless and gave them the use of their wits and made them masters of their minds."\textsuperscript{10} He "discovered to them" creative and technological skills: architecture, the calendar, mathematics, language, agri-
culture. "One brief word will tell the whole story: all arts that mortals have come from Prometheus." Without the Promethean spirit which gave mankind "blind hopes" and the ability to struggle beyond our place in Zeus’s order, mankind would be "swarming ants in holes in the ground, in the sunless caves of the earth." Though at times in the drama, Prometheus exults in his foreknowledge that Zeus is powerless against his fated fall:

Nothing shall all of this avail against a fall intolerable, a dishonoured end.

Prometheus still wants to compromise if Zeus frees him:

When he is broken in the way I know, and though his temper now is oaken hard it shall be softened: hastily he’ll come to meet my haste, to join in amity and union with me--one day he shall come.

For Aeschylus, the resolution must come in a synthesis of the two parties which upholds the rights of each; the process for both sides is through suffering to justice. Accordingly, in Prometheus Delivered, that third play of Aeschylus’s trilogy on Prometheus,
what Shelley called a "catastrophe", i.e., reconciliation between the tyrant and the rebel, takes place. Shelley might also apply the word "catastrophe" to his wife's Frankenstein because not only does she develop the rights and faults of both parties, i.e., of the social order, Geneva and Frankenstein's family (Zeus) and of the creative rebel, Frankenstein (Prometheus), but she insists that the two parties must be reconciled, as I show in the last chapter, by creating Frankenstein's own psychological make-up to include both poles: Prometheus and Zeus. (This ambivalence reflects Mary's own state of mind and that of her age, and is projected as well into the moral wrestlings of the Creature and Walton.)

In the medieval world view, with its dependency on the cosmology of Saint Augustine and of Saint Thomas, the heavenly and mundane were also polarized. Alchemy (which in the novel, is the first love upon which Frankenstein's curiosity fixes itself) was the medieval expression of a physical attempt to reach the divine by a route outside that of the established church and, as such, was suspect. As Patrick Callahan points out, for the medieval mind
"evil comes of its [alchemy's] Prometheanism; it provides the instrumentality by which the egoist can realize his increasingly unchained will."\textsuperscript{16}

In his study of Paracelsus, Carl Jung noticed the struggles of conscience which that would-be creator and defier of the communal order underwent, and referred to those conflicts as "Promethean guilt";\textsuperscript{17} nor was Mary's Frankenstein "modern" enough to escape the hazard of this vocation. In the transitional Renaissance, Christopher Marlowe's Dr. Faustus, the over-reacher who tries to be god-like, is destined, by the very structure of the universe he thinks in, to his hellish fall.

Still, by the time of Milton's \textit{Paradise Lost}, even the traditional Christian story of the guilt of Satan and man in aspiring to god-head, can be told with such unconscious defiance that Blake was led to comment that Milton was of Satan's party without knowing it.\textsuperscript{18} During the year 1816, Shelley read \textit{Paradise Lost} aloud to Mary: she used it extensively and absorbed its contradictions into \textit{Frankenstein}.\textsuperscript{19}

In his introduction to \textit{Prometheus Unbound} (1819), Shelley commented that Satan is the only imaginary
being resembling Prometheus, but that, unlike Prometheus, he is tainted by "ambition, envy, revenge, and a desire for personal aggrandisement". For Mary Shelley, however, another imaginary being in *Paradise Lost* resembles her idea of Prometheus: Adam. In her *Matilda* of 1815, Mary wrote, when Matilda was evaluating the benevolence of the poet Woodville:

To bestow on your fellow men is a Godlike attribute. So indeed it is and as such not fit for mortality— the giver like Adam and Prometheus, must pay the penalty of rising above his nature by being the martyr to his own excellence. 21

Not only does Victor describe his misfortunes in terms of the traditional Biblical language of the Fall:

"I ardently hope that the gratification of your [Walton's] wishes may not be a serpent to sting you, as mine have been", 22 but the Creature also articulates his inner conflicts by wondering whether he is most like Adam or Satan. Christopher Small even suggests that, in his superb self-reliance, the Monster is more like Prometheus than Frankenstein. 22 Nevertheless, Mary's focus is on Victor's re-enactment of original sin, though both Victor and the Creature are would-be benefactors of man who thereby
rise above their place and must suffer. For both of them, their punishment, the vulture eating out their livers, is imaged (just as Marlowe's Mephistopheles's was) as the bearing of "hell within" (F: VIII, 91; XVI, 138). Victor's work, in the view of traditional Christianity, can only be seen as the result of over-whelming self-pride. John Hick has written that:

The serpent is the first scientist; his 'temptation' is the earliest hypothesis; and the fall is the first and most daring experiment. This primal experiment in which the whole future scientific enterprise is implicit, is the experiment of regarding the world as an independent order with its own inherent structure and laws. The serpent rejects the religious significance affixed to the tree of knowledge by divine taboo... treating the tree as a natural rather than a religious object... 24

The difficulty of Mary's creative task that of bringing together in Frankenstein's person the contradictions of Western man: the aspirations and accomplishments of a Promethean genius, and at the same time, the remorse and guilt of an Adam re-enacting the original sin, is brought out in this passage by Nietzsche which describes the essential alienness of the Greek world view to the Judaic-
Christian one:

[For the Greeks]... man's highest good must be bought with a crime and paid for by the flood of grief and suffering which the offended divinities visit upon the human race in its noble ambition. An austere notion, this, which by the dignity it confers on crime presents a strange contrast to the Semitic myth of the Fall—a myth that exhibits curiosity, deception, suggestibility, concupiscence, in short a whole series of principally feminine frailties, as the root of all evil. What distinguishes the Aryan conception is an exalted notion of active sin as the properly Promethean virtue... 25

Though Mary herself, in her 1831 Introduction to Frankenstein, states the moralistic opinion that "frightful must it be; for supremely frightful would be the effect of any human endeavour to mock the stupendous mechanism of the Creator of the world", and though Frankenstein repeatedly echoes this didacticism, the novel defies any single-minded reading. For one thing, when Frankenstein is not acting out his Promethean drives, he is extremely passive and lifeless. He may feel guilt throughout the novel for his success at mimicking divine creation, but, in that very important sequence in which he destroys his female creation, he is also culpable: "I almost felt as if I had mangled the living
flesh of a human being." Also, after he carries out the "dreadful crime" of emptying the remains into the sea, he collapses in his boat letting the water act on him as it will for several hours. He briefly rouses himself to fight a storm only to fall into sickness and helplessness on hearing of Clerval's death. (He characteristically becomes incapacitated when he is faced with the consequences of his few decisive actions.) The submissive and passive side of Frankenstein's character is not very attractive; yet it seems that to act is to sin. Moreover, although Victor himself recognizes that destiny had decreed his particular destruction in the ominous "fore-knowledge" which he experienced at fifteen, the reducing of an oak to a blasted stump by a bolt of lightning (F II, 44), his last words are "yet another may succeed" (F: XXIV, 218), and thus indicate that he still hopes that future struggling might not result in his own Meroitios-like punishment.

I cannot resist putting in Northrop Frye's description of a tragic hero here, though the latter part of this paper will be concerned with the modern-
Promethean attempt at humanizing the "divine", because the passage is so suitable for suggesting how Victor's blighted potential works as a tremendous example, especially to Walton who is the everyman at that point in history trying to understand the meaning of Frankenstein's experience; Walton is, as Walling has pointed out, "the Wedding Guest" figure to Frankenstein as the "Ancient Mariner". 27

Tragic heroes are so much the highest points in their human landscape that they seem the inevitable conductors of the power about them, great trees more likely to be struck by lightning than a clump of grass. Conductors may of course be instruments as well as victims of the divine lightning. 28

Frankenstein sees himself as a victim of the divine lightning [as a "blasted tree" (F: XIX, 162)] for his presumption; his modern-Promethean efforts only take on a positive meaning if we can place them in a view of history which emphasizes the slow process of the ascendancy of man. This is what Mary struggles to do, but her basic skepticism underlies the whole novel.

While Mary Shelley was beginning Frankenstein in the summer of 1816, Byron, her neighbor at Diodati in Switzerland, wrote his poem: "Prometheus". The
poem characterizes the order of Zeus, the "Thunderer", as "the inexorable Heaven", the "deaf tyranny of fate", the "ruling principle of Hate"; it celebrates the Titan's "impenetrable Spirit which Earth and Heaven could not convulse"; and it exhorts us to look to the Titan as a "symbol and sign" of our own "fate and force." For pessimistic Byron, though Prometheus is resurrected as a powerful symbol of Romantic rebellion, we still face our "own funereal destiny". 29 At the same time though, Prometheus retained his symbolic life as the initiator of advancements in knowledge, as in Mary Wollstonecraft's usage when the character Darnford in Maria or the Wrongs of Woman refers to Rousseau as the "true Prometheus of sentiment". 30 Part of the genius of Mary Shelley's creation of Victor Frankenstein is her uniting of the traditional associations of this symbol with the emerging new creator in the human society of our times: the scientist. 31

There has been much discussion as to the origins of the name "Frankenstein", but Samuel Rosenberg's idea that it was a combination of Benjamin Franklin's name and that of "Wolfstein", Shelley's defiant
hero of St. Irvyne, who is another seeker of the knowledge of eternal life, seems to me to be the most apt. Even if it was not intentional, Mary certainly knew of Franklin as a living Prometheus. In the very chapter of Enquiry concerning Political Justice in which her father, William Godwin, made his speculations about man learning to prolong human life, he refers to Franklin's claim that "mind will one day become omnipotent over matter". In a recent paper called "The Cult of Franklin in France before and during the French Revolution", J.A. Leich shows the extent to which Franklin was popularly seen as one of the depositors of Zeus and, by extension, all tyrannical order. In one sculpture by Boizot, "Franklin appeared to direct thunder with one hand, and to trample a broken sceptre under his feet." In a widely-circulated poem by d'Auberteuil, he was associated with Montgolfier who had recently made sensational balloon ascents in the conquest of the heavens:

Si Jupiter veut nous réduire en poudre
Sage Franklin, tui lui prescris tes loix,
Et Montgolfier, plus hardi mille fois,
Va jusqu'au ciel lui disputer la foudre.
Mary herself includes, in the 1818 version, a description of Victor learning about electricity (which is to become his "spark" for creating life) from his father by means of the Franklin kite experiment.36

The modern-Prometheans are not content with the mere theft of fire but plot strategy for the overthrow and takeover of the divine realm on all fronts. Frankenstein's teacher, Professor Waldeman, praises the feats of the modern-Promehean scientists:

... 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 show 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. (F: III, 51).

Whereas Aeschylus has Prometheus, a god, take the first step towards breaking down the polarization between divinity and man by identifying with man, the modern-Promeheus, whether Franklin or Frankenstein, takes the first step as a man identifying with the gods. Frankenstein's god-like aspiration was that "a new species would bless me as its creator and
source" (F: IV, p.7). Even in his decline, he is to Walton: "a celestial spirit", a "divine wanderer... immeasurably above any other person I ever knew" (F: Let. IV, 33).

Mary Shelley, however, skillfully balances Walton's idolization of Frankenstein with the deflating effect of the angry speeches of Frankenstein's abortion-creation. The Creature, educated as he was on the world-view of *Paradise Lost*, constantly upbraids Frankenstein for his limitations as a divinity by comparing him to the creator:

Accursed creator! Why did you form a monster so hideous that even you turned from me in disgust? God, in pity, made man beautiful and alluring, after his own image; but my form is a filthy type of yours, more horrid even from the very resemblance. Satan had his companions, fellow-devils, to admire and encourage him; but I am solitary and abhorred (F: XV, 132).

Not surprisingly, Frankenstein admits to himself that "for the first time, also, I felt what the duties of a creator towards his creature were (F:X, 104)."

