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From the Editors

Spring 2020

Volume XXXI of the Shawangunk Review features the proceedings of the 2019 English Graduate Symposium, “200 Years of Frankenstein,” directed by Associate Professor Jackie George. On behalf of the Graduate Program, we want to thank all of the participants, including our invited speaker, Dr. Jared Richman of Colorado College, for their contributions to this issue. Thanks are also due to Andrew Higgins, English Department Chair, for his support of the event.

The submission deadline for Volume XXXII of the Review is December 15, 2020. We welcome poetry, book reviews, and critical essays concerning any area of literary studies. Please see submission guidelines on page ??? In that issue we will have a special section for poetry and prose commemorating Dr. Pauline Uchmanowicz, in whose honor the Symposium is being held in 2020. Please submit your contributions to this section by the same December 15 deadline.

Special thanks to Joann Deiudicibus, who joins us as guest poetry editor in this volume, and to Prof. Dan Kempton, who helped judge the annual essay contest. Thanks also to Samantha Grober, English Department Graduate Assistant, for her work on the volume.

Arthur Hoener, Professor of Graphic Design, and Meghan Eisel, a senior Graphic Design major, oversaw the redesign of the Shawangunk Review for this volume. We are grateful for their creative vision and hard work in undertaking this project.

Introduction

PART I

200 Years of Frankenstein

The 2019 Graduate Symposium

Jackie George

The 31st Annual Graduate Symposium celebrated the 1818 publication of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, a novel whose intellectual energy shows no sign of waning, even after 200 years. From bolt-necked Halloween masks to denunciations of "frankenfoods," iterations of *Frankenstein*—no matter how disparate—are commonplace. But alongside these cultural markers have emerged countless artistic revisions and adaptations, many of which challenge us to think critically not only about the moral and philosophical implications of Victor Frankenstein's story, but also the existential questions, dangers, and injustices of our contemporary world. The essays presented at the Symposium reflect the remarkable endurance Shelley's work.

One could argue that *Frankenstein's* power lies not in its depiction of creation *per se* but instead its aftermath (the novel even refrains from describing the precise means of the creature's animation). In this vein, the first panel of the Symposium, "It Lives," featured essays that reflect on decisions and their consequences, particularly the decisions made by artists who have adapted Shelley's text in other media. Teresa Kurtz's "She's Alive!: Anxieties and Animations of the Female Monster" considers the ways in which *Frankenstein's* female creature, left unanimated in Shelley's text, has been brought to life on screen. Through astute close readings of the novel and its adaptations, Kurtz reveals the extent to which depictions of *Frankenstein's* female creature tend to be shaped by anxieties related to gender, sexuality, and control. Stephanie Lopez's essay, "Is This Gentle and Lovely Being Lost For-Ever?: Hypermasculinity and Heteronormativity in Kenneth Branagh's *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*," also examines the ways in which the novel has been transformed in film, focusing on the dynamics of Victor's relationship with Henry Clerval in Branagh's 1994 production. Lopez convincingly argues that the film erases the novel's original model of male intimacy between Victor and Henry in

order to make room for a more hegemonic and, ultimately, toxic depiction of heterosexual masculinity. Finally, Eric Berman's timely essay "Move Fast, and Break Things: Frankenstein as Exploration of the Supposedly Enlightened Individual," critiques the Enlightenment underpinnings of Victor Frankenstein's work vis-à-vis the work of Shelley's father and husband. With a keen focus on the novel's themes of isolation and recognition, Berman asks us to use Frankenstein's bicentennial as an occasion to re-evaluate the current "disruptive" discourses emerging from present-day Silicon Valley.

The second panel of the Symposium, "Afterlives," focused exclusively on 20th and 21st-century works that are haunted by Frankenstein in both form and content. First, Nicole Halabuda brought the 20th anniversary of David Chase's pioneering television show into conversation with the 200th anniversary of Shelley's novel in "Narratives that Stick: Frankenstein and The Sopranos." Drawing on Anna Clark's theory of "protagonism," Halabuda's persuasive essay argues that the show's construction of Tony Soprano as a protagonist borrows from Shelley's frame narrative, using representations of consciousness to create an antihero formula that pervades contemporary "prestige" television. Next, in a shift that demonstrates the global reach of Frankenstein and its descendants, Sabrina Lopez's essay, "The Monsters We Create: Shifted Responsibility and Means of Creation in Frankenstein in Baghdad," brought our attention to Ahmed Saadawi's 2014 novel, which is set in contemporary Iraq. Lopez's fascinating analysis of the relationship between creator and created in the novel illuminates the ways in which Saadawi's text repurposes Frankenstein's original construction of monstrosity in order to depict the complex relationships between responsibility, community, and justice in an occupied land. Concluding the panel was Patrick Derilus's compelling essay, "Victor LaValle's Destroyer: an Afropessimist-Leftist Conviction in an Afrofuturistic Transhumanist World," which showcases the ways in which Frankenstein emerges in LaValle's graphic novel about Dr. Josephine Baker and her reanimated, cyborg son. Reading the text within the framework of Frank. B. Wilderson III's theory of Black subjectivity, as well as the Black Lives Matter movement, the paper teases out the historical, racial, and maternal strands of Dr. Baker's utopian vision and compares it to the material consequences of her work.

Preoccupied as it is by questions of epistemology, ethics, and virtue, it's no wonder Frankenstein persists in the cultural imaginary. As Dr. Jared Richman noted in his response to both panels, all of the essays presented demonstrate the extent to which Frankenstein is "a meditation on the very nature and definition of humanity itself."

Moreover, as a "meditation," the novel critiques the human condition in the wake of the Enlightenment with a clear respect for its (often irresolvable) contradictions and ambiguities. Yet even as the novel calls into question linear notions of humanity's "progress," it still argues for the necessity of improvement. That we still regard Shelley's tale as not only relevant but worthy of adaptation to our own moral dilemmas is evidence of this continued imperative.

Private: Voicing Frankenstein: Shelley's Monstrous Elocution

Jared S. Richman

For several decades, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; Or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818) has been read by scholars of Romanticism in relation to the work's rendering of deformity and monstrosity. Given its popularity as a site for investigating literary representation, individual and collective identity, gender construction, political authority, and personal agency, it should not surprise us to discover the novel enjoying an energized scholarly attention from the perspective of critical disability studies. Lennard Davis was perhaps the first to recognize *Frankenstein* in this light, noting that "we do not often think of the monster in Mary Shelley's work as disabled, but what else is he?" (143). Davis's construction of monstrosity within a disability framework centers primarily on the rendering of the creature's anatomy. He views the creature as "a disruption in the visual field" (143), whose physical form appears terrifying for "its composite quality" (145).

Given such critical emphasis on the visual, we might continue the discussion of *Frankenstein* and disability with a consideration of monstrosity itself. For example, Rosemarie Garland Thomson, whose formative work on disability in American literature and culture, *Extraordinary Bodies*, reminds us that since Aristotle, the monster, as "ubiquitous icon of physical anomaly [. . .] has exemplifie[d] culture's preoccupation with the threat of the different body" (36). Moreover, we must remember that non-normative bodies identified as "monstrous" in medieval and early modern Europe occupy a central place within disability studies as a critical field, its defining methodologies, and its persistent (if at times problematic) historical archetypes. Indeed, given that the term "disability" did not register culturally during the early modern era in the same manner it is now understood, some scholars working on the history of disability before 1800 have tracked an alternative lexicon to categorize and describe non-normative figures. Among these words we find "deformity," "wondrous," "debility," "fantastic," "anomaly," and, of course, "mon-

strosity.” Critical examination of this last term has tended to focus upon physical form in invocations of early modern disability, and the fact that such inquiries emphasize the visual in Frankenstein should surprise no one.

While my inquiry does not ignore the creature’s body (far from it, in fact), it does seek to shift the discussion of monstrosity (and disability) away from the visual to focus on the creature’s other defining feature: his eloquent speech. In the first edition of Frankenstein, for example, the term “voice” appears over fifty times, whereas the term “monster” appears twenty-five times (with “body” enjoying twenty-three invocations; “speech” appears just nine times, but “language” appears in twenty-five instances). Basic stylometrics aside, the many invocations of terms related to human language should give us pause. Shelley’s emphasis on language, accent, and eloquence haunt the novel almost as much as the creature haunts Victor—think of Shelley’s meditation on Victor and Elizabeth’s literature and language instruction, Henry Clerval’s obsession with “oriental” tongues, and Safie’s western conversion through language lessons given to her by her lover, Felix.

Indeed, the novel’s concern with the acquisition of verbal language has occupied no small measure of critical inquiry within the last four decades of Frankenstein scholarship. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, Peter Brooks, William Brewer, and Maureen McClane, for example, all locate the creature’s linguistic education as one of the work’s key sites of tension. It’s worth noting here that Shelley’s eloquent and language-obsessed character bears little resemblance to the figure seen in many later renderings of Frankenstein’s “monster” from popular culture, wherein, lacking the capacity for verbal expression, he often appears as either a grunting brute or even a hulking mute. In the first dramatic adaptation of the novel, Richard Brinsley Peake’s 1823 *Presumption; or, The Fate of Frankenstein* (later retitled *Frankenstein; or, The Dangers of Presumption*), the creature (called “demon”) does not speak at all. Most nineteenth-century theatrical portrayals follow suit. In the twentieth-century turn from stage to screen, Boris Karloff’s 1931 portrayal of the creature as laconic and taciturn serves as the cinematic archetype that animates most subsequent incarnations. The trope reaches its apotheosis, perhaps, with Peter Boyle’s comic turn as the creature in Mel Brooks’s *Young Frankenstein* (1975) where the character’s failed attempts at normative speech are played for laughs.

Unlike these later adaptations, Shelley’s original creature, socially isolated by visual apprehension of and cultural responses to his physical form, seeks human connection through speech – first with Old De Lacey (a figure who, not unlike the creature

himself, inhabits several categories of disability), then with Victor Frankenstein, and finally with Robert Walton. Bearing this in mind, I argue that Shelley’s rendering of elocutionary mastery as the basis for social inclusion and as the central feature of human development is deeply ambivalent. Frankenstein’s rejection of “inarticulate” voices stands uneasily alongside its rendering of eloquent speech as both the vehicle for human intimacy and as the very agent of social and political deception.

Thus, I want to suggest an alternative critical reading of Frankenstein in terms of disability, one in which we view the creature’s efforts for elocutionary mastery as an attempt to construct his own identity in response to his perceived physical deformity. To do so, we might adopt an intersectional approach to his composite identity to understand him as a disabled subject who desires community, intimacy, and inclusion among the human race. The creature’s aspiration to appear acceptable to the human society into which he so desperately wants to integrate perfectly demonstrates the phenomenon of passing, and in fact I argue that we begin to think about Frankenstein as what it really is: both a disability narrative and a passing novel.

Scholarship devoted to the practice and representation of passing has generally focused on race, class, gender, sexuality, and religion. However, recently this range of critical frames has expanded to include disability. Jeffrey A. Brune and Daniel J. Wilson, for example, define disability passing in part as “the way people conceal social markers of impairment to avoid the stigma of disability and pass as ‘normal’” (1). They suggest, moreover, that as a social act, passing “blurs the lines between disability and normality” (2). Frankenstein’s meditation on the nature of the human and social exclusion, I argue, blurs this line in similar ways. In my reading of the creature’s attempts to pass, “normal” functions primarily as “human,” and his efforts to deflect the stigma of disability coalesce around his elocutionary desires and practice.

In order to understand how the novel constructs disability and passing in terms of speech, I place Frankenstein alongside key works by eighteenth-century elocutionists, linguists, and philosophers such as Joseph Priestley, John Thelwall, John Locke, Jean Jacques Rousseau, and James Burnett (Lord Monboddo). Scholars such as Jacqueline George have noted how numerous eighteenth-century British lexicographers and elocutionists attempted to establish linguistic rules to govern speech and writing. Bringing together the history of elocution with the discourse of disability I mean to shift our understanding of Shelley’s focus on language towards the practi-

cal and material particularities of vocal morphology in the construction of identity.

To do so I use Frankenstein's rendering of and meditation on speech acquisition and verbal performance to consider how Shelley's elocutionary concerns come to define, shape, and complicate notions of normality, deformity, monstrosity, and ultimately humanity through the act of passing. Mediated again and again through Shelley's epistolary structure, the speaking voices of the novel's various characters form a complex hierarchy of what Davis calls "normate" and disabled subjectivities. Following much of the scholarship initiated by Gilbert and Gubar's seminal feminist reading of the novel, Paul Youngquist argues that "Frankenstein registers an appeal for a fully corporeal feminism, a politics that multiplies the possibilities of embodiment instead of assimilating them to a proper, and properly human, norm" (160). His emphasis on the "properly human norm" echoes the central binary of modern disability discourse articulated and complicated by Davis and others. As Victor's proper human form (and those of the De Laceys so admired by the creature) makes the creature appear more monstrous by contrast, they become, at least to the creature, mutually dependent: defined by the other's "perfect" physical body, the creature is ever more aware of what he calls "my personal deformity" (Shelley 144). Recalling Adam in John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (and Victor by extension), he tells his own creator that "God in pity made man beautiful and alluring, after his own image, but my form is a filthy type of your's [sic], more horrid from its very resemblance" (Shelley 144).

We might begin, then, at one of the novel's many beginnings: Victor's recollection of the creature's birth frames our understanding of his emergent subjectivity by placing the visual above the aural in the hierarchy of senses. In his account to the adventurer Robert Walton, Victor is careful to relate in great detail the creature's first attempts at verbal communication immediately following the act of animation: "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" (Shelley 84, my emphasis). Syntactically, Victor's inability (or unwillingness) to hear the creature appears tied to the latter's lack of eloquence ("inarticulate sounds") and a speech pattern he likens to muttering. Such a rendering echoes the creature's own first memories of his life, which center on the sensual body:

I began to observe, with greater accuracy, the forms that surrounded me, and to perceive the boundaries of the radiant roof of light which canopied me. Some-

times I tried to imitate the pleasant songs of the birds, but was unable. Sometimes I wished to express my sensations in my own mode, but the uncouth and inarticulate sounds which broke from me frightened me into silence again." (Shelley 122, my emphasis)

Here the creature recalls a desire to express his "sensations in [his] own mode," but suggests that he was "unable" to imitate birdsong. It seems significant that his assessment of his lack of articulated speech echoes Victor's earlier account of the creature's first "inarticulate sounds." What we might call the creature's "monstrous" speech, that is, his initial lack of articulation and verbal eloquence, characterized here as "uncouth" and "broken" in nature, effectively frightens him into silence, rendering him essentially disabled, made so by his inability to speak.

Read against his earliest memories, the creature's eventual discovery of verbal language through observations of the De Lacey family is, I would suggest, one of the key moments of this disability narrative:

By degrees I made a discovery of still greater moment. I found that these people possessed a method of communicating their experience and feelings to one another by articulate sounds. I perceived that the words they spoke sometimes produced pleasure or pain, smiles or sadness, in the minds and countenances of the hearers. This was indeed a godlike science, and I ardently desired to become acquainted with it. But I was baffled in every attempt I made for this purpose." (Shelley 128-29, my emphasis)

A science endowed by the creature with divine purpose and power, language and elocution emerge very quickly in his narrative as the mystical keys to his social desires. Language appears to the creature not merely as method of communication, but also as the mechanism by which one might evoke sympathy in others.

Moreover, by using the term science in this way, the creature's formulation of speech echoes the presiding elocutionary theories of the Shelley's era. John Thelwall, the political reformist and radical orator turned elocutionist and speech pathologist argues in his 1805 *Introductory Discourse on the Nature and Objects of Elocutionary Science* that "ELOCUTION may be regarded either as a Science, or as an Art. In the former signification it may be defined—The Science by which the Rules for the just delivery of Eloquence are taught" (2). Thelwall would go on to argue in his 1810 *Letter to Henry Cline* that elocutionary science serves "to vin-

dicating the right of diffusing those principles, that were to give the Mute . . . the free exercise and enjoyment of a faculty, which constitutes the essential attributes of our species”(17). Here he frames the treatment of vocal disability in explicitly political terms (“free exercise and enjoyment”), but more crucially he locates human speech as “the essential attribute of our species.” For Thelwall, speech defines what it is to be human.

Thelwall followed many prominent elocutionists in this assertion, going all the way back to at least the mid-seventeenth century in England. In his 1669 treatise *The Elements of Speech*, for example, William Holder, locates “Speech, [as the faculty] wherewith Man alone is endowed, as with an Instrument suitable to the Excellency of the Soul, for the most easie, speedy, certain, full communication of the Infinite variety of his Thoughts” (5-6). Holder’s construction of the relationship between speech and thought anticipates the creature’s, who determines very quickly that the exercise of this “Godlike science” is his path to passing as human and joining human society:

These thoughts exhilarated me, and led me to apply with fresh ardour to acquiring the art of language. My organs were indeed harsh, but supple; and although my voice was very unlike the soft music of [the De Laceys’] tones, yet I pronounced such words as I understood with tolerable ease. (Shelley 131)

His desire for verbal self-expression haunts the entire novel, most notably in Victor’s repeated request of Walton (“listen to my tale”; “listen to my history”); the Creature’s matching demand of Victor (“Listen to my tale”; “But hear me”; “Listen to me”; “listen to me,”); and Old De Lacey’s entreaty to the Creature to “confide to me the particulars of your tale” (Shelley 62, 63, 119, 147). Such desire to connect emotionally through speech recalls French philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau’s account of language in his unpublished *Essay on the Origin of Languages* and in the *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality* (1755):

Man’s first language, the most universal, most energetic, and only language he needed before it was necessary to persuade assembled men, is the cry of Nature. . . .When the ideas of men began to spread and multiply, and when closer communication was established among them, they sought more numerous signs and a more extensive language; they multiplied the inflections of the voice, and joined it to gestures which are more expressive by their Nature, and whose meaning is less dependent on prior determination. (31)

Ultimately, for Rousseau it is passion that gives rise to the development of human speech, moving from necessity and simplicity towards influence and complexity. The Scottish philosopher, James Burnett, Lord Monboddo, disagreed, finding reason, rather than necessity or passion, to be the catalyst for human language. Nonetheless, both agreed with the majority of eighteenth-century elocutionists that speech was a central characteristic of humanity. “Since,” Monboddo argues,

without the use of reason and speech, we have no pretensions to humanity, nor can with any propriety be called men; but must be contented to rank with the other animals here below, over whom we assume so much superiority, and exercise dominion chiefly by means of the advantages that the use of language has given to us. (I.2)

Read within the framework of disability discourse, Monboddo thus suggests the way in which physical and mental ability structures social and political hierarchies.

Shelley’s novel worries over the stability of such hierarchies both through her rendering of the creature’s genesis and in his filial relationship to Victor. For Frankenstein is not entirely clear in explaining the creature’s status in this hierarchy of the divine, the human, and the animal. Significantly, Victor suggests in his recollections that the creature may be physically more than human. The “dissecting room and the slaughter-house furnished many of my materials,” he tells Walton (Shelley 81). If Victor’s claims are true, then the creature’s body likely contains animal parts as well as those of human origin. On what grounds, then, may we consider him to be human?

One way we may begin to consider this question is to establish a cultural context for Frankenstein’s rendering of the relationship between the human and the animal. We know that Shelley had been reading the work of John Locke around the time she conceived the novel. Given her interest in elocution, Locke’s thoughts on the nature of humanity vis-a-vis speech are especially revealing:

GOD having designed man for a sociable creature, made him not only with an inclination, and under a necessity to have fellowship with those of his own kind; but furnished him also with language, which was to be the great instrument, and common tie of society. Man therefore had by nature his organs so fashioned, as to be fit to frame articulate sounds, which we call words. But this was not enough

to produce language; for parrots, and several other birds, will be taught to make articulate sounds distinct enough, which yet, by no means, are capable of language. (176)

The emphasis on language, and “articulate sounds” in particular, would seem to delineate a clear line between animals and humans. As Locke ultimately concluded, “brutes” have “not the faculty of abstracting, or making general ideas, since they have no use of words, or any other general signs” (64).

Closer to Shelley’s era, the natural philosopher and grammarian Joseph Priestley noted how speech separates humans from animals in terms of personal agency and ability: Brute animals, though capable of emitting a considerable variety of sounds, have very little power of modulating their voices, which is called Articulation. Of this men are capable. It consists not only in varying the aperture of the mouth, and thereby straitening or opening the passage of the sound, or in giving a greater or less degree of force to it; but, chiefly, in checking and stopping it in a great variety of ways, by the action of the tongue, lips, palate, and teeth. (14-15)

Priestley’s identification of speech as a uniquely human faculty rests less on the role of reason or thought (as it does for Monboddo and Locke) than on anatomy. Again, as the creature himself observes, his vocal “organs were indeed harsh, but supple,” and, as it turns out, fully capable of human speech (Shelley 131). In any case, the creature’s capacity for speech would seem to raise him above, as Monboddo says, “the other animals” to the level of man.

