

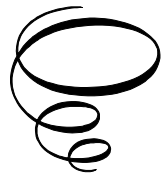
Mary Shelley's
Frankenstein,
1818-2018

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Edited by

Maria Parrino, Alessandro Scarsella
and Michela Vanon Alliata

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FOREWORD

In February 2018 the editors of the present volume organised a two-day international conference in Venice to celebrate the bicentenary of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*, one of the most successful and haunting stories of all time. This publication grew out of that event, which was attended by panellists from Europe, the United States, Canada and Asia, and for which we would like to thank Ca' Foscari University of Venice, and in particular the Dipartimento di Studi Linguistici e Culturali Comparati and its director Maria Del Valle Ojeda Calvo, for providing institutional and financial support.

The nineteen essays collected in this volume, which were originally presented at the Venice conference, have all been extensively revised, expanded, and updated. The book is divided into three parts and preceded by the editors' introduction. While the first part turns primarily to the text itself, analysing its fictional techniques, the second and the third are concerned with placing the novel in a wider cultural context, exploring the numerous afterlives of the novel, its reception, and adaptations in different media, such as drama, cinema, graphic novels, television series, and computer games.

In their various critical approaches, these essays aim to pay tribute to, and account for, the persistent hold that Mary Shelley's masterpiece continues to exert on the imagination of readers, writers and artists in all fields of human creativity.

PART ONE
READING FRANKENSTEIN

INTRODUCTION

MARIA PARRINO

In her *Journal* entry for 12 August 1816, Mary Shelley recorded: “Write my story and translate. Shelley goes to the town, and afterwards goes out in the boat with Lord B. – after dinner I go out a little in the boat, and then Shelley goes up to Diodati. – I translate in the evening and read *Le Vieux de la Montagne*” (Shelley 1987, 124). On Wednesday, 31 December 1817 (the day before its publication) Shelley wrote: “Read Tacitus – Walk – S[helley] reads Gibbon – Fran[kens]stein comes.” Between the two entries, Mary Shelley often mentioned working on the “story” – *Frankenstein* – which was thus accompanied by translation and reading in a foreign language, activities Shelley carried out simultaneously as part of her daily routine. This is not surprising for one whose stepmother was a professional translator and father a political thinker and a committed student of foreign languages. Nor is it surprising for a writer who was a determined and assiduous reader of (and listener to) books covering a diversity of genres. Such a multi-cultural and multilingual background marked her personal and professional life, both characterized by a systematic intersection of languages, motifs and themes.

If reading, writing and translation are crucial features of Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, it is from an analysis of her knowledge of European literature and her personal “rambles” in European countries that there emerges a relationship between the author’s multi-language experiences and her writing of *Frankenstein*. Mary Shelley’s multicultural reading influenced her writing, leading her to engage with issues of authenticity, narrative structure and translation. Crossing geographical and language borders was a feature of her writing, as is evident in the fact that she made the most famous Gothic monster a multilingual traveler. The Creature speaks French and English, and meets polyglot characters: Victor is French and speaks German and English; Elizabeth speaks Italian and French; Safie speaks Turkish and learns French; he is a migrant into foreign countries and languages.

Reading *Frankenstein* means more than simply reading Mary Shelley's novel, for the considerable number of texts mentioned lead towards an intertextuality that shows strong commitment, and is of unquestionable interest. The numerous references include Plutarch's *Lives*, Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Goethe's *Sorrows of Young Werther*, Volney's *The Ruins*, Edward Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Coleridge's "The Ancient Mariner," Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey," Ovid's "Prometheus," and Godwin's *Political Justice* and *Caleb Williams*. Similarly expansive is the formative influence of philosophical, political and scientific writings by John Locke, Mary Wollstonecraft, Erasmus Darwin, Luigi Galvani, Humphrey Davy and de Buffon, sources which Mary Shelley used for her novel whilst taking a scholarly and critical approach through which at times she shaped these multifarious works to her needs.

All the chapters in this section reveal a concern with the origins of *Frankenstein*. Although in her "Introduction" to the 1831 edition Mary Shelley articulated a version of the origins of her invention ("not out of void, but out of chaos"), critics nevertheless feel the need to further investigate the author's imaginative powers and trace the nature and the structure of her literary creation. Lia Guerra analyses the issue of origins and creation both in Genesis and in the mythological tradition, and speculates on the foundation myth and the creation of the first humans. She underlines the impressive extent of Mary Shelley's reading before writing *Frankenstein*, which shows an encyclopedic knowledge characteristic of her family and her community. Antonella Braidà discusses the origin of Mary Shelley's interest in justice and law. The young author's awareness of contemporary legal and political reforms emerges in the way the novel deals with the trial of Justine and discusses the issue of human rights. The juridical language used proves not only the influence of political thinkers (Godwin and Montagu), but shows both Mary Shelley's "critique of the law by subverting its major tenets" and her desire to deviate from common practice and provoke debate. If the trial highlights the arguments directed against the death penalty, the Creature's final admission of his guilt shows he has learnt the "sanguinary laws of man."

