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The Hideous Progeny of the Anti-Type: An Exploration of Love, Isolation, and Pursuit in the work of the Shelleys

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Introduction:

"I have love in me the likes of which you can scarcely imagine and rage the likes of which you would not believe." –The Creature from *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*[1]

The Shelleys. That name alone conjures up a vast array of images representative of perhaps the most famous family in the history of English literature. Percy Shelley was and continues to be one of the faces of the Romantic movement, producing poetry that changed the course of the written word. Mary Shelley came from a family of rich literary pedigree the daughter of political writer and novelist William Godwin and one of the premiere voices of the women's rights movement, Mary Wollstonecraft. When considering the influence of Shelley and Mary's work combined the effect is immeasurable and they both produced works that continue to stand the test of time.

But another thing comes to mind when considering the Shelleys besides their impressive body of work—their personal lives, fraught with love, scandal, and misfortune. The young Percy Shelley met Mary through her father, whose political views Shelley idolized. The was a problem, though, in that he was already married to his then nineteen year old, Harriet, pregnant with his first child. But Shelley was smitten with the precocious Mary Godwin and they ran away together, bringing along Mary's stepsister Claire Clairmont. As one can imagine, a relationship begun in such a state of passion is primed to become saturated with drama. And so it was.

Although Shelley had declared his love for Mary, there was also much speculation that he was also involved romantically with Claire. Mary may have won over Shelley's affections so

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[1] *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*. Dir. Kenneth Branagh. Perf. Robert De Niro, Kenneth Branagh, Helena Bonham Carter. TriStar Pictures, 1994. Dvd.

that he would leave his wife, but she was not altogether at peace with his possible sexual deviancy. This manifests quite clearly in a letter she wrote to him while he was away at Bishopgate, right around the time when he would have been composing "Alastor," one of the main focuses of this thesis. Richard Holmes points out that her real fears were not his separation from her, but that:

> The real basis for her fears was revealed in a brief paragraph that came unexpectedly in the middle of her letter. 'Pray is Clary with you? for I have enquired several times & no letters – but seriously it would not in the least surprise me if you have written to her from London & let her know that you are there without me that she should have taken some such freak - ' (Holmes, "Up the River" 287)

Holmes continues to point out that it is unknown whether Claire was indeed with Shelley at this time, but her worry about the action speaks louder than the possible action itself.

When Shelley returns he shares a quiet domestic life with Mary for a time which undoubtedly consisted of discussions between the two of his works, certainly of "Alastor: Or the Spirit of Solitude." This poem follows a young Poet on the quest for his idealized love and retells his inevitable death following the unrealizable dream. The philosophical ideas of love that Shelley explores in this work were something he intensely struggled with, but Mary may not have agreed with the conclusions the poem draws. Richard Holmes points out that:

> When Mary Edited *Alastor*, it is suggestive that she tried to draw a veil across the subject matter and implications of the poem…Mary wrote in 1839, 'This is neither the time nor the place to speak of the misfortunes that chequered his life. It will be sufficient to say that, in all he did, he at the time of doing it believed

> himself justified to his own conscience; while the various ills of poverty and loss of friends brought home to him the sad realities of life. Physical suffering had also considerable influence in causing him to turn his eyes inward; inclining him rather to brood over the thoughts and emotions of his own soul than to glance abroad, (Holmes, "Up the River" 306).

Instead of referring to the actual subject matter of the poem, she almost makes an excuse for him pointing to their difficulties around the time "Alastor" was written. But seems to believe that Mary altogether avoided facing Shelley's views on love and his disappointments surrounding it, when in actuality, she engaged the subject matter but in a similar manner as her husband—through her writing.

The story of how the young Mary Shelley thought of and wrote one of the most famous pieces of horror fiction of all time is nearly as infamous as the novel itself. She, Shelley, Byron and another, less known, man named Polidori, sat around one dreary summer reading the ghost stories of others until Byron proposed a contest between the group, to see who could write the best horror story. After many days of not a single thought the horrific nightmare of a student standing over a patchwork man of dead flesh stirring to life provides Mary with her own creative spark and leads her produce the novel as we know it today.

This origin story is almost too good to be true, however, and a little too simple for Mary Shelley's talent. Though the story is undoubtedly true, the idea of Mary's mind being a completely blank slate before this dream came to her is a little absurd, especially when you take her husband's work into account. The dream vision was "Like the fierce fiend of a distempered

dream."[2] But this is not a description of her nightmare, but a line from Shelley's "Alastor" that nearly perfectly describes it. This is too close to be a mere coincidence and points to a perhaps obvious fact—that artists with such fraught lives will inevitably manifest their experiences in their work.

Though critics have made the argument that Shelley's poem "Alastor" and the themes it explored heavily influenced Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* this thesis focuses instead on how the novel is a response. Between Shelley's fickle nature in relationships proved by his abandonment of his first wife, as well as his sexual deviance with Claire Clairmont, it is not surprising that his struggles with the definition of a perfect love is explored in his poetry. It should be equally unsurprisingly then, that Mary would do the same, taking the opportunity in her work to respond and explore this and similar concepts.

Before we begin the examination of how these ideas manifest and correspond in the work of these two authors, a quick note on the text. Though many scholars prefer to use the 1818 edition of *Frankenstein* because of its status as a first edition and it being seen as the most "pure." For the purposes of this thesis, however, the 1831 edition was used including the edits Mary Shelley made after her husband's death. This is because of a heavy focus on the introduction to this edition in chapter two. Regardless of any so-called purity, Mary Shelley made the edits herself and therefore it should be respected as the form of the novel she wished presented to her readership.

As Mary Shelley fondly referred to *Frankenstein* in her introduction, her novel is not simply her own 'hideous progeny' but a work born out of the literary merits of her entire family,

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[2] Abrams, M. H., and Stephen Greenblatt. "Alastor" *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. 7th ed. Vol. 2A. New York: Norton, 2000. 702-19. Print. Line 26.

but especially that of her future husband. She is not the passive, feminine author she is sometimes portrayed as being, instead engaging her own work with that of Shelley's, exploring his ideas further and taking them in a new direction. This is the most evident in references to "Alastor," specifically the poem's failed criticism of a form of narcissistic love focused around the "anti-type," a projection of the ideal self. Mary instead takes this criticism and illustrates the true horrible potential that Percy Shelley seemed blind to, or simply unwilling to see. Mary's hideous progeny is also the offspring of this perhaps misguided ideal, proving a very keen literary eye and master craftsmanship underneath her seminal story of fervent isolationism, the release of a horrific phantasm, and the terrifying consequence of an unchecked intellectualism.

Chapter I

Double Double: Narcissistic Love and Its Multitudes in "Alastor"

If we reason, we would be understood; if we imagine, we would that the airy children of our brain were born anew within another's; if we feel, we would that another's nerves should vibrate to our own, that the beams of their eyes should kindle at once and mix and melt into our own, that burning with the heart's best blood. This is Love. This is the bond and the sanction which connects not only man with man but with everything which exists. We are born into the world, and there is something within us which, from the instant that we live, more and more thirsts after its likeness.—Percy Bysshe Shelley[3]

A Need to Flesh out the Anti-Type

The above quote may be the young Shelley's most clearly articulated attempt to answer a question that many artists have deemed to be indefinite—What is love? Love is not simply an emotion for Shelley, but it seems, an entirely new method of existence—a life born anew with the full integration of another. Our physical make-up must pulse in tandem, the spiritual presence we convey through our eyes must meld into a single shade. We search for what is like us so that it may become us. This, as Shelley boldly states, is love. This passage appears in Shelley's essay simply entitled "Essay on Love," written sometime between 1814 and 1815. Traditionally, critics have taken this essay to be directed at Mary Shelley[4], the young girl with whom he ran away from his first unhappy marriage. A letter from Shelley to his good friend Thomas Jefferson Hogg on October 3rd, 1814 nearly confirms this assumption when he writes of the young Mary:

> I speak thus of Mary now…and so intimately are our natures now united, that I feel whilst I describe her excellencies as if I were an egoist expatiating upon his

[3] Shelley, Percy Bysshe, and Richard Holmes. "Essay On Love." *Shelley on Love: An Anthology*. Berkeley: University of California, 1980. Print. 71.

[4] Holmes, Richard. "Up the River: Bishopgate 1815." *Shelley: The Pursuit.* New York: E. P. Dutton, 1975. Print. 299.

> own perfections. *Then* how deeply did I not feel my inferiority, how willingly confess myself far surpassed in originality, in genuine elevation & magnificence of the intellectual nature until she consented to share her capabilities with me. I speedily conceived an ardent passion to posses this inestimable treasure. (P. B. Shelley, "Love Reborn" 60)

Shelley's actions as described in this letter—the pursuit of Mary, the need to take ownership of her, and their eventual perceived inextricableness—are a near perfect template for his own criteria of love as laid out in the musings of his notebook that would become "On Love."

Unfortunately, not all is ideal in Shelley and Mary's relationship as one may initially glean from the rapture expressed above. Unlike the clear overflow of idealized and seemingly unshakable romantic love present in this letter to Hogg, the essay "On Love" itself begins with the realization of distance between himself and Mary. The essay begins:

> I know not the internal constitution of other men, nor even yours whom I now address. I see that in some external attributes they resemble me but when misled by that appearance I have thought to appeal to something in common and unburdened my inmost soul to them, I have found my language misunderstood like one in a distant and savage land. (P. B. Shelley, "On Love" 71)

It seems as though Shelley's initial impression of perfect semblance between himself and Mary has shifted and he recognizes the inevitable disjointed nature of their relationship. As Shelley continues this introduction to his essay exploring love, he expands his frustration over the rift between himself and Mary to a frustration with every relationship he has, declaring "with a spirit ill fitted to sustain such proof, trembling and feeble through its tenderness, I have sought sympathy and found only repulse and disappointment," (P. B. Shelley, "On Love" 71).

Regardless of this recognition of the gap present between himself and Mary, and the admission of the seeming impossibility of the absence of such a gap, Shelley goes on to assert and insist upon a love build around what he calls the "anti-type; the meeting with an understanding capable of clearly estimating our own; an imagination which should enter into and seize upon the subtle and delicate peculiarities which we have delighted to cherish and unfold in secret," (P. B. Shelley, "One Love" 72). Richard Holmes, in his biography, *Shelley: The Pursuit*, perhaps best summarized the conclusions of "On Love," which in spite of the tensions put forth by its unattainability, "that ideal self or 'prototype' to be discovered within the lover's own heart. The beloved remains, in other words, an ideal projection of the self, which by definition must be unchanging, self-sufficient and therefore ultimately sterile," (Holmes, "Up the River" 303).

Shelley found the concrete definition to the anti-typical structure of love in his prose, but it was not until he set out on the second long poem of his career[5], the 720 lined "Alastor; or, The Spirit of Solitude" that Shelley truly begins to explore the true implications of this philosophy. The poem and its preface were both written in the autumn of 1815 at Bishopgate, around the time of the previously discussed letter to Hogg, though it is not clear whether letter or poem was written first. At this time, Mary had temporarily excluded from the household her step-sister Claire Clairmont, of whom Shelley was quite fond and perhaps sexually involved with as well.[6] This circumstance may have further prompted Shelley's musing on love, which resulted with "Alastor." As Richard Holmes describes, Shelley "had pressed the search into the caverns of his own mind as far as he could go in prose. He now sought the even greater formality and distancing of poetry," (Holmes, "Up the River" 300) and the narcissistic love archetype of the

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[5] Holmes, Richard. "Up the River: Bishopgate 1815." *Shelley: The Pursuit.* New York: E. P. Dutton, 1975. Print. 299-300.

[6] Shelley, Percy Bysshe, and Richard Holmes. "Second Marriage." *Shelley on Love: An Anthology*. Berkeley: University of California, 1980. Print. 67.

anti-type continued to be a central theme, to be critiqued, sought for, romanticized, condemned, and mourned in Shelley's work. If we take "On Love" to be Shelley's academic exploration of his ideas of love, we can then read "Alastor" as a spiritual thought experiment—an exercise to take his ideas and push them to their limits in a form outside of himself though deeply saturated in his own terms.

The Initial Dichotomy—The Two Poets

"Alastor" presents a spiritual exploration on the part of the narrator, or as Shelley himself insists at the start of the Preface, the poem "may be considered as allegorical of one of the most interesting situations of the human mind," (P. B. Shelley, "Preface" 703). Given Shelley's past manner of discussing the matter of love within terms of the very personal and biographical as in his contemporaneous "Essay on Love," the reader is primed to read this poem with an autobiographical lens. Perhaps knowing or fearing this, or perhaps if only for his own personal journey through grappling with ineffable qualities of his idealized version of love, Shelley, according to Holmes, "wrote the poem precisely in order to *distance* himself from his own lived experience," (Holmes, "Up the River" 303). This attempt to distance himself from the subject matter of the poem is quite obvious when examining the structure of the poem in its entirety.