Here then I turn to one of Frankenstein’s so-called “master-texts,” John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* (1674). It seems odd that few of the many critics reading Frankenstein within the context of *Paradise Lost* highlight Satan’s characteristic eloquence in relation to the creature’s. After all, in a significant moment of self-presentation, the creature tells Victor that he “ought to be thy Adam” (Shelley 118-19). Yet in the end the creature concludes that it is Satan, not Adam, with whom he ultimately identifies most closely; “the fitter emblem of my condition,” he tells Victor (Shelley 144). And, I suggest, it is his impressive eloquence that locates him most clearly as a scion of Milton’s Satan. In this way *Paradise Lost*’s rendering of Satan’s vocal mastery thus prefigures the conditions of Shelley’s creature: Adam is born eloquent, while Satan’s serpent (like the creature) seems to acquire human speech of his own accord (or so he tells Eve). In book IX, for example, Eve marvels at the serpent’s miraculous speech just as she is dazzled by his eloquence:

Into the heart of Eve his words made way,

Though at the voice much marveling; at length

Not unamazed she thus in answer spake.

What may this mean? Language of man pronounced

By tongue of brute, and human sense expressed? (PL IX.548-52)

Following both Christian tradition and Enlightenment thinking, the serpent is not meant for speech – a faculty reserved only for man – for it is the muteness of beasts and the eloquence of men that signifies their respective places in Eden’s hierarchy of creatures, a political order marked by language and vocal performance.

Like the serpent, the creature does not seem meant to possess human speech, let alone have acquired such eloquence. Initially he lacks it, and his physically mature body coupled with the want of speech effeminizes him, infantilizes him, and alienates him socially. What sets the creature apart from humanity initially is not merely his monstrous body, but also his inability to speak. As I noted above, in the early days after his “birth” he is multiply disabled by his confusion of senses and his inability to express himself not unlike a child. In Lord Monboddo’s sketches of the progression of human language acquisition, we hear echoes of the creature’s development as well: “but we propose here to exhibit the species itself in its infancy, – first mute; then lisping and stammering; next by slow degrees learning to speak, very lamely and imperfectly at first” (2). Note the diction of disability in Monboddo’s formulation: “mute,” “lisping,” “stammering,” “lamely,” and “imperfectly” – a catalog of terms that relegate the “infant” speaker to a place outside the norms of mature human society. If such a state should be, as Godwin suggests, only temporary (like childhood itself), then are those lacking vocal fluency, those with communication disorders, and those unable to produce human speech entirely precluded from full participation in human society?

For much of the novel, the creature’s attempts to master speech and thus pass for human waver uneasily between language’s social benefits and the potential for its abuse. If the altruistic goal of Romantic-era elocutionists was to enable the free use of speech for full participation in human society, then such beneficence expressed

a Rousseauian vision of intimacy and exchange combined with the ambition of Godwinian perfectibility. Returning to Milton's Satanic serpent, however, we find that he employs his eloquence less in the service of the social good than for that of deception. Eve's wonder at the serpent's miraculous ability to speak prevents her from seeing his real purpose. Instead, she gives praise to the fruit that "Gave elocution to the mute, and taught / The tongue not made for speech to speak" (PL IX.748-49). Here Milton seems to suggest that speech is attendant upon physiology ("the tongue"), while nonetheless maintaining the divine origin of the faculty itself as one to be given or taught. More crucially, perhaps, Eve here unwittingly constructs the serpent's speech as unnatural, and dazzled by the sheer novelty of the spectacle, is unable to recognize the monstrosity in it.

Not so with Shelley's creature. For Victor warns Walton repeatedly throughout the course of their discussions to be wary less of the creature's physical prowess than of his vocal mastery. Towards the end of his narrative, Victor exhorts Walton to be on guard, for the creature "is eloquent and persuasive, and once his words had even power over my heart; but trust him not. His soul is as hellish as his form, full of treachery and fiend-like malice. Hear him not" (Shelley 209, my emphasis). After all, Victor identifies the creature as having a "hellish" soul, one reflected not just in his corporeal shape but emblemized by the deceptive (and eloquent) nature of his speech. The fear of powerful speech, of elocution and of its role inciting both violence and revolution, of course, haunted Regency England in the wake of the French Revolution. By linking monstrosity to speech in this way, Shelley's novel merely builds upon religious and governmental anxieties that reached a fever pitch in the 1790s. Making such a connection allows us to think carefully about how Shelley binds Victor to his creature in the novel through their respective vocal abilities. Just as Victor warns Walton about the creature's eloquence, Walton in turn praises Victor's vocal powers: "He is so gentle, yet so wise; his mind is so cultivated; and when he speaks, although his words are culled with the choicest art, yet they flow with rapidity and unparalleled eloquence" (Shelley 61).

Though mesmerized by Victor's elocutionary abilities, Walton realizes that such power is ephemeral. As he writes to his sister, Margaret, "Sometimes, seized with sudden agony, he could not continue his tale; at others, his voice broken, yet piercing, uttered with difficulty the words so replete with anguish" (Shelley 209). Here, Walton marks Victor's physiological decline not only by the fever that ravishes his body, but also by the gradual "breaking" of his voice into silence. The "broken" voice, one that cannot perform to normative standards, signifies illness and por-

tends death. And our suspicion over the novel's coding of the voice as a mechanism of moral integrity peaks further by Victor's last act of verbal power when he exhorts Walton's mutinous crew to regain their courage in pursuit of glory. Lying prone in his cabin, "eyes half closed, and his limbs hanging listlessly," Victor rouses momentarily, shaming the crew to "Return as heroes who have fought and conquered" (Shelley 212). Walton notes that the "men were moved" to such a degree that "they were unable to reply" (Shelley 212). Echoing the same earlier sentiments regarding his scientific search for glory, Victor fails to internalize the morals of his own tragic tale. Yet we might also consider the moment for the way it emblemizes the novel's practice of policing its many voices. We might consider how, silenced like the crew, neither Safie nor Margaret Saville speak directly but rather are muted again and again by male speakers in the text. While Walton urges his sister to "read" and to "feel," he never asks her to speak (Shelley 209). The novel's privileging of the voice extends, it seems, only to male voices, but even then only normative (vide eloquent) voices prevail.

If Enlightenment thinkers understood human identity as contingent upon the ability to speak (and to speak fluently), it seems significant that so few of Shelley's female figures in the novel enjoy vocal freedom. They are, like the creature before he acquires speech, disabled by their inability to speak. Moreover, as I noted, theatrical and cinematic adaptations of *Frankenstein* often imagine the creature as limited in verbal capacity or even mute. The silencing of the creature, I would suggest, is one of the work's strangest legacies. We recall that while the creature eventually speaks at length and tells his own story, the female creature never achieves animation, never utters a sound, and therefore never registers in novel's social world. Victor's destruction of the creature's female companion has been read variously as murder or as sexual assault, but in the end the figurative result of his act is a silencing of the female voice. In this way the novel aligns femaleness with disability while speech is reserved for masculine authority. Lest we wonder, then, at the creature's elocutionary longing.

Like Victor, though the creature's initial desire for language appears altruistic, the latter's descent into violence and intrigue complicates Shelley's rendering of eloquence as an agent of truth, making it more monstrous in the unfolding. That is, socially alienated and thus disabled by his so-called monstrous body, he finds hope in the notion that his normative speech might mitigate and even transcend the effects his non-normative corporeal form invokes. The creature thus seeks to normalize his aberrant physical form by deploying eloquent speech, which is why

he approaches Old DeLacey first among the humans he admires. Here the creature attempts to pass as human in part by exploiting the old man's visual disability. As Ellen Samuels notes, the "historical and colloquial usage" of passing refers to "a form of imposture in which members of a marginalized group presented themselves as members of a dominant group" (135 my emphasis). In this sense one might read the creature's attempt to pass as human as deceptive, but as an act of disability passing it registers as a strategy enacted by a marginalized figure seeking entry into a community from which he has been denied entry. Concluding that the blind man would not be influenced negatively by the "unnatural hideousness" of his body, the creature resolves to gain the old man's favor by using his voice, which he concludes "had nothing terrible in it" (Shelley 146). In the end, the creature's failure to convince Old De Lacey's children of his benevolence complicates the relative potential of his eloquence as an agent for social good. And yet for Victor and Walton the episode does little to dispel concern over the power of the creature's artfully crafted speech.

Indeed, Victor admits to Walton that he himself has fallen victim to the creature's seductive vocal powers: "His words had a strange effect upon me. I compassionated him, and sometimes felt a wish to console him; but when I looked upon him, when I saw the filthy mass that moved and talked, my heart sickened, and my feelings were altered to those of horror and hatred" (Shelley 158). Ultimately what makes the creature most monstrous to Victor is the discordant relationship between the creature's verbal eloquence and his monstrous body. He acquires his eloquence over time and with much effort, and his adult body appears initially more monstrous for its lack of speech. A mature human body that cannot produce speech may then appear monstrous for its inability to perform normative behaviors, but so too does the non-normative body seem equally monstrous when coupled with eloquent speech. Walton's encounter with the creature at the end of the novel follows a similar trajectory: "Never did I behold a vision so horrible as his face, of such loathsome, yet appalling hideousness. I shut my eyes involuntarily, and endeavored to recollect what were my duties with regard to this destroyer. I called on him to stay" (Shelley 217). Walton momentarily denies himself the use of his sight, and so he comes to inhabit briefly the disabled subject position occupied by Old De Lacey. Warned by Victor, Walton is unable to hear the creature without prejudice – he cannot bear the sight of the creature, but neither can he trust the eloquence performed by the monstrous form before him.

Ultimately unable to pass for human, the creature falls inescapably into a realm

of monstrosity the novel renders as both culturally and socially inscribed. Peter Brooks's influential reading of the novel explains this failure by linking the creature's "monsterism," to what he "lacks": "In the Monster's use of language the novel poses its most important questions, for it is language alone that may compensate for a deficient, monstrous nature" (207). Yet Brooks's characterization of the creature as deficient based on his so-called monstrous (and where he elsewhere labels as "deformed") body, I would suggest, diminishes the superiority of his physiology, and perhaps more crucially devalues his formidable eloquence, which Brooks locates essentially as compensation rather than as ability. The creature is far from deficient, but is, in fact, extraordinary. What he lacks is not a proper body, but rather access to human companionship and society. Brooks's reading of physical difference, then, becomes part of a problematic critical cycle by which socially disabled figures necessarily become characterized as deficient within an able-ist matrix of normalcy.

The creature's attempt to participate and thus pass in human society through the mastery of elocution is more than compensation, more than mere disguise – it becomes, for the creature, a survival technique and an act of self-definition. Walton writes to his sister that he hears in Frankenstein's cabin "a sound as of a human voice, but hoarser;" – this is the sound of the creature's voice (Shelley 217). The qualification here is telling: not a human voice but "as of a human voice" – and like the creature's own claims as retold by Victor, his voice is harsh (hoarse). In this way, speech becomes both the symbolic marker of humanity and the corporeal conduit by which the creature attempts to pass as such. His path lies through what he can consciously manipulate and change about himself – not the social apprehension of his physical form but self-directed control of his voice and mastery of human language.

Ultimately, if read as a passing novel, Frankenstein offers a narrative departure from generic convention with regard to social and cultural mobility. Rather than detail a subject's passage between marginal and dominant communities, Shelley's work positions the creature's desire for acceptance and verbal performance as necessarily unilateral. There is no community of peers from which the creature can move: created *sui generis*, he is both alien and alienated. But the creature's tacit disavowal of the visual as the essential measure of identity imagines a pathway beyond the stigma of disability. In speech, naturalized as essentially human and rendered culturally constructed, the novel locates the potential for the creature to enter the human community. As Linda Schlossberg has argued, passing "is not

simply about erasure or denial, . . . but, rather, about the creation and an establishment of an alternative set of narratives” (4). And passing via elocutionary mastery does allow the creature the space to realize his own narrative potential. The many negative reactions the creature experiences with the humans he encounters form a recurring pattern that seems to reinforce his species difference. By contrast, the moments wherein he performs his verbal eloquence (with Victor, with Old Delacey, with Walton), work to disrupt that cycle of disability stigma. Thus, his act of passing functions as biologically transcendent but also socially transgressive. Blurring the line between “monster” and human, speech enables the creature’s self-making.

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She's Alive!: Anxieties and Animations of the Female Monster

Teresa Kurtz

From its conception, throughout its creation, and to the point of its destruction, Frankenstein's female monster is shrouded in anxiety. In fact, the unborn character of the female creature is frequently overlooked in Mary Shelley's novel, in which Frankenstein's (male) monster is usually the focal point. Through this essay, however, I aim to shift the spotlight from the male to the female creature in order to reveal some of the underlying fears surrounding the female monster—fears that are present in not only Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, but also James Whale's film *Bride of Frankenstein*, and subsequently John Logan's television series, *Penny Dreadful*. While Mary Shelley never actually brings the female monster to life in her novel, she introduces the possibility of a female monster that comes to fruition in these later adaptations.

The female monster's notable absence in the novel, as well as subsequent presence in these adaptations, can be read as salient manifestations of the anxiety of an uncontrollable female sexuality. This anxiety manifests itself in a fragmented body. As Shelley plants the seed of the female monster in the text, Whale harvests it in 1935 by imagining a version in which the female monster is animated. Whale's film animates the corpse Victor destroys in Shelley's text, playing out Victor Frankenstein's fear that the female monster might reject her mate. Whale's depiction of this rejection forces the audience to confront their anxiety of feminine hybridity by directing their gaze to a creature who is human, animal, woman, and bride. Given these abundant anxieties, there is no question as to why she was never given a chance at life in the novel and why she is destroyed so abruptly after her animation in *Bride of Frankenstein*.

Without ever bringing the female monster to life as a character in the novel, Mary Shelley plants the imaginative seed of a female companion in the minds

of her readers. While Frankenstein's monster and the animation scene receive a surplus of critical attention, the female monster is not usually afforded the same degree of consideration; this may be because Victor destroys her before she is ever born. However, Shelley gives the female monster a less literal kind of birth; in Frankenstein, Shelley creates the female monster as a concept. The creature tells Victor, "I am alone, and miserable; man will not associate with me; but one as deformed and horrible as myself would not deny herself to me. My companion must be of the same species, and have the same defects. This being you must create" (Shelley 118). As Shelley writes the creature's demand, the female monster begins to take shape in the mind of the reader. As such, it enters a conceptual space as a "deformed and horrible" companion "of the same species." These are the descriptors that help bring the creature to life for the reader, even if Victor does not.

It is worth noting, however, that Frankenstein's monster does not describe his companion as female—instead, he immediately uses a feminine pronoun. The sense of immediacy implied by the automatic use of this pronoun births both the companion and her female identity simultaneously. Given these very specific terms, Frankenstein's monster is doing much of the creating himself. Despite his lack of involvement in the literal piecing together of the female monster's body, the monster sets demands that attempt to control the female monster before she is even animated. Through words alone, the monster—and of course, Shelley—shape the female monster as a character, despite her existence as only an unborn concept.

Victor Frankenstein grapples with the decision of whether or not to meet the demands of his creature. Ultimately, he agrees to create a female companion for his creature and engages in what he deems "a filthy process," in which "[his] mind was intently fixed on the sequel of [his] labor, and [his] eyes were shut to the horror of [his] proceedings" (Shelley 137). This diction implies that the making of the female monster is somehow more difficult than the first creature; it is not necessarily more difficult in the labor itself, but Frankenstein's reaction to his work becomes "intermixed with obscure forebodings of evil" during the long creation process of the female monster (Shelley 137). Victor's own anxiety about creating a female monster is absorbed and embodied by this unborn creature through Victor's physical act of laboring with her. Victor frequently mentions his work, labor, occupation, or creation; the female monster is described as a process, not as a complete entity. In this way, Erin Hawley argues that the female monster's body is a metaphor for silencing: "Her unfinished body represents or reminds us of her incomplete story, and of the abrupt way she is vanished from the narrative of Frankenstein when

Victor casts her into the sea" (Hawley 220). Referring to the female creature only as an unfinished process calls attention to the fact that she is never given a narrative or even a chance at life in the novel.

Before completing and animating the female monster, Victor Frankenstein is overcome with the need to "consider the effects of what [he] was now doing" (Shelley 138). Victor is filled with many fears concerning the female monster that all circle around the enigmatic word—might:

I was now about to form another being of whose dispositions I was alike ignorant; she might become ten thousand times more malignant than her mate...[she] might refuse to comply with a compact made before her creation. They might even hate each other...might he [the creature] not conceive a greater abhorrence for it when it came before his eyes in the female form? She might also turn with disgust from him to the superior beauty of man; she might quit him and he be again alone. (Shelley 138)

Victor's chaotic thoughts reflect his anxiety about the uncontrollable nature of the female creature. Ignorant of how she will look, behave, and feel towards the already-completed monster, Frankenstein is afraid of unleashing unknown, unforeseeable possibilities when he brings the female monster to life. At the forefront of these fears is female sexuality; her desire may be independent of what Victor or the creature have in mind. Victor, in particular, is principally concerned that he may not be able to control this conceptually malignant female being. If the female creature were to be animated, she would have the individualized desire to choose her mate; Victor's lack of control over the sexuality of the female monster is enough of a threat to his patriarchal power as creator to make him destroy his creation before it is ever animated.

Although the female monster is never given the chance to have her own narrative in the novel, Shelley's unfinished female creature inspired others to bring her to life. For example, James Whale animates the female monster in his 1935 film *Bride of Frankenstein*, a sequel to *Frankenstein* (1931), also directed by Whale. Whale's adaptation goes beyond the story Shelley tells in her novel by bringing the female monster to life. Cleverly, Whale saves the animation scene for the very end, building the audience's anticipation and essentially using her animation to drive the entire film.

In her analysis of *Bride of Frankenstein*, Erin Hawley begins with the trailer itself: “The trailer shows us tantalizing shots of the spectacular creation scene but keeps its title character hidden from the audience—the words ‘What will she LOOK like?’ are superimposed over a shot of the bandaged bride (222). A large part of the film’s marketing was concerned with attracting people based on that exact question. People came to see the film to fulfill their curiosity: what would a creature who is human, animal, and female even look like? Hawley writes that *Bride of Frankenstein* “has the power to imag(in)e the unimaginable, to bring something out of the shadows” (Ibid.). As a film, it utilizes the advantage of representing the female monster in a visible physical space. The film has the ability to capture what the novel could not—the female monster’s appearance.

At the end of the film, even more anticipated than the female monster’s reaction to the creature is the removal of her bandages—the reveal. Will she be monstrous? The camera focuses for a generous amount of time on the female monster’s bandaged body, highlighting her feminine shape. In this moment, she is monster and woman united; one cannot be seen without the other. *Bride of Frankenstein* takes over the narrative from Shelley’s novel and directs the gaze towards a body that, as readers, we thought was destroyed forever. Not only does *Bride of Frankenstein* animate the female monster and reanimate the Frankenstein story, it also animates Victor Frankenstein fear that the female monster will reject his creature.

When the female monster’s bandages are finally removed, she is revealed to be beautiful despite the scars on her face. She wears her ascribed role: a white bridal gown. But as Frankenstein’s monster reaches out for the newly animated female creature, she reacts with a scream—she is horrified by the appearance of the creature. Unlike the intentions of the male creature and her creator, the female monster refuses to play the role of the creature’s bride. Whale’s film plays out the fear of uncontrollable female sexuality expressed by Victor in Shelley’s novel when, despite her similarity to the male creature, the female monster his hideous form. When the female monster does not meet his expectations, the creature kills both her, the mad doctor who created her, and himself. In Whale’s adaptation, the female monster cannot survive the restrictive demands of true womanhood; she does not acquiesce to the submissive role ascribed to her, nor is her nature pure. Rather, the female monster is an amalgamation that cannot be reduced to one role or identity.