Victor Sage poses the question of how we contextualise the ambiguous nature of the Sublime in *Frankenstein*, analysing the emotional impact of awe in the characters' description of the landscape. Intertwining biographical and textual references, Sage revisits the argument between H.-B. de Saussure and de Buffon, and its connection with the ascent on foot of the Mer de Glace in the valley of Chamonix by Mary Shelley and her husband Percy. A similar double-featured analysis emerges in Michael

Hollington's chapter on "ruinism" which widens our perspective upon the theme of ruins, challenging the exclusive reference to Volney in the novel. Hollington indicates the different images of nature in *Frankenstein* and underlines the paradoxical connection between constructive and destructive creation, the Creature and creator locked in a *doppelgänger* relationship.

Alessandro Scarsella focuses on Mary Shelley's approach to the epistolary form of the novel, analyses the timeline of the letters and the changes in format from Walton's first letter addressed to his sister to the last one – marked simply as "in continuation" – thereby making the move from the epistolary to the modern novel. Maria Parrino's chapter shifts the perspective from Walton's word-for-word transcription of Frankenstein's oral report to the auditory images of his framed writing. By focusing on the prosodic elements which are frequently mentioned in the novel, this chapter invites the reader to deal with "aural literacy," the ability to acquire knowledge by listening and engaging with the acoustic world.

The variety of topics which emerge from any study of *Frankenstein* is so great that no single publication can encompass them. Luckily, we are not the only ones publishing on *Frankenstein*, but proud members of a wider community of writers and scholars who feel the pressure to celebrate such a meaningful text, and experience the pleasure in doing so. We join the number of those who continue to have something to say about this text, those who despite (and because of) their reading and re-reading of the novel continue to find something new and intriguing in the 75,000 words which a 21-year-old author assembled and bid "go forth and prosper." In the final chapter of his book on *Frankenstein*, genetics, and popular culture, science writer Jon Turney warns (and reassures) us thus: "We are never going to be rid of *Frankenstein*, even if we want to be" (Turney 1998, 220). We surely do not want to be.

Works Cited

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CHAPTER ONE

“IN THE BEGINNING...”

THE BIBLE AND MYTHOLOGY IN MARY SHELLEY’S EARLY PRODUCTION

LIA GUERRA

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth and the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.

This is of course Genesis 1-5, where the first occurrence of the phrase “in the beginning” appears in the text of King James Bible. Another occurrence is in the Gospel of John I:1 and I:2: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God.” Paul’s Epistle to the Hebrews 1:10 resumes the image: “And Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the works of thine hands.”

The reasons for my making such a solemn opening lie in the peculiar quality of Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* of 1818, a text – to start with – deeply concerned with origin and creation, enrolling as it does among its characters a life-giver and a new-born man. Secondly, it is a text encapsulating in its subtitle a myth – in fact a foundation myth: this is testified in the tragic tradition attached to Prometheus, starting from the drama attributed to Aeschylus *Prometheus Bound* (5th century BC), where the Titan is depicted as chained by Zeus to a mountainside in the Caucasus in punishment for stealing fire from the gods and giving it to humanity – fire standing for the foundation of human technology. Prometheus is a foundation myth also because it resembles the creator-God of the Old

Testament, as the Greek legend describes him creating the first humans from clay or earth. Thirdly, the novel attaches an unusual relevance to the power of the Word, as does the Biblical text: in the narrative the Creature refers to language as “a God-like science” (Shelley 1994, 88). The interconnection of these three items will hopefully clarify the link between mythology and Christianity in the Shelleys’ circle. Biographical research around the Shelleys has long agreed that religion and heathen mythology were present in the early debates going on within the radical group they were part of, influenced by an earlier generation of Jacobin writers (initially Godwin and Wollstonecraft), and by Locke’s philosophical thought.

I will start from two basic statements: a) *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus*, first published anonymously in 1818, shares the parentless condition of all myths (Lévi-Strauss, 1969) and also marks the presence of myth in its subtitle; b) the 1818 text itself soon acquired an independent life, transforming itself into something different from the original text, in fact metamorphosing into a myth of its own.

I intend to address the topic of the use of myth in the Shelley circle from a wider perspective, viewing the origin of myth in a collective psychic reality meant to generate doubt and questions rather than offering answers, as ancient mythology was supposed to do. As the expression of pre-logical societies, and as a nonverbal way of knowing, myth enables the cultural man to designate pre-verbal knowledge. As such, it is contrasted with *logos*, the word whose validity or truth can be argued and demonstrated. The Shelleys’ interest in classical authors was supported by the work of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century mythographers, who contributed to general knowledge a careful and considered assessment of the mythology of the ancients, and a possibility of harmonizing it with the philosophical tradition of scepticism. As Gary Kelly has aptly clarified,

[T]he Romantic period saw extensive use of myth and history in literature. Since classical antiquity, myth and history had been used in literature for several purposes: to validate new works by reference to established and prestigious knowledges, to assimilate new subjects to the supposedly common knowledge of an educated and elite readership, to critique contemporary issues indirectly, and to suggest analogies between contemporary issues and supposedly universal, transcendent, or actual historical examples. In the Romantic period, myth and history continued to be used in literature for these ends, but they were also used in various new ways to reconstruct literature in the image and interests of those who wrote and read it, as a brief and partial taxonomy can suggest [...]. History and

historiography were similarly rewritten, imitated, faked, forged, and fictionalized, but especially appropriated for fictional representation of what the historical record did not or could not represent – the subjective and private lives of historic individuals or of fictitious common individuals placed in significant historical events or eras. (Kelly 1998, 70)