The spirit of triumphant Prometheanism is the essence of Godwin's philosophy in *Enquiry concerning Political Justice* and of Shelley's poetry especially in *Prometheus Unbound* of 1819. Mary
Godwin Shelley shared the hopes of her father and husband for the future to a certain extent, and *Frankenstein* can be seen as her attempt to incarnate these abstractions using her contemporary human situation in order to probe their possibility. She creates the man Victor Frankenstein as the best specimen of our species: he is given a happy childhood, indulgent parents, and a superstition-free education; moreover, he is brought up in the most enlightened society she could find: Geneva. Elizabeth extols its virtues this way:

The republican institutions of our country have produced simpler and happier manners than those which prevail in the great monarchies that surround it. Here 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 sacrifice of the dignity of a human being (P: VI, 68).

Though Victor's intentions are benevolent, his initial impulses assume an attitude that through knowledge he will conquer the environment: "I
will pioneer a new way, explore unknown powers, and unfold to the world the deepest mysteries of creation." (F: III, 51). In fact, he even says that the reason the human mind has not found out and learned to control the principles of life is because "cowardice or carelessness... [restrained] our inquiries." (F: IV, 54). Let us ignore for the time being the contradictions within Godwin himself as revealed, for instance, when he tried in 1794 to use Caleb Williams as a "vehicle" for his philosophy, but ended up presenting "things as they are":

What is now presented to the public is no refined and abstract speculations; it is a study and delineation of things passing in the moral world. 37

Victor’s optimistic claims are similar in spirit to the confident voice of hope with which Godwin speaks in Political Justice, particularly in the last chapter in which Godwin is most speculative about the future. Not only does Godwin suggest that once reason dominates our minds and bodies, and we are of benevolent temper controlling "those sentiments of anxiety, discontent, rage, revenge..."
and despair which so powerfully corrode the frame", that we will be able through an effort of the mind to "correct certain commencing irregularities of the system, and forbid [involuntary actions]"; but also that through this means of mind over matter, there is the "possibility of maintaining the human body in perpetual youth and vigour." And although Godwin does not talk of "absolute immortality of man", he does forecast that the mankind of "cultivated and virtuous mind" of the future "will probably cease to propagate. The whole will be people of men, and not of children." Though this is all very vague, there is certainly stated a hope to by-pass sexual gratifications which "please at present by their novelty, that is, because we know not how to estimate them." No wonder Mary had hesitations regarding successful modern-Prometheanism. In his sensitive interpretation, Robert Kiely sees Frankenstein's "presumption" as the attempt "to usurp the power of woman", "to eliminate the need for woman in the creative act, to make sex unnecessary."

Thus Mary makes her Frankenstein-Prometheus
suffer the vulture of self-doubt and remorse which she felt he should suffer. Even though the pattern of the penitent over-reacher is a common one in literature, Mary owes a direct debt to her father's attempt to work out the consequences of this thought artistically because modeled Frankenstein's (and the Creature's) complex vacillations on the fictional characters of his two novels *Caleb Williams* and *St. Leon*.

Falkland, in *Caleb Williams*, rivals Frankenstein in the frequency of his lamentations of regret and the resourcefulness with which he justifies and carries out the hiding of his "crime". Yet that, even his agony, he continues to nurture admiration for megalomaniac ambition is shown when he educates young Caleb to appreciate Alexander the Great as a model of "honour, generosity, and disinterestedness... [and of] cultivated liberality of mind."

When Caleb objects that Alexander murdered or enslaved whole tribes in order to realize his projects, Falkner urges him to be more "liberal":

*The death of a hundred thousand men is at first sight very shocking; but what in reality are a hundred thousand such men, more than*
a hundred thousand sheep? This was the project of Alexander; he set out in a great undertaking to civilize mankind; he delivered the vast continent of Asia from the stupidity and degradation of the Persian monarchy. 42

But Caleb, the creature Falkland raised from humble peasant to be his secretary, is prompted by his "curiosity" to push the conversation further, and so challenges Falkland to justify Alexander's and, by implication, Falkland's own "excesses of ungovernable passion". Falkland points out Alexander's very human remorse:

Do you not remember his tears, his remorse, his determined abstinence from food, which he could scarcely be persuaded to relinquish? Did not that prove acute feeling and a rooted principle of equity? 43

In spite of the fact that the rest of the novel exposes the injustices of Falkland's god-like tyranny over Caleb, by the end, Caleb comes to regret the heroic zeal with which he confronted the hypocrisy of Falkland. In his remorse after the death of Falkland, he forgives his "god" in terms which recall Falkland's earlier lesson on Alexander:

A nobler spirit lived not among the sons of men. Thy intellectual powers were truly
sublime, and thy bosom burned with god-like ambition. But of what use are talents and sentiments in the corrupt wilderness of human society? 45

Through his own experiences of suffering which finally drove him to "murder" Falkland, Caleb comes to understand how the initial benevolence of Falkland was poisoned by unjust society. The Creature's pattern of behaviour is not unlike that of Caleb especially in his final agony of self-repentance over Frankenstein's body. Victor becomes to his "murderer": "the select specimen of all that is worthy of love and admiration among men" (F: XXIV, 222). In a single phrase, the Creature identifies the essential contradiction within Frankenstein's (and Falkland's) character and his own ambiguous attitude towards his creator; he calls Frankenstein, "generous and self-devoted being." 46

In working out the consequences of Frankenstein's withdrawal from his family, Mary Shelley could draw on another of Godwin's attempts to work out moral principles by embodying them in a novel, this time his St. Leon of 1799. In a straight-forward reading of St. Leon, Marguerite, St. Leon's wife, is everywhere admired for her boundless virtue and equanimity
even when St. Leon's vices caused poverty, dishonour, and their son's disappearance. The sphere of her love is her immediate family. St Leon describes her this way:

Benevolent she was almost beyond human example, and interested for the welfare of all she knew, but these were brief and mutable concerns; they were not incorporated with the stamina of her existence. I was the whole world to her; she had no idea of satisfaction without me...

Throughout the novel, St. Leon is continually confessing his inferiority to such a mate because he is not content with his own or his family's approbation but seeks fame and social recognition. When he finally gains the philosopher's stone and the elixir of life, he is bound to secrecy; and because of this and his alchemical skills which give him immortality and unlimited wealth, he is god-like, cut off from the rest of the species. But, like Frankenstein, he does not rejoice at his "divinity"; he becomes the most miserable and guilt-ridden of men.

Godwin recognized that he seemed to have changed his opinions. In his preface, he writes:
Some readers of my graver productions will perhaps, in perusing these little volumes, accuse me of inconsistency; the affections and charities of private life being everywhere in this publication a topic of the warmest eulogium, while in the *Enquiry concerning Political Justice*, they seemed to be treated with no great degree of indulgence and favour. 48

He attributed his new understanding of human relationships to his brief experience of domestic bliss with Mary Wollstonecraft. Yet Godwin's former attitudes in this matter still trickle through in the novel because, even when St. Leon is accusing himself of the vilest of vices, he will rise above his guilt and make such odd associations as seeing Marguerite as "a nest of scorpions". 49 Once he even articulates his mixed feelings:

At some times I honoured Marguerite for her equanimity. At others, I almost despaired her for this integrity of her virtues. I accused her in my heart of being destitute of the spark of true nobility. Her patience I considered as little less than meanness and vulgarity of spirit. 50

Clearly, *Frankenstein* embodies a similar ambivalence. *Frankenstein* states that he tells his tale as a didactic warning to Walton:

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 (F: IV, 56).

At the same time, however, the social and domestic order is shown to be lifeless and limited. Moreover, the strongest self-criticisms of Frankenstein are not for actually creating the monster nor for abandoning him. In urging Walton to undertake the mission to destroy the Creature, he concludes:

During these last days I have been occupied in examining my past conduct; nor do I find it blameable. In a fit of enthusiastic madness I created a rational creature, and was bound towards him, to assure, as far as was in my power, his happiness and well-being. This was my duty; but there was another still paramount to that. My duties towards the beings of my own species had greater claims to my attention because they included a greater proportion of happiness or misery (F: XXIV, 217).

He condemns himself for isolating himself from his family and friend Clerval because they would be the natural aids to balancing his misguided ideas.

Accordingly, Robert Giely notes that Frankenstein has already "eliminated" his loved ones from his life while he is studying in Ingolstadt; the Monster's elimination of the victims is merely "a grotesquely exaggerated enactment of his own behaviour". 51
When Victor is looking back on the time that his father wrote that he regarded "any interruption in your correspondence as a proof that your other duties are equally neglected" (F: IV, 58), Victor recognizes his father's wisdom and self-consciously moralizes that:

A human being in perfection ought always to preserve a calm and peaceful mind, and never to allow passion or transitory desire to disturb his tranquility. 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 tranquility of his domestic affections, Greece had not been enslaved; Caesar would have spared his country; America would have been discovered more gradually; and the empires of Mexico and Peru had not been destroyed (F: IV, 59; my italics).

What is being suggested here, amidst the rhetoric, is some kind of mechanics of gradual progress in which the creative individual must be in rhythm with his community. He is in error if he isolates himself. This theme is paralleled and amplified by the Creature's appearance. The Creature blames his alienation.
from community for causing the loss of his potential goodness: "The love of another will destroy my crimes. My vices are the children of a forced solitude that I abhor" (F: XVII, 149). Robert Oppenheimer, the physicist is a voice of a twentieth-century Frankenstein obsessed with exploring his guilt in the nuclear catastrophes of Hiroshima and Nagasaki; he too has been led to finding evil in the isolation which the scientific disciplines cultivate:

Scientific knowledge... has become the property of specialized communities who may on occasion help one another but who, by and large, pursue their own way with growing intensity further and further from their roots in ordinary life. 52

Once more than Frankenstein is condemned, not because he "trod heaven in [his]... thoughts, now exulting in... [his] powers, now burning with the idea of their effects" (F: XXIV, 212), but because he does not reconcile his actions with human relationships nor, for that matter, with his natural environment. In January, 1817, while she was working on Frankenstein, Mary read a similar idea in Coleridge's Statesman's Manual of 1816. 53 In Coleridge's terminology:
the rational instinct, therefore, taken abstractedly and unbalanced, did in itself... and in its consequences... form the original temptation through which man fell: and in all ages has continued to originate the same... Religion as the consideration of the particular and individual... assigns the due limits... [to the contemplation of the universal and the abstract]. 54

Frankenstein re-enacts this original sin; he is an abortive modern-Prometheus because he fails to humanize his god-like discovery.

Again, with this theme, Mary Shelley is expanding on one of Godwin's central obsessions. Though Godwin might be discussing Frankenstein's moral dilemma in any number of places in *Enquiry concerning Political Justice*, one example suffices to show how delicate the balance between the creative genius and his community should be:

It is a curious subject, to enquire into the due medium between individuality and concert... In society, no man, possessing the genuine marks of a man, can stand alone... He that would attempt to counter-act it [social influence]... by insulating himself, will fall into a worse error than that which he seeks to avoid. He will divest himself of the character of man, and be incapable of judging of his fellow men, or of reasoning upon human affairs. On the other hand, individuality is of the very essence of intellectual excellence. He that resigns himself wholly to sympathy and imitation, can
possess little of mental strength or accuracy... He lives forgetting and forgot. He has deserted his station in human society. Mankind cannot be benefited by him. 55

When Frankenstein first seeks to unfold the deepest mysteries of creation, he does so believing that he is pioneering a new way for mankind and will, therefore, be revered as a benefactor to his species. As Shelley points out, the desire for fame (which Walton shares) is not necessarily anti-social:

There is a great error in the world with respect to the selfishness of fame. It is certainly possible that a person should seek distinction as a medium of personal gratification. But the love of fame is frequently no more than a desire that the feelings of other should confirm, illustrate, and sympathize with, our own. 56

Godwin would approve of Frankenstein following his natural independence, but Frankenstein hides his creative activity and thus violates the relationship an individual should have to society by refusing to have his actions judged by others:

Natural independence, a freedom from all constraint, except that of reasons and inducements presented to the understanding, is of the utmost importance to the welfare and improvement of mind. Moral independence, on the contrary, is always injurious. The dependence,
which is essential, in this respect, to the wholesome temperament of society, includes in it articles that are, no doubt, unpalatable to a multitude of the present race of mankind, but that owe their unpopularity only to weakness and vice. It includes a censure to be exercised by every individual over the actions of another, a promptness to enquire into and to judge them. Why should we shrink from this? What could be more beneficial than for each man to derive assistance for correcting and moulding his conduct from the perspicacity of his neighbours? 57

Frankenstein, moreover, insists on working at an inhuman speed. When he first acquires the technical knowledge to bestow life on inanimate matter, in an important passage, he considers how to proceed:

"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 exulted by my first success to permit me to doubt of my ability to give life to an animal as complex and wonderful as man." He weighs the possibility that he might fail but, still a little modest, he hopes his "present attempts would at least lay the foundation of future success." But then he makes the fatal judgement "contrary to my first intention" to make the creature of gigantic proportion. Why? "The minuteness of the parts formed a great hinderance to my speed"
It is this haste and impatience to create a being by himself which leads to his act of creation being monstrous both literally and morally. It is true that Godwin looked forward to the "annihilation" of the "brute engine" of political government which hindered the progress of mankind forward to a transformed society, but he did not advocate rapid change which would violate the delicate communal structure, here compared by him to the body's frame:

Yet upon the whole, it may be, like some excrescences and defects in the human frame, it cannot immediately be removed without introducing something worse. In the machine of human society all the wheels must move together. He that should violently attempt to raise any one part into a condition more exalted than the rest, or force it to start away from its fellows would be the enemy, and not the benefactor, of his contemporaries... the interests of the human species requires a gradual, but uninterrupted change.