Embedded in the identity of the female monster, especially in *Bride of Frankenstein*, are the several ontological categories that come together to create her mon-

strous form: human, animal, female, and bride. The female monster is a cyborg, or, drawing on the work of Donna Haraway, a body of “transgressed boundaries” such as human and machine, human and animal, or natural and cultural (149-150). Frankenstein’s monster is also a cyborg, constructed from both human and animal parts; however, I argue that the female monster is an even more convincing cyborg because of her societally constructed positions, or roles, as a woman and a bride. As a creature consciously constructed to be female, she is expected to be a beautiful object of desire, pleasing to man’s gaze despite being a product of the same grotesque process that made the creature. The title of the film itself mechanically constructs the role that the female monster is destined to fulfill: bride. Before her animation, before the female monster ever has a chance to speak her mind or decide whether or not she wants to engage with the creature in any kind of way, she is constructed to be his bride, mate, and loving companion. But she turns out to be a cyborg—one who does not behave according to how she was coded. As a result, she is punished through death, never allowed a real narrative, much screen time, or a voice.

John Logan’s contemporary television series *Penny Dreadful* also resurrects the female monster and the Frankenstein universe. In this adaptation, the character Bronam a London sex worker fallen from grace, dies and is reanimated by Victor Frankenstein to become Lily Frankenstein. This female monster is intended to serve as the male monster’s mate, but she is also the object of Victor’s desire. For example, before Victor animates the female monster, he is alone with her naked body. He touches her sternum, observing her stitches, likely in the name of science. But then he touches her breast and invades her dead body for the sake of his desire. A lifeless body, the female monster is the site of sexual desire. She can be the object, but not the subject. She can be desired, but cannot herself desire.

The female monster’s animation scene in *Penny Dreadful* reaffirms her role as a sexual object for both Victor and the creature. Both are present for her animation, in which they repeatedly and competitively yell, “Let her live!” As in *Bride of Frankenstein*, the lure of the scene is the reveal of her body after she is animated. Her dainty and delicate fingers grip the edge of the tank, a signifier for her constructed feminine identity. When she stands up from the tank, she does not look like she was just resurrected, but instead like she emerged from a swimming pool—dripping wet, shivering, and in need of assistance. Also, she is not positioned eye-to-eye with Victor and the creature; she is instead elevated on a pedestal in which her body becomes the spectacle. They both stand there ogling, visually taking in her body.

From her birth, the female monster is conflated with sexual desire—not a desire that is uniquely hers, but one that is projected onto her from Victor and the creature.

While she is hypersexualized, John Logan's imagining of the female monster differs because she is allowed a history, narrative, and purpose outside of what is ascribed to her. In other words, after the female monster rejects both the creature and Victor she is not killed off but becomes a rich character who seeks revenge on those who have hurt her. Compared to Shelley's novel, in which the female monster never lives, and *Whale's Bride of Frankenstein*, in which the female monster is quickly killed after her rejection of the male creature, *Penny Dreadful* affords the female monster bodily and sexual agency. Logan's adaptation offers hope that the transgressive female monster might be a site of subversive potential for expressions of female sexuality and hybridity.

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"Is This Gentle and Lovely Being Lost For Ever?": Hypermasculinity and Heteronormativity in Kenneth Branagh's *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*

Stephanie A. Lopez

Victor Frankenstein and Henry Clerval's relationship in *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* is markedly intimate, perhaps even homoerotic. It is surprising, then, that the two are mere acquaintances in Kenneth Branagh's 1994 film, *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*. One might perceive this change in their relationship as a mere byproduct of the adaptation from book to film; but, in the act of disassembling Victor and Henry's relationship, Branagh brings Victor's relationship with Elizabeth to the foreground, thus sacrificing a meaningful platonic relationship for a romantic one.

In this essay, I will analyze the content of Branagh's film to argue that the disintegration of Victor and Henry's relationship projects a heteronormative reading onto Shelley's novel. The formal changes the film makes regarding narrative structure are inherently entwined with its gender politics, specifically those regarding male platonic relationships. Branagh's revision suggests that healthy male platonic relationships compromise hegemonic conceptions of masculinity, and as such male platonic relationships are viewed as a threat to heterosexual relationships. Since audiences conditioned by these gender norms have come to expect this paradigm in the media they consume, the egregious error of erasing Victor and Henry's relationship may go unnoticed. However, Branagh almost entirely removes Henry from Victor's frame of reference, thus eradicating the healing effect of their friendship on Victor. A comparison of scenes from Branagh's film with the source text illustrates the extent to which Victor and Henry's relationship is censored for an audience conditioned to prioritize the models of toxic heterosexuality so prevalent in Hollywood romances over the much more complex model of male intimacy depicted in Shelley's novel.

For example, Henry and Victor are lifelong friends in the source text. Victor informs Robert Walton, "my brothers were considerably younger than me; but I had a friend in one of my schoolfellows, who compensated for this deficiency. Henry Clerval was the son of a merchant of Geneva, an intimate friend of my father"

(Shelley 21). This information extends the bond between Victor and Henry beyond the scope of the narrative, providing readers with a context for their relationship. In the film, however, such context is not provided. Victor and Henry's relationship in the film is presented as that which exists only through the audience's gaze. As such, this relationship in the film (or lack thereof) is filtered through the viewer. Conversely, in the source text, Victor and Henry's extensive history is briefly mentioned in Victor's account to Walton but is not entirely disclosed, leaving the particulars of this history known only by the two men in that relationship. In this way, the film leaves their relationship on display for the viewer, whereas the source text allows the men to have undisclosed history, which strengthens the intimacy between them.

One notable instance of male intimacy in the novel takes place when Henry accompanies Victor on his Grand Tour in the hopes that Victor's depression might be cured by travel. Victor recounts Henry fondly—romantically, even—when he reminisces about this particular trip:

He was a being formed in the "very poetry of nature." His wild and enthusiastic imagination was chastened by the sensibility of his heart. His soul overflowed with ardent affections, and his friendship was of that devoted and wondrous nature that the worldly-minded teach us to look for only in the imagination. (Shelley 130)

Victor's unreserved happiness in recounting this trip to Walton is uncharacteristic of him, given that he has been in a constant state of despair in the novel up to this point. After all, it is this despair, which his father perceives as depression, that motivates him to take this trip in the first place. Indeed, in this scene, Henry and Henry alone is the source of Victor's happiness.

Another notable instance of intimacy between the two men occurs after Henry's death at the hands of the creature. This incident flings Victor into a fit of grief that lasts for months, the intensity of which surpasses his reaction to Elizabeth's murder later in the novel. When Victor first views Henry's body, he recounts, "the human frame could no longer support the agonizing suffering that I endured, and I was carried out of the room [in which Henry Clerval lay] in strong convulsions. A fever succeeded to this. I lay for two months on the point of death" (Shelley 148). Afterward, Victor awakens in police custody and discovers he is being charged with Henry's murder. Victor's main point of concern, however, is his loss of Henry. He even admits, "[I] often reflected I had better seek death than remain miserably pent up only to be let loose in a world replete with wretchedness" (150). He would, quite

literally, rather die than be without Henry.

Meanwhile, when Victor discovers Elizabeth's body, he reacts in a similar manner, but to a lesser degree: "[H]er bloodless arms and relaxed form [were] flung by the murderer on its bridal bier. Could I behold this, and live?... For a moment only did I lose recollection; I fainted... I recovered" (Shelley 165). One might argue that, with Elizabeth's death being the final death that incentivizes him to pursue the creature, Victor has been numbed to his own sense of loss. At this point, Victor has nothing to lose, and his reaction would seem to support this point. However, I would suggest that Victor has nothing to lose because, at this point, Henry is already dead.

Perhaps because of its significance, Henry's death is the only death that Victor foreshadows in his narrative to Robert Walton. Shortly after he recalls the trip he and Henry took together—but before he describes Henry's murder—Victor muses:

[W]here does he now exist? Is this gentle and lovely being lost for ever [sic]? Has this mind so replete with ideas, imaginations fanciful and magnificent, which formed a world, whose existence depended on the life of its creator; has this mind perished? Does it now only exist in my memory? No, it is not thus; your form so divinely wrought, and beaming with beauty, has decayed, but your spirit still visits and consoles your unhappy friend. (Shelley 130)

In the novel's chronology, Henry dies after Victor journeys to Scotland to finish creating the female creature, and at this point in the text, Victor has not yet arrived at Scotland. It is curious, then, that Henry's (and not Elizabeth's) death is the only one Victor foreshadows.

Branagh, in contrast, characterizes Victor and Henry's friendship quite differently, beginning with their initial introduction. In the film, Victor and Henry first meet as students at Ingolstadt, bonding over Professor Kempe's crude behavior and tyrannical teaching style. This plot point contradicts Shelley's novel in two ways. Firstly, the film depicts Henry studying science, not languages; secondly, the film does not indicate that he and Victor grew up as close friends. The former point undercuts Henry's role in the novel as an emblem of poetic sensibility, the very quality that brings Victor such happiness on their Grand Tour. The latter point sets up the peculiarly uncomfortable acquaintanceship that Henry and Victor maintain throughout the film's duration. In the source text, Henry serves as a foil to Victor;

he compliments Victor because he is markedly different from him. Yet, in the film, Henry and Victor are practically the same person, particularly in terms of Henry's interest in reanimating life. Their only clear distinction in the film is Henry's decision to not carry out Professor Waldman's work, even though the film suggests he is capable of doing so. This distinction, as well as the intellectual similarities between the two characters, prevent them from forming an intimate relationship.

There are indeed points during the film when the two men appear to be growing more intimate, but these instances actually highlight Henry's role as a plot device. For example, when Henry brings Victor soup while he recovers from pneumonia—but the audience recognizes he is also recovering from the shock of seeing the creature reanimated—Henry brings news that the cholera epidemic in the city has become out of hand. Victor interprets this news as a confirmation that the creature will die from the epidemic, which, of course, the audience knows will not come to pass. What appears to be a touching moment in which Henry cares for his friend is actually a moment entirely orchestrated for dramatic irony.

Another instance in which the two fail to establish an intimate connection occurs when Victor implores Henry to help him carry out the experiments that ultimately lead to the creature's animation. In the source text, no one but Victor knows about the creature, and this contributes to his feelings of isolation. Curiously, in an attempt to create a sense of comradeship between Victor and Henry via their shared knowledge about the creature, Branagh actually drives these characters apart. In the following exchange between the two men, Henry grows visibly concerned with Victor's interests, particularly in regard to their religious and moral connotations:

VICTOR: Sooner or later, the best way to cheat death will be to create life.

HENRY: Now you've gone too far. There's only one God, Victor.

VICTOR: No, leave God out of this. (Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*)

This exchange takes place before Victor begins his experiments. Later, after Victor is set to begin his work, which is motivated by Professor Waldman's untimely death, Victor justifies himself to Henry with the following statement: "I think, for the chance to defeat death and disease, to let everyone on this Earth have the chance of life, sustained, healthy life, to allow people who love each other to be together forever... For all of that, I think it's a risk worth taking" (Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*).

Despite this justification, ultimately Henry refuses to aid Victor in his experiments. Victor then locks himself away in his laboratory, leaving Henry with full knowledge of his plans. In Shelley's novel, however, Henry is ignorant of Victor's work, and this ignorance contributes to his innocence. Meanwhile, Branagh exposes Henry to information that, instead of preserving his salutary position as a Romantic figure of sensibility, renders him a threat to Victor's intellectual progress. As a result, Victor exiles him from his laboratory, solidifying the literal and metaphorical barriers between them.

As a result of these recurring, yet unsuccessful, attempts at intimacy, Henry's fate after the fire at Victor's family's estate remains a mystery to Branagh's audience. Whereas the novel depicts Henry's death at the hands of the creature as the most traumatic event in Victor's narrative, the film radically changes Henry's fate. Henry is never attacked by the creature; he instead follows Victor to his family's estate, where Victor attempts to reanimate Elizabeth after she is murdered by the creature. Victor is successful, but Elizabeth rejects him and commits suicide by shattering an oil lamp and engulfing herself in flames. The resulting blaze consumes Victor's laboratory and eventually his family's entire estate. In the last frame of the film in which Henry is present, he stops Victor in the foyer of his home and begs him to listen to reason. Because Henry is last shown inside the house, it is unclear whether he waits for Victor, which would result in his own demise, or whether he leaves. This ambiguity signals the movie's clear disinterest in those particulars. And by the end of the film, this disinterest seems appropriate, given Henry's role as a mere plot device. Victor has no vested interest in his friend, so why should the audience?

This new reading of Victor and Henry's relationship, and the issues it generates, are the result of Branagh's alteration of Shelley's original narrative frame. Shelley's novel depicts the story via Robert Walton's letters to his sister. Walton's letters are the vessel for the transmission of both Frankenstein's and the creature's narratives to readers. These letters are not, however, the work of Walton alone. In fact, Walton notes at one point that Victor has been aiding him in this act of transcription:

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 in posterity." (Shelley 179)

This admission reveals to readers that the narrative is a product of both Walton's and Victor's labor, all rendered in a single voice; there is no point in Victor's story, or the text-within-the-text, that the reader can clearly identify where Walton's narration begins and where Victor's narration ends.

In contrast, Branagh's film affords Victor sole narrative control. After Walton ushers him into his ship and bombards him with questions, Victor begins to tell the story of the creature's creation and his own downfall. Victor's voice fades into the beginning of the film and fades out of the end, implying that he has told the entirety of the story, from start to finish, without interruption or outside influence. This reformation of the frame narrative depicts Victor as articulating his truth. In this way, he is rendered solely responsible for the characterization of his relationship with Henry—and solely culpable for not conveying Henry's fate after the fire. Because Henry's whereabouts at the tale's conclusion are considered unimportant in the scope of Victor's grand tale, he excludes that information.

While Branagh's film offers a fascinating examination of the relationship between Victor and the creature, the dissolution of Victor and Henry's relationship in the film compromises an integral dimension of Victor's characterization in the source text; his Romantic sensibilities are largely a result of Henry's influence on him, and Henry's marked absence in the film robs Victor of this facet. The film equates masculinity with overt heterosexuality; more specifically, the truly masculine male prioritizes a heterosexual relationship over healthy platonic relationships with other men. In addition to overtly sexualizing Victor's last moments with Elizabeth—their "sex" scene takes up approximately two minutes of grueling screen time—Branagh deconstructs what is the most significant relationship in Victor's life. Indeed, this is a rather dated view of gender politics, given that this movie was released around the beginning of the third-wave feminist movement, yet it is still the paradigm that many readers are brought up on. Continued iterations of this model of masculinity will prevent more progressive models of male intimacy—such as those depicted by Mary Shelley two hundred years ago—from coming to the fore.

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Move Fast, and Break Things: Frankenstein as Exploration of the Enlightened Individual

Eric Berman

Thousands of young people move west to ride the wave of knowledge, led by innovators with bold goals to control nature itself. The movement is now cultural, characterized by disciplined individualism, workaholics, and faith in the ability of science and reason to triumph over any obstacle; and when these bright-eyed thought leaders take chances, they often succeed at disrupting not just a field of technology, but fundamentally restructuring the fabric of society as we know it. Now: am I writing about today's disrupters out in Silicon Valley, or the thinkers of the 18th century's Enlightenment?

Some 200 years after the Enlightenment, we still have much to learn from its philosophies—and from its consequences. For although it introduced significant technologies such as the battery and the steam engine, it also generated the guillotine, culminating in Robespierre's bloody Reign of Terror and the Napoleonic wars. For that reason, we should take care to not drop the subtitle from Mary Shelley's 1818 novel *Frankenstein: The Modern Prometheus*. As Peter Thorslev argues, "It was Prometheus who became symbolic... of man in his fight for liberty against oppression in all its forms [as] he combines... the concern for individual liberty, and the concern for society" (108). Coming off the heels of Napoleon's 1815 campaign, Mary Shelley's text offers modern readers a stark cultural critique of her contemporaries' venerated Enlightenment ideologies by exploring their repercussions. What will happen, the novel's central tragedy asks, when high-minded ideologues are allowed to run free into uncharted terrain without social guardrails? Victor Frankenstein embodies the allure of a Byronic Hero as he solves science's quintessential problem of redefining life and death. But, the text emphasizes, neither he nor society could control the consequences of this technology's disruption to the status quo.

I. Great Man: Theory

To properly contextualize *Frankenstein*, we must first understand two of its key ideological predecessors: Jean-Jacques Rousseau's social contract theory, and the critique of that theory articulated by Shelley's father and husband. Rousseau's

1762 Du contrat social argues that the needs of the society outweigh the individual's rights to complete autonomy. As Francis Fukuyama notes, although human individual's inner selves have been regarded as sources of limitless potential, for Rousseau, "human happiness depended on the liberation of that self from artificial social constraint" (Fukuyama 97-8). Thus, in order for government to develop, citizens must necessarily give up some of their rights in order to coexist. The necessary and implicit question then becomes, how are these rights given up? Who decides?

Mary's father, William Godwin, was one of the bright souls who took it upon himself to guide the sprawling masses toward the Enlightenment principles of personal autonomy and perfectibility of the human spirit. In his libertarian credo *Political Justice*, he outlines his belief that society's "power of intellect can be established over all other matter [including] over the matter of our own bodies" (Godwin 581). However, his path to achieve this perfectibility is troubled by two assumptions: First, that "society is nothing more than an aggregation of individuals" (87); and, second, that of those individuals, a "life ought to be preferred which will be most conducive to the general good" (81). Thus, in a precursor to the Great Man theory of history that dominated much of the 1800s, Godwin argued that an individual's worth in the social contract should be qualified relative to the discoveries they make furthering humankind on its path to perfection.

Godwin's philosophical disciple Percy Shelley¹ applied these key elements of an-archo-utilitarian ideology into his own writing, calling for a societal restructuring designed to elevate the pursuit of knowledge even at the expense of social ties. He most explicitly defended these notions in "A Defence of Poetry," arguing that "the great instrument of moral good is the imagination, and poetry administers to the effect by acting upon the cause" (87), coming to the famous conclusion that "Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world" (118). Young Percy had a penchant for the Poet's plight, perhaps only outweighed by his political idealism. Both manifested in his early poetry, including his admittedly sophomoric *Queen Mab*.² Using an omnipotent vantage point to levy his political critiques, Percy's titular divine being shows the reader a utopian view of the world from across space and time: "This is thine high reward:—the past shall rise;/ Thou shalt behold the present: I will teach/ The secrets of the future" (sec. 2, lines 65-7). Neither kings, the clergy, nor the common man manage to escape the young Percy's critical eye. With

¹ Both Shelleys will subsequently be referred to by their first name.

² The full title *Queen Mab; A Philosophical Poem; With Notes* helpfully outlines the dual genres that Percy attempted to reconcile.

this eye on perfectibility as a salve for cynicism, the Queen offers that "Futurity / Exposes now its treasure; let the sight / Renew and strengthen all thy failing hope" (8.50-2). Given the text's aspirations, it is ironic that its lack of subtlety has left it on the fringes of the canon.

However, a later iteration of Percy's theme of individualistic pursuit of inspiration ended up considerably more nuanced and successful. *Alastor*, alternatively named *The Spirit of Solitude*, features a "Preface" (penned by Percy) that introduces us to the poem's protagonist: "His mind . . . thirsts for intercourse with an intelligence similar to itself. He images to himself the Being whom he loves" (69). A great deal of the lasting appeal of the poem is predicated on its inversion of Queen Mab's didacticism: in contrast to the painstaking way the Queen tightly grasps the reader's hand to guide us through Percy's worldview, the Poet of *Alastor* is an enigma. Though "obedient to high thoughts" (line 108) that allow him similarly to behold the "thrilling secrets of the birth of time" (128), this hero is far more about searching for inspiration than explaining what to do with that knowledge. Indeed, the Poet forsakes all of his previous life to become an Enlightened individual, the "One human step alone [that] has ever broken / The stillness of its solitude" (589-90). In attaining inspiration, his narrative ends, and even we the readers are foreclosed from following him in his success.

The isolation at the heart of *Alastor* is vitally important when read as an expression of the Byronic Hero archetype, drawn from the Shelleys' mutual friend and literary celebrity, Lord Byron. Byron's fictional characters and real-life personality inspired many imitators of "his capacities for feeling," which Thorslev identifies as "a natural product of that great spring thaw of sentiment which affected most of western Europe... in the beginning of this period" (35). Fukuyama argues that human social evolution at this crucial juncture of the French Revolution gave rise to a profoundly new sense of inner self (34), so it is no surprise that Byronic heroism began to resonate; the archetype's heroism is founded in opposition to existing social structures that subjugate the common man. The Byronic hero diminishes the prestige that more traditional markers like class or riches might confer, and proportionally raises the intrinsic dignity of the inner self that the common man could identify with.