Apart from numerous primary sources, the Shelleys could rely for back-up on reference-books that all Romantic poets were familiar with, starting from Lemprière's *Classical Dictionary* (1788), the first example of an encyclopaedic method applied to classical lore, soon to be followed by Bell's *New Pantheon* in 1790. In both, mythological topics are treated as "facts," and not interpreted, and are drawn up alongside historical characters and real places. In addition, pagan idols and their deeds are not compared to Christian revelation in order to emphasize the latter's superiority, but rather dealt with on their own. In 1806 Edward Baldwin's *Pantheon* was published: far from being encyclopaedic, this text revitalized the eighteenth-century allegorical interpretation of mythology and re-established the misused *topos* of ancient Greece vs Christianity. The opening reads: "[Christianity] fears no comparison with the mythology of ancient Greece" (Baldwin 1814, vi). However, the conclusion is not that the Greek religion is so inferior to Christianity that the comparison should not even be made, but rather that there are basic similarities between the two, that the Greek mind is deeply and genuinely religious and that Greek myth *is* religion. Far from being atheists, the Greeks "had the happiness to regard all nature, even the most solitary scenes, as animated and alive, to see everywhere around them a kind and benevolent agency, and to find on every side motive for contentment, reliance and gratitude" (Baldwin 1814, 82). This quotation is interesting for at least two reasons: one is that "Edward Baldwin" is the pseudonym for William Godwin, whose influence on both Percy and Mary was pervasive – even shaping a certain reading of paganism, as Percy clearly showed with his highly emotional reactions and the fascination with pagan features he showed when visiting Pompei in December 1818 (Shelley 1964, 74-75).¹ The second reason is

¹ See letter to Peacock of January 1819 (Shelley 1964, II: 74-75). Surprisingly, the otherwise laconic *Journals* record the impact of the visit to Pompeii on both Mary and Percy: "Tuesday 22 [December] [1818] Go to Pompeii – we are delighted with this ancient city – read Montaigne – S. reads Livy" (Shelley 1987, I: 245). This visit was soon to be followed by a ride to Paestum, enthusiastically discussed in a letter by Percy Shelley to Peacock on February 25, 1819 (Shelley 1964, II: 78-80). No emotional reaction is recorded in the *Journals*, where the facts are simply stated. (Shelley 1987, I: 249). Between the end of 1819 and 1820 Percy Shelley

CHAPTER FIVE

THE EPISTOLARY FORM IN *FRANKENSTEIN*: KEYWORDS AND CHARACTER SYSTEM

ALESSANDRO SCARSELLA

The epistolary component within the structure of *Frankenstein* appears legitimized in the paratext of the 1818 and 1831 editions. In the first edition, the four opening letters precede the first chapter, which was later split into two in the 1831 edition. The letters show variations between the two editions, although these are never substantial and always adhere to the content of the supposed truth of their statements. The propellant function of private writing in this text acts at the level of the performativity of the epistolary message, rather than within the psychological profile of the characters. This confirms on the one hand the decline of the epistolary formula, and on the other the construction of a new model of novel. The following observations attempt to tiptoe into the laboratories of Mary Shelley's novel, finding the traces left by the old style in the course of her literary experiment.

Hypothesis as to the Original Structure of the ur-*Frankenstein*

According to Charles Robinson's chronological reconstruction, Mary "wrote a shorter version of her novel; that she and 'Shelley [did] talk about my story' on 21 August, probably deciding to expand her 'short tale' into the surviving Draft of the novel" (Robinson 2016, 13-14). The Abinger manuscript at the Bodleian is divided into two parts and contains a narrative devoid of Walton's epistolary framework and the last pages of the text; here P.B. Shelley's handwriting has been identified. It must be assumed that the initial lost version was quite similar in layout to *The Vampyre* by Polidori, a text that was analogously published anonymously and is genetically linked to the first instantiation of the plot of *Frankenstein*,

and thus to the stormy night when the company at the Villa Diodati near Geneva during the summer 1816 took part in the ghost story competition, which is also described by the anonymous writer of the “Extract of a Letter from Geneva” that precedes the text. The strategy of identifying the specific author, which could be Byron or P.B. “Shelly,” (*sic*) according to Polidori’s erroneous transcript, is discerned in the paratext of the two works: in the “Preface” to the 1818 first edition of *Frankenstein*, as a testimony published by the author who, hides only her name; *The Vampyre*, however, is preceded by a letter that lacks any closing remarks or signature, and has been sent to the publisher by the editor who has received the text from a third party. We will bear this in mind.