This is the essence of what Mary demonstrates in Frankenstein. In fact, the judgement that Frankenstein's creative act is to be considered a malevolent "machination" depends a great deal in the novel on the fact that the community is not ready to believe in his actions and, as he constantly fears,
will, therefore, see him as mad. Judging from the horror which he himself suppresses as he carries out his task of creation, he, as a social being, is not ready for the conquest of this divine attribute either.

We can see Mary's tendency to present pessimistically "things as they are", if we compare her artistic attempt to embody modern-Prometheanism with Shelley's whole-hearted attempt in his *Prometheus Unbound* which ends up as a triumphant statement of the way things will be. Ironically, before Mary's *Frankenstein: the Modern Prometheus*, in his notes to *Queen Mab* of 1812, Shelley first used Prometheus as a symbol of the fall of man from vegetarianism. From Hesiod, he learned that man lived without suffering before Prometheus tricked Zeus into letting man have the flesh while Zeus got the fat and bones:

Prometheus (who represents the human race) effected some great change in the condition of his nature and applied fire to culinary purposes—thus inventing an expedient for screening from his disgust the horrors of the shambles. From this moment his vitals were devoured by the vulture of disease. It consumed his being in every shape of its
loathsome variety, inducing the soul-quelling sinkings of premature and violent death. All vice rose from the ruin of healthful innocence. Tyranny, superstition, commerce and inequality were then first known when reason vainly attempted to guide the wanderings of exacerbated passion. (my italics) 60

Even here, he already has the embryo idea of his later symbolic value of Prometheus.

By the time Shelley wrote to Godwin for the first time in 1811, he was already convinced that the modern-Promethean hopes for bringing heaven down to earth were realizable. Mary in Mathilda has her Shelley-like character, Woodville, articulate Shelley's life-mission as she saw it:

Believe me, I will never desert life until this last hope is torn from my bosom, that in some way my labours may form a link in the chain of gold with which we ought all to strive to drag Happiness from where she sits enthroned above the clouds, now far beyond our reach, to inhabit the earth with us. 61

And it is basically Enlightenment faith which Shelley embodies in his Prometheus Unbound of 1819: if man can be freed from tyranny and his mind liberated from ignorance, then man is capable of perfecting himself through reason. The efforts of the individual
in contributing "a link in the chain" may be judged "mad" or "evil" by his down-trodden contemporaries, but Shelley is able, with Diderot, to replace other-worldliness in the future; "Posterity is for the Philosopher what the other world is for the religious."62

Once he began writing to Godwin, Shelley, who was in Ireland beginning to organize groups for resistance against political and social tyranny, was confronted with and grew to accept Godwinian gradualism. This passage is from one of Godwin's letters to him in Ireland:

Discussion, reading, enquiry, perpetual communication: these are my favorite methods for the improvement of mankind, but associations, organized societies, I firmly condemn. You may as well tell the adder not to sting... as tell organized societies of men, associated to obtain their rights and to extinguish oppression--prompted by a deep aversion to inequality, luxury, enormous taxes, and the evils of war,--to be innocent, to employ no violence, and calmly to await the progress of truth... 63

This is the central lesson which the suffering Prometheus in Act One of Prometheus Unbound comes to learn: "to calmly await the progress of truth".

The chained Prometheus welcomes the change from day to night because of:
Their wingless, crawling hours, one among whom
--As some dark Priest hales the reluctant victim--
Shall drag thee, cruel King, to kiss the blood
From these pale feet, which then might trample thee

If they disdained not such a prostrate slave.
Disdain! Ah no! I pity thee. What ruin
Will hunt thee undefended thro' wide Heaven!
How will thy soul, cloven to its depth with terror,
Gape like hell within! I speak in grief,
Not exultation, for I hate no more,
As then ere misery made me wise. 64

The only attitude which can prevent the eventual triumph of the modern-Promethean spirit is despair;
this temptation is presented to Prometheus in Act One by the psychological tortures of the Furies who scorn Prometheus's boast to have awakened "clear knowledge" and recount the horror of how mankind has distorted and confused 'truth (particularly Christ's teachings) to justify its slavish mentality:

Hypocrisy and custom make their minds
The fanes of many a worship, now outworn.
They dare not devise good for man's estate
And yet they know not that they do not dare,
The good want power, but to weep barren tears.
The powerful goodness want: worse need for them.
The wise want love; and those who love want wisdom;
And all best things are thus confused to ill.
Many are strong and rich, and would be just,
But live among their suffering fellow-men
As if none felt: they know not what they do. 65
Fortunately, Shelley's modern-Prometheus has already reached that tranquil level of intellectual awareness which allows him to lovingly withdraw his vengeful oath once uttered against Jupiter and to await the change which must come. This is the historical process which Godwin promised: if man by man withdraws his blind confidence and support of tyranny, a "euthanasia" would spontaneously occur. Each man must cultivate the qualities of freedom until:

He cannot be degraded; he cannot readily become either useless or unhappy. He smiles at the impotence of despotism; he fills up his existence with serene enjoyment and industrious benevolence. Civil liberty is chiefly desirable as a means to procure and perpetuate this temper of mind. They therefore begin at the wrong end, who make haste to over turn and confound the usurped powers of the world. Make men wise, and by that very operation you make them free. Civil liberty follows as a consequence of this; no usurped power can stand against the artillery of opinion. Everything then is in order, and succeeds at the appointed time. How unfortunate is it that men are so eager to strike and have so little constancy to reason! 67

Social change comes of necessity (Demogorgon) "at the appointed time"; Prometheus's tranquil state of mind; that is, that of the whole species of mankind, is a pre-condition for it. In Act II, Asia describes
this historical process:

Hark! the rushing snow!
The sun-awakened avalanche! whose mass,
Thrice sifted by the storm, had gathered there
Flake after flake, in heaven defying minds
As thought by thought is piled, till some
great truth
Is loosened, and the nations echo round,
Shaken to their roots, as do the mountains
now. 68

Moreover, just as Mary Shelley demonstrates that
Frankenstein-Prometheus errs by separating himself
from love, Percy Shelley's Prometheus must join
forces with Asia before Demogorgon can be moved to
action. Asia is the symbol of love in the poem
and contains a number of aspects of which I can only
mention two. Before Jupiter's fall, she is the loving,
close-to-nature side of man. "Common as light is
love, ... It makes the reptile equal to the God..."69
After Jupiter's fall, she unites with Promethean
intellect, thus leading to a more abstract brother-
hood-of-man concept of love:

The loathesome mask has fallen, the Man remains,—
Sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed,—but man:
Equal, unclassed, tribeless and nationless
Exempt from awe, worship, degree, the King
Over himself; just, gentle, wise;—but man:
Passionless? no: yet free from guilt or pain,
In these lines, we have the essence of Shelley's vision of successful modern-Prometheanism. Moreover, Carl Grabo, in his book, *A Newton Among Poets* which emphasizes the effect that Shelley's study of scientific thought (particularly of Erasmus Darwin) had on the poem, illustrates that Asia is some sort of electrical phenomenon in the universe. This natural force joins with man's intellect to form the heaven-on-earth of Act IV which is not an impractical dream but Shelley's attempt to embody his faith in the scientific progress of man. The new order is very much dependent on man's ability to control nature:

The lightning is his slave: heaven's utmost deep
Gives up her stars, and like a flock of sheep
They pass before his eye, are remembered, and roll on.
The tempest is his steed, he strides the air;
And the abyss shouts from her depths laid bare,
Heaven, has thou secrets? man unveils me;
I have none.
The last act ends inciting us to the modern-Pro-
methean attitude: "to hope till Hope creates from
its own wreck the thing it contemplates."

How cowardly and how complex Frankenstein
looks besides Shelley's Prometheus. Poor Frankenstein
is not able to transcend his guilt and suffering
in order to reach beyond to any confident, tranquil
state of mind. Only once, while he is at the tomb
of Hampden, does he have any inkling that his own
attitudes enslave him:

For a moment my soul was elevated from its
debasing and miserable fears, to contemplate
the divine ideas of liberty and self-sacrifice, of which these sights were the monu-
ments and the remembrancers. For an instant
I dared to shake off my chains, and look
around me with a free and lofty spirit; but
the iron had eaten into my flesh, and I sank
again, trembling and hopeless, into my miser-
able self (F: XIX, 162).

Because Mary has structured Frankenstein's
personality to include both the curiosity and drive
of the creative individual (the Prometheus spirit)
and censoring, slowing-down social conservatism
(zeus's tyranny), the necessity for balanced change
is essential for the life of this individual organism,
and by extrapolation, for the life of the species.
Frankenstein is at the vanguard of the species.

The main reason Mary Shelley constructed the Walton frame-story was to lead the reader to place the meaning of Frankenstein's individual effort and failure in the context of the whole species' struggle towards improvement. Frankenstein's presumption to godhead is tragic not because of an eternal condition of the universe, but because of its prematurity seen in relationship to the "wingless, crawling" movement of human history. Captain Walton too has the distinct characteristics of a would-be modern-Prometheus, and his dependence on the readiness of his crew to proceed forward is dramatized by Mary's placing of this ship of human struggle in a hostile, alien environment. Walton himself is willing to die for the knowledge he seeks, "for the dominion I should acquire and transmit over the elemental foes of our race." (F: Let., 32). Whether poet or explorer (or scientist), he needs to boldly uncover the mysteries of life. His words: "There is something at work in my soul which I do not understand" (F: Let., 26), suggest the pull he feels towards entering into the inevitable process of history. Unlike
the visionary scenes of Act III and IV of *Prometheus Unbound*, Mary's Walton can only articulate the end of his efforts as being "a country of eternal light" where "he may tread a land never before imprinted by the foot of man." (F: Let., 21). (The language is remarkably like that of our "conquerors" of the moon.) The ship of mankind, then, may be on its way toward human enlightenment, but for Mary there was little hope of arriving, at least for her contemporaries. Walton's crew is not willing to aspire to divinity. Frankenstein's exhortations do not change their desire to turn back:

You were hereafter to be hailed as the benefactors of your species; your names adored as belonging to brave men who encountered death for honour and the benefit of mankind. And now, behold, with the first imagination of danger, or, if you will, the first mighty and terrific trial of your courage, you shrink away, and are content to be handed down as men who had not strength enough to endure cold and peril... Oh! be men, or be more than men. (F: XXIV, 215).

The only actual light at the north pole is the fire in which the Creature, the "abortion", burns himself up so as "to afford no light to any curious and unhallowed wretch who would create another as I have been." (F: XXIV, 222). It is a bleak ending with
the creature going to death speculating, perversely
in the traditional mind-set, on other-worldliness,
i.e., on whether his spirit will be alive after
dehth.