Given the degree to which Mary and Percy collaborated, it is little surprise that *Frankenstein* features varieties of that Byronic hero. As Charles Schug remarks, "none of the novel's narrators represents the norms of the work; each is limited in

his understanding of the others' experience and of the total import... Each narrator... takes a strong moral position that is inadequate to encompass the experience of the other two" (612). Yet by playing off one another, Shelley's primary characters comprise a different and more holistic view of the Byronic hero. Frankenstein owes considerable amounts of its lasting appeal to the ways in which these character arcs work in tight orchestration; only through understanding their tripartite overlaps can we see the ways Mary rehabilitated Rousseau's social contract theory to partially accommodate Godwin's and her husband's critiques, simultaneously cautioning against society voyaging forward with these isolated protagonists at the helm.

II. The Social Network

Frankenstein is told through the lenses of three separate individuals: Walton, Victor Frankenstein, and the Creature. The similarities between these three viewpoints triangulate the main causes for the destruction that follows in the wake of Victor's creation. As each narrator suffers from an isolated and thus limited vantage point, Schug argues, "each tries to force the listener into participation in his vision, just as Shelley seeks to force the reader into participation in hers" (609). Yet I would argue that intrusive metafictional moments, such as Victor's correction and augmentation of Walton's notes (M. Shelley 179), ultimately force the reader to ascertain their own path: we are tasked with judging these respective narratives by combining their perspectives to guide ourselves through their blind spots. That these individual narratives are each ideologically flawed clarifies for readers the idea that a functioning individual must indeed stay part of the social contract in order to live virtuously and understand the modern world.

The three protagonists, in their isolated existence, all suffer from an incomplete sense of identity. As Fukuyama argues, there are three crucial elements that comprise Post-Rousseauian identities:

The first is *thymos*, a universal aspect of human personality that craves recognition. The second is the distinction between the inner and outer self, and the raising of the moral valuation of the inner self over outer society. This emerged only in early modern Europe. The third is an evolving concept of dignity, in which recognition is due not just to a narrow class of people, but to everyone. (37)

These categories provide a useful lens for reading Walton's, Victor's, and the Creature's separate issues of recognition, each of which fuel their respective

character arcs.

Walton is a bridge between the audience and the more sociopathic protagonists, as he shows a degree of self-awareness in his reckless ambitions. Though Walton is shortsighted in many respects, he recognizes that, although he was privileged to a great deal of academic education, "it is a still greater evil to me that I am self-educated"; he is approaching his thirties, but confesses that he is "in reality more illiterate than many school-boys of fifteen." He goes on, "It is true that I have thought more... but [the thoughts] want keeping" (M. Shelley 9). When Walton first stumbles upon Victor in the frigid wastelands near the North Pole, it seems that he will at last find a friend of some sympathy—and he wastes no time before he starts "to love [Victor] as a brother" (15). In desperate pursuit of *thymos*, Walton implores the scientist to share his story because he recognizes that their ambitions are so similar. But despite Walton's initial show of sympathy, Victor proves recalcitrant.

Crucially, in the 1831 edition of the text, Mary makes clear that Victor's arrival should be more a warning than the serendipitous fulfillment of Walton's desire for a friend. Walton, eager to participate in Victor's story, proclaims that he would "sacrifice my fortune, my existence, my every hope, to the furtherance of my enterprise. One man's life or death³ were but a small price to pay for the acquirement of the knowledge which I sought" (202). With this grandstanding, Walton does gain recognition, but not in the way that he may have wanted. Victor exclaims, "Do you share my madness!", and it is only at this point the eponymous narrative commences. In contrast to the 1818 version that launches into Victor's history unprompted, the 1831 version rejects the Godwinian notion that "one man's life or death" is a small price. As Harriet Hustis remarks, Victor "notably sacrifices creative precision for speed," with "blatant disregard" for the "moral complexities and physical impracticalities of life in its concrete manifestations" (849). Despite his impetus to elevate his inner life's ambitions over society's guardrails, Victor comes to recognize the repercussions of this reckless pursuit when his Creature enacts his revenge.

Shelley's portrayal of these repercussions of megalomania becomes increasingly clear when those dear to Victor begin to die; he says he is more tortured than Justine, the wrongly-executed woman "on whom the public indignation was turned with renewed violence" (M. Shelley 64). Society's attempts at justice are misplaced

³ This presumably refers to Walton's own life being on the line, as he is speaking from the first-person perspective. However, it is important to note the ambiguity of this statement—this line could also be read as Walton explaining to Victor that he would be willing to kill in order to achieve his ambitions.

at first, rendering Justine a scapegoat for Victor's failure to fulfill his responsibility to the Creature. After the suspicious circumstances surrounding his dear friend Henry Clerval's death, Victor again makes it explicitly clear to Walton and the reader that social backlash was misplaced: "I am the cause of this—I murdered her. William, Justine, and Henry—they all died by my hands" (156). He later clarifies, "I am not mad" but rather the "assassin of those most innocent victims" (156). This guilt is so poignant precisely because Victor and Walton, as solipsistic Byronic heroes, so thoroughly abdicate responsibility that otherwise could have integrated the Creature into society.

Speaking to the last element of his formulation of modern identity, Fukuyama argues that modern society has changed to give all persons a right to dignity. This is the core issue of the Creature's character arc. It is important to not mischaracterize the Creature itself as a violent aberration that is inherently incompatible with society; while it is true that the Creature is rejected by society whenever he extends compassion, most notably in the case of Felix DeLacey reacting to his presence with violence (M. Shelley 110), these are the consequences of Victor's rejection and not cause. When the eldest DeLacey's blindness prevents him from prejudging the Creature, the Creature is afforded hesitant compassion. The Creature longs to be recognized by Victor and, later, by a sympathetic mate, a desire similar to Walton's yearning for thymos from Victor and Victor's close bonds with Elizabeth and Clerval. The same Victor who "saw an insurmountable barrier placed between me and my fellow-men" (M. Shelley 131), and who declares "I abhorred society" (M. Shelley 132), has an outsized effect on whether the Creature will be integrated into society (Hustis 850). The Creature's self-awareness does little to help him in a violent world where he has no power to himself integrate into society. And although he proclaims that his rational self resonates more with socialization than war (M. Shelley 104), he argues that "I am malicious because I am miserable; am I not shunned and hated by all mankind?" (119). The Creature's rational individual pursuit of benevolence is rejected by society, rendering him tragically anti-social.

The consequences of Victor's solipsistic existence are real and immediate for him and for his social network. In the pursuit of proportional dignity above the rest of his social system, a type of thymos called megalothymia (Fukuyama 22), and without adequate social skills to take responsibility for his Creature, Victor causes massive destruction to those around him. A great deal of this destruction stems from the isolation within which Victor forms the Creature, and the degree to which he attempts to shield the public from his creation. Modern readers must read Fran-

kenstein as a cautionary tale which, as with modern disruptions, emphasizes "the inability of society to harness the available technology to address [social problems]," thus leading to "disenchantment with the scientific enterprise itself" (Juma 281). We therefore must take deliberate, precautionary steps to socially integrate those who are making technologic leaps on our behalf, ensuring that the Enlightened few are well informed by the sympathetic many.

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Narratives that Stick: Frankenstein and The Sopranos

Nicole Halabuda

In her introduction to *Frankenstein*, Mary Shelley explains that it was a dark and stormy night when she and her companions decided to enter into a friendly ghost story competition. I can think of few genres that “stick” quite like ghost stories. I’m sure we all have one or two go-to tales that we tell and retell whenever we find ourselves sitting around a nighttime campfire—the special news bulletin about the escaped lunatic, the blood-thirsty, hook-handed man haunting Lovers’ Lane, or “snipe” hunting, just to name a few. Shelley emerged as the clear winner of her ghost story contest, penning a story that has endured for two hundred years. Two hundred years—what is it about the novel that has given it such longevity?

According to critics such as David Fishelov, *Frankenstein* has stuck around because of the numerous adaptations, references, and parodies that have persisted in popular culture; however, these critics, have failed to recognize a *Frankenstein* adaptation that has also stuck around for decades. I suppose it’s time to address the two hundred and forty pound mob boss in the room: “On January 10, 1999, a mobster walked into a psychiatrist’s office and changed TV history. By shattering preconceptions about the kinds of stories the medium should tell, *The Sopranos* launched our current age of prestige television” (Seitz, cover copy). This was the premiere date of the very first episode, of the very first season of *The Sopranos*.

Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* was published on January 1, 1818, making 2018 both the two hundredth anniversary of the novel as well as the twentieth anniversary of *The Sopranos*. Here we have a novel that has endured for two centuries and a television show that has endured for two decades. Again, it begs the question—what is it about these narratives that make them “stick”? (Although, I’m sure you’ve been wondering, given this essay’s title, what the two narratives have to do with one another in the first place.) First, this essay will argue that *The Sopranos* belongs in a conversation about the narrative form of *Frankenstein* because it is an adaptation of the novel. Then, using Anna E. Clark’s theory of “protagonism,” I will explore the protagonists of both *Frankenstein* and *The Sopranos* to posit that it is the use of a narrator at the center of the text—one who is capable of narrating from the

perspectives of both major and minor characters—that allows us to access the interiority of these characters and keeps us coming back for more.

Imagine my surprise while watching *The Sopranos* for the very first time to encounter not one, not two, but three explicit references to Frankenstein in the first fifteen episodes of the show. How does the saying go? “First time is happenstance, second time is coincidence, and third time is a pattern”? The more I thought about it, the more striking the similarities between the two texts became. The first two references appear within the first half of the premiere season, and these are the most important references because they explicitly link the protagonists in both texts; the later references really only serve as reminders that “Hey, in case you forgot, this is still a cleverly disguised Frankenstein adaptation!”

The first reference appears in season 1, episode 3, titled “Denial, Anger, Acceptance.” Tony Soprano has made a deal with Shlomo Teittleman, a Hasidic motel owner, agreeing to help him solve a family problem in exchange for a percentage of the hotel profits; however, when the owner doesn’t hold up his end of the bargain, Tony goes after him in a typically violent mob style. Teittleman says, “My son was right; you mutt...I created a living golem!...A monster! Frankenstein! Living dead!” While Tony is compared to Frankenstein’s monster in this episode, just two episodes later, Tony is compared to the maker, not the monster.

Season 1, episode 6, “Pax Soprana,” finds Tony dealing with fallout from Uncle Junior’s questionable management style. After the death of boss Jackie Aprile, Tony seems poised to succeed him; however, Corrado “Junior” Soprano is named the new head of the family. Tony abdicates the title to Junior in order to maintain peace, but when Junior decides to test the limits of his new power, people turn to Tony to correct the situation they feel he created. While complaining to Tony about all the ways Junior has overstepped his bounds and disrupted business, Larry Boy Barese says, “I think you created a fucking Frankenstein in Junior” (“Pax Soprana”). This time, Tony is referred to as Frankenstein, the creator.

In the two instances I have described, Tony is seen as both the monster and the maker. He is explicitly compared to both protagonists in Shelley’s novel, and this is where we start to hit upon what makes a narrative stick. In her analysis of Frankenstein, Clark quotes George Eliot when she writes, “the novel challenges us to look past stock figures and habituated types and ‘amplif[y] experience and exten[d] our contract with our fellow-men beyond the bounds of our personal lot’...Fran-

kenstein’s elaborate frame narrative and exemplary antihero are admittedly an extreme version of the decentered forms of readerly identification that mark protagonism” (252). Therefore, sticky narratives need protagonists who can be questioned by the audience while also encouraging that audience to compare other characters to each other and to themselves.

Clark continues, “It’s no secret that when we think of Frankenstein what comes to mind isn’t the title character, but his creature. Popular culture conflates ‘Frankenstein’ with the monster, and major critical interpretations of Mary Shelley’s novel describe the creature—not Victor—as the tale’s dramatic crux and conscience” (245). The first reference to Frankenstein in *The Sopranos* does just that; Teittleman conflates Victor Frankenstein and his creation when attempting to call Tony a sub-human monster, but he isn’t exactly wrong in calling him Frankenstein because Tony can be seen as a creator as well. Both texts question the boundary between monster and creator. Once we add the fact that *The Sopranos* also employs a frame narrative, it’s undeniable that David Chase seems to be piggybacking on one of the stickiest narratives of the last two centuries.

Clark explains that many critics identify the creature as the narrator who best exemplifies the rhetorical and thematic traits of the novel, but she believes these traits can be equally applied to the other narrators, Victor Frankenstein and Walton; however, the creature is “unique in one regard: his ability to understand and narrate the perspectives of other characters” (245). Ultimately, Clark seems to believe that a true protagonist is one who, like the creature, can narrate from the perspective of many characters, even minor ones, and that this ability reflexively works to develop the character of that narrator. Clark calls this “protagonism,” which, she explains, “facilitates identification with many characters, emphasizing evaluation, comparison, and contemplative detachment rather than unreflective absorption in a single perspective” (246). Although Frankenstein is not the only novel that utilizes protagonism, Clark holds it as the exemplar, specifically because it “encourages its audience to evaluate each of its three narrators upon their practice of protagonism” (246). This is exactly what I find myself doing when I watch television shows like *The Sopranos*.

Clark’s theory is built upon a number of dichotomies. Although she mentions detachment, she also discusses sympathetic identification, something the creature exhibits when he narrates from the perspective of other characters. This ability hinges on another dichotomy, internal and external focalization, which Clark ex-

plains in terms of several more dichotomies: subjective/objective and first-person/third-person (247). In *Frankenstein*, the creature's ability to occupy the perspective of another character is evident when the creature narrates events surrounding Felix De Lacey from both an internal and external focalization.

While narrating the backstory of the De Laceys, the creature explains, "The news [of his father and sister's imprisonment] reached Felix, and roused him from his dream of pleasure. His blind and aged father, and his gentle sister, lay in a noisome dungeon, while he enjoyed the free air... This idea was torture to him" (Shelley 87). The creature at once narrates past events he has heard the De Laceys discuss, as well as the internal emotions felt by Felix at that moment. Moreover, the discussion he overhears is also a past event that is now being disclosed to Victor. Chase follows this same exact narrative form with *The Sopranos*. The medium of film and television is a bit different because the camera eye can narrate the story visually and from many different points of view, but the story of *The Sopranos* is centered around Tony, and he also evinces the narrative ability we detect in the creature, chiefly during his therapy sessions.

The series begins with Tony attending his very first therapy session with Dr. Melfi. Like Frankenstein's Victor and Walton, Dr. Melfi and Tony occupy the outer frame of the narrative. As Tony describes his most recent panic attack, the camera moves out of Dr. Melfi's office to a flashback of Tony walking up his driveway after getting the morning paper. We see his narration in flashback as he describes it in the present day. During these therapy sessions, which are featured throughout the series, Tony often narrates the personal experiences of some of his closest family members and friends. Thanks to the medium, Tony is able to narrate the events of other major and minor characters verbally during therapy through his own point of view, but the film can actually depict to us the characters' points of view through a visual flashback. We can travel in time and see the actual event while hearing Tony's perspective on the event. This is what Clark calls protagonist's "primary formal apparatus" a focalization technique that is a new form of point of view, one that "brings multiple perspectives successfully or simultaneously into view" (246).

This is the key difference between the two mediums and where Chase gave Frankenstein's narrative form new life. In the novel we travel in time through the words of the narrators. Whether it is the creature narrating the De Laceys' history, Victor narrating the creature's time in hiding, or Walton narrating Victor's story to his sister, the narrative is delivered through text. In creating *The Sopranos*, Chase

had to figure out a way to similarly bring multiple perspectives into simultaneous view, even in the scenes that take place outside of Dr. Melfi's office (scenes that rely on flashbacks and voiceovers). Ultimately, to remedy this issue, Chase allowed the camera to act as another narrator.

Moving between the first-person and third-person perspectives is another unique ability of protagonism as a narrative form, one that, in *Frankenstein*, "works primarily through distinctions between 'internal' and 'external' focalization" (Clark 247). This internal focalization allows readers (or viewers) to share and occupy a first-person perspective, which "elides the temporal distance between speaker and subject," or a third-person perspective, which is "capable of incorporating that character's view into its own" (247). In *Frankenstein*, we see this through the creature's narration of the De Laceys' imprisonment, and in *The Sopranos*, we see this through the use of the camera eye.

Specifically, this narrative ability of the camera eye is achieved through camera angles and editing. Rather than the typical over-the-shoulder angle, scenes are shot from Tony's literal point of view. In season 6, episode 2 ("Join the Club"), when Tony is in a coma after being critically wounded by a gunshot, the show depicts one of his dreams. In this dream, Tony is a traveling businessman who is presently on the road when he loses his wallet and briefcase. A kind group of other business people invite Tony to join them for dinner. All of this action is shot from third-person perspective; however, as the group moves to leave the restaurant, a TV show in the background catches Tony's eye. At this moment the camera switches to first-person perspective and we see the show as Tony sees it. Before the camera abruptly shifts back to the third-person, we see through Tony's eyes a series of images on the television: the question "Are Sin, Death and Disease Real?", a waterfall, and, finally, a golden cross.

The scene then jumps to an exterior shot outside of the restaurant, where the third-person camera captures Tony kissing his female dinner companion. As the sound of an approaching helicopter intensifies, the couple is illuminated by a bright searchlight. The perspective jumps several times from third to first-person as Tony looks into the searchlight, and the sound of the helicopter merges with the regular beeping of a hospital heart rate monitor. The camera maintains the first-person perspective as the light changes from the helicopter searchlight to the surgical lamp above Tony's hospital bed. Finally, the camera returns to the third-person perspective to reveal Carmela and Meadow Soprano standing over their ailing patriarch.

Frankenstein also includes similarly rapid shifts in perspective. In the letter he receives from Elizabeth shortly after animating the creature, the narration shifts from Victor's first-person perspective, Elizabeth's first-person perspective, her second-person perspective, and then back to Victor's first-person narration. Victor explains, "Clerval...put the following letter into my hands" (Shelley 40). Then, he relays its contents: "MY DEAR COUSIN...And now I must tell you a little story...Do you not remember Justine Moritz?...I dare say you well remember the heroine of my little tale: for Justine was a great favorite of your's" (Shelley 40-41). Victor narrates his reception of this letter to Walton, and within the letter, Elizabeth narrates events concerning Justine. Elizabeth's narration interrupts Victor's first-person narration, and within her letter she employs a second-person perspective. We experience a shift in perspective while also experiencing a shift in time. We travel from Victor's narration to Walton in the present day, then back in time to when he originally received the letter, and finally Elizabeth's narration takes us back to the moment Justine joined the Frankenstein family. The text takes us on the same type of narrative journey that we experience while watching *The Sopranos*.

What Clark sees at work in the text is "a new kind of protagonist model": "it presents three narrators with equivalent voices...Frankenstein models forms of narrative identification through focalizing techniques. At the same time, however, this performance of narrative identification reflects back on the narrators themselves" (264). Because the camera can work as another narrator, and the visual narrative can employ unique techniques, we often encounter in *The Sopranos* several characters who act as narrators. By borrowing from the narrative structure of Shelley's novel, *The Sopranos* ushered in a new era of television where the protagonist no longer has to be the character who "speaks the most, or who simply appears most frequently" (Clark 251).

The kind of protagonism created by Frankenstein, and then later reanimated in *The Sopranos*, has created space for several television shows to break some of the old rules of the medium, as Matt Zoller Seitz and Alan Sepinwall have noted:

The show's mercurial unpredictability was electrifying. Pre-*Sopranos*, TV was widely dismissed as a medium for programs that didn't ask the viewer to think about anything except what was coming on next, and that preferred lovable characters who didn't change and had no inner life. The ideal network series was filler between commercials. It was hard to make art in this kind of environment, though some creators managed. There were lots and lots of rules. There were words you

couldn't say, things you couldn't show, stories you couldn't tell. The number one rule: don't upset people.

The Sopranos wasn't the first show to break most of these rules...But it was the first show to do that and still become a massive, enduring hit. (6)

Viewers could potentially learn to tolerate, or even like, a character like Tony Soprano because they are not always subjected to his view and his perspective. As a narrator itself, the camera focalizes other characters. We learn more about Tony because we are able to see him through others' eyes, or because we can see inside Tony's mind. Thanks to Chase's boldness, we've found ourselves in a new "Golden Age of Television"—one that features shows such as *Breaking Bad* and *Mad Men*, each of which piggybacks on the sticky narrative technique of *The Sopranos* and uses protagonism to narrate the story of their anti-heroes.