At the onset, the reader is confronted not with verse but with the prose of a preface, in which, Shelley clearly draws a judgment against the absolute devotion to the "anti-typical" construction of love, claiming that those who prefer solitude and self-centeredness to "human sympathy," "languish, because none feel with them their common nature. They are morally dead. They are neither friends, nor lovers, nor fathers, nor citizens of the world, nor benefactors of their country," (P. B. Shelley, "Preface" 703). Shelley is careful, obstinate even, to draw the reader's attention to this judgment early on in the experience of the poem, seemingly divorcing

him from the poet subject of the work. This heavy-handedness and insistence upon his presence as the author of the work, however he may claim to disapprove of the action of the poem, may actually work against any intention to distance himself from the Poet who is the subject of the poem because it draws him into conjunction with the poet narrator whose own preface and coda frame the structure of "Alastor." The dichotomy and inextricability of the 'narrator poet' and 'subject Poet' makes Shelley's self-assertion of identity with the narrator poet problematic as it draws attention to his contradictory attitudes present in the preface and those present in the text of the poem itself.

The poem begins in a manner one might expect from an icon of the Romantic period, calling back to the classical traditions with an apostrophe to the muse, in this case, mother nature. The first stanza is one of praise to the great immensity of creation, saturated with descriptive language of the world that houses and inspires this poet narrator, but overall a rather generic or expected beginning to a poem. The second stanza continues this praise but in language that is much more dynamic and personal, turning away from general description to the actual cry for literary aid from the narrator poet. He pleads:

> Favour my solemn song, for I have loved
> Thee ever, and thee only; I have watched
> Thy shadow, and the darkness of thy steps,
> And my heart ever gazes on the depth
> Of thy deep mysteries.
> . . . . . .
> Hoping to still these obstinate questionings
> Of thee and thine . . . (P. B. Shelley, "Alastor" 18-23, 26-27)

Here, the love of the narrator poet perhaps extends beyond the expectations of the reader. Nature is the sole object of the narrator poet's love and devotion and this love is described in terms of an insatiable and even voyeuristic obsession. This laudation of nature is extreme and implicates the narrator poet in the same sort of isolation warned against in the preface of "Alastor." Already, there is a discord between what the preface claims the poem sets out to do and what the text of the poem actually conveys.

However the narrator poet, although his love is reserved exclusively for nature, is not completely alone. In his continuing ode to nature he refers to a partner through whose mutual love he attempts to find deeper understanding of the wonders of nature:

> . . . In lone and silent hours,
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Have I mixed awful talk and asking looks
>
> With my most innocent love, until strange tears
>
> Uniting with those breathless kisses, made
>
> Such magic as compels the charmed night
>
> To render up thy charge:…and, though ne'er yet
>
> Thou hast unveil'd they inmost sanctuary, (P. B. Shelley, "Alastor" 29, 33-38)

In what may seem to be a contradiction to the narrator poet's earlier claims that nature is the sole proprietor of his love, he introduces a second figure who also possesses his love and is referred to as actually being his love. If we identify the narrator poet as Shelley himself, as his assertion of authorial presence in the preface would lead us to, then it may be that this "innocent love" of the poem is a thinly veiled reference to Mary who, as we know from "On Love," he had not previously scrupled to make blatant reference to. The exact significance of this will be explored

at greater length in a later chapter, but for now it is important to keep in mind the possibility of an autobiographical mapping, though not to think of the poem exclusively with lens.

The contradiction between the poet narrator's sole love for nature and his love for this unnamed figure is reconciled because his love for the unnamed figure serves only to attempt to understand more intimately the mysteries that pervade through nature. But regardless of how "innocent" the narrator poet claims his love for this figure is, the language used to describe the exploration of nature is very sexual. The "tears" and "breathless kisses," create the sense of a building passion that quickens and "compels" until the action reaches the self-censored climax represented by the ellipses. But this method of the exploration of the ideal of nature through sexual means fails. Nature remains above comprehension. Regardless of this failure, the narrator poet continues his journey to understanding, "I wait thy breath, Great Parent, that my strain/May modulate with murmurs of the air," (P. B. Shelley, "Alastor" 45-46).

The narrator poet then moves to immediately introduce the character of the Poet, or the 'subject Poet,' around whom the narrative action of the poem takes place. This structural choice on the part of Shelley, at first seems to suggest an emphasized or even insured degree of removal between himself and the physical and spiritual journey the subject Poet embarks on as "Alastor" unfolds. However, though the form implies this distancing the actual language of the poem implies just the opposite. The first contradiction in the text that would imply a closeness of the narrator poet to the subject Poet occurs in the lines, "no lorn bard/Breathed o'er his dark fate one melodious sigh:/He lived, he died, he sung, in solitude," (P. B. Shelley, "Alastor" 58-60). This presence of a claim that no poet mourned the loss of the subject Poet seems extremely odd in a poem with the exact purpose of retelling the subject Poet's life and eventual death. This contradictory statement is either simply a self-effacing comment on the part of narrator poet or it

implies a deeper connection between narrator poet and subject Poet. As the poem continues the latter possibility is the one that becomes more plausible as the language itself begins to reflect the similarities and intimate knowledge between the two poets, rather and only circumstance.

After this initial, brief description of the subject Poet's inevitable doom that the narrator poet somehow has access to knowledge of though he claims the subject Poet lived in solitude, the narrator poet turns to a description of the subject Poet as he lived:

> . . . Every sight
> And sound from the vast earth and ambient air,
> Sent to his heart its choicest impulses.
> The fountains of divine philosophy
> Fled not his thristing lips . . .
> . . . . . .
> . . . Nature's most secret steps
> He like her shadow has pursued, (P. B. Shelley, "Alastor" 68-72, 81-82)

The very first impression the reader received of the subject Poet as he lived is one of a man with an intense respect and love for nature and an insatiable thirst for answers to her greater mysteries. This is nearly an exact replica of the manner in which the narrator poet introduces himself. As the poem continues, the language that now describes the subject Poet's relationship to nature is lifted straight from that which described the narrator poet's relationship only a few lines previously. Bother are journeying after nature but are only able to access her indirectly, through her shadow. Such repetition and within such close proximity to each other cannot be mere coincidence. Shelley is drawing attention specifically to his *failure* to distance himself from what he is aware is the flawed ideal of the anti-type. Being aware of this of failure adds a more

dynamic component to the drama of the rest of the poem, creating a nuanced and conflicted exploration of anti-typcial love, rather than the moralizing critique that Shelley initially primes the reader to expect. The correlations between narrator poet and subject Poet reach a pinnacle right at the first dramatic turn of the poem where Shelley truly begins to delve into the meaning of the pursuit of the anti-type through the introduction of the subject Poet's vision of the veiled maid.

The Veiled Maid—Prototype and the Anti-Type

Given the already linked relationship between the narrator poet and the subject Poet, Shelley has set up a narrative that is dependant on dualism. Thus, we are readied to spot correlations between characters of similar natures as perhaps having a more cohesive relationship. Almost immediately after the emphasis of the similitude between the two poets of "Alastor," the reader is met with subsequent repetitive imagery, this time between the "Arab maiden" and the "veiled maid." The reader first meets the Arab maiden in a description which at first seems to only serve as a device for the narrator poet to continue his narrative and praise of the subject Poet. He describes her unrequited interest, narrating how she:

> . . . stole
> from duties and repose to tend his steps,
> Enamoured, yet not daring for deep awe
> To speak her love, and watched his nightly sleep,
> Sleepless herself, to gaze upon his lips,
> Parted in slumber, whence the regular breath
> Of innocent dreams arose; then, when red morn
> Made paler the pale moon, to her cold home

Wildered, and wan, and panting, she returned. (P. B. Shelley, “Alastor” 131-139)

While these lines do work to illustrate the love the subject Poet garnered from those around him, it is too long and too specific an aside to simply posit the Arab maiden as a throw away character. Shelley primarily brings attention to her significance by the fact that her description stands alone as its own stanza and this importance is only emphasized by the language she is described in. She is the active opposite to the subject Poet’s passivity. She goes out of her way to tend to the poet, while she loses sleep over him he slumbers on. When his breath is regular and calm hers is bewildered and panting. But, although her affections for the subject Poet are active in that they cause her to care for the Poet and to distemper her breath, she remains, like the subject Poet, passive. She is silent, too smitten by the subject Poet to dare converse, completely cutting off any chance of a spiritual connection. Throughout this entire stanza, there is absolutely no indication of any agency from the Poet. The pure physicality of the Arab maiden’s attempts to relate to the subject Poet do not seem to interest him in the slightest, and without even a hint of recognition of her, the subject Poet continues on his journey.

The passivity that the subject Poet exhibits towards the Arab maiden continues to be one of his defining features as the poem goes on. After this stanza of rest with the Arab maiden, both the subject Poet and reader partake in a whirlwind, almost supernatural itinerary:

> The Poet wandering on through Arabie
> And Persia, and the wild Carmanian waste,
> And o’er the aerial mountains which pour down
> Indus and Oxus from their icy caves,
> In joy and exultation held his way;
> Till in the vale of Cashmire, (P. B. Shelley, “Alastor” 140-145)

The locations the subject Poet passes through on his travels are listed roughly west to east as they are geographically located. The quick succession of these places gives the reader a sense of a great distance he travels, though without much labor on his part. This almost passive process in his journey is emphasized by the use of the verb "wandering." There is no purpose to his travels, regardless of the fact that they are seemingly vast. This listing of locations used in the first six lines of this stanza can have one of several effects on the reader. The first is simply to give the poem a sense of an exotic atmosphere. Other than the names of the locations, Shelley provides hardly any other defining or individual characteristics to these locations. This quick procession of foreign locations has the effect of blurring all of them into one great other—the Orient. While on the one hand this could be a chauvinistic and imperialistic ignorance to the differences between these locations, it also gives an almost superhuman characteristic to the subject Poet. As mentioned above, the language describing the toil such a venture should theoretically entail is absent, instead the subject Poet is merely "wandering on," requiring little exertion on his part. This superhuman ability to travel, however, may not be only in a physical sense. The vast scope of his travels also gives a dreamlike quality to the poem, pushing the reader not only deeper into a foreign physical landscape but also deeper into the exploration of the theoretical mindscape of Shelley. Placing the subject Poet into the foreign lands of the Orient may also work to again illustrate the intentioned distance between Shelley and the subject matter of the poem, but the narrator poet sweeps over these locations so quickly it serves instead to illustrate Shelley's assertion that the imagination is truly the setting for this journey into the other.

Once the poet reaches Kashmir he decides to rest. This rest, however, does not seem to be out of necessity. He has "languid limbs," (P. B. Shelley, "Alastor" 149) he is not exhausted but merely disinclined or simply too lazy to move. He finds his resting spot amongst the foreign

foliage and although he describes the spot as lonely, he also interestingly uses the word "bower," (P. B. Shelley, "Alastor" 147). While bower can mean a natural, idealized abode this word can also be a reference to a private apartment, especially that of a lady.[7] In other words, although the subject Poet is alone, the reader also has the sense that he an outsider or perhaps even an intruder. This idea of the subject Poet intruding upon the space of a lady is emphasized by the fact that Shelley introduces the veiled maid immediately after the subject Poet makes the decision to rest inside this natural bower. As the subject Poet drowses:

> . . . He dreamed a veiled maid
> Sate near him, talking in low solemn tones.
> Her voice was like the voice of his own soul
> Heard in the calm of thought: its music long,
> Like woven sounds of streams and breezes, held
> His inmost sense suspended in its web
> Of many-coloured woof and shifting hues.
> Knowledge and truth and virtue were her theme,
> And lofty hopes of divine liberty,
> Thoughts the most dear to him, and poesy,
> Herself a poet. (P. B. Shelley, "Alastor" 151-161)

Instead of being faced with the passive subject Poet of the previous sections of the poem, we have a subject Poet who is beginning to be actively engaged. This veiled maid, who although hearkens back to the Arab maiden in perhaps appearance—the veil being a stereotypical staple of middle-eastern garb—the two female figures could not be more unalike. The Arab maiden is

[7] "bower, 2b." The Oxford English Dictionary. 2nd ed. 1989. OED Online. Oxford University Press. 10 March 2012 <http://oed.com>

quiet, the veiled maid's voice is like a song. The Arab maiden appeals only to the subject Poet's physicality, the veiled maid to his philosophy. Regardless of this opposition between the two women, it is clear that the Arab maiden is the prototype for the anti-typical vision of the veiled maid.