Polidori’s narrative opts for a synthesis that avoids dialogue and favors free reported speech, except during the key dramatic confrontation between Aubrey and Lord Ruthven on the brink of the latter’s apparent death. Polidori proposes a simple structure: “I obtained the outline of each of these stories” (Polidori 1819, xv); this resembles a preparatory work, which anticipates the scripts of the films to come, rather than a novella. We find references to letters in *The Vampyre*:

1. Received by Aubrey during his stay in Rome:

Whilst he was thus engaged, letters arrived from England, which he opened with eager impatience; the first was from his sister, breathing nothing but affection; the others were from his guardians, the latter astonished him; if it had before entered into his imagination that there was an evil power resident in his companion, these seemed to give him most sufficient reason for the belief. (Polidori 1819, 36)

2. The letter that Aubrey writes to his sister begging her not to marry Ruthven, but which will never be delivered:

[H]e wrote a letter to his sister, conjuring her, as she valued her own happiness, her own honour, and the honour of those now in the grave, who once held her in their arms as their hope and the hope of their house, to delay but for a few hours that marriage, on which he denounced the most heavy curses. The servants promised they would deliver it; but giving it to the physician, he thought it better not to harass any more the mind of Miss Aubrey by, what he considered, the ravings of a maniac. (Polidori 1819, 69-70)

There is an evident functional parallelism between these and the family members’ letters received by Victor Frankenstein.

The Longest Letter

Walton's last letter in the first part of the third edition of *Frankenstein* is particularly long and contains almost the entire novel, except for the open ending, and indeed the second part concludes with Walton's last letters, described as "in continuation:" "WALTON, *in continuation* / August 26th, 17—" (Shelley 1818, 231) The last missive before the chapters begin in Book I is dated August 19th. The date is consistent with weekly mailings. So what does "in continuation" mean? It appears to be the residue of a heterodiegetic narrative in which the narrator gives voice to the characters through their own letters. Traces of an early such structure, as mentioned before, and one perhaps similar to the outline of Polidori's *The Vampyre*, can be found in Frankenstein's use of the third person for himself, but it is peculiar that the expression "So much has been done, exclaimed the soul of Frankenstein, – more, far more, will I achieve" should have been added to the third edition (variant transcribed in Appendix F; Shelley 1818, 329). The absence of farewells at the end of the last letter to the beloved Sister – replaced by the epigraphic THE END – seems undoubtedly taken from Polidori in the incomplete letter to the editor that precedes that narrative; it is followed by the unsigned second letter: "Extract of a Letter, Containing an Account of Lord Byron's Residence in the Island of Mitylene," in 1812 (Polidori 1819, [75]-84). By reversing the chronological order of the two letters which frame the tale of *The Vampyre*, we are faced with a different and even more allusive montage compared to the supposition of Byron's involvement in the ghost story, as author or as a strange and sinister protagonist. But Polidori avoided the solution of such a sender of letters as Walton, not least because Byron was not a fictional character like Victor Frankenstein and, indeed, would have been offended, and likely to have denied the authenticity of the episodes related to his stay in Mytilene.

However, the comparison is instructive in understanding the path taken by Mary Shelley in processing her material and procedures. It may be objected that Polidori could not count on the observations and interventions of counsellors of the caliber of P.B. Shelley and William Godwin; but it is also true that the tone of the two complementary letters in *The Vampyre* is very conventional and devoid of artistry. *The Vampyre* is saved in so far as it is deliberately presented as an outline, while in its short form it is endowed with remarkable efficacy.

Epistles in the Narrative Machine

No general theoretical reference is needed to support consideration of the structure of *Frankenstein* as a complex device, whose levels of narrative communication aim mostly to involve readers. The connection to the found manuscripts of the Gothic tradition is consolidated by the introduction of the "Preface" written by P.B. Shelley, which precedes the first narrative sequence of epistolary documents. However, these letters have the double function of a) verisimilitude, connected as they are to the special circumstances taking place, and to the emotions involved; and b) accentuating the interdiscursive context; for this is the intrinsic reality of the text's indirect relationship with the traditional trope of the *found manuscript*: an object of rewriting, the document bearing the word of others comes to light in the strategies and intentions of its author. An additional aspect that is perhaps worth noting is the homogeneity of voices in the exchange of letters, which all belong to the same family/social group. This explains why the Creature does not write letters but is the author of a long monologue, considered the true essence of the novel and making up the third volume of the first edition. The existence of the Creature represents a destructive factor from the point of view of the family group. As the product of an enclosed education, and destined to render an endogamic choice of a partner, Victor undermines such equilibrium with a parthenogenetic act of creation, whose gestation is accompanied by an autoerotic sexual delirium. But the correspondence becomes in itself a desperate symbolic act in this deprived setting, since it aims to maintain the cohesion of the group and, in its nature as an uninterrupted flow of communication, achieve appropriate behavior and an ethical principle:

I knew my silence disquieted them; and I well remembered the words of my father: "I know that while you are pleased with yourself, you will think of us with affection, and we shall hear regularly from you. You must pardon me, if I regard any interruption in your correspondence as a proof that your other duties are equally neglected." (Shelley 1818, 83)

However:

My father made no reproach in his letters; and only took notice of my silence by inquiring into my occupations more particularly than before. (Shelley 1818, 84)

In P.B. Shelley's gothic novel *Zastrozzi*, the impossibility of epistolary correspondence with the outside world is connected to the imprisonment of the sequestered Verezzi and his suicidal condition:

He often expressed a wish to write to Julia, but the old woman said she had orders neither to permit him to write nor receive letters – on pretence of not agitating his mind; and to avoid the consequences of despair, knives were denied him. (Shelley P.B., 1810, 10)

A state of mind which can be defined as the epistolary behaviour of particular characters has perhaps, in the long history of *Frankenstein's* reception, prevented the surplus value of the epistolary frame from increasing, whether semiotically or affectively; this can be attributed to the functioning of conventional self-mimetic narrative mechanisms. On the contrary, in the crisis of the epistolary model, there is a reason for the preservation of this fictional device, aimed at readers and, above all, at such consummate and compulsive readers as Mrs Margaret Saville (sister of Walton, whose initials coincide with those of Mary Shelley). However, the deliberate chronotopic consequence of each individual epistle, between distance and closeness, presupposes the impossibility of knowing the intervening facts. This limit to the reading of each letter should be emphasized, both in Walton's letter-frames and in the other letters transcribed within Victor Frankenstein's homodiegetic narrative.

Journals, Papers and Notes

If it is true that the author herself had direct experience of the communicative and personally evocative power of letters and private writing (Freya, 2016, 1; Bennett 2003, 216), and that she was aware of the structure of the epistolary novel (Favret 1993, 178-179), it is also true that the prototype of Walton's letters can be identified, for the context described, in the *Viaggi di Russia* (1760) by Francesco Algarotti (1712–1764). The Venetian intellectual described the journey he had made – following Lord Baltimore – to St. Petersburg on the occasion of the marriage of the Prince of Brunswick to Princess Anna of Mecklenburg, niece of the Tsarina Anna Ioannovna. Translated into English in 1769, the book feigns to be the collection of Algarotti's letters to Scipio Maffei and in particular, to Mylord Hervey (Lord John Hervey), to whom the work is dedicated. Algarotti's itinerary is limited to the Baltic Sea and, while the Arctic Ocean is mentioned, its characteristics are referred to through the secondhand testimonies of the whalers. This strategy distinguishes Algarotti's report from Walton's letters, although there is an interesting

analogy in the overlapping of the terms and functions of letter and journal. The trend of the travel diary is mocked within the text, but he then admits that he too wrote a “journal:”

You see, my Lord, that if I was at all inclined to enter into minute particulars, I could easily make a complete journal of our voyage, and even embellish it with scientific narrations [...]. To finish the journal of our voyage, for, without being aware of it, I think I have led myself into one, I will tell you [...].

Such is my journal of what relates to this strange occurrence up to the present day. [...] I shall continue my journal concerning the stranger at intervals, should I have any fresh incidents to record. (Algarotti 1769, 10, 44)

This is a significant signal in Algarotti, as later in Mary Shelley, concerning the genesis of the text, starting from its first diary entry and leading to the definitive writing of letters; this proceeding is brought to light in the letters of the author, Algarotti. The same procedure, as transferred to the voice of the character Walton, may indicate the outline of a primogenial draft of the incipit of the novel in the form of a diary. In both cases we witness a transfer from the self-referential point of the “I” to the conditions of reception of a “you.” In this context, what emerges is the intersection between the present in the journal and the imminent time of its reception in the form of a letter to a recipient. An analogous transfer of subjectivity to the objectivity of narrative statement emerges explicitly in the Creature’s words regarding Safie’s letters to Felix. The Creature participates as a silent spectator to the daily life of a family, whose destiny has been radically changed as the result of the encounter with a Turk who has been unjustly condemned by the French state, and whom the young Felix helps to escape from prison. The Turk promises the hand of his daughter Safie, who begins to send him letters:

“During the ensuing days, while the preparations were going forward for the escape of the merchant, the zeal of Felix was warmed by several letters that he received from this lovely girl, who found means to express her thoughts in the language of her lover by the aid of an old man, a servant of her father’s, who understood French. She thanked him in the most ardent terms for his intended services towards her father; and at the same time she gently deplored her own fate. “I have copies of these letters; for I found means, during my residence in the hovel, to procure the implements of writing; and the letters were often in the hands of Felix or Agatha. Before I depart, I will give them to you, they will prove the truth of my tale [...]” (Shelley 1818, 148)

Empathy and the Rewriting of a Truth

Involvement in the Turkish affair and the consequent condemnation results in the exile of Felix's family (including his sister Agatha and the blind father) to Germany to endure modest conditions of semi-poverty; into this the foreigner Safie intrudes, wishing to be reunited with Felix against the will of her ungrateful father. This presents a unique opportunity for the Creature: the foreigner must learn a new language; the Creature observes with empathy this effort of communication and learning. The relationship that is generated between the Creature and the foreigner is engaging to the point that he copies Safie's letters which he then claims to be able to show to the person listening to his story, namely Victor Frankenstein, as proof of the veracity of his tale. Victor delivers these same letters to Walton, who accepts them as testimony to the authenticity of the entire context, on a par with his personal experience of meeting the Creature:

His tale is connected, and told with an appearance of the simplest truth; yet I own to you that the letters of Felix and Safie, which he shewed me, and the apparition of the monster, seen from our ship, brought to me a greater conviction of the truth of his narrative than his asseverations, however earnest and connected. (Shelley 1818, 231)

This almost immediately follows the words "Walton, *in continuation*," and the context helps to explain this puzzling phrase, which emerges as an important aspect of the way in which written letters confirm the truth of Frankenstein's spoken narrative. The handwriting of these copied letters must be that of the Creature, and is understood to be equivalent to its physical presence. The production of a letter therefore constitutes a factor of credibility founded on truth. By transcribing Safie's letters, the Creature takes on the function of the author of an earlier, prospective epistolary novel. However, the letter appears to be only one of the means that could have contributed to the constitution of a dialogic or polyphonic novel; this latter solution was discarded by Mary Shelley, but probably long remained hanging in the balance. The formula of a choral novel was never in her mind. These instances of private writing emerge as the tip of the iceberg of a macrotext which questions and disrupts the logic of letters in the epistolary novel, bypassing the socio-anthropological justification of the collective scenario. The chain of temporal causes is connected to the interaction between the characters and the unfolding of the plot. Diaries and documents, journals, papers, notes – the process begins from a discovery by Safie:

“By some papers of her father’s, which fell into her hands, she heard of the exile of her lover, and learnt the name of the spot where he then resided.” (Shelley 1818, 151)

So to the “some papers in the pocket of the dress” found by the monster in Frankenstein’s laboratory; that is, the “journal of the four months that preceded my creation” (Shelley 1818, 155). Clearly the function of the diary here is limited to the reporting, in the present, of those past four months. Similarly for Britton (2009, 6) the monologic narrative of the monster occupies a long but synchronic period of time, like that of a page in a journal: “His tale had occupied the whole day; and the sun was upon the verge of the horizon when he departed” (Shelley 1818, 172). But after the return of Frankenstein to Geneva, the third volume of the novel begins with the projected study trip to England and the hope of a

long correspondence with those philosophers of that country, whose knowledge and discoveries were of indispensable use to me in my present undertaking. (Shelley 1818, 177)

At this point, the synthetic and rapid forward movement of the novel seems to resemble Polidori’s *Vampyre*. The first-person narrative naturally remains constant, although the recurrence of heterogeneous types of private writing marks the almost feverish search for an appropriate narrative regime. Consider the journals kept by Clerval:

And you, my friend [Walton], would be far more amused with the journal of Clerval, who observed the scenery with an eye of feeling and delight, than to listen to my reflections. [...]

“I have seen,” he [Clerval] said, “the most beautiful scenes of my own country.” (Shelley 1818, 179, 180)

Noteworthy is the shift from writing to saying; saying is not speaking, but perhaps a further trace of that first chaotic drafting of *Frankenstein*, the lost ur-Frankenstein, from which these observations have been derived, can be identified in this suspension. Confirmation of the chaotic state, so to speak, of the opening chapter of this final part of the novel, within the long quotation from Clerval’s journal/speech, is the explosive passage from the first to the second person – who is no longer Walton, but rather Clerval:

Clerval! beloved friend! even now it delights me to record your words, and to dwell on the praise of which you are so eminently deserving. He was a being formed in the “very poetry of nature.” His wild and enthusiastic

imagination was chastened by the sensibility of his heart. (Shelley 1818, 181)

“Pardon this gush of sorrow” (Shelley 1818, 182) the protagonist admits, again addressing Walton.

Terms of Reciprocity

In the next chapter, the second in Volume III, “the letters of introduction that I had brought with me, addressed to the most distinguished natural philosophers” (Shelley 1818, 183) are mentioned; and later “we received a letter from a person in Scotland, who had formerly been our visitor at Geneva” (Shelley 1818, 184). However, Frankenstein awaits other letters, which may contain dreaded news of loved ones: “I waited for my letters with feverish impatience” (Shelley 1818, 187). Still, in the third chapter of the third part, Frankenstein is reached in his refuge on the Orkneys Islands, by letters whose texts are not transcribed: “I saw a fishing-boat land close to me, and one of the men brought me a packet; it contained letters from Geneva, and one from Clerval, entreating me to join him” (Shelley 1818, 194). Here, the relational and interactive nature of epistolary material for the development of the plot is explicitly demonstrated in the protagonist’s reaction to reading Clerval’s letter: “This letter in a degree recalled me to life, and I determined to quit my island at the expiration of two days.” (194)

In the fourth chapter, papers and letters become essential in exonerating Frankenstein from the accusation of being the perpetrator of Clerval’s murder, according to the practice of the good judge who considers private writings to be testimonies of truth:

“It was not until a day or two after your illness that I thought of examining your dress, that I might discover some trace by which I could send to your relations an account of your misfortune and illness. I found several letters, and, among others, one which I discovered from its commencement to be from your father. I instantly wrote to Geneva: nearly two months have elapsed since the departure of my letter. —” (Shelley 1818, 203)

The reader must wait until chapter five in order to see the text of this correspondence, in which both Elizabeth’s letter, and Frankenstein’s response containing the promise of marriage, are transcribed. Elizabeth adequately defines the function of her communication, as *an exertion of mine*, a conscious message embodying performativity; Frankenstein

admits its effectiveness but in the opposite direction to what Elizabeth had hoped for. The letter rekindles his dormant fear of the monster's revenge:

My uncle will send me news of your health; and if I see but one smile on your lips when we meet, occasioned by this or any other exertion of mine, I shall need no other happiness. "ELIZABETH LAVENZA. "Geneva, May 18th, 17—. "

This letter revived in my memory what I had before forgotten, the threat of the fiend – "*I will be with you on your wedding-night!*" (Shelley 1818, 211)

This is the story told by the monster and repeated in the form of a monologue by Frankenstein in the presence of Walton, who nonetheless scrupulously takes notes. It should not be forgotten that all such content takes the form of a very long letter from Walton to his sister Margaret, a letter begun on 19 August and which ends before 26 August, when Walton tells his sister: "You have read this strange and terrific story." (Shelley 1818, 231) However, to confuse the different authorship paternities and responsibilities, and to consolidate the supposed credibility of the general testimony, comes Walton's clarification that Frankenstein intended to act as an editor of himself, carefully reviewing Walton's transcriptions:

Frankenstein discovered that I made notes concerning his history: he asked to see them, and then himself corrected and augmented them in many places; but principally in giving the life and spirit to the conversations he held with his enemy. "Since you have preserved my narration," said he, "I would not that a mutilated one should go down to posterity" (Shelley 1818, 232).

The nearby phrase "Walton, *in continuation*" is again relevant, as the notes made by him confirm narrative truth. The abrupt closure, deprived of the pleasantries appropriate for the recipient ("*beloved sister*"), expresses unexpected intentions and reveals the overlap of the sender of the framing letters with the function of the second-degree narrator or narratee. Indeed, as we will later learn, the structure of the novel presupposes an additional narrator when Margaret, having received the correspondence from her brother Walton, proposes herself as the real and implicit promoter of the publication. What can be questioned about Walton's testimony is not its truthfulness (since it seems to be presupposed and represented by the existence of an epistolary document in the novel), but its timeliness. In fact, his letters seem to have been written at a distance in space that becomes a chronological separation from what is narrated, and hence of their possible development. The considerable time that separates the sending of the letters from the Arctic Pole to their reception in England

interrupts the transmission of the narrated facts and postpones indefinitely the explanation of their outcome.

A Response to the Crisis

There is undoubtedly an open ending, and it is a solution that is not found, for example, in E.T.A. Hoffmann's novella "The Sandman" (1816). The German author works upon the structure of the epistolary narration in order to propose distinct levels of perception of reality, without however renouncing the intervention of an author-narrator who appeals to the "gracious" and "indulgent" reader. In Hoffmann's work the last word belongs to this first-degree narrator. In *Frankenstein* this function is omitted and Mary Shelley intervenes as author only in the introduction of 1831. Besides the other reasons for this choice (which effectively left open the attribution to P.B. Shelley) the fact that the first edition was published anonymously would have affected this positive absconding of the first-person narrator from the objective fabric of the plot. On the other hand, the shifting order of the narrative voices can perhaps be correlated with the organization of the publication by the publisher Lackington & Co into three distinct volumes within a series. This decidedly paraliterary arrangement included units to be sold separately, almost as booklets, and having a target audience of curious readers passionate about urban legends, esotericism and occultism. However, Mary Shelley insists upon different writing mediums and on the changing positions of the narrative voices. This experimentalism is pushed to the point where it becomes difficult not to consider it almost a parody.

According to P. B. Shelley's valuable indications, the transgressive force of *Frankenstein* does not reside in its fantasy elements, but in the intersection of narrative methods performing as expressions of a human truth, in which the monster also participates. Conceiving it to be against nature is Frankenstein's mistake. And as the Creature is the result of a combination of elements, so the novel is an unprecedented experimental workshop; in P. B. Shelley's words from the "Preface," the author is engaged upon establishing

the truth of the elementary principles of human nature, while I have not scrupled to innovate upon their combinations. (Shelley 1818, 47)

Frankenstein, a product of crisis, interprets, according to a further explicit and perhaps undervalued statement by P. B. Shelley, the social crisis

presented by the novels of the time, which set out to design new ethical frontiers:

[Y]et 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. (Shelley 1818, 47-48)

Evidently the novel form itself must have already established a very solid model of legibility in the second half of the eighteenth century, equipped with extremely persuasive traces of verisimilitude and verifiability in order to sustain the impact of a parody that does not so much demystify the function of the epistolary style, as to recompose the frame of reference of the logical and deontological values of narrative writing.