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The Monsters We Create: Shifted Responsibility and Means of Creation in *Frankenstein* in Baghdad

Sabrina E. Lopez

Stories of the monstrous and the supernatural have long fascinated readers. Beasts and ghouls have served as the subjects of cautionary tales for children, while monstrous stories for adults often explore the ethical and moral implications of beastly existence. In 1818, Mary Shelley published a story about monstrosity that would go on to become a pervasive, international myth. The persistence of this myth is due, in part, to Shelley's treatment of themes such as creative responsibility, nurturing domesticity, and the definition of humanity. Ahmed Saadawi, in his novel *Frankenstein in Baghdad*, takes up these themes in a sharp political and social critique of a very different time and place. First published in 2014 and translated into English in 2018, Saadawi's novel features the Whatsitsname, a creature of war-torn Baghdad, whose monstrosity transcends the limitations of his appearance, or even the mistakes of his creator. Instead, the Whatsitsname represents society itself. In this essay, I will compare Shelley's original creature with Saadawi's communally-constructed vigilante in order to show how Saadawi broadens the *Frankenstein* myth. Moving from the limited realm of the individual to the broader sphere of the community, *Frankenstein in Baghdad* exposes the literal monsters that exist within the fabric of the human society and a united life experience.

This shift toward communal construction, culpability, and mutual suffering is first detected in the creative processes that are depicted in each novel. Both creatures are constructed in isolation, with Victor Frankenstein laboring in his living quarters at the University of Ingolstadt and Hadi the junk dealer sewing in the privacy of his shed. Both the Whatsitsname and Frankenstein's creature are constructed and reanimated in private, and though both creatures are "born" under the cover of night and consist of disparate body parts, there are also key differences with regard to their construction, reanimation, and development. For example, Victor Frankenstein builds a "frame" for the "reception" of life and often refers to the body parts he gathers as "materials" (Shelley 35). He describes the creature as a "lifeless thing," and only moves from calling the creature "it" to "he" after reanimation (Shelley 38). Hurried by his own eagerness, Victor chooses large body parts, which form a "being of gigantic stature" (Shelley 35). This prioritizing of time and speed

over detail and proportion denotes Victor's disrespect for the creature. As a result, when the creature does come alive Victor views him as a savage, less-than-human Other.

In contrast, the language of creation in Saadawi's novel is quite different. Hadi, speaking in public, explains that the Whatsitsname was built with the body parts of bombing victims found abandoned in the street. Hadi's description of this ghastly work lacks the scientific language of material acquisition. Addressing his listeners' questions about the "corpse" he has sewn together, Hadi explains, "It's a human being, guys, a person...I made it complete so it wouldn't be treated as trash, so it would be respected like other dead people and given a proper burial" (Saadawi 27). Retelling his story later at the local coffee shop, Hadi urges others to use the moniker "Whatsitsname" when referring to the missing corpse. Unlike Hadi's Whatsitsname, Frankenstein's creature does not have the luxury of a proper name, a deficiency that contributes to his othering. In contrast, Hadi seeks to respect the humanity of his creature, thus providing a model to his listeners and to us as readers.

Hadi's purpose for creation replaces Victor's creative intention to provide life to dead matter with the need for proper burial and respect of human life. While Victor Frankenstein works to achieve a personal scientific goal, Hadi builds the body of the Whatsitsname with a goal beyond the self. In an environment stricken with death and multiple layers of sorrow, Hadi embodies a selflessness in his creation that responds to his personal and communal suffering. As such, the body of the Whatsitsname represents the sheer magnitude of the mutual suffering and diminishing value of human life in occupied Baghdad. This body elicits empathy from readers even before the Whatsitsname is reanimated; in its very composition, the body asks us to consider concepts of justice, value, injustice, grief, war, suffering, humanity and death. While it can be argued that both Victor and Hadi create as a means of coping with loss, the difference between their griefs is clear. While Victor fights against death itself, Hadi works against unjust violence and the desecration of the bodies of his fellow citizens. In this way, Saadawi moves his readers outward, beyond the blinders of the self, and towards the concepts of mutual suffering and the cruelty people inflict upon one another.

This movement can also be detected in the character Elishva, whom the Whatsitsname recognizes as a mother. This marks another difference between Frankenstein in Baghdad and the original novel: whereas Victor is a singular creator, the Whatsitsname is provided a set of parents and an opportunity to develop a con-

create identity through his perceived familial relations. While the DeLacey family functions as a means for Shelley's creature to acquire language and an understanding of domestic tranquility, his engagement with the family is limited to voyeurism. The Whatsitsname, in contrast, encounters Elishva directly, and she mistakes him for her long-lost son Daniel. This initial acceptance and socialization places the Whatsitsname on a path very different from his Romantic counterpart. While he recognizes himself to be "ugly," and seems surprised that "the old woman didn't seem startled by his dreadful appearance," Elishva's warm welcome provides an opposing sense of comfort (Saadawi 55). Whereas Shelley's creature recoils in horror with the "reality [of] the monster that I am" and becomes filled with emotions of "despondence and mortification," the Whatsitsname overcomes the shock of his appearance fairly quickly, without an immediate sense of self-hatred, which demonstrates the power of human interaction (Shelley 90). In a world of war, Saadawi reminds his readers of the real positive impact of acceptance, and the ways in which acts of acceptance can be replicated.

Elisha's presence as a maternal figure also highlights the influence individuals have on one another in the construction of social ideals, morals, and the social contract. She immediately imposes upon the Whatsitsname the identity of her son, Daniel, and she immediately goes about reminding him of "his" supposed past. Photographs, clothing and the unpacking of "the boxes inside her that had long remained closed," together with long monologues laced with religious language, provides the Whatsitsname with a sense of morality, purpose and identity (Saadawi 61-62). Here we see Saadawi injecting a maternal figure into the Frankenstein myth, thereby underscoring the interconnectivity between the realm of the self and the realm of society.

This understanding of interconnectivity and its relational concepts plays a vital role in the novel's understanding of responsibility, blame, and justice. While Shelley alludes to interconnectivity through her choice of victims, who are all related in some way to Victor, Saadawi depicts this aspect of the Frankenstein myth on a much larger scale. For instance, Saadawi's use of the third person omniscient point of view for the first seventeen chapters provides multiple, simultaneous perspectives on singular events. Each new chapter brings a new, individual perspective on bomb explosions in Tayaran Square and the Sadeer Novotel overlooking Andalus Square. Readers see multiple individual reactions to the same horrific event as it unfolds, reminding us of the number of individuals who experience these horrors as a societal whole. This formal choice illustrates an interconnectivity forged

through collective experience. Whereas the limitations of an individual might blind us to the existence of mutual suffering, Saadawi's readers can see the echoing effect of one deadly event across multiple persons. As Zahar Hankir notes, "Saadawi's goal isn't to resolve the horror of war, but rather to thrust the reader into its midst so that they may question its senselessness" (2).

The novel's form is echoed in the composition of the Whatsitsname, whose body is composed of innocent victims whose murders cry for vengeance, peace, and justice. The Whatsitsname, a creature who is endowed with respect, humanity and value, struggles with the shared energy and desires he receives from the parts that compose the collage of his body, as well as the soul that rests within him. One of his assistants, the "young madman," believes the Whatsitsname to be the "first true Iraqi citizen" by virtue of the fact that his "body parts [derive from] people from diverse background-ethnicities, tribes, races, and social classes" (Saadawi 146). Building on the moral sense established during his initial meetings with Elishva, the Whatsitsname defines his existence as "the answer to their call for an end to injustice and for revenge on the guilty" (Saadawi 143). While Shelley's creature is blinded by his own intense suffering and seeks revenge on his creator, the Whatsitsname's monstrosity stems from his vigilantism and distorted sense of justice. Ultimately, the Whatsitsname believes he exists to serve the suffering people, the "innocent who have no protection" (Saadawi 143). This mission and his unique struggle with shared bodily desire sets him apart from Shelley's creature, who is only motivated by his own desires and needs—that is, his experience of the self.

In this way, Saadawi harnesses the power of Frankenstein to question the extent to which we are beholden to responsibilities outside the self. This responsibility is evident in the Whatsitsname's preoccupation with the definitions of innocence and guilt, as well as his need to replace his own lost body parts in order to survive. For the various consciousnesses associated with his different body parts demand that the Whatsitsname enact vengeance for their past murders. After the Whatsitsname avenges the murder of an individual associated with one of his body parts, that part (now satisfied) falls from his body. This process of continuous molting and chronic decay creates a need for constant regeneration. In other words, if replacement body parts are not available, the Whatsitsname must not only avenge previous murders, but commit new murders in order to survive. Quoting an interview with Saadawi, Hankir argues that this unique situation is a metaphor for the war in Iraq:

Saadawi's not so subtle intention here is to emphasize what he refers to as the "complicity" of all those involved in the conflict. In his mind, everybody has blood on their hands: American soldiers; foreign mercenaries; Al-Qaeda fighters; warlords; journalists; and corrupt Iraqi officers. "People tend to view themselves as saints seeking justice, and others as terrorist," [Saadawi] says. "In truth, no one's innocent." (Hankir 3)

This movement away from individual to collective responsibility is confirmed through the Whatsitsname's need for regeneration. The task of locating replacement parts from the innocent and the inevitable use of criminal body parts to maintain his physical form causes the Whatsitsname, as well as the reader, to question categories of criminality, guilt, and innocence. For example, if the Whatsitsname kills a criminal in order to replace a body part, does that then render the Whatsitsname a criminal? The lack of a clear definitive answer in response to questions like this prevent the novel from ascribing blame onto a singular person or even a particular set of persons. Instead, it places the responsibility for judgement upon the community, and upon the atmosphere of normalized violence and death in Baghdad and in the wider world.

This idea of communal complicity and responsibility is embodied in the character of the Whatsitsname. His ideology, physical composition and resulting actions reach their final expression through his convergence with Hadi, his creator. As Victor Frankenstein symbolically merges with his creation through their cat-and-mouse journey at the end of Shelley's novel, Hadi merges with his creation through what Harriet Hustis identifies as the Promethean "willing assumption of a creator's responsibility for his helpless progeny" (848). Hadi's exposure to a fire, which leads to a facial disfigurement, initiates his merging with the Whatsitsname and, eventually, his development of a Promethean "pity that Frankenstein's monster [could not] obtain" (Hustis 848). Hadi's pity, which manifests in his confession to the Whatsitsname's crimes in a court of law, completes the novel's shifting of responsibility from the individual to society by dramatizing the reallocation of blame.

While one need not have read the original Frankenstein in order to appreciate Saadawi's novel, a comparative analysis does allow for an appreciation of Saadawi's use of the Frankenstein myth to increase a social awareness among a modern readership, particularly one functioning in a modern society still rife with suffering, war, and poverty. In a culture so focused on the individual, it can be easy to forget that mutual and communal suffering exists. Frankenstein in Baghdad increases our

awareness of this suffering, and calls attention to the modern disconnect between self and whole that can perpetuate unending conflict. The novel's emphasis on interconnectivity and depiction of Promethean pity stands as a stark reminder of our common humanity. The need of novels such as *Frankenstein in Baghdad* is unfortunate and unsettling. However, its use of *Frankenstein* to identify injustice and to promote change both highlights the importance of literature and hints at the continued longevity of Mary Shelley's two-hundred-year-old ghost story.

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Victor LaValle's *Destroyer*: An Afro-Pessimist Leftist Conviction in an Afrofuturistic Transhumanist World

Patrick Jonathan Derilus

Victor LaValle's *Destroyer* is a visionary comic whose narrative synthesizes the vigorous, innovative drive of Victor Frankenstein with that of his descendant, Dr. Baker, a twenty-first century scientist of artificial intelligence, who hopes not only to create life, but to also recreate the way in which humans exist in and navigate through an elaborately transhumanist world. When we read *Destroyer* through the lens of Afro-Pessimism,¹ we can identify how Dr. Baker attempts to transcend the social, political, and ontic constraints that are continually put upon Black bodies. Although Baker prevails in this effort to foreground the notion of Black longevity, the results of her efforts to sustain a safe world for her son, Akai, leave more to be desired.

In calling into question Dr. Baker's project as the so-called "destroyer," I draw on the framework of Afro-Pessimism as articulated by the editors of *Afro-Pessimism: An Introduction*:

One of the central tenets of Afro-Pessimism. . . is a reoriented understanding of the composition of [antiBlack] slavery: instead of being defined as a relation of (forced) labor, it is more accurately thought of as a relation of property. . . as such, [Black people] are not recognized as social [subjects] and are thus precluded from the category of "human"—inclusion in humanity being predicated on social recognition, volition, subjecthood, and the valuation of life. (8)

With the disquieting result that Black bodies are not recognized as sentient, human beings, we are therefore, unequivocally vulnerable to white supremacist violence. Dr. Baker does not conceive of reform or retributive justice through the criminal justice system as sensible solutions to the status quo. Baker evinces an impassioned militancy in the face of absolute hopelessness, developing an innovative, radical

¹ Citing Hortense J. Spillers, the editors of *Afro-Pessimism: An Introduction* note that "the social death of the slave goes to the very level of their being, defining their ontology. Thus, according to Afro-Pessimism, the slave experiences their 'slaveness' ontologically, as a 'being for the captor,' not as an oppressed subject, who experiences exploitation and alienation, but as an object of accumulation and fungibility (exchangeability)" (8).

way for her to provide safety for Akai. With the “reoriented understanding of the composition of antiBlack slavery” (Afro-Pessimism 8) in mind, it is enough to say that the following Black characters, regardless of their mechanization, are seen as property: Dr. Baker, Akai, and also Akai’s fully-mechanized father. Dr. Baker has avowed a significant portion of her labor and time to the recreation of her half-mechanized, son, Akai, whose Black life was lost to white supremacist state-sanctioned police violence.

In his review of *Destroyer*, Anthony Breznican highlights how LaValle’s work echoes the sociopolitical climate of twenty-first century America:

A young Black boy is killed by police. There is no justice, and definitely no peace for his grieving mother, Dr. Jo Baker. She comes from a long line of researchers, and she immersed herself in science rather than religion to fight through her grief, finally unearthing a family secret that may allow the unthinkable: a way to bring her son back. This is the setup for *Destroyer*, a new monthly comic book series that fuses the heartbreak of the Black Lives Matter movement with an age-old story: Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*. (1).

In the case of Akai’s murder by police, it is clear he did not need to do anything threatening. The “danger” was simply his Blackness. Akai’s death is seen as a manifestation of what Afro-Pessimist thought identifies as racial vulnerability:

Given the ongoing accumulation of Black death at the hands of the police—even despite increased visibility in recent years—it becomes apparent that a Black person on the street today faces open vulnerability to violence just as the [Black] slave did on the plantation. . .this reveals that when one is Black one needn’t do anything to be targeted, as Blackness itself is criminalized. (Afro-Pessimism 9)

Nevertheless, Dr. Baker is able to retain Akai’s memories. For example, he helps his mother recall his childhood, when she and his father allowed him to navigate the world outdoors independently.

By this point in the narrative, by preserving his heart and consciousness intact, Dr. Baker redefines his murder. As a memory, his murder is not so much a moment of intergenerational trauma as it is a moment in which Akai can transcend the constraints of human mortality. Dr. Baker says to the reanimated Akai, “You were twelve when we really let you go places alone” (LaValle ch. 1). Akai does not

recall his moments of youthful indulgence as a Black boy; he must be reminded. Here, LaValle’s narrative echoes one of the primary sociopolitical missions of the Black Lives Matter movement: the abolition of capitalist, colonial, imperialist war against Black people. This effort begins with children above all else, as they are the future of this world. It is for this essential reason and many others that the comic confronts the disquieting truth that Black children have never been attributed the human right to exist like their white counterparts. When Akai’s consciousness asks his mother why he cannot recall his encounter with the police, she replies, “Because that’s when you died” (LaValle ch. 1).

Aisha Sabatini Sloan has addressed *Destroyer*’s links to Shelley’s novel: “To be young, gifted, and black in the work of Victor LaValle, as it turns out, is to be a kind of compassionate Frankenstein, a patchwork quilt of cultural influences and coping mechanisms no civil rights activist in his or her right mind could have imagined” (1). Incorporating the social, historical, and political factors of race, class, gender, and human ability, LaValle’s work explores what a better world would look like for Akai, and its other Black inhabitants, while also making the subject matter of Shelley’s text more accessible to twenty-first century readers. Yet, in the world LaValle produces, Black life is still under the threat of white supremacist, patriarchal, state-sanctioned police violence. LaValle does not ask whether Black lives matter but instead whether Black lives matter even in an Afrofuturistic,² trans-humanist world. I argue that the answer *Destroyer* provides us is no.

As the plot of *Destroyer* unfolds, it gradually becomes more evident to readers that Dr. Baker espouses vehemently Black anarchistic politics that contain undertones of afropessimist sentiment. What I mean by anarchism, in its most precise description, is defined by Kim Kelly:

Anarchism is a radical, revolutionary leftist political philosophy that advocates for the abolition of government, hierarchy, and all other unequal systems of power. It seeks to replace what its proponents view as inherently oppressive institutions — like a capitalist society or the prison industrial complex — with nonhierarchical, horizontal structures powered by voluntary associations between people. Anarchists organize around a key set of principles, including horizontalism, mutual aid, autonomy, solidarity, direct action, and direct democracy, a form of democracy in

² *Afrofuturism* is defined as “a cultural aesthetic that combines science-fiction, history and fantasy to explore the African-American experience and aims to connect those from the black diaspora with their forgotten African ancestry” (“Afrofuturism”).

which the people make decisions themselves via consensus.

For example, Dr. Baker recounts the assassination of Mississippi-born Civil Rights Black activist Medgar Evers by the white supremacist Byron De La Beckwith. After Myrlie Evers receives notice that Beckwith was acquitted for his murder, she calls into question the Euro-American tradition of white supremacy, colonialism, genocide, systemic antiBlack oppression, and so forth. In an interview with local news reporters, depicted in *Destroyer*, Myrlie virulently fantasizes about using a firearm to murder her white neighbors as well as police officers: “Myrlie remembered wishing she had a machine gun. . .if she had it, she said she would’ve mowed down the police and her white neighbors. The depth of her hatred was indescribable” (LaValle ch. 2). Following this example, Baker indulges in this sanguinary phantasmagoria.

The scientist’s stifled burst of rage is the inexorable result of the inherently oppressive system that has not “failed” her, but has instead functioned as it was supposed to. To that end, Baker’s militant disposition becomes more pronounced throughout the comic. This disposition is composed of her dual identities as an impassioned Black mother and as an erudite scientist. Baker is at once ambivalent, nihilistic, yet enthralled by the opportunity to prolong her son’s life. This particular disposition is articulated at one point by her lab’s supercomputer, who assures Dr. Baker that she is going to cry: “Your endocrine system has released hormones to your ocular area. You are going to cry” (LaValle ch. 1). Though the supercomputer is accurate in their observation of Baker’s emotional condition, she appears unmoved, withdrawn, and eager to proceed with her scientific work. She replies to the supercomputer, “I don’t have time to cry.”

Returning to her work, Baker cites Victor Frankenstein: “Life and death appeared to me ideal bounds, which I should first break through, and pour a torrent of light into our dark world. A new species would bless me as its creator and source; many happy and excellent natures would owe their being to me” (LaValle ch. 1). Baker repurposes Frankenstein’s sentiment and proclaims that her “dark world” is an antiBlack world, in which Black lives are under the quotidian, systemic threat of white supremacy. As such, she makes the revitalization of Akai, the “torrent of light,” her primary objective. “The problem, of [antiBlackness] as always, is systematic,” Baker warrants (LaValle ch. 1). Because this issue is intergenerational and systemic, all of LaValle’s Black characters are vulnerable to white supremacist danger. Still, Akai’s Black and youthful curiosity remains undamaged when

he attempts to distinguish the material reality in which his Black body had been taken from him by the state; Dr. Baker assures him that he is out of danger, saying, “No, baby. Not anymore” (LaValle ch. 1). By reanimating her son’s heart and consciousness, Dr. Baker, in the symbolic sense, destroys that which destroyed her son: “imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchy” (hooks xi).

In the world of the comic, systemic white supremacy still exists and endangers Black life; however, Baker instills what we might call a transhumanist hope within the intricacies of the human condition. We observe Baker as the mother, who is better able to commit to loving her son. In recounting the acquittal of the police officer who murdered him, Akai claims an essential goodness of the human species: “These men aren’t that man, mom. You didn’t raise me this way” (LaValle ch. 2). Regaining her composure, Dr. Baker calmly approaches and hugs him, affirming that Akai is in fact, her “better angel.” In spite of this momentous occasion, however, the comic calls our attention to how this world functions in relation to its would-be property, i.e.: Akai’s Blackness in cooperation with his mechanization.