Although thus far the reader has been familiar with a relatively passive subject Poet, in the above stanza we see him begin to have agency—It is he who dreams of the veiled maid. However, because the subject Poet visions the veiled maid in such quick succession after the assertion that he may be intruding upon her natural or spiritual habitat, there is a shadow of doubt about who exactly has agency over whom. Does the landscape infect the subject Poet into this fit or is he forcing his own ideals upon a representative of the other? The subject Poet at once intrudes upon a space outside of himself and internally creates the figure which, as rest of the above stanza emphasizes, he will project his own ideals onto. The stanza continues, describing the veiled maid only in terms of nature or the intellectual ideas that she shares with the subject Poet. But she is not simply similar to the subject Poet, the language emphasizes that she, in fact, is the subject Poet. The conceit that she is veiled only helps to define her as the subject Poet because she has no individually defining physical characteristics—she is faceless and eventually, formless.

The poem's description of this vision takes a turn from being a gentle, perhaps even mothering or docile portrayal of the veiled maid, to one that shows off her capability for feeling and inspiring fiery, lustful passion. This display of heated emotions begins as soon as the veiled maid's soft tonal speech shifts to the art of song:

> `. . . her fair hands
> Were bare alone, sweeping from some strange harp

Strange symphony, and in their branching veins
The eloquent blood told an ineffable tale.
The beating of her heart was heard to fill
The pauses of her music, and her breath
Tumultuously accorded with those fits
Of intermitted song. (P. B. Shelley, "Alastor" 165-172)

Interestingly, Shelley here begins to describe the veiled maid not in terms that would emphasis the ephemeral aspects of a vision, but in very physical, bodily language. This physicality, however, is subjugated by terms belonging to that of nature. The vision may have veins but they are branching veins. The "strange harp" may be a reference to the Eolian harp, a trope frequently found in Romantic era poetry. The use of this image—a harp that is normally played upon by the wind—adds to this confusion between the veiled maid's physical body and the landscape around her. Her entire being and the music she creates, it seems, are meld into each other, her heartbeats forming the baseline to her song, her breath, creating cadence. Once again, Shelley has confused the exact origins and nature of the veiled maid and this mixed imagery only continues as the veiled maid's song plays on.

Unable to contain the passion of her song, the veiled maid soon stands and continues to artistic outpouring. It is not until this moment that the subject Poet finds his agency within the vision itself. He finally turns towards the woman of his dreams and:

And saw by the warm light of their own life
Her glowing limbs, beneath the sinuous veil
Of woven wind, her outspread arms now bare,
Her dark locks floating in the breath of night,

Her beamy bending eyes, her parted lips
Outstretched, and pale, and quivering eagerly.
His strong heart sunk and sickened with excess
Of love. (P. B. Shelley, "Alastor" 175-182)

In our first instance of truly seeing the subject Poet react to the veiled maid, Shelley once again uses language that suggests the subject Poet and the veiled maid are one in the same, and importantly, that the subject Poet recognizes this fact. He first views the veiled maid in light emitted by "their own life," they are inextricable. The description continues and the language becomes more and more sexually saturated, yet still maintaining a juxtaposition between terms of the body and terms of nature. Her veil is at once manifesting as raw and muscular yet light and transient as the wind. She has progress from bare hands to now completely bare arms giving the reader the sense that she is unveiling although her veil has taken on an aspect of a physical part of her being. Finally, there is a bit of a role reversal. Whereas before, the Arab maiden fawned over the subject Poet's lips parted in sleep, it is not the subject Poet who sickens with love at the sight of this sexually inviting gesture. This reversal of descriptive language as this passionately charged stanza reaches climax.

In what seems to be an uncontrollable fit and need to meet the passion of the veiled maid and act upon the love he feels full to burst with, the subject Poet:

. . . reared his shuddering limbs and quelled
His gasping breath, and spread his arms to meet
Her panting bosom:…she drew back a while,
Then, yielding to irresistible joy,
With frantic gesture and short breathless cry

> Folded his frame into her dissolving arms.
>
> Now blackness veiled his dizzy eyes, and night
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Rolled back its impulse on his vacant brain. (P. B. Shelley, "Alastor" 182-188, 191)

The veiled maid is no longer described in terms of the subject Poet but instead, now the subject Poet is described in terms of the veiled maid. His breath is now matched to hers and he is shuddering with anticipation. This role reversal acts to cement the comingling of their beings, he is not simply projecting himself onto her but they become literally inseparable and indistinguishable. And indeed this melding of forms is the sexual and literal climax of the poem. When the veiled maid and the subject Poet finally meet, it is only for a fleeting moment as the veiled maid dissolves away. But there is ambiguity about what exactly happens—the subject Poets folds *into* her, yet it is the veiled maid who disappears. The subject Poet awakes and finds himself alone but not completely without traces of the veiled maid left behind. He is now veiled as the maid once was and yet his vision of her has left him, his brain vacant.

Throughout this scene of the veiled maid, Shelley has illustrated the potential frustrations of the narcissistic structure love of the anti-type to some extent. We as readers are presented with the subject Poet passing on the opportunity for relations with another member of the tangible world in favor for the company of one who exists solely in his imagination. The end of this stanza serves to convey the inability for such a relationship to be resolved—instead the climax is interrupted by the veiled maid's desertion of the subject Poet, she falls back into him. But regardless of this frustration and lack of conclusion the narrative of the love of the anti-type does not read as a sharp critique illustrating the failures of such a relationship. Nearly the entire

narrative of the veiled maid is steeped in erotic and alluring language not only failing to convey the horrors of such a relationship but also working in the opposite direction to paint it as alluring and desirable. This failure becomes even more interesting when we consider the parallels between the above passage and a passage from early in the introduction to the poem before the narrator poet begins the brunt of his narrative. We see the same ellipses standing in for orgasm in the above passage as we do when the narrator poet, or Shelley himself, is narrating his own frustrations in accessing the great secrets of nature. Once again, there is not a formal distancing between Shelley and his subject matter as Holmes suggests, but an emphasis drawing them closer together. What Shelley has presented us thus far in "Alastor" is a nuanced and delicate conflict within himself concerning this subject matter of narcissistic love that he already has explored in prose. Once the subject Poet awakes from his dream, these conflicting attitudes around the metaphor of the veiled maid continue as he begins his search for her.

Echoing Myth

The remaining narrative of "Alastor" follows the subject Poet who, extremely shaken by his vision of the veiled maid, continues his journey, this time in search for the vision. But his search is in vain, he find no physical trace of her. Regardless of his inability to find the veiled maid, the subject Poet still ignores the advances of the women of reality but they fail to understand him, they "would interpret half the woe/That wasted him, would call him false names Brother, and friend," (P. B. Shelley, "Alastor" 267-268). These youthful maiden's inability to access the troubles of the subject Poet cause his own indifference towards them, preferring instead to pursue the ideal veiled maid, who only taunts him with her presence in his tortured dreams.. As his wandering search becomes more and more hopeless the subject Poet has a sudden realization:

. . . A gloomy smile

Of desperate hope wrinkled his quivering lips.

For sleep, he knew, kept most relentlessly

Its precious charge, and silent death exposed,

Faithless perhaps as sleep, a shadowy lure,

With doubtful smile mocking its own strange charms. (P. B. Shelley 290-295)

This passage describes the subject Poet's first thoughts of the possibility of union with his dreamed beloved in death. The subject Poet begins to equate sleep and death but has not yet fallen completely for the possible allure of such a sacrifice. Yet regardless of this doubt, the fact that both the subject Poet and death are smiling at the prospect, equates them. It seems that the subject Poet does not only project his ideals onto the world around him but also his fears. The following stanza begins, "Startled by his own thoughts he looked around./There was no fair fiend near him, not a sight/Or sound of awe but in his own deep mind," (P. B. Shelley, "Alastor" 296-298). Somehow, the subject Poet has scared himself into thinking that his own thoughts of death were not inspired within him at all but instead by some physical outer force. An actual being who is pursuing him as he is pursuing the maid. This is the first appearance of the alastor of the poem's title. This term, transliterated from ancient Greek[8], refers both to the pursuer and the pursued, so not only do we have their equality in action but also in name. It seems that although the subject Poet is pushing himself further and further into solitude, he is not truly distancing himself from anyone and, in fact, is experiencing several doppelgangers—first with the veiled maid and now with the a manifestation of hi desperate thoughts to find her. This doubling comes to a head when the subject Poet pauses his wild wanderings to look at himself in a pool:

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[8] Abrams, M. H., and Stephen Greenblatt. "Alastor" *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. 7th ed. Vol. 2A. New York: Norton, 2000. Print. 702.

. . . His eyes beheld

Their own wan light through reflected lines

Of his thin hair, distinct in the dark depth

Of that still fountain: as the human heart,

Gazing in dreams over the gloomy grave,

Sees its own treacherous likeness there. He heard

The motion of the leaves, . . .

. . . . . .

. . . A Spirit seemed

To stand beside him. (P. B. Shelley, "Alastor" 469-475, 479-480)

This image of the subject Poet looking into his own reflection is perhaps the most overt reference Shelley makes to the Narcissus and Echo myth of ancient Greek mythology. Though, as Holmes asserts, the entirety of "Alastor" roughly follows the outline of the myth,[9] a youth vainly searching for his ideal beauty, the imagery of the above stanza more concretely directs the reader to the myth. Keeping this point in mind, it is interesting to consider that this is also one of the first instances of a direct, judgmental tone of the subject Poet's actions. Like Echo, the subject Poet has been chasing his ideal and causing himself to wither, but Shelley is also reminding us that the subject Poet is meant to be this figure of Narcissus as well, in love only with the ideal of himself. But instead of gazing into his reflection and seeing the beauty he seeks, he sees only a sallow and aged visage. The subject Poet himself sees the damage his fruitless voyage has caused, and again finds himself with visions of his death and an uncanny awareness of the dark Spirit pursing him. This Spirit is described in oxymoron, it is a spirit, ephemeral, yet it is the

[9] Holmes, Richard. "Up the River: Bishopgate 1815." *Shelley: The Pursuit.* New York: E. P. Dutton, 1975. Print. 300.

physical movement of the leaves that alerts the subject Poet to its presence. The thing is not entirely present, though, as it only "seems" to stand beside the subject Poet.

This ambiguity of the corporality of the pursuing spirit continues to be emphasized as the stanza concludes:

> Now deepening the dark shades, for speech assuming
> Held commune with him, as if he and it
> Were all that was,—only…when his regard
> Was raised by intense pensiveness,…two eyes,
> Two starry eyes, hung in the gloom of thought,
> And seemed with their serene and azure smiles
> To beckon him. (P. B. Shelley, "Alastor" 486-492)

Here, the subject Poet and the Spirit hold in a moment of private and intimate recognition, and though they are both speechless they seem to understand each other in a wordless conversation. This relation between them runs so deep the narrator poet describes it as akin to as if the subject Poet and the Spirit were the only two beings in existence. This has an interesting dualistic effect in that it at once serves to separate the two but also to bring them together. There is a moment, represented by the ellipses, when the Spirit seems to disappear. Shelley neglects to explicitly mention the nature of this disappearance but given that previously in the poem the ellipses has stood in for sexual union, it may be that the Spirit here has joined with the subject Poet. When he attempts to look at the Spirit he finds not the spirit, but the eyes of his veiled maid, encouraging him onward in his journey. This not only serves to equate the pursuit of the veiled maid with the looming Spirit but also acts to strengthen Shelley's emphasis of the doubling of the subject Poet's role as both Narcissus and Echo. The language in this stanza makes it unclear whether or

not the subject Poet has ever taken his gaze off of his own reflection, implying the eyes of the veiled maid may in fact be a reflection of his own eyes that entice him and urge him on in his journey.

Shelley's use of the myth of Narcissus and Echo brings a nuance to his treatment of love based around the anti-type. While this myth seems an obvious choice, given that the anti-type is dependant upon a love of the self, by transforming the subject Poet into both the agent of self-love and the pursuer of ideal love, it serves to highlight the true isolation of such a pursuit. The two agents of the myth have been reduced to the one of the poem. The use of this myth also gives "Alastor" an air of a cautionary tale, especially when the poem is reduced to summary of its narrative. We as readers really begin to see the deep conflict within Shelley towards his ideas about love. This conflict within Shelley continues to manifest until the powerfully sympathetic language of subject Poet's conclusion overshadows any of Shelley's attempts to give the poem a tone of admonition.