But Walton is still yearning to go on though he
is prevented for the moment from doing so: and Victor's
last words, in their appeal to the other-worldliness
of Enlightenment thought, i.e., posterity, still
stand to balance the creature's last words: "yet
another may succeed." We are left realizing that
in spite of the considerable ambivalence Mary shows
towards modern-Prometheanism, especially in the
creature's narrative, but also in Victor's didacticism,
that Frankenstein's attempt is abortive because
of his inability to inch forward ever sensitive
to his community's (and his own social self's)
ability to follow, and, more decidedly, because the
front of human evolution is not ready for Franken-
stein's great leap forward (or rather, upward).
Chapter Three

MARY SHELLEY AS ARTISTIC ALCHEMIST

It was the secrets of heaven and earth that I desired to learn; and whether it was the outward substance of things or the inner spirit of nature and the mysterious soul of man that occupied me, still my inquiries were physical secrets of the world.

Victor Frankenstein

My last chapter demonstrated that Mary Shelley tried to place the meaning of Frankenstein's technological achievement in relationship to his community's readiness to accept the consequences of his success at achieving "divinity". Yet the "physical secrets" of nature into which Victor inquires are internal as well as external. This chapter will present the realization of Frankenstein's alchemical ambitions as a psychological experiment in which he "discovers" what he calls his "vampire" self, and is unable to face the true nature of his
discovery. In this chapter, I am relying on the Jungian interpretation that the philosophical alchemist of the medieval and Renaissance period was externalizing his internal processes of self-discovery by means of pseudo-chemical terminology and operations.\(^2\) At the same time, I see Mary Shelley as an artistic alchemist objectifying the patterns and findings of her own psychological explorations in Victor's act of creation and its aftermath. The novel then is Mary's own "hideous progeny"\(^3\) patched together from the "bones" she collected from her biographical experiences and her cultural inheritances. That the novel went forth and prospered indicates the success with which she animated her disparate sources into a whole creation which somehow, in the symbolic relationship between the creator and the creature, articulated a psychological truth for her contemporaries and our own century.

Frankenstein is an exploration of Mary Shelley's unconscious. As Launcelot Whyte has demonstrated in his The Unconscious Before Freud, the idea of the unconscious was being expressed and even transforming society before it was analyzed by Freud.\(^4\) In her clearest
discursive statement of her artistic intentions, she prays that she may become aware of her unconscious:

Let me fearlessly descend into the remotest caverns of my own mind, carry the torch of self-knowledge into its dimmest recesses: but too happy if I dislodge any evil spirit or enshrine a new deity in some hitherto uninhabited nook.5

Mary's writings show that she was perpetually seeking fictional apparatuses to express her self-exploration. She is nowhere as successful as she was in Frankenstein, but her failures reveal her intention even more clearly. For Mathilda, a novella written in 1819, she tried to construct a framework in which to place Mathilda's history. This fragment, called "Fields of Fancy", was abandoned, probably because it was so mechanical and silly. Mary tries to articulate the source of her artistic inspiration as a "wanton spirit", Fantasia, who has taken her before to various Fairylands and, in this story, flies her to the Elysian fields to hear Diotima,6 Socrates' instructress, give a speech on the secrets of the universe which concludes: "I can know nothing."7 A dreamy youth listens and is captivated, but a
suffering maiden, Mathilda, is about to try out
the truths of her own turbulent and painful life
against Diotima's tranquil visions when the spirit
of Fantasia fades.

This is no more awkward than the trappings
with which she introduced The Last Man of 1826. 8
In the author's introduction, she and her friend
visit Sibyl's Cave. They insist on going deeper
and lower into the passages even when their guides
will not go on for fear of spectres. The inner
cavern they reach is actually Sibyl's cave, and they
carry out the Sibylline leaves on which are writings
in various languages from ancient Chaldee to modern
Italian. Mary and her companion (obviously Shelley)
devote their time to "deciphering these sacred re-
 mains" until he is taken away from her, and she
continues her labours alone. This narrative is
an obvious allegory describing a fearless descent
into the unknown of her own mind. Towards the end
of her introduction, she suggests that we can all
discover the Sibylline Leaves inside us but that
the order an artist places on the chaos and obscurity
of the fragments "would be fashioned by his own
peculiar mind and talent." The Last Man is her interpretation of the Sibyline Leaves. I will briefly discuss this novel in my last chapter, but it is enough to point out here that The Last Man can be seen as an exploration of Mary's own psychological state after Shelley's death. Her writings in her journal for the period of 1822-1826 reveal her despair and acute loneliness at being "the last man". For instance, when she heard of Byron's death in 1824, she wrote, "The last man! Yes, I may well describe that solitary being's feelings, feeling myself as the last relic of a beloved race, my companions extinct before me."  

At the same time as Walton's journey in Frankenstein to discover a northeast passage and the north pole parallels Frankenstein's modern-Promethean ambitions for technological knowledge, it is allegorical for a voyage into the unknown of the mind. Although Mary does not develop this suggestion in much more than a few phrases, Walton does speak of his aspirations to understand the "marvellous", to find a "country of eternal light", in this way: "I may there discover the wondrous power which attracts the needle... [I
may ascertain] the secret of the magnet." This vaguely suggests that Walton is attempting to solve philosophical mysteries (which in the thought of Romanticism were frequently expressed in terms of what Coleridge called polar logic) as well as natural mysteries. In Prometheus Unbound, Act IV, Shelley provided his prophecy of the "Polar Paradise" in which Man's Intellect (Prometheus) comes to embrace Love (Asia), comes to understand the "magnet-like affinity of all things for each other."

According to Shelley's 1818 Preface to the novel, Mary wrote Frankenstein "partly as an expedient for exercising any untried resources of mind." In it, she arrived unconsciously at her most successful pattern for describing her creative process: the artist as alchemist. Victor Frankenstein collects his raw materials from the charnel houses and graveyards, but Mary is at the same time careful to have him retell his early life, to have him collect again the psychological materials which created the Monster. Mary Shelley employs Victor's interest in alchemy not only to indicate the origins of his vaulting ambition to penetrate the secrets of nature, but also
the origins of his obsessions with secrecy and solitude. As an adolescent, he loves the wild fancies of Paracelsus and Albertus Magnus because "they appeared to me treasures known to few besides myself". (F: II, 43) Even when he supposedly realizes that the alchemists' systems had been exploded as inept and contradictory, he still studies modern scientific methods in order to pursue the alchemical aim of finding the elixir of life, and, moreover, he continues their habit of always working alone isolated from the community. Not even Professor Waldeman, his mentor, suspects that it is Victor's absorption with his one pursuit which leads him incidentally to the "improvement of some chemical instrument which procured me greatest esteem and admiration at the university" (F: IV, 54). Finally after two years at the university, Victor withdraws completely into his solitary cell at the top of the house to create the Creature. This description of Victor's isolation from others suggests why his technological discovery is monstrous and out of harmony with the community's readiness to accept it; at the same time, Mary's insistence on his
aloneness is also apt if we are reading the novel as Frankenstein's self-exploration and subsequent rejection of his psychological discovery. Carl Jung, who has shed much light on the motivation behind the obscurities of the symbolism of the alchemists, has written that:

There is no doubt that the goal of the philosophical alchemist was higher self-development, of the production of what Paracelsus calls the "homo maior"; or what I would call individuation. This goal confronts the alchemist at the start with the loneliness which all of them feared, when one has "only" oneself for company. The alchemist, on principle, worked alone. He formed no school. This rigorous solitude, together with his pre-occupation with the endless obscurities of the work, was sufficient to activate the unconscious and, through the power of the imagination, bring into being things that apparently were not there before.11

On the psychological level, then, Victor's solitary exploration creates the Creature who is an unleashed aspect of his own psyche.

In Chapter five, on that dreary night in November when the Creature is "born," Mary has Frankenstein describe his actions this way: "I collected the instruments of life around me that I might infuse a spark of being into the lifeless thing that lay at my feet." What are "the instruments of life"?
Technically, the instrument is probably the "spark" of electricity. But psychologically, it is the dream. As soon as the creature convulses and begins to move, Victor becomes horrified and disappointed. He says, "the beauty of the dream vanished, and breathless horror and disgust filled my heart." Was he dreaming during the creating? We are not told anything of the Creature right after his first stirrings, but Victor's dream fades and he rushes out of the room:

But ... 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...

And again, he submits to dreaming and has his nightmare of Elizabeth changing into his dead mother's corpse and being crawled on by worms. In it, the dream-logic confusion is mixing the technical with the psychological ingredients of Frankenstein's discovery. (See my discussion of this dream on pages 129-32 of this thesis.) At any rate when he wakes up, the essence of his dream-process has been distilled out: the creature is fully "born" and separated from the dreamer: he is struggling
to communicate and form some bond with his creator; but the creator instantaneously refuses to recognize the monster's source and rejects any relationship with him:

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. (F: V, 61)

Mary's own method of creating "so very hideous an idea", as she explained it to her readers in her 1831 Introduction, remarkably parallels Victor's. She not only collects some of the "bones" and raw materials of her creation: a brief history of her own early life, her motivation for day-dreaming and writing, her own and her husband's ambitions for her fame, the incidents of that summer at Diodati in 1816 which immediately triggered her activity including the telling of ghost stories,\textsuperscript{12} and the resulting contest with Byron, Shelley and Polidori to see who could write the best horror story--but also she describes the process by which she won
the contest. At first, she fretted consciously trying "to think of a story":

I felt that blank incapacity of invention which is the greatest misery of authorship, when dull Nothing replies to our anxious invocations. Have you thought of a story? I was asked each morning, and each morning I was forced to reply with a mortifying negative.

When she finally comes to the embryonic idea of her Frankenstein, it is during a waking dream. She emphasizes her passivity; she is not working on trying to get a story; the essence of her dream-truth comes "unbidden" to her imagination. And the next day, she wrote a transcript of her dream which became the heart of the novel: chapter five. The 1831 Introduction recorded her dream this way:

I saw the pale student of unhallowed arts kneeling beside the thing he had put together. I saw the hideous phantasm of a man stretched out, and then, on the working of some powerful engine; show signs of life, and stir with an uneasy, half vital motion. Frightful must it be; for supremely frightful would be the effect of any human endeavour to mock the stupendous mechanism of the Creator of the world. His success would terrify the artist; he would rush away from his odious handiwork, horror-stricken.

Her dream as alembic created the essential symbolic
image which has remained alive in our Frankenstein mythology.

Many critics have interpreted the central image of the novel biographically because of the strong suggestion that the inhumanity of Frankenstein consists in his spurning of both his woman and his "child". I am going to discuss some of the findings of this approach because the discovery of the personal origins of her creation reveals Mary Shelley's ambivalent feelings towards her mother, Wollstonecraft, her father, Godwin, and her husband, Shelley, not only as her closest family relations but also, as I shall go on to emphasize in the latter part of this chapter, as spokesmen for the spirit of modern-Prometheanism. After all, the word "Frankenstein" articulates some feeling for us even if we know nothing of Mary Shelley and her family. Mary was able to transform her own complex fears which originated in her personal relationships into a symbol which articulated her contemporaries' fears. She told us herself what the essential meaning of the relationship between the creator and the creature was in her 1831 Introduction: success in
discovery whether of the physical secrets of nature or of the mind (and in their deepest meaning, they are the same truth for Mary) would terrify the artist. Moreover, she recognized that she had found a tale which would speak to the "mysterious fears of our nature": "What terrified me will terrify others." She is the artistic alchemist, because, as Jung said of Paracelsus, she somehow understands the unity which embraces the multiplicity and thus that if she found herself she would know others:

[Paracelsus wrote: "You know yourselves one with others". ... This is the specific definition of this experience of the coniunctio: the self which includes me includes many others also, for the unconscious that is "conceived in our mind" does not belong to me and is not peculiar to me, but is everywhere. It is the quintessence of the individual and at the same time the collective.]