Dr. Baker’s project is a manifestation of what is allowed in her world, or what Hari Ziyad identifies as that which must be sacrificed in order to survive:

If Black people are contending our humanity in response to whiteness or the state under which whiteness operates, what does that mean? What are we willing to sacrifice in order to force ourselves to fit under the definition of humanity that will not and cannot encompass us? Blackness cannot exist as humanness within the realm that whiteness conceives. Black lives cannot matter under the standards of whiteness, by necessity and design. (147)

Akai’s design is viable; however, it is also intersectionally nebulous to the destructive force of whiteness. Akai’s disposition represents a carefree intellectual and emotional curiosity, as well as Black youthfulness. Though it is compelling to see that Akai has felt aloof about his mechanization, he exists as though his youthfulness was never deprived of him. It is left to readers to assess Dr. Baker’s architectural genius and its function in the real world. Like the “West Wind” in Percy Shelley’s famous ode, Dr. Baker regenerates: “The stress, or structure, or problem of the ‘Ode’ may also be defined as the ‘death and regeneration’. . .for the west wind is both destroyer and preserver; it shatters established structures that new ones may be built from their ruins; it scatters the withered leaves. . .in order to ‘quicken a new birth’” (Fogle 221).

Dr. Baker's plan, while birthed, is nevertheless unfinished. Though mechanizing Akai solves one problem—his literal safety—it is not enough to curtail white supremacy. The case of Blackness, despite transhumanist privileges, cannot escape suffering under whiteness, as Ziyad asserts:

As the 'Other' that exists outside subjectivity, outside [of] humanity, obtaining reprieve from suffering is impossible because [Black people] are not understood as capable of suffering. Under whiteness, there is no answer to the centuries of abuse, no redress, because abuses are not registered in order to be healed. There is no way to 'fix' the abuses that come with the exclusion of the nonhuman from the benefits of humanity except to stop benefiting humanity. So long as we exist under whiteness, so long as whiteness exists, Blackness has no recourse. (147)

Among all other existing antiBlack institutions, Dr. Baker concludes that America exists solely as a "big Civil War monument," and she vengefully fantasizes burning this monument to the ground. (LaValle ch. 6). Thus, it is with an anarchist conviction that Dr. Baker seeks to achieve the following: 1) the eradication of all antiBlack institutions, 2) unconditional safety of Black people across the country and 3) a world in which Blackness and machine cooperate impartially. From her ideations of murdering police officers and her white neighbors, she progressively espouses direct action in the face of danger. To some, Dr. Baker's anarchist politics may seem naive and useless. However, Baker preserves the significance of her project. She says with assuring fervor to Akai that "even the monster, in the end, is only human. You are actually a new life-form" (LaValle ch. 5). By making Akai take heed to the antiBlackness of the world—that in the eyes of white people, he is by default, a monster—she centralizes his existence as a beautiful, Black being.

Dr. Baker is certain that as Akai progresses through the world, he may not be able to assure non-Black people that despite his visible mechanization, he is as human as they are. In her tirade against America's chronicles of antiBlack injustice, she broaches the subject of his future:

Artificial life will be humanity's next great concern. Not just you, but other life-forms totally nonorganic. Pure machine. What will we do with you? It's not just about how humans treat artificial life, but how you all will treat us. What kind of ethics should we expect? What kind do we deserve? You are the start of what will dominate as humanity declines. Global warming, rising tides, none of that will

kill you. But we'll be dying by the billions. Some will even blame you for our end. They'll label me mankind's enemy, too. (LaValle ch. 5).

Assessing the severity of current conditions of the material world, and contrasting it with that of a "better" one, Dr. Baker still articulates an afropessimistic skepticism. Baker commits to her speculation about the safety and well-being of Black lives. As Joy James states, Black people are and will still be open to "gratuitous violence" as "colonial, imperial, and corporate state violence will still [foment] antiBlack practices and policies" (125). Dr. Baker imagines herself as "The Destroyer" who dethroned Abraham Lincoln, as she proclaims in chapter 5: "The Destroyer. And I will welcome the title. If it kept you safe, I would destroy them all." In essence, we see that Dr. Baker is not the 'destroyer' she insists she is; instead, she is undoubtedly Akai's sole protector and liberator of Black people in America.

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Graduate Student Essay Award

PART IV

We are pleased to publish the winner of the annual SUNY New Paltz Graduate Student Essay Award, as well as an essay the judges determined was deserving of honorable mention. Submissions came from essays written for credit in a graduate seminar during the 2018-2019 academic year. The winner will receive a \$100 award.

Award Winner

Jessica Leigh, "Reapproaching Magic in the Renaissance" (Prof. James Schiffer, Fall 2018, Shakespeare, Marlowe, and Jonson)

Honorable Mention

Jeremy Strahan, "The Perfect Detonator: Stevie and the Professor's Resistance in Secret Agent" (Prof. Vicki Tromanhauser, Spring 2019, British Literature of the Twentieth Century to 1945: Modernism and the Nonhuman)

Reapproaching Magic in the Renaissance

Jessica Leigh

One of the defining characteristics of Renaissance England is the constant conflict and interplay between traditional Christian values and new horizons of thought, invigorated by newfound interest in classical Greek philosophy and literature as well as rising socioeconomic mobility. Yet these two ideological modes do not always work in stark conflict, but rather are interwoven in the Renaissance struggle to place and define persisting old beliefs and traditions in the New World, and in addition, to do the same for new beliefs within the pre-existing Christian framework of society. Here, it becomes more important than ever to form new classifications around different systems of magic and the supernatural, even when they appear to blur the lines between pre-, anti-, a-, and purely Christian forms of magic and belief. Approaching magic thus becomes an act of probing the limits of human power and the ethical complexities of the supernatural, the outcomes of its usage and the morality of its existence dependent on its categorization. Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, and Jonson's *The Alchemist* all offer valuable insight into Renaissance theater as a forum for exploring the moral quandaries of magic and either reaffirming older beliefs found in medieval and ancient times, or forming subversive new attitudes. These three playwrights reassess medieval beliefs in magic as well as the rising Renaissance attitudes observed around them, not simply throwing out tradition but rather critically reworking these beliefs for their own time.

When analyzing how Renaissance playwrights presented changing ideas towards magic, we must first look at the earlier historical context of English culture and attitudes involving magic going back to the Middle Ages. As Michael D. Bailey points out in "From Sorcery to Witchcraft," witchcraft was long condemned by clerical authorities in England, but was not always treated in the same extreme manner. Bailey explains that "The fully developed concept of witchcraft that held force throughout the years of the great European witch-hunts appeared only in the early fifteenth century," and that, quite notably, they "burned out in the seventeenth century" (960). Thus as the Middle Ages progressed, concerns over magical practices reached a head, and yet, the violently condemning attitudes that defined

the witch-hunts appear to have been significantly tempered during the time in which Shakespeare, Marlowe, and Jonson wrote. The distinctions between different forms of magic is also important here, as even in the Middle Ages, sorcery referred to “the simple performance of harmful magic ... suspicious at best” while witchcraft referred to a “fully developed stereotype” which “made possible the widespread anxiety and the sheer number of executions for this crime which took place during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries” (Bailey 962). While negative clerical and public attitudes towards magic were largely negative long beforehand, severe widespread negative action towards those accused of using magic was thus dependent on the classification of magic as witchcraft and therefore demonic. The importance of this categorization is also marked by the presence of magic as “an important and vital aspect of many areas of medieval culture,” evidencing that certain forms of magic could be seen as morally neutral or even outright acceptable, though Christian culture and theology influenced the increasing classification of more or all magic as being morally reprehensible over time, particularly as “the rise of various types of learned magic, including astronomy, alchemy, and spiritual and demonic magic” spread throughout the educated elites of Europe (Bailey 963). Anti-magic sentiment is, in this context, reactionary against a widespread culture of exploration into various forms of magic and their abilities to influence human life and fortunes for good or ill. This resulted in the “conflation, in clerical minds, of two very different magical systems,” meaning the negative grouping of outright demonic or morally dubious magic with the “widespread and diffuse system of common spells, charms, blessings, potions, powders, and talismans employed by many people at all levels of medieval society, including, it should be noted, many clerics” (Bailey 965). Consolidation of clerical power and a clear-cut condemning stance towards laymen taking supernatural power into their own hands to the detriment of the church was thus one of the core elements fueling negative overarching classification of magic, though the enactment of witch-hunts rested on the collaboration of society as a whole and a cycle of changing attitudes and actions supporting one another.

Yet as Bailey points out, the Renaissance became a time of philosophical realignment and open questioning of the issues surrounding practices previously deemed to be witchcraft. Lauren Kassell, whose works include a wealth of information relating to magic in medieval and early modern England, documents the radical shift in ideology during the 1600’s that called into question the dogmatic grouping of all forms of magic into one sinful category. For example, though first published in France in 1625, *The History of Magick* by Gabriel Naudé would afterwards make

its way to England as a bold and clear-cut redefining of magical categories, aiming to “clear the ground of the false histories that had been written for the previous two hundred years” by arguing for certain forms of magic, natural philosophy, and mathematics to be recognized as licit once again, notably defending great thinkers such as “Zoroaster, Socrates, Roger Bacon, Agrippa, and ultimately Virgil, whose names had been sullied by the term magician” (Kassell, “All Was This Land” 107-108). While Naudé did not hold a positive outlook towards all forms of magic, it is telling that he was able to convincingly argue for a return to public acceptance of schools of thought and magic that once prompted burnings at the stake. Civil war and puritanism would later exacerbate concerns over witchcraft which directly conflicted with the surge of positive public interest in the occult, but during the early 1600’s, the tide was being turned towards peaceful curiosity and acceptance, even reinvigorated widespread belief in certain types of magic that constituted “natural magic, a divinely imparted art” (Kassell, “All Was This Land” 111). It is during this period of initial realignment, shifting for a time away from puritanical ideas and once more towards open exploration of knowledge and divine power, that the great Renaissance playwrights composed their plays dealing with magic in its different forms, entrenched in debates over sanctioned versus illicit magic.

Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus* deals with the moral classification of magic in a Christian framework and the limits of human power. Its namesake main character, Faustus himself, represents a boundary-pushing intellectual willing to explore all available forms of knowledge, as he boasts not only of his skill in medicine but also his familiarity with philosophy, history, and law. He is bold in his enthusiasm towards the newly invigorated study of magic and the occult, exclaiming

Lines, circles, schemes, letters and characters!

Ay, these are those that Faustus most desires.

O what a world of profit and delight,

Of power, of honour, of omnipotence

Is promised to the studious artisan! (Marlowe 1.1.51-55)

Faustus’ ideas in this first scene appear impressive, holding within them the spirit of unquenchable curiosity that drove many intellectuals of his time and the daring

to approach forms of magic deemed illicit. Indeed, real-world examples from the early 1600's mirror this initial enthusiasm to explore different categories of knowledge that were previously held to be simple witchcraft or sorcery. For example, as Kassell also chronicles, the astrologer, alchemist, and physician Simon Forman created an enormous body of work on these various topics, "devoted several reams of paper and dozens of quills and bottles of ink to the study of alchemy and magic," and documented his "pursuit of the secrets of nature in ancient texts, the alembic, and the streets of London ... [amalgamating] numerous alchemical, magical, and medical traditions in a quest that his contemporaries would have called chymical, hermetical, Paracelsical, philosophical, iatrochemical, or spagyric physick" ("Medicine and Magic" 160). Forman would have represented the ideal of a scholar of magic in the early seventeenth century, an example for Faustus to follow if not one of his fellows in spirit. Forman's desire to reach groundbreaking medical discoveries through study and experiment, and even his ultimate goal of amassing enormous magical power through attainment of the philosopher's stone, mirror some of Faustus' early energy as he pushes aside his previous significant medical successes to proclaim, "Yet thou art still but Faustus, and a man. / Wouldst thou make man to live eternally, / Or, being dead, raise them to life again, / Then this profession were to be esteemed" (Marlowe 1.1.23-26). The type of power Faustus describes here is a popular interpretation of the potential powers of the philosopher's stone, its attainment a conundrum approached with enormous passion by real-world Renaissance scholars who sought it for its supposed abilities to unlock near-unlimited alchemical power, making possible the curing of diseases, the indefinite extension of life, and even possibly necromancy. To this extent, Marlowe's infamous titular character is right in line with the best the early seventeenth century had to offer in terms of scientific exploration and the reorganization of certain taboos into valid areas of study. However, where Faustus fails—and does so quickly—lies both in a critique of the inherent limits of human power and spirit, and in the importance of continuing to recognize the boundaries of licit studies in magic even in an era of revived openness to its varieties.

Faustus' hubris, as well as his ignorance of the still-standing importance of Christian faith, calls into question the optimistic view of new Renaissance magicians and alchemists as morally righteous or even neutral from a Christian standpoint. His proclamations of desiring power over life and death, mirroring the abilities of the sought-after philosopher's stone, quickly escalate into selfish unquenchable desire, arising not from a place of divine goodness but rather of personal interest. Furthermore, Faustus unknowingly self-imposes limits on his attainment of power via

his character flaws; he moves from grand statements against Christendom to playing childish pranks and giving the Pope an offensive but ultimately mediocre knock in the head, accomplishing little to nothing he proclaimed himself to be pursuing. The grandiose, noble image of the boundary-pushing scholar is quashed by the image of a surprisingly childish man whose inner turmoil has led to his doom. Even his emboldened first speech becomes tempered by his flawed Latin and incorrect quotes, foreshadowing the incompleteness of his knowledge and his naivety in proclaiming his accomplishments. His interpretations of incomplete Biblical passages, ignoring the context, also draw attention to his lack of understanding of Christian philosophy. As Joseph Westlund notes in "The Orthodox Christian Framework of Marlowe's Faustus," there is an "irony" to Faustus' behavior. Faustus is "reaching for the infinite with a very limited manner of thinking; despite his boundless imagination, Faustus is unable to recognize the validity of central Christian truths" (Westlund 192). As Westlund continues to point out, Faustus' proclamation of the hopelessness of his situation, prompting an irreversible descent into sin, is one of ignorance: "He quotes only the first half of the familiar verse, and omits the crucial point that it makes: 'For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord' (Romans 6:23) ... Faustus distorts his text to bring it into line with what he thinks is relevant to his own position" (194). In an overtly Christian world, it is fitting that Faustus' unquenchable desire and inability to fully understand and/or accept Christian belief leads to his doom. This aspect of Faustus' demise links his failings in character with issues of theology and the categorization of magic. The direct result of his incomplete belief is his pact with Mephistopheles and his oaths to Lucifer, the ultimate in unshakably illicit magic.

In Doctor Faustus, despair springing from a lack of understanding of God's forgiveness is what allows Faustus to descend into illicit magic. Westlund argues of the progression of Faustus' character in relation with despair and sin that "Faustus' presumption in the first scene arises from his despair of salvation, and his continued presumption and life of sin lead him to an even greater despair in the final scene" (197). The ignorance, despair, and sin Faustus struggles through form a cycle, feeding into one another and compounding one another to the point that Faustus feels hopeless even in the face of divinely offered salvation via angels and the wise words of earthly Christians. Faustus faces damnation not only for engaging in magic, but for committing himself to an unrepentant life bound to explicitly illicit, anti-Christian practice and repeated denial of salvation. The reality of his devilish pact is in contrast with the lofty, even charitable goals he proposes in the first scene. While this distinction sets Faustus apart from devout Christian practitioners and

scholars of astrology, alchemy, and other forms of licit magic and philosophy, it also serves as a powerful reminder that magical practice and the search for knowledge held the potential to be corrupted or skewed into the illicit if not approached with care and clear Christian awareness.

It is hardly the fantastical feats which Faustus achieves through magic that define the sin into which he descends. Rather, as Robert Ornstein argues, Faustus' "astounding adventures in sorcery" do not "in themselves sustain the essential drama of the hero's progress toward damnation" (1378). I would disagree with Ornstein's assertion that "the elements of the supernatural in other Elizabethan plays are merely literary, drawn from folklore and popular superstition, and allied to the fantasy of dreams rather than the speculations of philosophy" as, for instance, Shakespeare's use of supernatural events such as Queen Margaret's prophecies/curses and the ghosts which appear in the scene before Richard's death are serious representations of divine justice defining the real world in *Richard III*. However, Ornstein's further claim that "for Marlowe...the dream of transcendent or supernatural power has momentous intellectual seriousness" is undeniable in the face of the philosophical struggles of Faustus (1378). The comedic hijinks of Faustus' magic do not define his doom, but rather the deeper philosophical implications of hopeless engagement with an inherently illicit form of magic. Furthermore, Faustus' self-dooming defiance of heavenly law draws attention to the quandary that "inevitably man's attempts at greatness must break against a universal order which is predicated on, and which demands, human obedience and denial" (1380). In a Christian society, there is no easy solution to Faustus' ambition and unwillingness to put his faith wholly in God other than for Faustus to be damned and for the good masses to beware. Yet despite Faustus' clear failings and even foolishness, an element of the almost admirable is present in his character, in his daring to seek out the limits of human potential and mastery of the earthly world. Indeed, were Faustus nothing but villainous, his story would fail to be tragic. Rather, Faustus is entrapped not only by his own earthly desires and persistent despair in the face of offered redemption, but also by a universal order that does—or must—punish Faustus' curiosity for the supernatural. He exists in a world which has slowly learned again to accept meager tinctures, potions and charms, but allows control over one's own destiny only through humble obedience and conformity to divine law, landing Faustus' would-be radical self-realization firmly in the realm of the illicit. To simply praise Faustus, a sinner, or to ignore his ignorance would certainly go too far in Marlowe's time, yet the outcome of the play leaves us with a telling note of sympathy as Faustus descends, terrified, into hell.

Shakespeare's *The Tempest* may first appear to contrast heavily with Doctor Faustus' treatment of magic-usage, as its most prominent and influential character, Prospero, wields enormous magical power arguably on par with or in some respects greater than that of Faustus. And yet the result is not his doom, but rather a neat resolution of the story's conflicts. The categorical distinction of his magic is central here, as Ariel and the other spirits he uses to achieve his goals are not demons like Mephistopheles, and Prospero's speech in relation to his magic references both pre-Christian mythos and a-Christian English folk beliefs:

Ye elves of hills, brooks, standing lakes, and groves

And ye that on the sands with printless foot

Do chase the ebbing Neptune ...

... and you whose pastime

Is to make midnight mushrooms.(5.1 33-39)

The references to elves, also known in folklore as faeries, and the Roman god Neptune, counterpart to the Greek Poseidon, paint a much more morally neutral image than that of Faustus' form of sorcery. Both these schools of magic would have been known even in the Middle Ages, and before the increasing strictness of witch-hunt ideology, been seen as harmless references denoting either scholarly knowledge in the case of Roman mythology or simple allusion to widely accepted folk belief in the case of elves. Thus Shakespeare depicts a shift back to this stance from complete anti-magic dogma, allowing Prospero to employ licit forms of magic to benefit himself and others. Even despite his goals being in part selfish, and the incredible powers he attains far above and beyond those expected of a humble Christian man, he is spared the punishment Faustus endures for limitless overreaching and sin in consorting with devils. However, the categorization of Prospero's magic is not wholly neat and simple, and his final abjuration of his "rough" magic points again towards the importance of humbleness and the possible immorality of magic used without limit.

Abjuring his magic, Prospero declares in continuation of his aforementioned references to the supernatural sources of his magic:

... But this rough magic

I here abjure; and when I have required

Some heavenly music—which even now I do—

To work mine end upon their senses that

This airy charm is for, I'll break my staff,

Bury it certain fathoms in the earth,

And deeper than did ever plummet sound

I'll drown my book (5.1.50-57).

Cosmo Corfield notes the critical debate over Prospero's meaning in this speech, writing that "Critics divide over whether 'rough' directs a strong sense of disgust against the magic, or whether it is meant less strongly, merely indicating a provisional abjuration," going on to offer the perspective that Prospero's speech could denote that "His 'project' is simply undergoing a metamorphosis, and will be successfully attained through the subsequent exercise of more refined (less 'rough') means" (32). Firstly, the idea of Prospero's "rough" magic being unrefined appears less likely given his significant accomplishments throughout the text. It is possible that his skills in magic could be further refined, particularly in the sense of fine-tuning, but Prospero's awareness of his high level of magical achievement is evident. Furthermore, when determining the more likely meaning behind Prospero's usage of the word "rough", we should note both the dark undertones and potentials of Prospero's magic, as well as his apparent motivations.

As Corfield also mentions, Prospero's magic does not only blend morally neutral forms of the supernatural, but also contains a hinted-at undercurrent of the illicit, as "Shakespeare's borrowings from Medea's incantation in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (the accepted source of the 'Ye elves' speech, lines 33-50) selectively stress the 'dark side of Prospero's art'" (32). In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Medea's impressive power both directly involves immoral actions as well as encourages them; like Prospero, her power allows her to pursue revenge and escape from the done deed unscathed.