A Cautionary Elegy

Egged on by the enticing gaze of the veiled maid, the subject Poet returns to his pursuit in earnest making his way through beautiful descriptions of the natural world around him. Yet still he travels on, until he reaches an area where "One step,/One human step alone, has ever broken/The stillness of its solitude:" (P. B. Shelley, "Alastor" 588-590). Not only is the subject Poet alone but he has reached an area of nature where no other human has ever tread, securing his absolute solitude. It is shortly after coming upon this undisturbed earth that "he knew that death/Was on him," (P. B. Shelley, "Alastor" 626-627). He returns to the position in which he first vision his veiled maid, "upon an ivied stone/Reclined his languid head, his limbs did rest," (P. B. Shelley, "Alastor" 634-635). His entire being seems to have returned to the state in which

he first glimpsed his ideal love, going from the very active pursuit to once again having a "passive being," (P. B. Shelley, "Alastor" 630). As the subject Poet draws closer and closer to death, staring out at the moon with a smile upon his lips, the narrator poet presents the reader with the following description:

> . . . the Poet's blood,
> That ever beat in mystic sympathy
> With nature's ebb and flow, grew feebler still:
> And when two lessening points of light alone
> Gleamed through the darkness, the alternate gasp
> Of his faint respiration scare did stir
> The stagnate night:—till the minutest ray
> Was quenched, the pulse yet lingered in his hear.
> It paused—it fluttered. (P. B. Shelley, "Alastor" 651-659)

The moon, the subject Poet's final sight, makes its descent behind the mountain and as it makes its journey, its light slowly winking out, the subject Poet's life energy drains in equal rhythm. The subject Poet's life energy has become in sync with nature, his death coinciding with the disappearance of the moon. This portrait of the subject Poet's death is far from horrendous, if anything the situation and the language describing it romanticize this form of death. His death does not come in some shocking, sudden, or painful manner, as one may expect in a cautionary tale, but instead the subject Poet is at peace, smiling, and calmly allowing his life's energy to ebb away at the will of nature.

This depiction of the subject Poet's death is not simply a romantic and perhaps even alluring one, but it also illustrates the subject Poet's melting into the world around him. Although

he has doomed himself this fate through a narcissistic and solitary pursuit of his anti-type, this doomed fate is not one described as being terribly damning. The subject Poet instead of being truly ostracized by his actions becomes a part of the landscape around him, and becomes the idealized tool of nature. The narrator poet now describes the subject Poet's body as a:

> . . . wondrous frame—
>
> . . . . . .
>
> A fragile lute, on whose harmonious strings
>
> The breath of heaven did wander—a bright stream
>
> Once fed with many-voiced waves—a dream
>
> Of youth, which night and time have quenched for ever,
>
> Still, dark, and dry, and unremembered now. (P. B. Shelley, "Alastor" 665, 667-671)

Although with his passing the subject Poet is now described in the past tense, this image of him as the Eolian lute suggests several things. The first is that he has fully coalesced with nature no longer attempting to access the true beauty of nature but becoming nature's medium itself. The second hearkens back to the veiled maid who also was described as such a lute earlier in the poem. Though it is not directly stated, the subject Poet's immersion into nature suggests not that he has become the victim of a lonely death but almost that he has achieved his goal. He may not physically have ever found the veiled maid yet in his death they seem to now inhabit the same landscape.

The narrator poet, however, does not celebrate the possibility of post-mortem union. His tone through the stanza is one both of great reverence and mourning. Perhaps most interesting about this final narrative stanza is that it ends with a contradiction. The narrator poet claims that

the subject Poet's memory has been completely obliterated by his death in isolation, and yet this entire poem narrating his story exists. This contradiction then brings the reader's attention to the contradiction of the entire final stanza, or narrator poet's coda. This last part of the poem is saturated with the language of mourning. With the repetition of the phrase "thou art fled," (P. B. Shelley, "Alastor" 686) the text of the stanza reads like a dirge. This is not the ending to a poem that would speak out against the pursuit of the ideal, but instead ends as an elegy to its impossibility. The narrator poet then moves onto a description of the subject Poet's seemingly exquisite corpse:

> . . . Upon those pallid lips
> So sweet even in their silence, on those eyes
> That image sleep in death, upon that form
> Yet safe from the worm's outrage, let no tear
> Be shed—not even in thought. (P. B. Shelley, "Alastor" 699-703)

The focus on the subject Poet's sweet and pallid lips gives this description of death an almost erotic tone. We then have the statement that the subject Poet's body death is the same as his body in sleep. Once again, we have an indirect nod to the possibility that the veiled maid and the subject Poet are united in this death—the subject Poet believed the veiled maid was only accessible through sleep—the erotic language surrounding this sleep serves to emphasize this possibility.

Yet, the narrator poet again denies the reader the right to mourn, whether in the action of crying or the mere thought of it. The narrator poet continues to deny mourning:

> Let not high verse, mourning the memory
> Of that which is no more, or painting's woe

Or sculpture, speak in feeble imagery
Their own cold powers. Art and eloquence,
And all the shews o'the world are frail and vain
To weep a loss that turns their lights to shade. (P. B. Shelley, "Alastor" 707-712)

This seems to be a terribly strong statement to make, especially in a poem doing exactly what that passage speaks against attempting. The narrator poet does not even limit this ban of mourning to that of verse but expands it to all of art and expression. This denial of art's ability to mourn, as well as the denial that any mourning occurred for the subject Poet at all, increases this death to implications beyond that of subject Poet. The language of his description also acts to expand this mournful song to more than just the life of the subject Poet, the poem ends:

. . . when all
If reft at once, when some surpassing Spirit,
Whose light adorned the world around it, leaves,
Those who remain behind, not sobs or groans,
The passionate tumult of a clinging hope;
But pale despair and cold tranquility,
Nature's vast frame, the web of human things,
Birth and the grave, that are not as they were. (P. B. Shelley, "Alastor" 713-720)

The subject Poet is now described as a "surpassing Spirit" reminiscent of both the veiled maid and the Spirit who pursued him in his pursuit. Because all of these figures were equated in language with each other it ascribes a transcendental importance to the subject Poet. His death not only symbolizes the loss of his life but the loss of his ability to pursue. For the ones left behind there is no more chance of a passionate chase, however fruitless it may end. They are left

with nothing, with the same languid passivity that defined the subject Poet before he found his vision. What the end of this poem emphasizes is not entirely the dooming effects of solely pursing after the anti-type in an obsessive and isolating fashion, but how the lack of such a pursuit is equally damning. There is a great amount of ambivalence in the poem due to this ending and the layer upon layer of doppelganger between the subject Poet, the veiled maid, and the Spirit who pursues him and lures him to his death. Then we have the most important doppelganger, the split between subject Poet and narrator Poet.

This emphasis of the subject Poet's absolute solitude and never having been mourned by anyone only draws our attention to the fact that the narrator poet has an intimate knowledge of the subject Poet and does indeed mourn him, having access to information he claims no one else has. That is because the subject Poet is to the narrator poet what the veiled maid is to the subject poet. In other words, the subject Poet plays the role of the anti-type in the vision of the narrator poet, to act out his ideals in the experimental landscape of poetry. And, through the irony of Shelley's insistence on distance between himself, the narrator poet, and the subject Poet, it becomes clear the three are interrelated. Shelley, in his preface to "Alastor" states, "the picture is not barren of instruction to actual men. The poet's self-centered seclusion was avenged by the furies of an irresistible passion," (P. B. Shelley, "Preface" 703). But this assertion that "Alastor" is a tale of caution or admonition is barely held up within the text of the poem itself. As will be discussed more thoroughly in chapter two, it seems Shelley had a tendency to prime readers with false assertions in his prefaces. There are certainly moments where the quest of the subject Poet seems foolish and damning but it is not his action that is criticized, but the hopelessness of the situation itself. "Alastor" reads as a poem with many intentions. As a cautionary tale to warn others of the danger of this sort of fanatic self-love, an elegy mourning both the subject Poet and

his hopeless pursuit that renders all of art fruitless in its wake. But more than anything, “Alastor” serves as an exploration into Shelley’s own mind surrounding this subject matter, revealing contradiction and ambivalence. Shelley’s insistence of “Alastor” being a moralizing poem, as well as the assertion of several degrees of removal between himself and the characters within the poem, betray him in the end. Shelley struggled with this subject matter so much so that the poem does not have a concrete conclusion that passes judgment over the wrong or rightness of the anti-type structure of love. Instead, the product of these musings, “Alastor” itself, is the conclusion. In the face of the poem’s own assertions of the absence and weakness of poetry to convey the emotions behind such a struggle, “Alastor” became and remains on of Shelley’s most profound works.

Chapter II

A Conversation of Introductions: Comparing the Prefaces of the 1818 and 1831 Editions of *Frankenstein*

When *Frankenstein* first appeared in print, the edition was published anonymously in 1818 with a succinct and somewhat general preface, written by Percy Shelley, common for novels of the time.. It was not until the second edition was published in 1823 that Mary Shelley was credited as the author and it was not until 1831 with the printing of the third edition that Mary's own introduction was published.[10] These two beginnings to *Frankenstein* are very different in both style and content although they are both meant to explain the synthesis of the idea for the novel. Shelley's introduction presumes to take on the identity of the author of *Frankenstein* and seems to almost labor to displace the creation and the opinions of the novel away from Mary's imagination in a very impersonal tone. Mary's introduction, however, has a near opposite approach. Not only is her tone much more vivid and fanciful but her recollection of the events that inspired the writing of *Frankenstein* are much more personal. Unlike Shelley's attempt to push responsibility for the story away from the author, Mary embraces it though not without qualifications that mirror or perhaps even mock Shelley's strategy. When reading these two introductions side by side the experience plays out almost like a conversation or a debate between the two authors that spans both time and death. Shelley makes his assertions and judgments over Mary's authority, though not without some praise. Mary, in turn, specifically mentions or alludes to passages of Shelley's first edition and then attempts to subtly or outright debunk them, but not with a vicious tone, her thoughys still with loving regard and respect for her then late husband.

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[10] Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft, and Maurice Hindle. "Note on the Text." *Frankenstein, Or, The Modern Prometheus*. London: Penguin, 2003. Print. lviii.

Percy Shelley's Preface to the 1818 edition

The first edition's introduction begins in a manner not unlike other novels of the time—with a claim that there is some basis in reality for the supernatural events that occur in the work. In this introduction, Shelley hearkens to the work of "Dr. Darwin, and some of the physiological writers of Germany" (P. B. Shelley, "Preface" 5) as the inspiration for *Frankenstein*. This serves a number of purposes that may seem standard, helpful or even protective on a first reading. Attempting to establish a direct source for the seed of the idea that is grounded in reality is a means of offsetting any future accusation of blasphemy or hedonism by the publishers and reading audience. It also serves as a way of perhaps increasing the appeal and intrigue of the novel. Similar to advertisement strategies of the horror movies of today, claiming basis on a true story could add an extra alluring aspect to *Frankenstein*, allowing readers the possibility to imagine the supernatural events of the novel actually occurring, in some form, in reality.

Another common method authors of the period would use to displace their own authorship was to claim they had found an old manuscript by an unknown or completely obscure author and had simply edited its contents for the public. Shelley does not quite use this method, but the one he invokes is similar to a certain degree. Instead of referring to a specific text he instead describes the following:

> I shall not be supposed as according the remotest degree of serious faith to such an imagination; yet, in assuming it as the basis of a work of fancy, I have not considered myself as merely weaving a series of supernatural terrors. The event on which the interest of the story depends is exempt from the disadvantages of a mere tale of specters or enchantment. (P.B. Shelley, "Preface" 5)

Shelley, taking on the persona of the author of the text, here states that his own beliefs and imaginations are nothing like those in the text. But this is not a complete abandonment of creative responsibility. Shelley, states that the author has not simply put known, factual though fanciful, puzzle pieces together to form a narrative, but has had more creative input than such a process requires. The last sentence of the above passage also seems to suggest that because the author has not only drawn from these outer sources, but also maintained an authority in its creation, in writing, he has essentially created fact. Shelley cements this proposition with his following statement, "I have thus endeavoured to preserve the truth of the elementary principles of human nature, while I have not scrupled to innovate upon their combinations," (P.B. Shelley 5). At this point in the first edition's introduction, Shelley's prose seems to be in Mary Shelley's favor - to attempt to protect her story and herself from the censor and the possible anger from the readership. But as the introduction continues these efforts seem to go too far to displace the authorship—and when one takes into consideration the fact that Shelley is writing this in Mary's stead, an almost sinister tone, or questions of an ulterior motive, comes to light.