Let us first try to re-discover some of the personal origins of her fears. Gail Kmetz's speculation is one example of an interpretation which stresses the influence Mary's relationship with Godwin, her father, had on the novel:

Mary understood very well the psychology of the outcast. The monster is rejected by the
man who created him; Mary had been rejected by her father. He is hated and feared wherever he goes; society had turned its back on her. He cannot help destroying, and hates himself; she never got over her guilt at having been the occasion of her mother's death. The monster is a projection of Mary's self-image: like her, he has a vast thirst for knowledge and a pathetic need to be loved and accepted. In later life, when a mild attack of smallpox had left some minor scars on her face, she called herself "the monster". Although Kmetz does not substantiate her claims, if we piece together scattered references to Mary's upbringing, we do find some evidence that Godwin tried to shape her as his "creature". In September, 1797 (Mary was born on August 30, 1797.), Godwin asked his friend William Nicholson, who was familiar with Lavater's theories, to give his opinion concerning Mary's physiognomy. In one of the few references to Mary in his letters to the second Mrs Godwin, he shows how he uses the common enough child-rearing tactic of suggesting how disappointed he will be if she does not turn out well: "Tell Mary that, in spite of unfavourable appearances, I still have faith that she will become a wise and, what is more, a good and a happy woman...." In 1813, Godwin wrote to an unknown correspondent, who asked what theories of education the daughters of Wollstonecraft
had been raised on, that:

... neither of them are brought up with an exclusive attention to the system and ideas of their mother.... The present Mrs Godwin has great strength and activity of mind, but is not exclusively a follower of the notions of their mother; and indeed, having formed a family establishment without having a previous provision for the support of a family, neither Mrs Godwin or I have leisure enough for reducing novel theories of education to practice....

He has no planned program, but he goes on to relate what he values in the character and mind of his own daughter; Fanny's greatest fault is her "indolence", but:

Mary, my daughter, is the reverse of her in many particulars. She is singularly bold, somewhat imperious, and active of mind. Her desire of knowledge is great, and her perseverance in everything she undertakes almost invincible. My own daughter is, I believe, very pretty.17

Here Mary is somewhat improved since she was sent away to Scotland in 1812, and Godwin found it necessary to tell her temporary guardian that, "I am anxious that she should be brought up... like a philosopher, even like a cynic... [but] I wish she would be excited to industry."18 It is from a letter written to Mary after she ran away from home that we get the
clearest idea of Godwin's expectations. On September 9, 1819, when she was suffering over the deaths of both her children within a few weeks of each other, he wrote to disapprove of her depression. In the interests of "true philosophy", he communicates the truth to her:

The human species may be divided into two classes: those who lean on others for support, and those who are qualified to support. Of these last, some have one, some five, and some ten talents. Some can support a husband, a child, a small but respectable circle of friends and dependents, and some can support a world, contributing by their energies to advance their whole species one or more degrees in the scale of perfectibility. The former class sit with their arms crossed a prey to apathy and languor, of no use to any earthly creature... You were formed by nature to belong to the best of these classes, but you seem to be shrinking away, and voluntarily enrolling yourself among the worst. Above all things, I entreat you, do not put the miserable delusion on yourself, to think there is something fine, and beautiful, and delicate, in giving yourself up, and agreeing to be nothing... (my italics) 19

No doubt Mary felt the pressure of her father's "philosophy", and she endeavoured to reply to some extent in Mathilda, a novelette which was written in the late summer and autumn of 1819. In her introduction to the novelette, Elizabeth Nitchie
demonstrates the biographical parallels: Mathilda is Mary, Mathilda's father is Godwin, Woodville is an idealized Shelley. Mathilda's mother dies a few days after giving birth to Mathilda, and the father flees in grief leaving Mathilda in the care of an aunt in Scotland. Mathilda grows up as a solitary being haunting the woods of her aunt's estate and forming fantasies around the hope that her father would return and say, "My daughter, I love thee." On her sixteenth birthday, he claims her back, and she spends the next few months in ecstasy, until he begins to reject her for reasons unknown. Finally, she forces him to admit, albeit unwittingly, that his cruel moodiness is an attempt to cover his "unnatural passion" for her. While Mathilda shuts herself in her room to wrestle with her conflicting feelings, her father in despair leaps into the sea. After going to the funeral and then staging a suicide to mislead her other relatives, Mathilda retires to the country to indulge uninterrupted, in her self-obsessed grief. This is the same "luxurious self-pity" which Walling notes is expressed in her The Last Man of 1826. Even before Woodville enters
her life, Mathilda is constantly arguing her right to be selfish, weak and lazy. Here is one example:

Mine was an idle, useless life; it was so; but say not to the lily laid prostrate by the storm arise, and bloom as before. My heart was bleeding from its death's wound; I could live no otherwise. 22

Who is this addressed to? Who is she continually beseeching not to "reproach" her "with inutility" if not Godwin? Later, in the novelette, Mary-Mathilda is clearly aware that Shelley-Woodville also has little patience with the indulging of despair. Let us examine one more passage from Godwin's 1819 letter to Mary:

Remember, too that though at first your nearest connections may pity you in this state, yet that when they see you fixed in selfishness and ill-humour, and regardless of the happiness of everyone else, they will finally cease to love you, and scarcely learn to endure you. 23

This is a potent threat whether the "nearest connections" be Shelley or Godwin himself especially from a father of whom Mary wrote, in an unpublished letter of 1822: "Until I met Shelley I [could] justly say that he was my God—and I remember many childish
instances of the excess of attachment I bore him."\(^{24}\)

Godwin showed how swiftly he could disclaim his child when she disobeyed his wishes when he refused to communicate with her after her elopement with Shelley. Just the same, though there is validity in suggesting that Mary's fears of rejection originate in her relationship with her father, the identification of Frankenstein with Godwin can be carried too far:

Sam Rosenberg claims Frankenstein is:

... an allegory of the disastrous consequences of love denied to children by parents concerned only with the fulfillment of their own desires... [because, as he argues] early in life Mary knew—as every child in such a predicament knows infallibly—that she could not successfully meet the Olympian challenge from her father and rightfully harboured a deep unconscious grievance against the man who had created her and denied her love or forgiveness when failed to replace his prestigious lost wife. \(^{25}\)

Rosenberg's interpretation emphasizes Mary's psychological need to get rid of the mother she could not live up to:

her daughter Mary had written an entire book in which she revived her, monsterized her, killed her, and with that act of exorcism hoped that the spirit of Mary Wollstonecraft would remain undistrubed forever afterward. \(^{26}\)
Still there is something eerie about the way she names the monster's first victim, Victor's youngest brother, "William". Not only is "William" Godwin's first name, but it is also the name of her own youngest half-brother, the only "normal" child of the Godwin household in that both Godwin and Mary Jane Clairmont were his parents; moreover, "William" is her own infant son's name (the one who was to die at three years of age in 1819), her own "sweet babe" "little Willmouse" who was sleeping in the next room. William is also the name which Wollstonecraft and Godwin used to refer to their unborn child in their love notes to each other in 1797 before the birth of Mary. It is the child Mary should have been, one who would please its father and would not kill off its mother. Very aptly, Mary leaves the Creature nameless, and, as anyone writing about Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin Shelley finds, she has no name which is entirely her own, including Mrs Shelley, especially in the summer of 1816 when she began the writing of Frankenstein, and was the poet's mistress.

Even in the most cursory look at Shelley's biography, we cannot but be struck by how much of Victor's early life and attitudes are taken from
Shelley's. Christopher Small has made a thorough demonstration of some of the parallels of which the following are a few: Frankenstein's first name is "Victor" which was Shelley's pseudonym in much of his juvenilia; Professor Waldmann's character and influence is likely derived from Shelley's teacher Dr. Lind who befriended Shelley at Eton; Victor's early aspirations to penetrate the secrets of the universe read like Shelley's own; Shelley, as his friend Hogg related in his Life of Shelley, was obsessed with experiments using electrical phenomena and at the same time, he delved into the study of the so-called black arts. Both "Alastor" of 1815 and "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty", written around the same time as Frankenstein was begun in the summer of 1816, present the same image of a seeker of knowledge haunting graveyards or ruins at night trying to discover the spirit of life as Frankenstein pursues nature to her hiding places.

In her "Notes on 'Queen Mab'", Mary Shelley briefly recounts the development of her husband's early life and attitudes which led him to believe in "the perfectibility of human nature" and how "all
could reach the highest grade of moral improvement, did not the customs and prejudices of society foster evil passions and excuse evil actions." 30 Like Frankenstein, he had a burning passion to be the benefactor of his fellow-creatures. Yet, unlike Frankenstein, Shelley characteristically confronts social oppression publicly as he did in the events leading to his expulsion from Oxford for the writing of the pamphlet "The Necessity of Atheism" with Jefferson Hogg. In Shelley, the Pursuit, Richard Holmes shows that Shelley "deliberately set out to court... notoriety." 31 Mary presents his behaviour more sympathetically:

[at 17] ... he was treated as a reprobate, cast forth as a criminal. The cause was that he was sincere; that he believed the opinions which he entertained to be true. And he loved truth with a martyr's love; he was ready to sacrifice station and fortune, and his dearest affections, at its shrine. 32

In either case, the description does not sound like the hesitant, self-doubting, even deceitful Frankenstein who more resembles Mary's self-projection in Mathilda--Mathilda who "with my dove's look and fox's heart" pretends a suicide and retires into
complete inactivity rather than face what has happened and the suffering of living with other people.  

Still there is something to the suggestion that Mary saw herself as Shelley's "creature". In her 1831 Introduction, she emphasizes that it was Shelley who "was forever inciting me to obtain a literary reputation", "to prove myself worthy of my parentage..." and even who "urged me to develop the idea [of Frankenstein] at greater length..." when she had thought only of a short tale. She knew very well that part of the reason that Shelley had fallen in love with her as she "scribbled" at her mother's grave in St. Pancras cemetery was his image of her as the physical and spiritual offspring of Wollstonecraft and Godwin, and she demonstrated her willingness to live their shared beliefs, in free love for example, by her dramatic escape at 16 years of age from her father's house to run away with her soul mate. We need only read his "Dedication" to her of his poem "Revolt of Islam", of 1817, in which he expanded on those expectations of his less fully expressed in the earlier poem ("To Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin") which he dedicated to her in 1814:
How beautiful and calm and free thou wert
In thy young wisdom, when the mortal chain
Of Custom thou didst burst and rend in twain
And walk as free as light the clouds among,—
Which many an envious slave then breathed in vain
From his dim dungeon, and my spirit sprung
To meet thee from the woes which had begirt it long!34

When Mary eloped with Shelley in the summer of
1814, she probably had the same image of herself as
he did. However, her ambivalence towards his hopes
and beliefs as shown in Frankenstein and her other
writings, indicate an internal conflict with her
own increasing tendency towards conservatism. The
next chapter will deal with her conventional-mindedness
which became quite apparent in her writing after
Shelley's death. That Mary was extremely dependent
on Shelley in 1816 becomes clear if we imagine her
situation if he had deserted her. Not only was she,
rejected by respectable society as a fallen woman,
but she had also been shunned by her own family.
She had no means of support and was the mother of
an illegitimate child. No wonder she married Shelley
within the month of his first wife's suicide on
December 29, 1816. Godwin who had refused his
approval of her free "marriage" to Shelley but had
continued to obtain money from his son-in-law, then
attended the legal wedding. In his letter of February
21, 1817, he writes with "pleasure" to his brother that his daughter, "a girl without a penny of fortune" had met with a very "good match", and merely describes Shelley without naming him as "the eldest son of Sir Timothy Shelley, of Field Place, in the county of Sussex, Baronet." Mary, however, was also keenly aware that her marriage to Shelley marked a rise in her social status. This is demonstrated by Burton Pollin in his analysis of Mary's short story of 1837, "The Parvenue". (The heroine is torn by a divided loyalty between her bankrupt father and her upper-class husband who raised her from poverty, and is yet isolated and alienated from both.)