Just as the family romance of Mary Shelley can be glimpsed in the intertwining plot of *Frankenstein*, so again influences and models must be sought in a biographical context in which authoritative guidelines were not lacking. William Godwin's *Caleb Williams* (1794), which is a homodiegetic narrative, contains in the plot, across its three volumes, important reports of sent letters; but these are only fully transcribed where necessary (notably the main narrator's letters of resignation sent to his supporter Falkland, whom he suspects of a murder for which innocents were executed). This correspondence is the main task of Caleb Williams, acting as secretary for business and literary exchanges:

My employment was easy and agreeable. It consisted partly in the transcribing and arranging certain papers, and partly in writing from my master's dictation letters of business, as well as sketches of literary composition. Many of these latter consisted of an analytical survey of the plans of different authors and conjectural speculations upon hints they afforded, tending either to the detection of their errors, or the carrying forward their discoveries. All of them bore powerful marks of a profound and elegant mind, well stored with literature, and possessed of an uncommon share of activity and discrimination. (Godwin 1794, 7)

Frankenstein will also be published in three volumes, but in a more condensed form than the extended paternal novel. The basic narrative structure remains the same, both in the father's work and in that of the daughter. The need for synthesis forced William Godwin to select the most dramatic or narratively functional letters. Otherwise the protagonist would have been lost in the proliferating correspondence, like *Bartleby* "the Scrivener." But this same narrative function, not taken to the extreme but rather alluded to in *lettres* and *papiers*, is found in the French

Fantasmagoriana, the reading that provoked inspiration in the company at Villa Diodati and which is quoted by Mary Shelley in the introduction of 1831: there are papers in *L'heure fatale* (*Fantasmagoriana*, 153–156), letters in *La morte fiancée* (*Fantasmagoriana*, 2, 66) and *Le revenant* (*Fantasmagoriana*, 2, 178–179). This is obviously a simplification that coincides historically with the decline of the epistolary novel, whose position of historical mediation towards the modern novel seems to have been implicitly recognised here. But the directions are different: the detective story in Godwin; the ghost story for *Fantasmagoriana*; a *mélange* of the two in Mary Shelley. Viewed from a distance, the structure of *Frankenstein* appears to be that of a spiral; it is all contained within the letters, in the transcriptions, in the papers which, against Walton's expectations ("it is highly probable that these papers may never reach you," September 5th [Shelley 1818, 235]) instead reach the hands of the beloved sister and compulsive reader, Margaret. Following the logical thread of the strategy of fiction, Margaret – the recipient who is addressed by the narrator Walton – serves as the unnamed editor who brings the text to light in 1818. The same editor is in turn proposed from the point of view of Mary Shelley as a personal feminine *alter ego* and thus an additional narratee at the first level, so to speak, in a narrative machine of unparalleled complexity.

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its historical and cultural context, reclaiming the themes of childhood and family. The differences from the novel are nevertheless important, particularly with regard to the external focus upon the Creature, notably in the ice cave scene, but also to the re-imagined episode of the creation of the Bride, and finally the representation of science and the implications of transgressing the limits of knowledge. Branagh gives the word back to the monster and explores the relationship between the innate and the acquired. The film insists on the importance of memory in the constitution of identity, and highlights the incestuous subtext through the brother/sister relationship as well as in the relationship between the father and Elizabeth. A similar initial attention for Mary Shelley, author and conflicting character, is highlighted by Beatriz and Fernando Moreno who analyse the edition of *Frankenstein* illustrated by Elena Odriozola, and published in 2013. This version became important for two main reasons: on the one hand, because the illustrator was a woman; on the other, because it does not focus on the key moments of the text that are traditionally represented, but rather on Mary Shelley's preface to the 1831 edition and her personal experience during the creation/writing of the novel. Within the entire tradition of American illustrators, for the most part male (Carbé, Ward, Everett, Moser, Wrightson, etc.) who tackled the novel by moving away from stereotypes and simplifications, Odriozola is positioned along the path opened out by Broutin in 1968 and Marcia Huyette in 1977. Huyette was the first woman to illustrate *Frankenstein*, and Odriozola the first to exclusively illustrate the 1831 "Preface" by treating it as a mythical narrative linked to the theme of birth, which in turn establishes a feminist perspective.

Psychoanalytic and gender elements are also found in the most recent adaptation of the story of Frankenstein in *Penny Dreadful* (2014-2016), a British-American television series created by John Logan and analysed here by Greta Colombani. Starting from the duplicity of man and non-man in the personality of the monster, Logan explores and further develops this theme by making Frankenstein and the Creature overlap. Most interesting is that the absence of Victor's family coincides with a tripling in the number of his creatures, including a female one, for whom he eventually develops the same desire as his firstborn, and who replaces the novel's Elizabeth. Frankenstein is not only defined as a "monster" and a "demon" like his Creature, but also shares his profound isolation and desire for companionship. Finally, thanks to the insertion of a theatrical setting, the Creature has been represented as an eternal subject of "perpetual resurrection" and rewriting in literature, and in transpositions to cinema, a television series and video games.

As Jon Garrad demonstrates, by rewriting myths and stereotypes in video games, the player or players adopt a point of view similar to the Creature's, as an avatar and as a central character pursuing this playful itinerary. The adaptation of the literary work is always more indirect, although the narrative and the methods of transferal manage to evoke a similar way of "feeling" and "reliving" the plot. The essays published in this third section confirm the primacy of the visual factor in the transmission of the imaginary icons present in the source, and in the plot of the novel. Indeed they are part of it, even when the reader's point of view and the questions asked by the public seem to set new priorities for reusing the text, and invoke new ideological perspectives that are partly incompatible with the romantic context of the original narration.