After these previous attempts to support and even hype the factual quality to the supernatural occurrences in the novel, Shelley curiously backtracks when it comes to the desired effect this story will have on readers. Speaking again as the anonymous Mary Shelley he states:

> I am by no means indifferent to the manner in which whatever moral tendencies exist in the sentiments or characters it contains shall affect the reader; yet my chief concern in this respect has been limited to the avoiding the enervating effects of the novels of the present day, and to the exhibition of the amiableness of domestic affection, and the excellence of universal virtue. (P.B. Shelley, "Preface" 5)

The only way to describe the latter part of the above passage to say it is a lie. Shelley's claim that the contents of *Frankenstein* endeavors to dodge this believed moral affect novels had on their readers is simply untrue. The only point in the novel where this "amiableness of domestic affection, and the excellence of universal virtue" are at all on display is during the scenes where the Monster secretly lives with the De Lacey family and learns language and the possibility of human goodness. But even this scene works to completely oppose and strip domestic affection of its amiableness when the Monster is callously driven away, yet again, by the only other humans he has encountered, as we will see further discussed in chapter three. It is not certain if Shelley is putting an emphasis on this domestic affection and universal virtue as a way of diverting the publishers eyes and expectations in another effort to slip under the censor's radar, or if there is something else in the text that Shelley wishes to draw attention away from.

These reflections could be Shelley's own suppositions of the text or at the very least, his attempts to project this lens of reading the novel onto the readers' experience. Universal virtue and especially domestic amiability are two qualities that are primarily within the feminine sphere of concerns, but considering the fact that at this point *Frankenstein's* author's gender is unknown, it seems superfluous that such measures to assert that Mary was writing within the acceptable subject matters of her sex were taken. This peculiarity is heightened as the passage continues with:

> The opinions which naturally spring from the character and the situation of the hero are by no means to be conceived as existing always in my own conviction; nor is any inference justly to be drawn from the following pages as prejudicing any philosophical doctrine of whatever kind. (P.B. Shelley, "Preface" 6)

Here, Shelley, in place of Mary, explicitly declaims all responsibility for the authorship of the ideas put forth in the novel. Though the author has penned the characters, situations, and events of this novel, Shelley here asserts that any opinions or philosophies these characters may have originate solely from the passive, process of writing them. He goes so far as, not simply to add a disclaimer that the author, Mary Shelley, does not share the opinions of her characters, but to state that said opinions never existed in her conscience. This passage goes further than to simply act as a protective shield against possible moral criticism from the publishers and the readership. Instead, it works to debase Mary Shelley's autonomy as the author. She is painted as simply a means to the literary end, but not in the high, divine sense of the Eolian harp. Because of the subject matter—the reanimated corpse that is the monster and the horrors that ensue—there is no honor in being the passive vessel of poetic beauty. The strength and the insistence of this language suggests a fear in Percy Shelley. What is it in *Frankenstein* that he so ardently desires to disassociate with his wife? Attempting to answer this question will be one of the main focuses of chapter three.

This analysis of the above passage as a personal attack by Shelley on his wife's ability to write and take ownership of the philosophies the novel puts forth may seem like an extreme reading until Shelley gives his account of how the story of *Frankenstein* originated. Unlike Mary's own account of how the seed of *Frankenstein* was planted, which will be discussed later, Shelley's account is drab with little details of the scenario that brought the story about. He recounts that, "two other friends (a tale from the pen of one of whom would be far more acceptable to the public than anything I can ever hope to produce) and myself agreed to write each a story, founded on some supernatural occurrence," (P.B. Shelley, "Preface" 6). At the time that Mary first began writing *Frankenstein*, she and Shelley were spending time with Lord Byron

in Switzerland, so the two other friends that Percy Shelley here asserts write infinitely better than the author of *Frankenstein* must refer to none other than Lord Byron and Percy Shelley himself.[11] While this passage could easily be seen as an attempt to make the author seem humble and therefore more likable to the readers, the fact that Shelley is referring to himself gives the passage a cruel tone. Not only does he assert that *Frankenstein* is not up to caliber with either Shelley or Lord Byron's writings, but that nothing Mary Shelley ever writes could possibly hope to compete with their work. This jape is cruel and unusual and is just a further attempt to debase and even humiliate Mary Shelley.

Shelley's introduction does less to inform or raise interest in the reader than it does paint and alarmingly passive and insulting portrait of the author. This work to illegitimize Mary's prowess as an author, and in extension also works to debase the entire novel is the exact opposite to the function of an introduction. But what is it in the novel that Percy is so apt to humiliate into obscurity? Looking at Mary's own introduction to the third edition of *Frankenstein,* published after Percy's death in 1831, helps begin to answer this question.

Mary Shelley's Introduction to the 1831 edition:

Mary's own introduction to her novel was not printed until the Standard Novels edition, printed in 1831, and according to Mary, it is only because these publishers wished for another account of how she, as a young girl, could have possibly thought of such a horrifying tale.[12] Anne Kostelanetz Mellor, in her essay, "Revising *Frankenstein,*" posits that by the end of this

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[11] Holmes, Richard. "The Byron Summer: Switzerland 1816". *Shelley: The Pursuit.* New York: E. P. Dutton, 1975. Print. 330.

[12] Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft, and Maurice Hindle. "Author's Introduction to the Standard's Novel Edition". *Frankenstein, Or, The Modern Prometheus*. London: Penguin, 2003. Print. 5.

introduction, “Mary Shelley both disclaimed responsibility for her hideous progeny and insisted that she had remained passive before it,” (Mellor 176), but as we will see, the exact opposite is true. She begins this introduction with this statement that seems to suggest that she is writing the introduction out of a feeling of necessity rather than actually wanting to. She reinforces this implied sentiment when she states, “it is true that I am very averse to bringing myself forward in print; but as my account will only appear as an appendage to a former production, and as it will be confined to such topics as have connexion with my authorship alone, I can scarcely accuse myself of a personal intrusion,” (M. W. Shelley, “Introduction” 5). Here, Mary is curiously at once stating her willingness and unwillingness to come forward with personal details in print. By stating her unease over speaking about herself but then complying to do so anyway, Mary is almost peaking the reader’s curiosity. She is highlighting her personal experience instead of obscuring it when she points out her aversion to come forward. This strategy allows Mary the keep with her role of domestic coyness while still shedding light on her personal life. Even her excuse that she will only be speaking of herself and her own authorship works in this favor because, as we will see, it is not exactly a true statement.

Before really delving into the events of the summer of 1816 that lead to the creation of *Frankenstein* Mary goes the much more personal route and speaks of her childhood in Scotland. She begins by stating the perhaps obvious fact that she enjoyed writing at this time in her young life, but interesting enough she does not emphasize writing as her passion. Instead she states, “Still, I had a dearer pleasure than this, which was the formation of castles in the air – the indulging in waking dreams – the following up trains of thought…my dreams were all my own; I accounted for them to nobody they were my refuge when annoyed – my deepest pleasure when free,” (M. W. Shelley, “Introduction” 5). Mary shares the deep and personal connection she had

with dreams when she was a young girl. This almost seems like a throwaway reference, simply placed within this introduction to frame Mary's life as a writer a bit. It is interesting, however, that she explicitly states that she kept these dreams to herself and that they were her mode of escapism. This aspect of the dreams is highlighted when Mary goes on to describe her earliest writing when she says, "I could not figure to myself that romantic woes or wonderful events would ever be my lot; but I was not confined to my own identity, and I could people the hours with creations far more interesting to me at that age than my own sensations," (M. W. Shelley, "Introduction" 6). The idea of Mary not being confined to her own identity sounds incredibly reminiscent of the subject Poet's relationship with the anti-type as found in "Alastor," but it is not quite the same. Mary explicitly states that these imaginations are outside of herself almost to escape her own identity. This is not the narcissistic projection of Shelley's imaging, but it does perhaps seem to be the first reference or nod to this philosophy.

The idea that her thoughts are of Percy Shelley's work on the imagination and love becomes clear when she immediately mentions him in the following paragraph. Once again, Mary puts forth a statement that seems to undermine her own wish and will to write. She writes that it was not herself who was eager to write, but Shelley:

> My husband, however, was from the first, very anxious that I should prove myself worthy of my parentage, and enrol myself on the page of fame. He was for ever inciting me to obtain literary reputation, which even on my own part I cared for then, though since I have become infinitely indifferent to it. At this time he desired that I should write, not so much with the idea that I could produce anything worthy of notice, but that he might himself judge how far I possessed the promise of better things hereafter. (M. W. Shelley, "Introduction" 6)

This little anecdote from Mary about her and Shelley's relationship with her writing is reminiscent of the attitudes found in the preface to the first edition. Shelley seems to be both encouraging Mary to write but not exactly confident in her abilities. In the preface, Shelley's condescending tone may have been an attempt to paint the author of *Frankenstein* as being humble, as well as a jab at Mary's talent. Mary may be echoing this desired humbling impact except that this condescension is not in her voice, she is merely retelling the opinion of her husband. Instead of simply echoing the sentiments of her husband preface this gives the effect of a more direct reference to it, as if she is telling the reader that she was aware of Shelley's perhaps less than supportive views towards her talent. This subtle glance of Mary's recognition of trouble in her personal life with Shelley is only the first example.

After this beginning part of the introduction, explaining how and why Mary first began writing, she starts to recall the details of the origin of *Frankenstein* herself. She sets the scene for the reader, explaining how she and Shelley were visiting Lord Byron that summer in Switzerland but how the rain kept them indoors. To entertain themselves, they resorted to books. Mary describes one volume in particular:

> There was the *History of the Inconstant Lover*, who, when he thought to clasp the bride to whom he had pledged his vows, he found himself in the arms of the pale ghost of her whom he had deserted. There was the tale of the sinful founder of his race whose miserable doom it was to bestow the kiss of death on all the younger sons of the fated house, just when they reached the age of promise. (M. W. Shelley, "Introduction" 7)

This reference to this collection of ghost stories may have actually been one of the volumes that Mary, Percy, Byron, and the rest of their company read from that summer, but Mary must have

chosen this volume carefully as yet another method to subtly draw the reader's attention to her and Shelley's personal lives. The immediate clue to this, is the title of the volume itself which brings Percy Shelley to mind. Mary already knew that Shelley was not concrete in his affections, as he left his pregnant wife, Harriet, to run off with Mary. But Harriet was not Mary's only possible rival for Shelley's love, her step-sister Claire Clairmont was also tangled up in Shelley's affairs. Holmes even goes so far as to state that Claire's role in Shelley and Mary's relationship, "provided the element of dark, unstable, tempestuous affection that his calm union with Mary required to keep it alive; and that this 'shadow' love occasionally—at moments of crisis—achieved violent sexual expression," (Holmes, "First Love" 39).

There is evidence in abundance that Percy Shelley was certainly an inconstant lover but it is not until the description of the story that this reference to him solidifies. The horror story of the man embracing his new wife only to grasp the intangible ghost of her former lover is eerily reminiscent of the scene of the veiled maid in "Alastor," discussed at length in chapter one. But this scene is even more reminiscent of Shelley personally because Mary mirrors the scene from "Alastor" but adds the details of Shelley's own relationships. The second story Mary references also seems to mirror her and Shelley's life together, though perhaps to a lesser degree than the first example. The head of house whose children are doomed to an early death also sounds like a reference to Shelley because he and Mary's children's unfortunate fates. A year before writing *Frankenstein* Mary's first child by Shelley, a daughter, dies a few days after her premature birth. Clara, their third child, dies at about a year old, and only a year after that, their second child, William also dies. Only their last son, Percy Florence, survives to adulthood, all their other

children die while still very young.[13] This similarity between these two supposed German ghost stories and the personal details from both Shelley's work and personal lives strikes a chord too eerie to be unintentional. By including these stories that also served as the inspiration to write her own story of horror, Mary is giving the reader a subtle clue to the fact that *Frankenstein* was written with Shelley and his works in mind.

Mary's description of the Switzerland summer continues and we come to Lord Byron's proposition that they each write a ghost story. She goes out of her way to mention that there were four people present at this gathering, including Polidori, though Shelley neglected to mention him in the original preface. As she briefly describes each of the ghost stories the participants of the challenge imagined we have a description of Shelley's attempt, saying he was "more apt to embody ideas and sentiments in the radiance of brilliant imagery, and in the music of the most melodious verse that adorns our language, than to invent the machinery of a story, commenced one founded on the experiences of his early life," (M. W. Shelley, "Introduction" 7). Mary's depiction of Shelley's story, although praising his mastery over descriptive language, is at the same time, adding a little twist of an insult, suggesting he does not have a fantastic grip over narrative. This is very similar to how Shelley, in his preface, questions Mary's abilities. Also, Mary once again brings up the idea of basing a story off of one's own experience, priming the reader with this idea that this practice was not uncommon in their work.