Prospero avoids fully realizing this dark side to his magic, as he ultimately chooses reconciliation, but his initial plot for revenge implies the ability to warp even this neutral magic into evil. It is up to Prospero to cut off his usage of magic before he descends into Faustian sin, according to Corfield: "Instead of pursuing appropriate theurgic ends, he has chosen to 'court' the 'auspicious star' so as to pursue a revenge plot. He has misapplied [supernatural power] and, in light of this failure, must abjure it" (43). From this perspective, it is not the incompleteness or lack of skill in Prospero's magic that causes him to turn away from it, but rather his own human failings and understanding of his moral responsibility. Unchecked magic opens the possibility for Prospero to act with cruel vengeance, like Ovid's Medea, though he finally decides to turn away from revenge and to forgiveness instead. Before this shift in Prospero's actions, the pursuit of revenge is "morally contaminating ... As a revenger Prospero assumes the powers of godhead, setting himself up as a substitute for heaven" (41). In the Christian framework of Renaissance England, man seizing supernatural ability to dole out moral justice in the form of punishment is distinctly illicit as it puts aside faith in the ultimate judgment of God, attempting to take what is a theologically divine power for oneself. Thus Prospero's plot to reclaim his throne and provide his daughter with her birthright status once more are acceptable even through the usage of magic, but it must be stopped before exacting punishment.

Prospero is able to maintain his status as a hero and morally acceptable magician, then, through turning to Christian forgiveness as well as cutting off future access to potentially dangerous magic in a humble act of self-denial. His original failure to rule properly because of his preoccupation with magic adds to this analysis, stressing the negative consequences of magic practiced without restriction and the final importance in Prospero's character arc of his decision to move on from magic. The result is a look at magic which balances moderate fears of the negative potential of sorcery and Christian humility in regard to the earthly powers of man as a qualifying factor in acceptance of magic derived from a-Christian and pre-Christian systems. Because of this balance, no longer is Prospero the sorcerer to be burned at the stake like his late medieval predecessors, or cast into Hell like Faustus—rather, he is applauded as the main driving force behind *The Tempest* and the in-story creator of its happy ending.

Between periods of particular Puritan pressure reviving witch-hunt ideology—mainly during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I "and the period of the civil wars"—the study of alchemy boomed again, spurred by its relative safety from roughly

1600 to 1640 (Trevor-Roper xi). It was in the year 1610, in the midst of this period of excited study and relatively public discussion of alchemy that Ben Jonson's *The Alchemist* was first performed. Public enthusiasm over alchemy had grown to such a height that, according to John S. Mebane, "it was a significant force behind movements for political and religious reform in the period" and had come to embody "a view of man as a divine creature who can learn to control the creative forces of nature... dependent on an unorthodox theory of private divine inspiration" (117). Alchemy was practiced with the goal of using a special, personal relationship with God to physically shape the world, and well-known alchemists proclaimed their goal to be "to perfect and purify what nature leaves imperfect" (Mebane 119). Through this area of study and associated pro-alchemic movements, the occult had become intertwined with Christian religiosity, and an unparalleled idealism towards approaching the world's problems had arisen. This attitude is specifically what Jonson confronts in *The Alchemist*, questioning not only the excessive utopianism associated with alchemy and its supporters, but also the founding philosophical ideal driving the practice of alchemists—that is, their vision of man as being able to attain a demigod-like status through divine revelation. In the face of what posed itself as being an infinitely charitable pursuit, *The Alchemist* fires back with a portrait of roguish tricksters exploiting basic human folly and foolishness, and "the rhetoric of individualism and reform [becoming] the tool of a vicious megalomania" (Mebane 124). Both the self-proclaimed "alchemist," his cohorts, and the gulls (fools) in the play satirically reflect Jonson's criticism of real-world alchemists and their supporters, as well as the new form of self-serving, profiteering Renaissance individualism which alchemy was used to justify.

This dual charitable-idealism/megalomania is best demonstrated in the character of Sir Mammon, whose highly romanticized proclamations of his plans for use of the philosopher's stone, once attained, start out as ultimate goals of utopian world-building and quickly shift into self-centered materialism and debauchery. Mammon begins to explain his desire for the philosopher's stone by using conventional descriptive language on the matter: "The perfect ruby, which we call elixir ... / Can convert honour, love, respect, long life, / Give safety, valour ... / I'll undertake, withal, to fright the plague / Out o' the kingdom, in three months," (2.1.47, 50-51, 68-69). However, he is fast to reveal the megalomaniacal desires that truly cause him to blindly go along with Subtle's schemes, shifting from his initial apparent goal of serving others charitably to attaining "a list of wives, and concubines" (2.2.35) as well as an extensive list of fine material possessions. It becomes clear that the Christian spirit of charity supposedly driving alchemy and Mammon's

desire for the philosopher's stone, as in his proclaimed goal of curing the plague, is only a passing justification for his true goals of revelry and riches. He is so blinded by his desire that even when Surly attempts to reveal the truth of Subtle's scam, Mammon protests, "No, he's a rare physician, do him right. / An excellent Paracelsian!" (2.3.238-239), comparing Face to the famous German alchemist Paracelsus, who had also written on the moral/religious philosophy backing his studies. Jonson's other characters in *The Alchemist*, such as the humorously hypocritical Puritans, also showcase a similar form of deception that allows them, in turn, to be deceived, focused as they are on their own self-interests. Tribulation declares that his goal is overtly religious, stating, "For the restoring of the silenced Saints, / Which ne'er will be, but by the philosopher's stone" (3.2.39-40), but in reality, it is wealth the Puritans seek. They are willing to excuse the attainment of it by any means, as Tribulation justifies it: "Casting of money may be lawful" (3.2.152). Their hypocritical self-interest allows them to be strung along by Subtle in his own wealth-generating plot.

Jonson's criticism of the occult thus comes not from a Puritanical standpoint of fear of the demonic or sinful; the play in fact even criticizes Puritans who supported alchemy with the justification of ideal Christian spirit and goodly goals backing the pursuit of a stone promised to create infinite wealth and earthly immortality. Rather, Jonson points out the potential gulling of devious, even Machiavellian salespeople pushing supposed alchemical miracles, as well as the apparent egotism of backers who desired a Faustian level of power. In *The Alchemist*, alchemy itself is not presented as an illicit form of magic to be feared or punished like Faustus' deal with the powers of Hell; rather, it is exposed as a con game playing off of gulls' wishful thinking. Jonson's take is refreshingly practical, not chastising the genuine goals of intellectual exploration held by many true alchemists of his time, but rather warning against its potential to be exploited, particularly in the bustling proto-capitalist urban streets of London. This surprisingly religiously-neutral approach to the theological/ethical debate over alchemy demonstrates a shift in public opinion towards the occult and breaches into new fields of knowledge and human power. Moving towards more pragmatic arguments of honesty and the realities of alchemy as business and away from the previously-unquestionable chastisement of the alchemical as demonic would lead to the practice of the scientific method as we know it, and open up the field of modern chemistry out of the basic knowledge of elements and chemical reactions garnered through alchemical experiments. For instance, after the events of the English Civil War and the collapse of the Protectorate, the newly-crowned Charles II would return from abroad with an alchemist

in his court, showing that even despite its ties with political radicals and proponents of the Puritan revolution, alchemy had finally turned from a matter of enormous religious controversy into a vital field of study that was there to stay regardless of the powers in place and their distaste for their opponents' philosophies. The Alchemist is therefore, despite its overtly negative take on alchemy as a sham, a step in the direction of innovation, condemning exploitation of alchemy as business and citing harmful attitudes involved with it, rather than hindering it through outright condemnation of the field as a whole. Despite the clear skepticism the play presents towards grandiose claims and the shady dealings of alchemists-for-hire, the arena of debate it opens is in contrast to previously-held extreme late medieval opinions of magic and therefore marks a step forwards in classification of the occult and public allowance of its practice.

The Renaissance is often posed neatly as a time period that ascended beyond the dogmatic orthodoxy of the Middle Ages; aforementioned medieval stances towards magic and extensive practice of witch-hunts are cited frequently. However, these three major Renaissance playwrights reveal that Christian philosophy remained enormously important. Socio-economic and political power shifts following the Late Middle Ages created a radically different cultural context in which to re-approach magical categorization, the limits of human power accessed through the occult, and studies into fields previously branded illicit. That infamous Renaissance spirit of enterprise is intermingled in these plays with the knowledge of moral limits. Faustus strays much too far outside the bounds of Christian morality, and becomes, in his own mind, lost to the ever-available hope of repentance; Prospero uses enormous a-Christian magic to craft anew a royal future for himself and his daughter, but must self-consciously reject that magic to be truly moral; alchemy largely ceases to hold innately sinful, anti-Christian connotations, but takes on a new controversy of the deceit by businessmen and hypocrisy of alchemy's supporters. Rather than closing the book on medieval theological debates, these plays open up the arena for a new era and new discussions, helping to reshape philosophical views surrounding magic which would contribute not only to the ending of witch-hunts but also to the development of chemistry, all still within a Christian framework of ethics and belief in the divine.

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The Perfect Detonator: Stevie and the Professor's Resistance in *Secret Agent*

Jeremy Strahan

"I have no doubt...that there had been moments in the writing of this book when I was an extreme revolutionist, I won't say more convinced than they, but certainly cherishing a more complicated purpose than any of them."

At first glance, Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent* seems to portray a world of nihilism, a dark and ironic tale where anarchists prop up the very system they swear to destroy, and gross incompetence leads to a tragic death spiral. However, between the lines we find a common sympathy evoked for those at the lowest rungs of society, from laborers and even animals who must inhabit this same world with hypocrites like Mr. Verloc. And yet, all these characters are trapped within the same system, and will remain so unless they can grasp onto a certain "moral agent" twin possibilities that fall between the two extremes that exist within the novel. The angelic sacrifice, Stevie, stands juxtaposed with the bomb-strapped professor: the innocent victim blown apart, and the insidious specter standing outside the plot. Stevie's demise is a rallying cry for change, and his empathetic morality a signal for the way things should be, but the Professor's survival is a dire warning, a reminder that the promises of Humanism are hollow, and all can come crumbling down. Stevie's demise cuts through deceit and brings an end to the titular *Secret Agent*, while the Professor, despite providing the destructive implements, escapes all condemnation and judgment while he continues his dark designs.

Verloc's entire character arc centers around Stevie. The story paints a pathetic picture of his business – the false, dingy pornographic store hiding the anarchist "operation," one of a gross "fanatical inertness" that defined Mr. Verloc (Conrad 24). And yet, Mr. Verloc is a man pretending to be an anarchist, secretly a counter-terrorist, and someone who also informs for the local police on the side while keeping his wife in the dark about everything. Despite this, even though he hosts actual anarchists at his false business, he has no need for deception because the majority merely sit there and wax philosophically. It is a miracle of procrastination that he avoided trouble for so many years. This man, "undemonstrative and burly in the fat pig style," has his cozy inertness collapse as he is pressured into carrying out a

bombing to galvanize the country, striking out the symbol of science itself (Conrad 25, 45). Considering that one of the tenets of Humanist thought is one of “rational progress” and “the universal powers of reason,” Conrad asserts that the power of this London society is tied up within the belief of science as sacred (Braidotti 13, 15). To attack what people see as progress is “madness...inexplicable, almost unthinkable...you cannot placate it by threats, persuasion, and bribes” a force of chaos that will inspire an overreaching response (Conrad 45).

One of the most tragic elements of this story is that the people fighting for “revolution” have no grandiose goals of equality or freeing people from oppression. The real goal of their leader, Vladimir, is retrogression. The bombing must bring an end to the open-door policy on political refugees, and Vladimir’s Russian origin is no accident: “No other nation had more reason to be irritated with Britain’s policy of granting asylum to political extremists and its categorical refusal to extradite alleged terrorists to their countries of origin” (Frank). The picture of society Conrad paints is bleak enough, but the emptiness and inaction of these revolutionaries speaks to a general malaise that has infected the world.

However, Conrad puts forward two characters who resist this stifling air. The first, an anarchist who looms above the rest, unpredictable as he is unsettling, dynamite strapped to his chest and searching for one thing – “the perfect detonator” (Conrad 80). The Professor lurked in the shadows for an hour while his associates were unaware, and just his “firmness, and assured precision” of his movements are enough to make them sweat (78). He laughs outright at the thought of getting caught by the police and states that “to deal with a man like me you need sheer, naked, inglorious heroism” (79). The Professor openly embraces the title of villain and declares that he draws his strength and “force of personality” from his opposition to the social order: “[Inspector Heat] was thinking about many things – of his superiors, of his reputation, of the law, of the courts, of his salary, of newspapers – of hundreds of things...He plays his little game – so do you propagandists – but I don’t play” (83-84). The only person who could reasonably kill him is someone who could “face their own institutions” and reject their police training in service to their own morality (86). He openly proclaims this as his goal, a “clean sweep and a clean start from a new conception of life” presenting his dynamite as a cleansing forest-fire that births fertile ground (87).

The following chapter reveals him as a victim of the “atrocious injustice of society,” one where wealth triumphs over merit, and people are fooled by the “tales

of men who rise from poverty” to think they have a chance (95). As the son of a Christian preacher, the Professor embodies both the secular and religious world, the “moral agent” who stalks the land (96). But he has a unique, character defining fear: he believes in mankind. The Professor, the villain, only exists because he believes society CAN change, but when he sees the faceless masses moving about “like locusts, industrious like ants, thoughtless like a natural force...impervious to sentiment, to logic, and terror...” he doubts his entire enterprise, both the sword and shield of fear he uses to define himself (96-97). While this all ties into his insatiable ego, it does give an ember of humanity to a man who crafts bombs and detonators he hands out to “anybody” who asks (78).

However, he clearly has an effect on Inspector Heat, who muses that burglars and thieves operate within the same system as the police – a strikingly similar statement to what the Professor told the propagandists (108). When they encounter each other, what follows is reminiscent of a comic strip: the grim detective, Defender of Order, staring down the Cheshire Cat with his long cloak and seedy laugh. But although it begins with the classic “if I lay hands on you now, I would be no better than yourself” both of them find themselves at a crossroads – they run out of things to say (110). The Professor’s menacing presence is defused by Heat’s ineloquent obstinance (with such phrases as “Give it up – whatever it is”), and the two part ways with the professor sulking that he could not rile the detective, and Inspector Heat reassuring himself that the whole of society supports his investigation simply because anarchists “have no class – no class at all” (112).

While the professor is a byproduct of society’s evils, and one who, unlike the false anarchists, takes decisive action, he stands as a disturbing “unacknowledged and unacknowledgeable hero” (Ruppel 100). Driven to work “14 hours a day” and willing to starve for his craft, he struggles with intense loneliness, had his childhood dreams of upward mobility shattered, and rises up against a society “that seems impervious to the plight of the poor and takes a vicarious pleasure in the spectacle of anarchists fighting desperately and vainly for social justice” (100). The depictions of London throughout the story bears disturbing descriptions of “opulence and luxury” places “without shadows in an atmosphere of pure powdered gold” that must “be protected against the shallow enviousness of unhygienic labor” (Conrad 23). Adding to this, the newspapers and media throughout the tale gobble up any news about anarchists and socialists, but only as a matter of spectacle. With the propagandists sitting on their laurels, Mr. Verloc agreeing that this opulence “must be protected,” and with Inspector Heat vowing to defend society in any form,

the Professor is the only person left who, willingly and honestly, fights for change, and even believes change is possible. Of course, at the same time, the Professor's methods are monstrous, and will no doubt kill uncountable civilians if he actually got his way, or heaven forbid, someone tried to rob him and triggered his vest (that along with the classic anarchist problem of what actually replaces society – the critique versus the solution). Conrad makes the Professor so frightening because we have no idea how to judge him; he is a being “separated from heaven and earth”, a man who regards others as inferior insects (but is really the pest himself), and yet remains the only one actively trying to improve society (Conrad 111). He is the self-proclaimed “moral agent” willing to commit gross immorality for his purpose.

Since Joseph Conrad did regard himself as a former revolutionary, perhaps the Professor represents that “complicated purpose” that a man of conviction and ideals must hold onto (Ruppel 84). However, if he were the only potential “hero” of this story, than the traditional reading of *The Secret Agent* as a “study in nihilism, that all systems represented in the novel are held up to the same caustic scrutiny and are all found deficient” would seem dominant (Ruppel 92). However, like the Professor, there is another character motivated by moral outrage, one of a much purer stock – the unwitting victim, Stevie.

Already pushed to the fringe of society due to mental disability, Stevie could easily turn into a misanthrope, but he possesses a level of empathy that shames those around him. “Shame” being the same word he shouts as he witnesses the beating of a horse, understanding the plight of the desperate driver, but unable to cope with the beast's cries (188). When Winnie made her accidental comment about the horse, Stevie did not sit idle – he sprung to action and begged the cab driver “Don't...Don't whip...you musn't. It hurts” (174). Before the whip had even fallen, Stevie expresses more concern for animals than the majority of characters have shown for their fellow man. Stevie embodies the post-human, connecting, and directly feeling, the pain of both the beast of burden pushed to the limit, and the laborer barely able to feed his family. He himself connects that “a zoo-proletariat... [these] animals have been exploited for hard labour, as natural slaves and logistical support for humans” in the same way the poor people of society are othered and shunned by both the wealthy and middle class (Braidotti 70). He tries to work through this grief but “the anguish of immoderate compassion was succeeded by a pain of an innocent but pitiless rage” he possesses the wisdom “in knowing his powerlessness” but could not contain the “righteous indignation” over the incident (Conrad 186). While other characters might be capable of empathy, they might

just as easily shut themselves off, stating “that's just how things are” and continue forward. Stevie, though, can read a newspaper article about a “German soldier officer tearing half-off the ear of a recruit” and become inconsolable for the whole day (72).

Joseph Conrad's narrator often finds ways to jab at his characters as his merciless opening description of Mr. Verloc shows. However, Stevie escapes these indirect insults, only facing direct scrutiny from spoken dialogue, and not from the narrator setting the scene. The Professor's loneliness is mocked, but Stevie's struggles are laid bare, letting the oncoming tragedy speak for itself.

The core nexus of the novel revolves around Stevie, even though he (while alive) gets minimal screen time. Winnie married Mr. Verloc over her sweetheart in order to provide stability for Stevie; Winnie's mother removes herself from the family picture to ease their burdens, a pair of “lonely sacrifice[s]” that binds the family together (Ruppel 94). Winnie allows herself to be deceived, manipulating events so that Stevie views Mr. Verloc as a saint so they may grow closer together (Conrad 193). And there lies the crux of the novel. Mr. Verloc, though entirely unearned, has a family dedicated to him, devoted to the core, even though he views Winnie as a “possession” and to Stevie “extended as much recognition as a man not particularly fond of animals may give to his wife's beloved cat” (Conrad 52). Verloc could lead an idyllic life if he either stepped away from his tepid terrorism, or gave an ounce of respect towards the boy he radicalizes for the sake of shirking his responsibility. Verloc provides the panacea for Stevie's rage, showing him that there were others who understand this “bad, bad” society and were taking steps to change it. He rescues Stevie, gives the boy hope and a passion to learn more, but of course, this is all built on a lie.

Mr. Verloc does not believe the rhetoric he spews – he merely wants to create an unwitting dupe, a passionate and pure agent to carry out the attack he was too weak-willed to complete. But, when Verloc looks over the “innocent Stevie's shoulders” he views “circles...innumerable circles, concentric, eccentric, a coruscating whirl of circles that by their tangled multitude of repeating curves, uniformity of form, and confusion of intersecting lines suggested a rendering of cosmic chaos” (Conrad 57). Just as Stevie needed the future murder weapon, the “carving knife” taken away from him by Winnie after the German officer incident, his actions foreshadow the recursive effect of the failed bombing, of Verloc's own life crumbling before him for the transgression he takes against Stevie: the condescension

and commoditization of Winnie goes unanswered until Verloc sinks his claws into the impressionable boy, taking advantage of the “father and son” dynamic setup by Winnie, and turning it into one of “submission and worship” (204, 250). Much like how the Professor’s suicide vest requires a twenty second countdown, Verloc’s demise is a slow breakdown of those circles, each one connected by the “house cat” he paid little attention too.