Again, though, we must be careful about identifying Frankenstein as Shelley. Richard Holmes points out that in Shelley's "review" of Frankenstein, though Shelley certainly knew how Victor's biography resembled his own, "... implicitly, Shelley accepted his own identification as Frankenstein's monster" because he saw himself as forced into involuntary isolation and malevolence by social ostracism. Holmes quotes this passage from the "review":
It is thus that too often in society those who are best qualified to be its benefactors and its ornaments are branded by some accident with scorn, and changed by neglect and solitude of heart into a scourge and a curse.38 Of course, Shelley's judgement here also explains why Victor's initial creativity, developed in solitude, becomes increasingly egotistical and destructive. Besides, Clerval is probably a portrait of Shelley as Mary liked to think of him.39 As Rieger points out, Clerval is certainly an early version of Adrian, the "Shelley" Mary idealizes in The Last Man.40

It is necessary to point out that though Mary may have feared Shelley's cruelty, he too might have felt himself to be her victim. We have another incident from that summer of 1816 at Diodati to illustrate this possibility. At midnight on June 18, Byron was reading from his manuscript copy of Coleridge's "Christabel" to Polidori (Byron's doctor), Shelley, Mary, and Claire Clairmont. When Byron reached the lines in which Geraldine (who appears to be beautiful and good up to that point in the poem) reveals her hideous bosom, Shelley ran screeching from the room. Polidori reports in his diary that:
He was looking at Mrs S., and suddenly thought of a woman he had heard of who had eyes instead of nipples, which taking hold of his mind, horrified him.41

I do not know the specific causes of Shelley's horror, but something in their relationship seems to have made him identify Mary with Geraldine and himself with the prey, Christabel.

Ellen Moer finds the central biographical impetus for the creation of *Frankenstein* in Mary's own maternal urges to create, and specifically, in one incident of her life, when she wanted to restore life to her own dead infant in the year before she wrote *Frankenstein*. On March 13, 1815, Mary recorded in her journal the trauma of losing her unnamed infant girl: "Dream that my little baby came to life again, ...that it had only been cold, and that we rubbed it before the fire, and it lived. Awake and find no baby. I think about the little thing all day. Not in good spirits." Moer puts in parentheses after this passage Victor's words of hope that he might "bestow animation upon lifeless matter."42 While noting that Mary cherished her own babies, Moer claims that Mary was moralizing about maternal
rejection of offspring:

Most of the novel, roughly two of its three volumes, can be said to deal with the retribution visited upon monster and creator for deficient infant care. Frankenstein seems to be distinctly a woman's mythmaking on the subject of birth precisely because its emphasis is not upon what precedes birth, not upon birth itself, but upon what follows birth: the trauma of the after birth. 43

Indeed the only female "villain" in Frankenstein is Justine's mother who "through a strange perversion" cannot endure her own daughter and suffers to death torn between abhorrence and repentance (P: VI, 68-9). Also, as Morton Kaplan points out, the Creature is very much presented as the newborn: "His crying helplessness, the confusion of his senses, his vulnerability to pain, his inability to communicate, portray the human child at birth as accurately as we could wish." Though Christopher Small is partly right when he claims that the reader cannot help think: "If only Frankenstein had loved this creature," the reader is not allowed any such easy solution. We are forced to face the fact that Victor was given excellent parental care, and yet he did not turn out virtuous or happy. Thus George Levine warns: "the underlying structure
of the book implies an irrational and dangerous world, which cannot be comprehended by rational theory and which is strained with enormous energies latent and repressed.\textsuperscript{46} We can patch together again the biographical materials and speculate indefinitely, and yet never understand the source of the vital energies which animated Frankenstein and his creature into a life of their own.

Some critics have attempted to deal with the "latent and repressed" energies of \textit{Frankenstein} by seeing the Creature as Victor's double. For instance, Masao Miyoshi re-interprets \textit{Frankenstein} according to the central motif of his book, \textit{The Divided Self}. "Scientific" Frankenstein becomes "unbalanced" when he moves away from "poetical" Clerval.\textsuperscript{47} The Creature's murders are:

\ldots a projection of Frankenstein's own suppressed urge to destroy what he loves—a negative impulse lurking in the depths of rationalism. Indeed, it is only the absence of a carefully conceived plan that distinguishes Frankenstein's creation of the monster from Dr. Jekyll's of Mr Hyde, who is turned loose solely as a means by which the creator realizes his secret and abominable desires. The common error of calling the Monster 'Frankenstein' has considerable justification. He is the scientist's deviant self.\textsuperscript{48}
Surely, it is a distortion of the novel to see the Creature as a "Mr Hyde" or as a "deviant self". Miyoshi himself notes how the complex Creature mirrors "his creator's cycle of guilt and remorse."49 As I demonstrated in chapter one of this thesis, the Creature reflects the same inner conflict between benevolent and malicious urges as Victor (and Mary herself). Also ignoring the ethically-motivated side of the Creature, Morton Kaplan has written a Freudian interpretation of the novel in which "the monster becomes no more than agent of his [Frankenstein's] wishes—the embodiment of his own monstrous passions, sexual and murderous".50 Kaplan puts particular emphasis on the monster falling in love with Caroline, Victor's mother (i.e., her portrait in little William's locket), and says that the monster's crimes act out Victor's oedipal passions; "the psychopath destroys the women who remind him of his mother".51 Kiely's comments on the dream which Frankenstein has right after the Creature is animated complement Kaplan's interpretation: "In this extraordinary rendition of an Oedipal nightmare, Mary shows, without moral comment, the regressive depths
of her hero's mind." \(^{52}\) Kaplan explains that Frankenstein continually flees from the creature not only because, as he admits, "I am the murderer" but because he is protecting "the guilty agent of his own criminality". \(^{53}\) Only when all of his loved ones are dead does he try to end the Monster's career. Since the Monster practically told Victor he intended to murder Elizabeth in his threat: "I will be with you on your wedding night,"

No answer is tenable other than that he wishes her death, that the monster is his double-agent, and that his ignorance, secretiveness, and folly are all feigned. Even the manner in which we are told, 'the whole truth rushed into my mind,' suggests how the thought is kept from consciousness only until it is too late. \(^{54}\)

Although there is some truth in Kaplan's interpretation of the novel, he puts too much emphasis on the criminality of the Creature. By allowing the unknown within Victor, the Creature, to present his complexity in his own words, Mary Shelley suggests, in Levine's words, "that the monstrous in us can be both beautiful and generous," \(^{55}\) Kaplan, in a sense, accepts Victor's self-deluded verdict on the Creature's essence: "vampire" self. Actually Victor usually
refuses to be aware that the monster has any relationship to his own desires, and only once does he acknowledge this directly. Just after Victor learns of William’s murder and is returning home, he sees the Creature among the rocks and decides that the Creature is the murderer. "The mere presence of the idea was an irresistible proof of the fact." Mary then has him go on to this one brief self-realization:

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. (F: VII, 80)

Characteristically though, Victor hates the irrationality in himself which he cannot control so much that he projects it into something other than himself, and thus he calls the creature of his mind: "fiend", "devil", or at best, "wretch". In her poem, "Speeches for Dr. Frankenstein", Margaret Atwood gives her Frankenstein this same tendency of objectifying his own dark side:
Reflection, you have stolen everything you needed

... You have transmuted yourself to me...

Now you accuse me of murder

Can't you see
I am incapable?

Blood of my brain,
it is you who have killed these people. *57*

By the end of the poem, the piece Victor had sliced loose from himself and called Creation has assumed its own defiant existence: "I will not come when you call." In Mary's novel, too, by the closing chase scenes, Victor has managed to dissociate himself so completely from his creature's actions that he imagines himself an avenging angel in the service of his sacred loved ones:

I pursued my path towards the destruction of the daemon more as a task enjoined by heaven, as the mechanical impulse of some power of which I was unconscious, than as the ardent desire of my own soul... (F: XXIV, 205)

Victor's capacity for narcissistic self-delusion seems endless.

At this point it is fruitful to look at two of Mary Shelley's short tales because in them she
not only set up the double motif, but also intimated how she thought the protagonist should respond to his double since both stories end happily. (It is important to note that both stories were written at least ten years after *Frankenstein* when Mary was prone to "solve" problems in her writings rather than describe them honestly in all their irrationality.) In "Ferdinando Eboli", published in 1829, the noble, prosperous, and handsome Count Ferdinand Eboli is betrothed to fair Adalinda. Just before he leaves on a military campaign, he takes formal leave of his fiancée and his future father-in-law. That night Adalinda hears someone climb onto her balcony and she recognizes her lover. Alone together for the first time, they experience "Love's own hour", and Adalinda gives him a lock of her hair. This nocturnal visitor turns out to be Ludovico, a "natural" elder son of Ferdinando's father, who in revenge for the neglect shown him, kidnaps Ferdinand and usurps his position as count and as Adalinda's fiancée. Ferdinand is imprisoned but escapes becoming a lowly robber as his brother had been. Ludovico is, however, not entirely vicious
and tries to win Adalinda with the truth about how unfairly he had been treated and of how she actually fell in love with him, the false Eboli, that night when he came to her room. She, of course, prefers the proper Eboli, who soon gets his position back. Ferdinand then predictably forgives the repentent Ludovico, who then goes to die honourably in battle. Mary fails to develop the potential of the double in this story; Ludovico, though, does briefly show the characteristic moral ambiguity of the Creature when he hesitates in his diabolical plan to argue the justice of his actions. 58

"The Transformation", published in The Keepsake for 1831, is a much more effective story and clearly resembles Frankenstein. We have the same kindly father-figure (Torelli), the same patient fiancé (Juliet), and the same arrogant young man (Guido). Guido deserts his social obligations for a life of debauchery and crime. Finally, the fiend so "possessed... [his] soul" that he loses all his possessions and is alienated from Torelli and Juliet. They are ready to forgive him and await only his humble remorse, but Guido in defiance decides to die rather than to submit. At
this point, he meets a very deformed dwarf who praises Beelzebub, and has powers to end a storm and to produce a chest of unlimited wealth. The dwarf bargains to exchange his chest for the use of Guido's handsome body for three days, and Guido agrees. Predictably, the dwarf does not return with his body, and Guido, in his distorted body, limps to Torelli's villa to find that Juliet is about to marry the dwarf in the form of his own reformed, penitent self. Guido then decides to end "the machinations of the fiend" by killing his body even if it means his own death. During the fight scene, the dwarf-in-his-body acts in contradictory ways seemingly asking to be stabbed and yet resisting. At the end, when Guido awakens again in his own body with Juliet caring for him, he is confused. Was the dwarf a fiend? Or was he his own guardian-angel who externalized Guido's monstrous pride in the dwarf body? The ending is both happy and moralistic as Guido gratefully accepts the self-knowledge that the dwarf-doppelganger he fought was somehow his own fiendish self. The creature is not strictly Frankenstein's double.
though he is an unleashed aspect of Frankenstein's psyche. Frankenstein's realization that the Creature is his "vampire" self is a self-protective lie which the novel as a whole refutes. What Frankenstein expresses in his irrational rejection of his Creature is his own (and Mary's) psychological inability to face the success of modern-Prometheanism which is man's struggle to become "divine", to make earth heaven.

We have no reason to doubt the claim Shelley makes in his 1818 Preface to Frankenstein that the author of the novel thought the creation of life was "not of impossible occurrence"; as Mary herself says in her 1831 introduction, she heard Byron and Shelley talk of Erasmus Darwin provoking a piece of vermicelli to life in a jar and this was one of the conversations which led her to invent her story:

Perhaps a corpse would be reanimated; galvanism had given token of such things: perhaps the component parts of a creature might be manufactured, brought together, and endued with vital warmth.

In the novel, Mary maintains the same vagueness on the subject of which methods Victor used to manufac-
ture life. He collects bones and selects "features" for his creation (F: IV, 58; V, 60); thus, at times, we are led to think of the Creature as the patched-together monster propagated by the film versions of the Frankenstein tale. However, we then are left wondering, with the critic Silva Norman, how the eight foot monster could have been made with human bones, or with Martin Tropp, what raw materials could have been used on the Orkney island which had only five inhabitants. At the same time, Frankenstein's use of the phrase "lifeless clay" hints that he is using the traditional creating materials of both God (according to Genesis and Milton) and Prometheus (according to Ovid). Robert Philmus suggests that the reason she is not specific in her description of his methodology is because of her ignorance of science. What was much more important, however, to Mary Shelley than her acceptance that modern science might achieve such a feat was her evaluation of the effect of such an achievement: "His success would terrify the artist," writes Mary in her 1831 Introduction. Moreover, she assumed that she had hit on that which would be universally horrifying,
that which spoke to the "mysterious fears of our nature"; "What terrified me will terrify others." As Shelley wrote in the 1818 Preface, what the novel wants to emphasize is "the truth of elementary principles of human nature". Victor is unable to face the fact that he can make life, that he is "divine"; and hence, paradoxically, that the origins of man are not divine, we are not created in the image of God, we originate in filth and worms.