As Mary's narrative of the origin of her most famous work continues she recounts the initial difficulty she had with thinking of a story. Preoccupied with the wish to rival the horrendous impact the ghost stories had on others with a work of her own, all of her initial thoughts are in vain, as she describes, she "felt that blank incapability of invention which is the

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[13] Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft, and Maurice Hindle. "Chronology". *Frankenstein, Or, The Modern Prometheus*. London: Penguin, 2003. Print. viii.

greatest misery of authorship, when dull Nothing replies to our anxious invocations," (M. W. Shelley, "Introduction" 8). In other words, Mary suffered from a severe case of writer's block. She continues to ruminate on the endeavor of writing when she interestingly posit the following theory, that, "invention…does not consist in creating out of void, but out of chaos; the materials must, in the first place, be afforded: it can give form to dark, shapeless substances, but cannot bring into being the substance itself," (M. W. Shelley, "Introduction" 8). What Mary is here admitting to is that writing does not come from nothing, it is more about taking different elements that are already in existence and reforming them to create something new, the story. Percy Shelley's preface put forth a similar idea, but that was more for the protection from possible accusations of blaspheme. By the time Mary had written her introduction *Frankenstein* had already been in print for over ten years and it would not be necessary for her to state this idea in the hopes of self-preservation. So, this admission, too, seems to point to the Mary putting the seed in the reader's mind that her work has at least, in part, been based off of previous events. This is also emphasized by the fact that Mary follows this paragraph by describing how she first got her inspiration for *Frankenstein*. She says, "many and long were the conversations between Lord Byron and Shelley, to which I was a devout but nearly silent listener…They talked of the experiments by Dr. Darwin…who preserved a piece of vermicelli in a glass case, till by some extraordinary means it began to move with voluntary motion," (M. W. Shelley, "Introduction" 8). Mary then goes on to talk about how this one incident discussed between the three of them (she does stress that she is a *nearly* silent listener) began her thoughts on the possibility of reanimation of a corpse.

Mary, like Shelley's preface, seems to have put the agency of her ideas and writing outside of herself. But instead of being an insult to herself or an effort to stay humble, it reads

more as a way to illustrate her writing *Frankenstein* as both inspired by and in response to real incidents in her and Shelley's lives together. This displacement of agency continues as she describes the way her now fabled dream came into her conscience, her, "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," (M. W. Shelley, "Introduction" 9). Here, there is no agency on Mary's part, all of the following images of Victor at his creation's side from the dream seem to be entirely outside of any control on Mary's part. But she does not simply rob herself of all credit to the degree Shelley does in his preface, when she awakes the next morning and announces to the rest of her party that "I had *thought of a story*," (M. W. Shelley, "Introduction" 10). Although Mary initially presented her inspiration as having come from a source entirely outside of herself, she recognizes her dreams as a part of her conscious, when she declares that she thought of a story she takes ownership over her narrative and begins the writing process later that same day.

Mary's assertion of her own agency in the creation of *Frankenstein* continues as she describes the novel's development into the form as we know it today. The tale begins as simply that a tale, but:

> Shelley urged me to develop the idea at greater length. I certainly did not owe the suggestion of one incident, not scarcely of one train of feeling, to my husband, and yet but for this incitement it would never have taken the form in which it was presented to the world. From this declaration I must except the preface. As far as I can recollect, it was entirely written by him. (M. W. Shelley, "Introduction" 10)

Mary declares in language stripped of any qualifiers that she is the sole person behind the writing and the content of *Frankenstein*, and that she owes little to her husband save his insistence that

she develop the work into a longer form. She also here asserts his composition of the preface that appeared in the first edition. But this insistence of her independence from Shelley is interesting, because the strength of her language, that she does not owe *scarcely one trains of feeling* to Shelley seems to come into conflict with her narrative up to this point and indeed how she decides to end the introduction. Just earlier in the text, she speaks of how Shelley and Lord Byron's conversations about the work of Dr. Darwin are what perhaps gave rise to her dream in the first place. This strength of language is similar to Shelley's insistence in the preface of "Alastor" that asserts his opposition to the ideals of narcissistic love explored in the text of the poem itself, as well as his separation from the narrator. But just as in Shelley's work, here this insistence gives the same opposite effect, leading the reader to question the truth of such a statement.

The reader's questions are in fact answered, though implicitly, from the closing of the introduction. Mary has told the tale of how her hideous monster came into creation in her imagination and how the pages of the novel were brought to life. She then reflects on her personal feelings towards her famous work when she writes:

> And now, once again, I bid my hideous progeny go forth and prosper. I have affection for it, for it was the offspring of happy days, when death and grief were but words, which found no true echo in my heart. Its several pages speak of many a walk, many a drive, and many a conversation, when I was not alone; and my companion was one who, in this world, I shall never see more. But this is for myself; my readers have nothing to do with these associations. (M. W. Shelley, "Introduction" 10)

In almost complete contradiction to her strict statement that Shelley was not responsible for any part of *Frankenstein* she speaks fondly of him, reminiscing of their time together before his death nine years previous to Mary writing this introduction. In this recollection of memories, of a time before her life has been racked with death and misfortune, she specifically references the fact that this novel reflects the many discussions between her and her husband. As Holmes points, at the time that Shelley was writing "Alastor," only shortly before Mary begins *Frankenstein*, "almost everything he wrote…would have been shown to Mary, and probably to Claire also; and discussed at length," (Holmes, "Second Marriage" 65). These discussions Mary refers to inevitably included "Alastor" and his ideas of anti-typical love. The manner in which she speaks of these conversations and the way they manifest in *Frankenstein* almost sounds like she's suggesting the work is continuing the discussion between her and Shelley. The novel "speaks" it is an active participant. Just as "Alastor" was a continuation of the exploration of the anti-type found in "On Love," *Frankenstein* is a continuation or a response to these conversations. But Mary does not explicitly put this idea forward, ending the paragraph almost chastising the reader for attempting to peak into her life, claiming that these references within the text are for her only. Of course, just as before, this insistence actually only primes the reader more so, to look into the text for these details.

Percy Shelley's preface written anonymously for the first edition, once it comes to light that it is he writing it, almost comes off as an insult to Mary and a way to cleverly compliment himself and Lord Byron. But this, like Mary's own jab at Shelley's inability to imagine creative plots, this may just be a playful jest. What is more sinister in his preface is the repeated attempts to displace the content and philosophies of the text of *Frankenstein* away from the thoughts and feelings of the author. The reasons for Shelley's exasperated efforts for this separation become

clearer once Mary's own introduction is published in the 1831 Standard's Edition. In this introduction, despite a denial that Shelley had any influence on the writing of *Frankenstein*, she still draws a direct correlation between it and the many discussions her and her husband would share. Of the many topics the young lovers would have talked about, Shelley's own work would have been among them, and of that body of work, "On Love" and "Alastor" surely would have been discussed between the two of them. The ideas found in these two works by Shelley, manifest in *Frankenstein* as well, although to a very different conclusion which will be discussed at length in chapter three. It is this exploration on Mary's part that Percy seems to want to draw attention to. Eventually, however, his efforts fail when Mary's own introduction is published. Instead of drawing our attention away from examining the philosophical beliefs and personal ties in the book, Mary subtly, out of continued love and respect for Shelley, encourages her reader to discover them.

Chapter III:

Frankenstein: The Anti Anti-Type Response to "Alastor"

Frankenstein, one of the most famous pieces of horror fiction ever written, the origin of perhaps one of the most recognizable icons of frightening cinema and Halloween merchandise, was written by Mary Shelley when she was only nineteen years old. This feat alone, the shear wake of influence this one piece of literature has had on all sorts of different media, would be enough to leave one impressed, but there is so much more to the novel than its legacy. While Mary Shelley's innovations on the hideous stuff of nightmares certainly are impressive in their own right, the novel's deeper examinations of the many relationships and philosophical ideals it holds are where one can find its true literary credit. But this is unsurprising, given Mary's literary origins and surroundings, as the daughter to William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft, future friend to Lord Byron and wife to Percy Shelley. It is this last figure, Percy Shelley, who played the largest role in the formation of *Frankenstein*. Specifically, his second long poem "Alastor" written not long after he and Mary met and ran away together. Richard Holmes, goes so far as to suggest that the evil spirit which pursues the subject Poet of "Alastor" influenced *Frankenstein* to the point that " the monster sometimes seems to be an almost programmatic attempt to present the *kaka-daimon* of Shelley's poem, the evil spirit of solitude itself," (Holmes, "Byron Summer" 332). But this statement seems extreme or at the least perhaps a bit misguiding. Instead, this chapter will propose not that Mary was heavily influenced by this work, but that she wrote *Frankenstein* as a response. In essence, just as "Alastor" was a means for Shelley to explore further his ideals of self-center love, Mary used *Frankenstein* as her own thought experiment, critiquing a specific aspect of the ideal of the anti-type, extreme obsession and isolation. This manifests in the development of Victor's relationship with his wretched creation. This

relationship possesses much more than a simple father – son or the more Godlike, creator – created, dynamic, but instead forms a conceit throughout the novel concerning the relationship between the idealist and the idealized. Instead of the mourning that comes in Shelley's "Alastor," Mary's novel portrays a much more critical view of Shelley's philosophies, reflecting perhaps her own personal opposition to them.

Walton, the First Mad Scientist?

Interestingly, the novel opens immediately not with Victor Frankenstein's narrative, but with letters from an Arctic explorer named Walton. He, in his own isolating pursuit of the unknown which somewhat mirrors Frankenstein's later narrative, stumbles across a great sight on his adventures. Just when hope seems lost in the wilds of the ice, the crew spots a sled led by a many of gigantic stature who soon disappears into the horizon. It is not long after this initial sighting that another figure is spotted, a figure in much more dire circumstances. Walton and his crew haul the man on board and describes him thusly:

> I never saw a man in so wretched condition…We accordingly brought him back to the deck, and restored him to animation by rubbing him with brandy and forcing him to swallow a small quantity. As soon as he showed signs of life, we wrapped him up in blankets and placed him near the chimney of the kitchen stove. By slow degrees he recovered, and ate a little soup which restored him wonderfully. (M. W. Shelley, *Frankenstein* 26-27)

As readers this is the one of the first descriptions we have of Victor Frankenstein and one of the first adjectives used is "wretched," the very word that Frankenstein immediately assigns to his creation once it begins to stir with life and continues to use to refer to him as the narrative continues. Right at our first encounter with Victor, we are being trained to associate these words

with both Victor and his monster. This first word is the clue and the crucible that leads to the reader's further recognition of these first views of Victor as equating him to his creation. The passage continues with Walton's attempt to rescue Frankenstein from his condition of poor health, but Mary Shelley is very careful about her prose in this passage. Walton does not merely describe Victor as slowly regaining his health but by being "restored to animation." This language is the same as that used by Frankenstein when he first begins his quest to discover the secret to life—he does not merely wish to create life but to restore it to dead matter. Walton, essentially shadows Victor's future actions, Victor is undergoing the same process and described in the same language as his creation. The possibility of this use of such a specific description as being a coincidence is undermined by the repetition of similar language as the passage continues. Victor shows "signs of life" and "restored' is repeated. Something that is interesting to take into consideration when reading the above passage is the fact that the letters Walton is writing to his sister are supposedly happening in real time, in other words, that Walton is writing these letters in succession very shortly after the events which they are describing. This is important to remember when analyzing the above passage because it eliminates the possibility that Walton's descriptive language has been tainted by that of Frankenstein in his retelling of the events of his life.

This initial description of Frankenstein continues and as he is fully restored by Walton, his fully living state is also seen to be similar to that of the monster:

> Two days passed in this manner before he was able to speak…I never saw a more interesting creature; his eyes have generally an expression of wildness, and even madness, but there are moments when…his whole countenance is lighted up, as it were, with a beam of benevolence and sweetness that I never saw equalled. But he

> is generally melancholy and despairing; and sometimes he gnashes his teeth; as if impatient of the weight of woes that oppresses him. (M. W. Shelley *Frankenstein* 26)

As Walton continues to describe Frankenstein as he continues to recover, next choosing the word "creature" to describe him. Again, this is the same exact language that Victor uses to label his creation. Victor has only been referred to as a man once in this passage at the very beginning, giving the reader the effect that as he recovers, as he is "restored to animation," he becomes more and more like his creation in the descriptions. It is also interesting that right after Walton refers to Victor as creature he remarks on the expression of emotion given off by Frankenstein's eyes. He describes them as having a "wildness, and even a madness." It is these qualities about the monster's great yellow eyes that truly frighten Victor as the monster begins to stir and causes him to flee from his creation. One could even argue that the benevolence that Walton detects in Victor makes him even more akin to his creature. Although Frankenstein immediately labels the creature as a monster and disregards any of the creature's attempts to change his judgment, the reader learns of the creature's initially kind nature through his narrative of his time with the DeLacey family. It was only the actions of others convinced him to become what Victor had labeled him as. In truth, both Victor and his creature are characters torn between "sweetness" and "despairing." Again, these descriptions of Frankenstein are of Walton's own language, a character that has not met the creature and has yet to hear of his existence. He lacks the knowledge of this shared language to describe both Frankenstein and his creation, which adds a certain eerie element of truth to the idea that at the very start of the narrative, when we as readers first meet Victor Frankenstein, he is already one and the same with his monster. At the very start of the novel we as readers are primed to draw these conclusions, and though this is a horrifying

idea in itself, this is not the true revelation of the text. It instead primes the reader to explore how this dualistic relationship came about.

The Early Academic Obsession and Creation

Before we can see what effect Frankenstein and his monster's relationship have on the two of them and how it acts as a response to Shelley's exploration of the ideas, we must first see what drove Frankenstein to create the monster. From the time he was a young child, Victor describes his obsession with debunked or parascientific pursuits. He describes this need, however, in negative terms:

> I felt as if my soul were grapping with a palpable enemy; one by one the various keys were touched which formed the mechanism of my being: chord after chord was sounded, and soon my mind was filled with one thought, one conception, one purpose…I will pioneer a new way, explore unknown powers, and unfold to the world the deepest mysteries of creation. (M. W. Shelley, *Frankenstein* 49)

The physicality to this description of his desire to achieve more, how deeply this need penetrated his body as well as his spirit, and his naming it the enemy foreshadow his actual rivalry with the physical being he creates. Merely having the thought to pursue such an intellectual journey already shows dooming relationship between the idealist and his idealizations. The sense of doom is emphasized when Victor later describes this need as being "a resistless, and almost frantic impulse, urged me forward; I seemed to have lost all soul or sensation but for this one pursuit," (M. W. Shelley, *Frankenstein* 55). This is highly reminiscent of the language Shelley uses as his subject Poet persists in his fruitless pursuit of his own creation, the veiled maid. Victor, like the subject Poet, has driven himself into isolation, consumed by his need to achieve his ideal. Mary is establishing this connection before the monster is even created because unlike

the subject Poet, Frankenstein does, in some sense, achieve his lofty goals, but this pursuit and capture, as Mary shows, has disastrous consequences for both creator and created.

Victor has worked tirelessly to form his being, blasting moral asides, plundering graves for materials, and daring to match God in the ability to bestow life. But on the faithful night where his creation is finally ready to receive the actual spark that will reanimate his lifeless limbs, Frankenstein describes his horror of his creature's first moments of being alive, "I saw the dull yellow eye of the creature open; it breathed hard, and a convulsive motion agitated its limbs. How can I describe my emotions at this catastrophe, or how delineate the wretch whom with such infinite pains and care I had endeavored to form?" (M. W. Shelley, *Frankenstein* 58). It is interesting that it is not until the creature actually has life within him that Frankenstein recoils back and, for the first time, truly sees the grotesque nature of his work. Though in retrospect, Victor has described his need to create in negative terms, this was not recognized until the moment the monster opens his eyes. Mary is pointing out the blindness of the idealist and the isolationist, who so entranced in their own pursuits fail to see how it hurts those around them or themselves. It is almost as if when the creature opens his eyes, Victor opens his own as well, further drawing the two characters together. This sudden and complete hatred for his action is then transferred onto the result of that action, the creature itself. Victor continues to describe his first real look at his living creation:

> I beheld the wretch – the miserable creature 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 downstairs. (M. W. Shelley, *Frankenstein* 59)

Without Victor's newfound lens that casts light on the grotesquerie his laboratory has become these initial actions by the creature would necessarily come off as so ill-intentioned as Victor perceives them. It makes sense, like a bird first hatching, that the newborn monster would fix his eyes upon his father figure, and the same goes for when he reaches out for his creator. But Victor's horror at himself is displaced and he now views instead his creature as the manifestation of his sins. In a bizarre twist of Shelley's "Alastor" Victor does not project his love onto the monster but his hatred, ironically binding the two irrevocably although Frankenstein wishes to escape. This correlation between Victor and the subject Poet becomes more clear when Victor laments, "Mingled with this horror, I felt the bitterness of disappointment; dreams that had been my food and pleasant rest for so long a space were now become a hell to me; and the change was so rapid, the overthrow so complete!" (M. W. Shelley, *Frankenstein* 59-60). Just as when the subject Poet awakes from his fevered erotic dream of the veiled maid, so too does Frankenstein's dream of a perfect created life form abruptly vanish upon this metaphoric awakening. What was once sustaining becomes a hellish understanding of the unattainable nature of such a goal and results in the mental torture and eventual deaths of both protagonists of their respective works. Victor eerily prophesizes this himself when he later states, "I foresaw obscurely that I was destined to become the most wretched of human beings," (M. W. Shelley, *Frankenstein* 76).

Wandering Kindred Spirits

What follows Frankenstein's abandonment of his creation is a long path of paranoia about what horrible acts his creature must commit and the unfortunate confirmation of Victor's fears. His younger brother William, a mere child, is found strangled and the poor caretaker

Justine is blamed and subsequently tried and executed for his murder. Frankenstein, somehow aware that the true perpetrator of his crime is his own monster, grieves and separates himself from his family. The guilt of his actions haunt him and as he describes, he "wandered like an evil spirit, for [he] had committed deeds of mischief beyond description horrible, and more, much more ([he] had persuaded [him]self) was yet behind," (M. W. Shelley, *Frankenstein* 93). This explicit mention of the evil spirit is a direct reference to "Alastor" and is likely why Holmes believed *Frankenstein* to be a "programmatic" attempt to flesh this idea out more fully. However, unlike Shelley who does not explicitly state the relationship between pursued and pursuing spirit, Mary makes the correlation clear. How Frankenstein weighs how to deal with such a spirit also resonates with "Alastor" when he puts forth, "often, I say, I was tempted to plunge into the silent lake, that the waters might close over me and my calamities forever," (M. W. Shelley, *Frankenstein* 94). Victor, like the subject Poet, feels compelled to end his own life, and interestingly Mary uses the passive voice in the verb "tempted." It is unclear wheather, like the subject Poet of "Alastor" there is the sense of an outer agent taunting him to his death or if this is entirely Victor's initiative.

Shortly after Victor describes feeling the impulse to commit suicide, the ambiguity of the sense of pursued and pursued, tempted and tempter, becomes further stressed when Frankenstein seems to wish to give up his life again and cries out, "wandering spirits, if indeed yet wander, and do not rest in your narrow beds, allow me this faint happiness, or take me, as your companion, away from the joys of life," (M. W. Shelley, *Frankenstein* 101). Here, Victor explicitly calls upon his kindred spirits, wandering with him though seemingly with the authority to allow or prevent his exit from this world. To complicate matters further, immediately upon uttering this statement, Victor notices, "as I said this, I suddenly beheld the figure of a man, at

some distance, advancing towards me with superhuman speed," (M. W. Shelley, *Frankenstein* 101). In one sense, Frankenstein gets his wish. He evokes the wandering spirits and at that instance his creature, a fellow wretched wanderer, appears. But this coincidence has another interesting effect as it again links the two beings together, not only in that now they seem to be almost sharing the same thoughts, but their fates are combined and their roles almost reversed. Frankenstein had called upon the spirit asking permission to take leave of this world, extinguish his life, and the monster, whom Victor had given life, enters the scene to take claim over that responsibility. But the monster does not grant any lucky untimely death upon Victor and instead begins to narrate his own life of abandonment.

The monster begins his narrative of his life after Victor's cruel flight from the laboratory, recounting his struggle to survive in the woods, gaining sustenance from nuts and berry, facing the winter winds without shelter. That is until he comes upon a small cottage who we learn is inhabited by the DeLacey family. Yearning for companionship the creature, to an obsessive degree almost mirroring his creator's, strives to learn their language. He hopes that "knowledge might enable [him] to make them overlook the deformity of [his] figure; for with this also the contrast perpetually presented to [his] eyes has made [him] acquainted," (M. W. Shelley, *Frankenstein* 116). Like Victor, he somehow has an early grasp, or perhaps exaggeration, of the power of knowledge. But, also like Frankenstein, he understands that not all knowledge is helpful even if it is enticing. For instance, he soon goes on to describe his love for the family:

> '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 stared back, unable to believe that it was indeed I who was reflected in the mirror; and when I became fully convinced that I was in

> reality the monster that I am, I was filled with the bitterest of sensations of despondence and mortifications. Alas! I did not yet entirely know the fatal effects of this miserable deformity.' (M. W. Shelley, *Frankenstein* 116-117)

This, too, is reminiscent of a scene from "Alastor" where the subject Poet for the first time remarks at his haggard visage in the pool. But unlike "Alastor" this is not an inversion of the Narcissus and Echo myth, nor does the language surrounding the monster's deformity serve to romanticize an ugly appearance from the tireless pursuit of the ideal. There is no fawning Echo and no self-love present in this scene, only hatred for the knowledge of his hideous form.

The monster's narrative continues to mirror Victor as he becomes more and more knowledgeable through his observation of the family and the different texts he has found and read to himself. He becomes more self-aware and begins to question the nature of his existence and the knowledge he possesses. He exclaims, "Of what a strange nature if knowledge! It clings to the mind, when it has once seized on it, like a lichen on the rock. I wished sometimes to shake off all thought and feeling; but I learned that there was but one means to overcome the sensation of pain, and that was death – a state which I feared yet did not understand," (M. W. Shelley, *Frankenstein* 123). The monster, too, has contemplated the taking of his own life to escape the burden of the knowledge he possesses, in this case, the knowledge of his own hideous existence. A few pages later, the monster expands on this recognition, saying "increase of knowledge only discovered to me more clearly what a wretched outcast I was. I cherished hope, it is true; but it vanished when I beheld my person reflected in water, or my shadow in the moonshine, even as that frail image and that inconstant shade," (M. W. Shelley, *Frankenstein* 133). After the DeLacey's rejection of the creature his mind takes a dark turn.The monster's knowledge, though perhaps not directly, is responsible for his recognition of his isolation, similar to how Victor'

pursuit of knowledge leads to his solitude. But just as in "Alastor," when the monster views his disfigured visage in the clear pool of water he gives up his hopes. He does not resign himself to lie down and die like the subject Poet, at least not at this point in the narrative, but in a way is he resigned a sort of death, the cold realization he must carry on alone.

Creating Companionship and Chaos

But the monster has not yet completely accepted this fate of a doomed existence to walk the earth alone, scorned by all other living beings, including those who are responsible for his being and those who he has shown only love and reverence. In return for the wrongs his master has done against him, the monster searched for Frankenstein until he found him and began to relate his tale. At the end of his narrative, which Victor fails to see mirrors his own, the creature demands that Frankenstein construct another being like him, this time a female. The creature states:

> I demand a creature of another sex, but as hideous as myself; the gratification is small, but it is all that I can receive, and it shall content me. It is true, we shall be monsters, cut off from all the world; but on that account we shall be more attached to one another. Our lives will not be happy, but they will be harmless, and free from the misery I now feel. Oh! my creator, make me happy; let me feel gratitude towards you for one benefit! (M. W. Shelley, *Frankenstein* 148)

Though this is not an entirely hopeful solution, the creature promises that he and his newly created companion, will run away together and live in isolation away from the hate-filled eyes of humans, bound together through their mutual loneliness caused by a shared hideous exterior. Regardless of his female companion, the reality of their isolation is still a dismal prospect.