Although when Victor begins to frequent the graveyards in order to study the processes of life and death, he asserts that his mind is superstition-free, yet he is in the habit of referring to his female loved ones as "guardian angel" (F: I, 38), and "being heaven-sent" (F: I, 38); Elizabeth also has a "saintly soul" and "celestial eyes" (F: II, 41-2). He wants to defeat decay and death which sicken him. Accordingly, his inability to accept the origins of life as he "discovered" them leads him to reject his creature for unmistakable reasons: the Creature is a "filthy creation", a "filthy mass" (F: IV, 58; XVII, 149; my italics).
Frankenstein is no detached observer as he watches in the graveyard as the "wonders of the eye and brain" of man decay to filth and become "the food of the worm" (F: IV, 55). As Joseph Needham illustrates in his History of Embryology, the "rationalistic" scientists of the period 1700-1850 were still trying to find verification if not for God's good order, at least for the socially-derived concepts of relationships according to which their community then lived:

theological naturalists... hailed with enthusiasm the discovery of monogamy in tortoises, or mother-love in goats, but they had nothing to say concerning the habits of the hookworm parasite or the appearance of embryonic monsters in man. Not until the beginning of the nineteenth century did it become clear that Nature cannot be divided into the Edifying, which may with pleasure be published, and the Unedifying, which must be kept in obscurity.66

Before he starts his work, Victor expects to be revered as a "father" by his creature-children; "A new species would bless me as its creator and source. Many happy and excellent natures would owe their being to me. No father could claim the gratitude of his child so completely as I should deserve theirs." (F: IV, 57).
But in his ambitions, he is more addicted to the "superstitions" of modern-Prometheanism with its quest for divinity, for dominance over nature, and for the exemption of man who feeds on other species from becoming food himself for other life forms.

Victor describes his violation of nature during his work on his creature by noticing that not only did he ignore his duties to his family, but he was insensitive to the beauty of nature. In particular, he missed the spring, nature's own season of resurrection. Yet "the fall of a leaf startled me, and I shunned my fellow-creatures as if I had been guilty of a crime." (F: IV, 59). After his project is over, has left home, and Victor is no longer striving to control nature, he welcomes "divine spring" which restores his joy of life (F: V, 65). In fact, Frankenstein's crime is his reversal of natural process; he fed the living to the dead; he "tortured the living animal to animate the lifeless clay" (F: IV, 58).

Victor's nightmare which occurs immediately after the creature is "born" forbodes nature's nemesis: Elizabeth "in the bloom of health" becomes the corpse of his mother, and the worms, one of the beings
in the long chain of life-renewal which Frankenstein tried to short-circuit, eat the living. This pattern of nightmare re-occurs in Victor's delirium, when he is in jail for the murder of Clerval: "blooming" children, brides and youthful lovers become "prey for worms" (P: XXI, 178); he even experiences his own suffering as a "never-dying worm alive in my bosom" (P: VIII, 91).

Frankenstein is caught in the horror of modern-Promethean science which as it began to make man divine also forced him to see his "filthy" physical origins. Aply, the monster as living, unedifying filth kills off the "celestial" beings. In her "Speeches for Dr. Frankenstein", Margaret Atwood has captured the sense of Victor's self-disgust, and the necessity of his rejecting the creature:

I was insane with skill:
I made you perfect.

I should have chosen instead
to curl you small as a seed,

trusted beginnings. Now I wince before this plateful of results:

core and rind, the flesh between
already turning rotten.
I stand in the presence of the destroyed god:

a rubble of tendons, knuckles and raw-sinews.

Knowing that the work is mine
how can I love you? 68

Paradoxically, though Mary allows Victor to become "divine" and, thereby, undermine the claim that God the Creator exists, she does not let him cope psychologically with his success. Thus Victor would rather see his creative activity as sinful than face that man originated in the image of the worm.

In the twentieth century attempt at elevating our "lowly" origins and instincts, we have created a "spiritualized" evolutionary biology. As it is described by Michael Polanyi, biology is the study of the history of our triumphant rebellion against meaningless chaos; in the modern-Promethean attitude, all life gropes towards the ascendancy which led to man and the development of consciousness. Even the bacillus and the worm are given places in this heroic struggle: the bacillus "set up a centre of self-interest against the world-wide drift of meaningless happenings"; and the worm, at a later stage towards consciousness, formed a ganglion at the tip of its
body with which to meet and understand the exterior world for the rest of the organism. "Within this active centre the animal's personhood is intensified in relationship to a subservient body. So we find prefigured the cranial dominance which gave rise to the characteristic position of mind in the body of man." 69 Freud's motto for The Interpretation of Dreams signals a parallel attempt in psychology to elevate the sexual and instinctual physicality of man: "Flectere si nequeo superos, Acheronta movebo."

Though Victor loves to praise Elizabeth's ethereal virtues, his behaviour shows his revulsion to being with her in the flesh. Not only does he stay away for six years at Ingolstadt and then take off for England, he also has trouble going home. When coming from Ingolstadt to Geneva, he has to remain two days at Lausanne because "fear overcame me; I dared not advance, dreading a thousand nameless evils that made me tremble, although I was unable to define them." (F: VII, 77). Even after he is at home, and he has identified the Creature, and at the same time himself, as the murderer of William,
he still says, "solitude was my only consolation—
depth, dark, death-like solitude" (F: IX, 93), and
continually escapes Elizabeth's company to be alone.
either sailing on the lake or climbing in the mountains.
In fact, in a perverse way, the reason he produces
life in his solitary cell is to avoid a woman's
womb as a "workshop of filthy creation" (F: IV, 58).
Many of the film progeny of Frankenstein emphasize
the gigantic, antiseptic machinery used by Frankenstein
to produce his monster, but Mary herself makes
Victor's horror the result of facing the fleshy
physicality of his creating. Even though, in her
1831 Introduction to the novel, she mentions a
"powerful engine", the rejection scene is the direct
consequence of his revulsion for the body of his crea-
ture. Accordingly, Mary is perhaps referring to
the womb when she claims Victor mocked the "stupendous
mechanism" of the Creator.

In conclusion then, Frankenstein and the Creature
initially came to life when Mary allowed her unconscious
horror of the success of modern-Prometheanism to
take its own form, and thus from her dream-alembic she
brewed out the essential symbol we have used for the
past 150 years to express our irrational fear of, and fascination with the manipulation by man of both external and internal nature. If we missed the basic conservatism of the original dream, which became the rejection scene of Chapter five, we can find it again at the very end of the novel when, as Harold Bloom points out, "the daemon is allowed a final image of reversed Prometheanism."
Chapter Four

MARY SHELLEY'S "INTERIOR FATALITY"

With my habit of going backstage always, I did not find that the drama lay in tragic incidents of a person's life, but in the hidden motivations which lay behind these incidents, the "interior fatality". I was more curious as to what prevented a personality from developing, a talent from blossoming, a life from expanding, a love from being fulfilled. My personal obsession with a human being's potential drove me to seek the handicaps, blocks, interferences, impediments. ¹

Anais Nin

I must work hard amidst the vexations that I perceive are preparing for me—to preserve my peace and tranquillity of mind. I must preserve some, if I am to live; for, since I bear at the bottom of my heart a fathomless well of bitter waters, the workings of which my philosophy is ever at work to repress, what will be my fate if the petty vexations of life are added to this sense of eternal and infinite misery? ²

Mary Shelley
October 5, 1822
After failing to write a eulogistic biography of Shelley after his death, in 1826 Mary Shelley published *The Last Man* in which she created Adrian, her fictional, idealized Shelley. Yet as William Walling's chapter on the novel demonstrates, *The Last Man* is a "Burkean" novel which reacts against Shelley's vision of the future: "In the over-all implications of *The Last Man*, we find Mary making an unconscious palinode to many of the political and social ideas she shared with Shelley while he was still alive." Moreover, Walling sees the novel as "a startlingly pessimistic allegory which identifies equalitarianism with a plague virulent enough to destroy civilization itself": Adrian (the last descendent of the royal house which abdicated in order to establish democracy) is an ineffectual dreamer until he re-assumes his traditional noble leadership and fights with his people against the "plague"; Ryland, the commoner who becomes the Protector in the new republic and who is the active champion of many of Shelley's own political ideas, shows his vulgar origins during the plague by becoming a despicable coward; the aristocratic Lord
Raymond, who advocates the return to paternalistic leadership, is treated favourably throughout the novel. As Hugh J. Luke, Jr. points out in his introduction to The Last Man, Mary creates "another fragmentary portrait" of Shelley in the character old Merrival, the astronomer, and there is an underlying bitterness against a man "far too long-sighted in his view of humanity to heed the casualities of the day, and [who] lived in the midst of contagion unconscious of its existence." Because Merrival is preoccupied with calculating the nature of the earthly heaven which will exist six thousand years hence, he does not see the starvation and suffering of his own wife, children and contemporaries. Moreover, Mary uses the plague as a warning to man "the heaven-climber"; Nature teaches us the proper humility:

Yet a feeling of awe, a breathless sentiment of wonder, a painful sense of the degradation of humanity, was introduced into every heart. Nature, our mother, and our friend, had turned on us a brow of menace. She shewed us plainly, that, though she permitted us to assign her laws and subdue her apparent powers, yet, if she put forth but a finger, we must quake. She could take our globe, fringed with mountains, girded by the atmosphere, containing the condition of our being, and all that
man's mind could invent or his force achieve; she could take the ball in her hand, and cast it into space, where life would be drunk up, and man and all his efforts for ever annihi-
lated. 7

Here in The Last Man, she consciously preaches her conservative horror of modern-Promethean accomplish-
ments, but in Frankenstein, the dream-symbol which is the artistic prophecy of the novel, i.e., her creation of that horrifying image of the "pale student of the unhallowed arts" and his creation, the "hideous phantasm of a man", originates in her inarticulate state of mind. She does not tamper either with her creations, Frankenstein and his monster, who still continue to live independent mythological lives, nor with the contradictori-
ness of the novel which is alive because liberal hopes and conservative fears of human advancement are allowed to be intertwined, as they are in reality, in vital relationship to each other. As she becomes increasingly aware of her own tempermental conser-
vatism, which I identify as her "interior fatality", and no longer has to reconcile herself daily to living with Shelley and his world view, her writing begins to lose its life.
In her later fiction, Mary Shelley repeatedly returns to the same theme of showing the evil of Faustian self-pride, but her creative arteries hardened into complacent formulas. One example illustrates a typical pattern. In *Falkner*, published in 1837, Mary is clearly writing her version of her father's story of Falkland in *Caleb Williams*, and in it, she "solves" the tensions between the victim and the self-willed tyrannical man. Falkner's crime in his past is the causing of the death of a woman he loved and kidnapped when she refused to leave her husband for him. In despair, Falkner is about to commit suicide in a cemetery when he is stopped by a little girl, Elizabeth, who is day-dreaming on her mother's grave. The orphan not only helps Falkner back to a virtuous life, but also, when she is grown up, reconciles the guilty Falkner with the son of his victim. Through her love and patient suffering, Elizabeth redeems both men and, in the end, all three settle down together in tranquil domestic harmony.  