At first, Victor is appalled by the idea, fearing that the creatures' combined power would serve to incite them to attack and wreck havoc upon the human race. But after a thought, however a reluctant thought it is, Frankenstein begrudgingly agrees, feelings his fatherly duty towards his creation for the first time. With the creature's promise of destruction upon all that Frankenstein loves, the young doctor leaves to undertake his gruesome galvanizing task once again. He then isolates himself once again, especially from his family, which creates a heavy burden in him by itself. He describes it as:

> I felt as if I were placed under a ban – as if I had no right to claim their sympathies – as if never more might I enjoy companionship with them. Yet thus I loved them to adoration; and to save them, I resolved to dedicate myself to my most abhorred task. The prospect of such an occupation made every other circumstance of existence pass before me like a dream, and that thought only had to me the reality of life. (M. W. Shelley, *Frankenstein* 151)

In an interesting twist, in resolving to create a companion for the monster Frankenstein here also resolves to eliminate the possibility of himself having one, at least for the time being. There is also an interesting reversion to the language of dreams in describing his work, but it is inverted. Before, when all of Victor's dreams rested on his success at attempting to instill life in what was dead, now his work has become a nightmare and all other aspects of life are the dream. But as we already know from past experience, both in this novel and the poem "Alastor" that came before it, what you dream is doomed to be that which is unattainable.

This resolve of Frankenstein to bring to life a female to serve as the companion to his earlier creation is short-lived. Victor delays the process of building the creature out of dread and as he delves deeper and deeper back into the science he forsook his promise violently dissolves

into a paranoid fear. As the monster himself promised, he comes to check Victor's progress in his second endeavor, when Victor sees him at the window, he reflects:

> I trembled, and my heart failed within me, when, on looking up, I saw by the light of the moon, the daemon at the casement. A ghastly grin wrinkled his lips as he gazed on me, where I sat fulfilling the task which he had allotted to me. Yes, he had followed me in my travels; he had loitered in forests, hid himself in caves, or taken refuge in wide and desert hearths; and he now came to mark my progress, and claim the fulfillment of my promise. (M. W. Shelley, *Frankenstein* 171)

As the passage begins, Victor describes the effect the mere sight of his creation has on him. His heart "fails" within him, not only interjecting his great fear of his creature but also his likeness to it and the half-formed companion he is striving to animate. Thought and sight of the creature creates a feeling of death, of inanimation, within Victor. In this moment, Victor reduces himself to the same dead flesh of the creature and the future companion. Victor then continues to describe the creature in the same monstrous language that he has since the spark of life first flowed through his creation, with "daemon," the "ghastly" grin, but if the reader takes into consideration Victor's language of equality between himself and the creature at the very beginning of the passage, then the reader must also make the conclusion that Victor is also describing himself.

This intimacy of likening himself bodily with the monster through language transforms into an even stronger bond as the passage continues. Through a mere glance, Victor has come, not only to the conclusion that the creature must have followed him, but also to intimate knowledge of specific details of the monster's whereabouts and methods of tracking. Though this could be mere speculation based off of the creature's previous discussions with Victor, the tone

of his language is too repetitious and insistent. With the earlier language of connection between Frankenstein and his monster, this is too specific a description to pose as mere conjecture on Victor's part. Now, at this literal meeting between the two characters, not only are their bodily descriptions constructed to suggest similarity, but also their minds are open to a fluidity of identity.

The fluidity culminates as the passage goes on:

> As I looked on him, his countenance expressed the utmost extent of malice and treachery. I thought with a sensation of madness on my promise of creating another like to him, and trembling with passion, tore to pieces the thing on which I was engaged. The wretch saw me destroy the creature on whose future existence he depended for happiness, and, with a howl of devilish despair and revenge, withdrew. (M. W. Shelley, *Frankenstein* 171)

Victor continues to describe his creation's expression with language of absolute disgust, with "malice" and "treachery." Once again we as readers can apply these descriptors to Victor himself because at this moment, Frankenstein describes himself as being overcome by a "madness." His perceived evil descriptors of the monster manifest themselves in his mind and produce this madness which in turn produces the monstrous behavior of destroying the companion, an act he would normally reserve as only able to be enacted by the creature. But this act of destroying the creature's companion is not just the result of the two minds and bodies of Frankenstein and his creature becoming more and more similar but is yet another act that emphasizes their soon to be interchangeability. The conclusion of the passage reaches a disturbing level not simply because of the act of destroying the companion but the manner in which Victor does it. He describes himself as "trembling with passion" and in the heat of that passion physically tears to pieces of

corpse of pieces. This language is not only violent but is also subversively sexual. This effect is strengthened when the reader takes into consideration Victor's position around the thing. He is standing over it, "engaged on" it. Most strikingly, though, at this point the reader is prepped to view Victor and his creation as similar—the reader is already aware of the monster's intentions to have the female as a companion and that intimacy is one of his desires. If we take the monster's wishes and wants to also be Victor's as the language suggests, than Victor has in essence fulfilled his greatest fear and consummated the creature's and his companion's union in the creature's stead.

This mirroring between the monster and Frankenstein is, of course, brought to a head once the monster return's the favor and murders Elizabeth on her and Victor's wedding night. The monster rages once he sees what Victor has done to his promise of companionship and threatens outright before he flees from the laboratory, "I shall be with you on your wedding-night," (M. W. Shelley, *Frankenstein* 173). But Frankenstein, mistakenly takes this threat to be against his own person and neglects to take Elizabeth's safety into account, an oversight which leads to devastating consequences. Every precaution goes to waste and as Frankenstein contemplates false hopes that the monster will not deliver on his promises when "I heard a shrill and dreadful scream…As I heard it, the whole truth rushed into my mind, my arms dropped, the motion of every muscle and fibre was suspended; I could feel the blood trickling in my veins, and tingling the extremities of my limbs," (M. W. Shelley, *Frankenstein* 199). As Elizabeth's peril comes into Victor's consciousness he becomes hyper aware of his corporeal nature. There is almost a contradiction of terms, his life is at once suspended but he also feels his blood running through his body, Elizabeth's death has thrown him into an ambiguous state.

Because Victor mistook himself to be the victim of the monster's plot, it seems the is a transfer between the two of the descriptive language. The passage continues:

> Great God! why did I not then expire! Why am I here to relate the destruction of the best hope, and the purest creature of earth? She was there, lifeless and inanimate, thrown across the bed, her head hanging down, and her pale and distorted features half covered by her hair. Every where I turn I see the same figure – her bloodless arms and relaxed form flung by the murderer on its bridal bier. Could I behold this, and live? Alas! life is obstinate, and clings closest where it is most hated." (M. W. Shelley, *Frankenstein* 199).

He is unable to become more like his creation at this point and instead that tragedy falls into Elizabeth's fate. Now she becomes "lifeless," "inanimate," and "distorted" like the monster but more importantly like the female companion which Frankenstein had ripped apart. This horrific death replaces the sexual climax one would expect on a marriage bed. Yet this can only be what is expected. Throughout the novel, similar to the subject Poet's continued refusal of women of the flesh, Frankenstein forgoes his union with Elizabeth in favor of his ardent pursuit of that which he idealizes. But instead of the portended horrors Shelley claims his poem will illuminate, Mary Shelley's novel becomes a truly nightmarish exploration of the mental and emotional consequences of such an endeavor. In place of sexual climax, the dramatic climax of the novel is reached and as Holmes observes, "thus both creator and created destroy each other's hopes of sexual happiness, and with that their links with human society are shattered. Both become outcasts and pariahs, tortured equally by the knowledge of what they have done, and the desire to be revenged for what they have lost," (Holmes, "The Byron Summer" 333). While this is certainly true, it can also be said that their ostracism is not only a result of this encounter but also

the cause of it. Mary is warning us not only of the dangers of unfulfilled romantic and sexual desires, but that the obsessive and self-centered behavior that both Victor and his creation participate in prevents a union from occurring in the first place.

The Final Chase

The death of Elizabeth is the last blow against any chance of Frankenstein going on to live a life of satisfaction and also quenches any inkling that he and the monster could ever be reconciled. Her death also marks the point in the narrative where Victor and his creation truly become inseparable. He reflects:

> As the memory of past misfortunes pressed upon me, I began to reflect on their cause – the monster whom I had created, the miserable daemon whom I had sent abroad into the world for my destruction. I was possessed by a maddening rage when I thought of him, and desired and ardently prayed that I might have him within my grasp to wreak a great and signal revenge on his cursed head. (M. W. Shelley, *Frankenstein* 202).

Frankenstein, in both descriptive language and thought, now mimics the monster's previous actions, he wishes to tear him apart just as he did his companion, just as the creature did to Elizabeth. Although it seems all of his rage if directed at the monster, there is the clue that this hatred points inwards as well because he names himself the creator. This is not the first time Victor has taken blame for the events of the novel, but it is one of the first times that it induces such a rage and violent nature in him instead of depression or melancholy. Victor has finally found his resolve to pursue and destroy the monster which brings us back to the beginning of the novel.

Holmes marks this as being extremely innovative on Mary's part, remarking, "the way in which, after the murder of Elizabeth, she reverses the roles of pursuer and pursued. It is now Frankenstein who pursues the monster. This creates a *doppelganger theme*, in which Frankenstein and his creation are made to form antagonistic parts of a single spiritual entity," (Holmes, "The Byron Summer" 332). But here Holmes neglects the fact that this doppelganger effect has been present for the whole of the novel, yes the roles are reversed, but this has the effect of solidifying a relationship that Mary has carefully crafted throughout the narrative. This doppelganger effect is less about doubling the characters and more about confusing them, as Victor reflect near his final moments of life:

> 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. (M. W. Shelley, *Frankenstein* 219).

The first sentence of the above passage seems like an oxymoron, Frankenstein here admits that it was madness that led to him create life and also admits that the creature was rational. There is at once a recognition of his creature but also a confusion between himself and the monster in his syntax. He then attempts to justify his actions, calling attention to his membership in the human race. But this fails, due to his near constant identification with the monster and his self-induced separation from humanity for most of his life. The statement just does not ring true and instead reflects his self-centeredness more so as he attempts to displace his blame.

Near minutes after Frankenstein expires aboard Walton's ship the monster himself appears, moments too late to attempt reconciliation between himself and his master. Perhaps unexpectedly, he bemoans Victor's death, exclaiming:

> 'That is also my victim!' he exclaimed: 'in his murder my crimes are consummated; the miserable series of my being is wound to its close! Oh, Frankenstein! generous and self-devoted being! what does it avail that I now ask thee to pardon me? I, who irretrievably destroyed thee by destroying all thou lovedst. Alas! he is cold, he cannot answer me.' (M. W. Shelley, *Frankenstein* 221).

He comes to beg forgiveness but it is too late, Victor lies dead before him. But in Frankenstein's death the monster also sees his own, now inevitable that his dual self has parted. Victor is a victim to the monster and the monster is a victim to Victor, in the end these two halves to the same whole have destroyed each other. And here, in yet another subtle reference to "Alastor" the monster refers to Victor as "generous and self-devoted," which perfectly describe him though they may seem contradictory terms. In his self-devoted quest to discover the mysteries of the universe, Victor was generous with the gift of life which he bestowed onto the monster, even if such a gift came to ruin them both.

Mary Shelley's exploration of isolation and self-devotion intensely differs from her husband's own attempts. Although in both works the figures that pursue their highest callings to the point of ostracizing themselves away from friends, family, and the opportunity for real relationships, which inevitably leads to their doom, in *Frankenstein* the consequences are terrifying. Instead of building an elegy to the doomed nature of this practice as Shelley did, Mary illustrates dangers of isolation and projection of ideals with the relationship between Victor and

his creation. The two similar beings cannot coexist without forming an antagonistic relationship which works to doom them both. It seems as though Percy Shelley wished to suppress this reading of the relationship between Frankenstein and the monster in the preface that he wrote for the first edition, but after his death Mary was free to actually emphasize it in her own introduction for the 1831 edition. This was most likely not out of a spiteful place in Shelley, but a self-denying one. Holmes posits that in a review Shelley wrote on *Frankenstein*:

> It is impossible to believe that he was not thinking at least partly of himself when he added, '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.' Implicitly, Shelley accepted his own identification as Frankenstein's monster. (Holmes, "The Byron Summer" 334)

But although there is an implicit acceptance in his relation to the monster, Shelley still seems to be missing the point. While the society who would not accept the monster are certainly at fault for turning him to a life of isolation, it is Victor's initial abandonment of his creature that serves at the catalyst for the entire arc of the narrative. Here, Shelley continues to lament his own feelings of being discarded and remaining blind to the admonitive properties of the novel, just as he remains obstinate that his exploration of anti-typical love is a criticism when it, in fact, mourns it. In short, writing *Frankenstein* perhaps gave Mary Shelley the platform to do a fantastic exercise on the possible consequences of her lover's behavior, not to serve to chastise him but to warn him of the possible dangers.

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