As I demonstrated in chapter one, the truth of *Frankenstein* is in its Gothic roughness and in-
consistency: Frankenstein is both Faustian megalomanic and benefactor of our species; the Creature is both the criminal and the victim of society; society is both tyrannical and loving. Mary, in 1818, seems able to dwell in "uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact & reason", in what Keats calls "Negative Capability", and thus, she articulates the ambivalence of her contemporaries. She is a prophetess, or what LaBarre calls "a cultural hero", because somehow through her own subjective processes of trying to reconcile the radical "spirit of her age" with her own and her contemporaries' disillusion with the radical hopes of the 1790's, she created the living mythology which we use to articulate our conservative horror that modern-Promethean science will be successful:

Every movement finds its culture hero or prophet. His genius is communication. In one sense he is an exponent of the standard psychic state of his contemporaries, spokesman for his generation. In another sense, his creative fantasy, if apt, becomes by psychic contagion and irrational phatic communication a 'folie a deux' raised to a geometric power equal to the number of his communicants. 10

Frankenstein does not condemn modern-Promethean
efforts, but rather reveals the complexity of the human psychological attempt to keep pace with technological advancement towards "divinity". With every new triumph of the human species, our guilt and anxiety manifests itself, and Frankenstein and his Monster receive an infusion of life and thus live on.
Notes for Chapter One


2. Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein (or the Modern Prometheus)* (New York: Airmont Books, 1963), 14. All further references to this, the 1831 text of the novel, will be indicated by the abbreviation: "F" and will be given in the body of the thesis.


8. *Ibid.*, 47


10. Mary wrote this in February, 1815, when her father was on one hand, refusing to communicate with her and Shelley and on the other, insisting on his interest in Shelley's finances. *Journal*, 37

11. *Journal*, 204.

13. Ibid., I, L. 628


16. Ibid., 672


18. Andre Maurois, Ariel: The Life of Shelley (New York: Frederick Unger Publishing Co., 1952) 298. See also pp. 217, 239; Maurois is one of the critics who finds it necessary to side with one of Shelley's wives and he picks the more human harriet.


23. Ibid., 37


27. Paul, 73.


34. Spark, 21.


37. *Mary Wollstonecraft, Maria or the Wrongs of Woman* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1975), 74.

38. Ibid., 27.

39. Ibid., 104.

40. Ibid., 28.

41. Ibid., 53-6

43. Janet Todd has written a more detailed comparison of *Maria or the Wrongs of Woman* and *Frankenstein* in which she concludes, "the similarities between the experiences and characters of Jemima and the Monster are sufficiently striking to suggest that Mary Shelley had her mother's work somewhere in mind when she wrote her novel." See "Frankenstein's Daughter: Mary Shelley and Mary Wollstonecraft", Women and Literature, Vol 4 #2 (Fall, 1976), 25.


50. This is one case in which the 1832 is vastly superior to the 1818 text; in 1818, this section read, "I perceived a woman passing near... Here, I thought, is one of those whose smiles are bestowed on all but me; she shall not escape... I approached her unperceived, and placed the portrait securely in one of the folds of her dress." 171.

51. Krempe also shows the same kind of narrow authoritarian attitude towards alchemy as Victor's father exhibited. He calls it "nonsense", while Alphonse calls it "sad trash".


54. Mary seems momentarily influenced by Shelley's earlier ideas on vegetarianism which blamed diet for social ills. See Holmes, 220.


57. Levine, 25.


60. Ibid., 190.
Notes for Chapter Two


Christopher Small's chapter "Robots and Resurrection" in his Ariel Like a Harpy: Shelley, Mary and Frankenstein (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1972) stresses our need to face the monster we have let loose and not to try to manipulate that meeting. "What makes the monster so terrifying is his unpredictability and independence of human will; he is an instrument disobedient to his maker." Small then goes on to show that though "the whole of SF represents an attempt to solve the problem with which Mary's novel leaves us," it is limited by the fact that its definition of man is "scientific man" and therefore, Science Fiction "is inescapably trapped in seeking to cast Satan out with Satan."

Moreover, the whole growing ecological awareness is a protest against the Frankenstein-like "benefactors" who proceed with their spectacular discoveries without considering the relationship of their creation to the rest of life. Rachel Carson's Silent Spring, which is an attack on the short-sighted, irresponsible creating and unleashing of chemical pesticides, is typical.

2. "Ectypal" is a word cited by Karl Kerényi in his Prometheus: Archetypal Image of Human Existence (New York: Pantheon Books, 1963) "for that which corresponds to [archetypal]... in our temporal world... the phenomenal world, the world of sense as distinguished from the archetypal world." xviii.

By "ectypal", then, I mean historical incarnations of the archetypal relationship of tyrant and victim, though what is at issue in the novel and in our era, in general, is the possibility of ending this "eternal" relationship.
3. Ibid., 46.

4. Ibid., 37


7. Aeschylus, L. 189.

8. Ibid., L. 946-7.

9. Ibid., L. 29.

10. Ibid., L. 442-3.

11. Ibid., L. 505.

12. Ibid., L. 149.


15. Ibid., L. 191-5.


17. "The Christian and the primitive pagan lived together in him in a strange and marvellous way to form a conflicting whole... His spirit was heroic, because creative, and as such was doomed to Promethean guilt." C.G. Jung, "Paracelsus", *Alchemical Studies*, trans. R.F. C. Hull (New York: Princeton University Press, 1967), 189.


20. Adam is an "imaginary" being as a single individual, but not as a symbol of a collective primordial experience.


22. See note #2 in Chapter One.

23. Small, Ariel, 192. William H. Hildebrand says Mary evokes the connection between Prometheus and the Creature by having the Creature "hanging among the rocks". "On Three Prometheuses: Shelley's Two and Mary's One," Serif, XI (Summer, 1974), 3-11.


26. Frankenstein, 172. As always Victor Frankenstein views his action in relationship to communal moral order and not to any absolute or divine moral order. In his article, "Mary Shelley's Modern Prometheus: A Study in the Ethics of Scientific Creativity", Wilfred Cude emphasizes just this point: "Mary Shelley is probing a problem of secular ethics: she confines her work to this world because her theme is of concern only to this world." Dalhousie Review, 52 (1972/73), 216.


30. Mary Wollstonecraft, Maria or the Wrongs of Woman (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1975), 38.

31. M.K. Joseph writes in his introduction to his edition of Frankenstein that Prometheus "was also an accepted metaphor of the artist, but when Mary Shelley transfers this to the scientist, the implications are radical." (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), xiv.

32. Florescu, In Search, 34-6.


35. Ibid., 4.

36. Frankenstein (1818), 39.

37. William Godwin, Caleb Williams (London: Frederick Warne & Co., n.g.), preface.

38. Political Justice, 773-5.

39. Ibid., 776

40. Ibid., 776


42. Caleb Williams, 49.

43. Ibid., 49
Caleb is trying to escape Gines, and compares Falkner's watchfulness to God's: "It was like what has been described of the eye of Omniscience, pursuing the guilty sinner..."

Ibid., 135.


Ibid., preface, ix.

Ibid., 66.

Ibid., 81.

Kiely, 165.


Statesman Manual, 32. For Coleridge, the balanced human mind is a tri-unity of reason, religion and the will "which is the sustaining coercive and ministerial power... In its state of immanence (or indwelling) in reason and religion, the Will appears indifferently, as wisdom or as love: two names of the same power, the former more intelligent, the latter more spiritual," 34.

Political Justice, 756-7.

57. Political Justice, 754-5.
58. Ibid., 554.
59. Ibid., 251.
61. Mathilda, 70.
65. Ibid., I, 621-31
66. Political Justice, 248
67. Ibid., 248
68. Prometheus Unbound, II, iii, 36-42.
69. Ibid., II, v, 49-3.
70. Ibid., III, iv, 193-205.
72. Prometheus Unbound, IV, 1, 420-5.
73. This idea is based on Kenneth Burke's essay, "On Tragedy" in Tragedy: Vision and Form:
"For if tragedy is a sense of man's intimate participation in processes beyond himself, we find that science has replaced the older metaphysical structure with an historical structure which gives the individual man ample grounds to feel such participation. What science has taken from us as a personal relationship to the will of Providence, it has regiven as a personal relationship to the slow unwieldy movements of human society." p. 285.
Notes for Chapter Three

1. Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*, p. 41, see note #2, Chapter One.


3. In her 1831 Introduction to the novel, Mary wrote: "I bid my hideous progeny go forth and prosper." The novel was popular as soon as it was published, and many plays based on her idea were put on with great success. In September, 1823, when she first came back to England after Shelley's death, she wrote to Leigh Hunt: "But lo and behold! I found myself famous. *Frankenstein* had prodigious success as a drama, and was about to be repeated, for the twenty-third night, at the English Opera House. The play-bill amused me extremely, for, in the list of dramatis personae, came '_______', by Mr. T. Cooke." This nameless mode of naming the unnameable is rather good." Cited by Mrs. Julian Marshall, *The Life & Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley*, 2 vols. (London: Richard Bentley & Son, 1889), II, 94-5.

4. Launcelot Whyte concludes: "I have given sufficient evidence to show that the general conception of unconscious mental processes was conceivable (in post-Cartesian Europe around 1700, topical around 1800, and fashionable around 1870-1880. Also that many special applications of the idea had been systematically developed from 1800 onward. My object in doing this is in degree to belittle Freud's achievement, which would be absurd, but to show that an immense background of sustained thought by a large number of individuals in many countries unconsciously or semi-consciously influences and supports even the most original of minds."


5. Mary wrote this on February 25, 1822.


12. As Martin Tropp points out, "the alert reader will notice that the stories as she remembers them, bear some similarity with the Frankenstein dream; there is a 'kiss of death', a bride who becomes a ghost, some inter-familial murder, and a 'gigantic' and presumably monstrous spectre."


13. Jung, 162.


17. Paul, II, 214.


22. Mathilda, 52.


24. cited by Nitchie, 83.


26. Ibid., 63

27. Tropp points out the similarities between the two babies and the possibility that she is fantasizing the murder of her own son. p. 33.


29. Christopher Small, 100-108.


31. Holmes, 53.

32. Mary Shelley, "Notes to Queen Mab'", I, 339.
33. *Mathilda*, 48


38. Holmes, 334.


40. James Rieger, in his Introduction to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, xxiv.


43. Ibid., 142


45. Christopher Small, 160.


48. Ibid., 84.

49. Ibid., 84.

50. Kaplan, 135.

51. Ibid., 141.


53. Kaplan, 141. Martin Tropp confirms this reading: "Frankenstein wakes from this nightmare of Elizabeth becoming a corpse to see his creation smiling at him in what might be termed a conspiratorial grin, for through the Monster, Frankenstein will achieve all his dreams." 23.

54. Kaplan, 144.

55. Levine, 27.

56. In other words, Frankenstein forsakes his responsibility as a successful alchemist in rejecting his own nature. I quote Jung again to illustrate my point: "Paracelsus, like all the philosophical alchemists, was seeking for something that would give him a hold on the dark, body-bound nature of man, on the soul which, inextricably interwoven with the world and with matter, appeared before itself in the terrifying form of strange, demonical figures and seemed to be the secret source of life-shortening disease. The Church might exorcise demons and banish them, but that only alienated man from his own nature, which, unconscious of itself, had clothed itself in these spectral forms. Not separation of the natures, but union of the natures was the goal of alchemy." p. 161.

58. Collected Tales, 65-80

59. Ibid., 121-135

60. Based on the evidence of Polidori's diary, Rieger argues, "'poor Polidori', not Byron, was Shelley's partner in the scientific conversation that precipitated Mary's germinal nightmare image of the Monster." Introduction, Frankenstein, xviii.


62. Tropp, 44.

63. The motto of Frankenstein is a quote from Paradise Lost: "Did I request thee, Maker, from my clay to mould me man?"

64. As Pollin has noted, Mary was reading Ovid's Metamorphoses in 1815. "Philosophical and Literary Sources of Frankenstein" Comparative Literature, 17 (Spr., 1965), 102.


67. Tropp has illustrated the similarity of the description of Elizabeth's death scene in her bedchamber to the one given here of Victor's nightmare. "Some of the details--the corpse of Elizabeth, the yellow light of the moon through the shutters, and the Monster, grin and all--are identical." 29.

68. Atwood, 44.

70. Using two photographs from the films, Tropp shows how the film, *Bride of Frankenstein* of 1935, improved on the classic Frankenstein film of 1931 by making the gadgets and shape of the "powerful engine" suggestively phallic. See illustrations following page 2.

71. See for instance William Paley's, *Natural Theology* (London, 1802), for contemporary usage of the term "stupendous mechanism" referring to the physiology of the body.

72. Bloom, 128.
Notes for Chapter Four


6. Ibid., 141

7. Ibid., 166


Bibliography