While the Professor claims the title of “moral agent,” Stevie owns the championship belt. Even after Verloc manipulates him into carrying out the bombing, Stevie proves incapable of murder, taking himself out rather than bringing harm to any bystanders. Could something have subconsciously held Stevie back, despite his willingness to “go through fire” for Mr. Verloc (201)? It would be one thing to dismiss this as a mere mistake, but can the boy who cried for animals and cab drivers really carry out the attack? While Winnie claims he was enraged and holding the carving knife to “stuck that officer like a pig,” it seems just as likely that Stevie would listen to the officer explain himself, perhaps how he must impress his superiors or risk losing his position, and feel intense pity for the man and the sad state of our world. Stevie’s bouts of violence turn self-destructive because of his own empathy, unable to inflict true pain on others. Convincing him (falsely) he has the power to change society and then sending him on a mission that demands (at least a risk of) murder leads to a predictable outcome: He dutifully explodes away from innocents, stumbling on his own anger just as he “stumbles on the root of a tree” (104). The man society regarded as degenerate becomes a sacrifice who sears himself into their minds, his honest outrage laid bare through his mangled corpse.

In doing so, Stevie becomes a source of horror for the novel’s inhabitants. The police officers must listen to the shovel scrape his “disintegrated” body, becoming “sick as a dog,” and sending Inspector Heat into a moment of existential dread as he ponders innumerable deaths and “the horrible notions that ages of atrocious pain and mental torture could be contained between two successive winks of the eye” (103). Not only has Stevie become an animal, a thing, he renders the same effect upon the officers who maintain the society that has caused him much mental woe. The anarchists of the shop too, save the Professor, are left flabbergasted, calling the incident “criminal” as they see the walls of their cozy operation crumbling down as the result of the impending police investigation into their activities (85). Ironically, Stevie has also outdone the Professor, for not only does he provoke an outrage, he “is simply a more intelligent mechanism than the one the Professor holds in his hand, since he is able to detonate immediately rather than within the

twenty seconds the Professor’s flask takes to blow up” becoming the perfect detonator always on his mind (Clark).

On one hand, “Stevie is unable to moderate his behavior within “acceptable” Victorian bourgeois terms, so his entropy increases to the point of explosion, both in temperament and body, from inside to outside and vice versa when his image shows in Winnie’s face,” but that same explosion finally evokes a response that his brooding cries and passion failed to produce (Clark). While the rattling of the police and the fear of the anarchists might be temporary, Stevie’s demise exposes the boundless lies of Verloc’s existence. Mr. Verloc, with one last chance to repent, remarks through narration that Stevie “was a much greater nuisance dead than he ever had been alive” removing any notion of culpability (249). For the next thirty pages, Verloc belittles Stevie and Winnie as he tries to reassert control. However, with the blinders removed from Winnie’s eyes, the sweet, perfect, bourgeois housewife wields the tool of her marital oppression – the carving knife – and butchers Verloc just as he finishes consuming a piece of roast beef “ravenously, without restraint” (Conrad 269, 283; Lutz). She wields the same knife she took from Stevie to calm his rage, the one reserved for the inhuman “German slaver” that “don’t deserve much mercy” (73). And so ends the secret agent, the oppressor dead on a couch, the inactive, self-important villain of the story.

Stevie’s death is answered by turning his murderer into an animal of consumption, a lump of carved meat equivalent to the roast beef he just consumed, a darker echo of the “zoe-egalitarian” desire to bring unity between human and animal (Braidotti 71). The moments up to his death have a circular echo like his former writings, with Winnie constantly blurting “But what of Stevie?” and “This man took the boy away to murder him. This man took the boy away from his home to murder him. This man took the boy away from me to murder him!” embodying that crescendo of righteous rage Stevie always kept inside (266). The corpse of Stevie scatters the false anarchists, inspires terror in the police, and cuts through the deceit and lies that dominated his home. But as a corpse, he lies in the same realm as the Professor, that of death, not life. Winnie finds no solace after the death of Verloc, taking herself to the grave as she is abandoned by one of the remaining anarchists, Ossipon, and sees no future ahead for herself since the police will inevitably hunt her down.

But to call this struggle pointless or nihilistic diminishes the white-hot outrage of Stevie and Winnie, a cry that goes beyond the pages of the novel. We are meant to identify with their grief, to view the world with the surprising wisdom of the

supposedly unintelligent Stevie. There is no simple solution for society, and while “His inarticulate compassion and rage are symptomatic of the difficulty both of finding an ethical justification for social and economic injustice and of constructing an ethical order,” there is a clear call to arms within Conrad’s writing, and a stark condemnation of those who live in gilded deceit, like Mr. Verloc (Lutz). But even if we have no panacea for our societal structures, Stevie’s death reminds us not to look past cruelty, no matter who or what it falls upon, lest we become as heartless as Verloc or trapped like Winnie, trapped within a box of our own creation, slowly filling with the water that will drown us, or rather, the bomb that will consume us. Change at the individual level, and not the macro-movements of anarchists, counterrevolutionaries, foreign powers, and the police force, is the only way to start a new circle.

But to say Joseph Conrad wishes to leave us with such a tragic yet poignant call for humanity understates the ending. After all, the Professor not only he lives, but unlike the majority of the cast, he is completely unaffected by the fallout, immune to the echo of the corpse. And only now do we get the Professor’s true philosophy: “The weak! The source of all evil on this earth...I told him that I dreamt of a world like shambles, where the weak would be taken hand in hand for utter extermination” (324). When Ossipon asks what remains he calmly replies, “I remain – if I am strong enough” (325). Stevie called for an equality where people could be made to understand each other; the Professor also calls for equality, but only of circumstance. Everyone starts from square one, and those with merit will consume the rest. Ossipon again asserts that “Mankind wants to live – to live” but the Professor replies “Mankind, asserted the Professor with a self-confident glitter of his iron-rimmed spectacles, does not know what it wants” (329). Ossipon tries to keep arguing, but he reads about Winnie’s suicide (which he played a part and is yet another echo of Stevie’s death) and suffers an existential breakdown as the words “impenetrable mystery” and “madness and despair” hang over his head (328-330). As readers, we hold little sympathy for Ossipon, who perhaps gets his comeuppance by suffering this breakdown, reduced to nothingness for his crimes, “feeling nothing, seeing nothing, hearing not a sound” (332).

But the Professor walks free. The enemy of everyone has the final say, and walks into a crowd:

He had no future. He disdained it. He was a force. His thoughts caressed the images of ruin and destruction. He walked frail, insignificant, shabby, miserable – and

terrible in the simplicity of his idea calling madness and despair to the regeneration of the world. Nobody looked at him. He passed on unsuspected and deadly, like a pest in a street full of men. (Conrad 332)

Stevie, both living and dead, calls for a transhumanist renewal; the Professor, purged of any semblance of humanity, seeks an apocalypse to bring retribution both bloody and terrible. He will never succeed. By Conrad’s own admission, he is a pest who skulks the city of London. He is the byproduct, perhaps the warning, that a corrupt society will birth more incarnations of the Professor, and if the moral outrage of Stevie continues to be drowned out, those pests will multiply, and spark that slow chemical reaction to the perfect detonation.

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Poetry

PART V

Pont Saint-Louis

Joseph Curra

-For HRS

Beyond the river dividing two islands,
bells toll against a city ancient, moving modern,
where at night, behind Notre Dame,
the water, lighted, turns an amber glow
before bronze and darkened stone

while, across a cobbled path, gather disciples
searching for the rigid—
learning to hold against tide and time
like the old man on the footbridge
who sings folk songs like cities
that live beyond the living,

who must have held once to the railing,
looking for a reflection and poured forth impression.

Origin Story

Joann K. Deiudicibus

After Joy Harjo

Remember the last breath should be as full as the first.

Know each of your lung's landscapes.

Remember each cut as well as each kiss.

Know that every touch on your body marks a path back to love.

Remember day-break and wave-break; map points

where they burst over and inside of your metronomic heart,

siphoning shores of that abandoned island.

Remember you are salt and sand, star and seaweed,

seed and skeleton, a sound tsunami

cresting at the speed of light.

Remember that the mother who bore you also shattered,

the father that failed you also made you.

Your eyes may be bright with a prophet's vision,

your hair may burn pale as the moon, but

remember the belly that bred you, the hands

that raised you up, skyward where you could almost

reach what had ripened, taste the air like Eve,

who, uncoiling from some cosmic conch,

was called womb-ward from the waves.

Remember her voice speaking in serpentine tongues,

how she bled sin to sing you, her first hymn.

Again, A g a i n, A g a i n, A g a i n

C.E. Witherow

It is not the wind scraping against
the windows,
it is the howling of a moment lost,
wavering branches
carving lines of “I thought we—”
again, again,
against the tempered glass
searching for a way
to finish the sentence.

It's Always Today

Dennis Doherty

Today it was the first day
of class—bad weather, an ice
delay. I was a little late and
discombobulated in an unusual
building lately reconfigured,
looking for a stairway up.
Found one at the end of a
long hallway and began
to climb. Above on the first
landing I spied a pair of shoes
near the steps. As I rose
I saw a small colorful rug
next to the shoes. Near the top
I saw a young man in the corner
who had been obscured by the
stairs. His hands were together

and he was bending toward
the wall, northeast, praying beyond
the wall, beyond Mecca, even.
And then I found my classroom,
and there I found my students.

Unshackled

Ryene Fenner

As long as hands are in the air
they know retaliation is lifeless,
like the lack of melanin in their skin.

In the brightest hues of honey to the darkest tones of cocoa
lies a power to be feared.

Melanin is not a veil prescribed by the colorless;
it is a cloak of armor enameled with gold by God.

The fabric of our beings has been
woven together by strength and persistence
that have been threaded through the veins of royalty.

We were not bound by the ankles
to become warp and weft into
news stories of the slain and broken.

After Aeschylus, παθει μαθος

Thomas Festa

Whoever holds as a fixed law
that wisdom comes through suffering
won't forget in sleep
how pain falls drop by drop upon the heart
until truth comes, like it or not,

an awful grace, molten

out of our pain.

Cover of Time

Thomas Festa

The blind thrust earthquake killed my mother's classroom aide's son and husband in their beds, Northridge tenement stucco stories crushed together under a covering of dust. Angela. She was from Manila, *nila* from Sanskrit for indigo tree, or flowering mangrove. Her face on the cover of *Time* did not belong—no more belonging left, only suffering, the universe made self-aware in pain. We all feared aftershocks, the fault. Our own condemned, we had to move while foundations repaired and walls shored up against the next vibration, the viola in California, the quiver of the angelus. Across town, in a nearly identical apartment, removed from habits and glances, learning to ignore notions like providence, homecoming, and biding my time. Blue quietude descended, as unforeknown as the angel of a furious annunciation, a lake without ripples shimmering, paper napkins blown in a gust. A whisper (not in parentheses) from the great blank outside, a spoor newly scented on the arid wind of ethics. The flowers are small, bell-shaped, blossom in late summer or early autumn. They're blue, or red, the kind everyone recognizes but no one can name.

Blood Relativity

Edward Maietta

If a vampire is flying after you

at fifty miles per hour

And you're running away—full tilt—

25 miles per hour

—This is back when you were young*—

then you haven't much of a chance, sorry.

If you're on a train traveling 200 miles per hour,

away from the vampire,

that sucker will likely pick on someone closer.

If you're on a train traveling 200 miles per hour,

toward the vampire,

then I'll miss you.

* and tasty

Vows

Julia Ponder

Our past territories

were lands left behind

with a cadence of urgency.

You move your hands

over my body and so

much has changed

since they began. Could words

describe how to complete

this terraforming?

They exist outside

seafoam clouds, wet dirt,

starling air, and high altitudes.

So, tell me
a thing about you
no one knows.

Then, I will reach back
into my own topography
and find some edge

to meet yours, some cliff of
longing that is the final
piece. Our secrets will intertwine in
a mossy knoll of rock, a fragile
ecosystem that only
we can travel to, barefooted.

The Burning of the Apple Orchard

Julia Ponder

The morning begins with a molting of limbs;
the workers have begun the ceremonial burn
of the apple orchard. Each tree is wrenched
from the dirt and dragged to a growing cascade
of branches and ember; fuji, macintosh, and golden delish,
have all lost their definition as the inferno
grows and the sun peeks over the horizon to bear
witness. It is a purge of past selves,
diseased, pest-ridden, or perfectly healthy.

You can see the bonfire from miles away beckoning
as it dispels, inviting as it cautions. Each flake of new
ash like some secret message landing in your gnarled
hands while you marvel at the sky, saying to you,
*This is what you were, this is what you are, this
is what you will be.* Already the neighboring orchards
have started to redden and blossom. Do they take notice
of the scorched earth beside them?

Sonnet no. saliva

Aaron Ricciardi

Excerpts from *FAN: Forever Aaron and Nichole*, a crown of sonnets

The scent of your saliva was a bitch
the way it lingered 'til I went to sleep,
affixed there by you, teacher, at my Jeep
at one-fifteen, past curfew. Like an itch,
the odor haunts me now. It's almost wood,
and also French perfume, abuse, and gum.
You taught me that the secret's in the thumb.
I worry most that, at your heart, you're good.
I know that you were wrong. I'm strong. I'm yours,
forever in your classroom in your clutch.
The other night, I go to lick the neck
of some new guy, and, when I do, he purrs,
like you would purr—the smell—and it's too much.
The guy would never know, but I'm a wreck.

Sonnet no. Razr

Aaron Ricciardi

Excerpts from *FAN: Forever Aaron and Nichole*, a crown of sonnets

The guy would never know, but I'm a wreck
when spooning, since my arm has to be tucked
beneath his pillow. Suddenly I'm sucked
back home—fifteen, sixteen—when mom would check
to see if we—my teacher and her boy—
were cooing on our phones too late at night
again when I should be asleep. We'd fight
if I got caught, so I devised this ploy:
I'd hide my Razr like you do a tooth,
and play-act like my dad face-down in bed.
My tired mom would creep in, then she'd feel
beneath the down and case, and find the truth.
“Hang up with her!” and then she'd kiss my head,
with lips the very opposite of steel.

Cephalopod Senescence

Jan Zlotnik Schmidt

“It is a spring, moonless night in the small town, . . . the cobbled streets silent . . . limping invisible down to the . . . crowblack, fishingboat-bobbing sea. [...] Now behind the eyes and secrets of the dreamers . . . see the . . . the wrecks and sprats and shells and fishbones, . . . dished up by the hidden sea.”

—*Under Milkwood* by Dylan Thomas

Dylan Thomas’s town, New Quay, and the Octopuses at the Quay in Wales*

Their slick pocked tentacles

suck their way up the quay

miniature Medusas

in the *crowblack* moonless night

Rose blistered stippled legs

waddle up stones wander

from the shore like fat old ladies

* “NEW QUAY, West Wales — The poet Dylan Thomas called this the ‘cliff-edge town at the far end of Wales,’ but lately it has become better known as the place where the octopuses crawled out of the sea.”

-Rod Nordland, “Cliff-Edge Town Visited by Poets, Dolphins—and Octopuses,”
New Quay Journal, November 16, 2017

in the *crowblack* moonless night

Ballooning bodies heave

in and out out and in

in death throes with each breath

in the *crowblack* moonless night

The fishermen are aghast

What plague has crawled out of the sea

In the moonless night they ask?

Did creatures lose their way

in atmospheric upheavals, storm surges,

in polluted seas— blue and purple pellets

straws and plastic bits glistening like charms?

How did man-of war, giant barreled jellyfish,

lose their bearings? Pulled in by the tides

by the relentless rush of waves

Will the dolphins, too, swimming in their midst be gone?

All dished up by stinking death?

Will we all become nothing more than *sprats shells*

and fish bones in the crowblack, fishingboat-bobbing sea

Red Mittens

Jan Zlotnik Schmidt

I stretch a pair of child's red gloves

over my knuckles and nails

the wool thinned

like a layer of gauze

I am stunned

surprised my large hands

could accommodate so small a prize

They arrive in a package

with a feathered dreamcatcher

a 2020 calendar Christmas cards

with wreaths and red birds reminders from the

St. Joseph's School for Orphan Indian

Children to buy their Christmas presents

Pleas and please

I remember a pair of red mittens
that dug into snow drifts
formed crusty ice balls
thrown with an angled arm
at the catalpa tree
Tossed one and another
until the snow turned to dust
scabbed against bark

And as snow fell I opened
my small mittened hands
flakes sparkling like
stars In my open palms

Then I smashed snow into blocks
Built a fort dug down
I was an Eskimo in an igloo
And it was time for the Iditarod
my huskies ready I swayed

swerved and tugged
at pretend reins until I fell
into a glacial landscape
Lips and toes blue from cold
Now I stretch the gloves
over my fingers brush
snowflakes away from my cheek
gaze up at the Big Dipper
the little Dipper the North Star
constellations my father
pointed out to me
on cloudless nights

The same fleet wonder
Warmth in my fingers
before blue cold
takes away all dreaming.

Marie Brizard

Jeffrey Seitz

“I drink,” he said, “to the buried that repose around us.”

“And I to your long life.”

—Edgar Allen Poe from *The Cask of Amontillado*

Overhead, the pink paper mache lanterns
quiver as you come over while I sit
watching the other colors decorate the streets.
A shade soaks onto your porcelain face.
As I search for light in your hollow eyes,
you thrust yourself forward and kiss me.

I taste barley.

You plummet into my depths and rip my soul
asunder. You pull strings, tie knots, and tighten
valves. My throat collapses and my lips solidify.

I gasp.

My breath abates in the pink dimming lights.
One lantern follows another into the black—
Which shadow shall I chase?

Everyone else walks off with another in hand.
The city floats off into twilight’s open wings,
my hands wrestle around my neck.

Why is time so slow?

The walls become chalk in the moonlight.
I feel oxygen wave good-bye.
I pull at my neck, still feeling the coils
squeezing, rhyming with my throbbing heart.
You dare me to close my eyes
while I whimper and moan for mercy.

I didn't expect my tomb to be this big

The Day I Learned about the Difference between Romanticism and Realism while Welding with My Father

Robert Singleton

In February

when sheets of plate steel

lean white-rimmed

against the Quonset huts

in the rail yard,

it doesn't take a genius

like Shakespeare to understand

that realism begins

when a fool

touches them without

wearing gloves.

The Gardener

Robert Singleton

For Claire

Plant graceful things first

for shelter from the trumpet's seed.

The hardier next

in memory of poets

who needed help the most.

Next, the round eyes of lunar moths

to mark the path to fiction

and the need for hope and growth.

Phlox of different shades

to soothe the mind

and violets to erase its fears.

Pluck roses from

the bottom of the sea

and peonies to guard the path

and break the clouds apart.

Add lily of the valley
for jewel songs so bright
that children learn to hear
in seven languages
the first time they read.

My Last Students

H.R. Stoneback

“The curtain I have drawn for you . . .”

-Robert Browning, *My Last Duchess*

For AS, JC & NLL, December 7, 2019

For fifty years I taught on Tuesday nights
so many graduate seminars—Faulkner,
Hemingway, Warren, Ballads—all that talking,
so much Tuesday-talking, rhythm of life

well-lived. And now this thing they call *retirement*.

Of course, I'll keep on talking down the roads
of all the world, one-shot visiting keynotes,
lectures, poetry readings, faces always different

nevermore the same faces every Tuesday
the depth and passion of earnest glances,
hearts made glad by perfect sentences,

curtains opened in profound and amused ways—

it happened every Tuesday half a century.

But now at last it's curtains for the classroom.

And if the road brings weary gathering gloom

rows of faces linger as I stand Sentry—

listening for the password to Eternity

or maybe just another Tuesday

Elegy—An Ode for Emily (Rose Included)

H.R. Stoneback

All Souls' Eve: For the Philadelphia Memorial Services, November 9, 2019

In Memoriam: femme de lettres Emily Mitchell Wallace Harvey 1933-2019:

For ceremonies Franklin Inn Club & Christ Church (Est. 1695) Philadelphia

It was somewhere long ago—was it Spain

or France or Philadelphia?—I first heard

her voice across the room (Gregory's, too):

the keen clarity of exactitude,

the charming old civility of tone,

the shape and sound of each acutely chosen word.

I'd just done a conference keynote address:

She introduced herself, said *I know your work*—

her steady straight unblinking piercing gaze

confirmed authority of every phrase—

and now I've heard you speak I know you are the best.

I laughed and said *Hope I resemble your remarks.*

Then years of conferences with Emily.
We worked together, shaped events, she even
chose me to speak at her grand MLA Poets
Dinner at her beloved Club: from wheelchair, though it's
rough, I stood to speak first time in years—her flattery?
Not with Emily—her words made you rise and believe.

Her words made you stand up, made you better
than you were, words never empty, precision
sprung from passion, searing fiery amplitude.
Her words made me join her Club where we colluded
to set things right in the world of arts and letters,
to weigh our pounds of truth and justice, make revisions.

Her words inspired, compelled me to write a book,
dedicated to her and her Sister Mary.
For her words, I featured her at symposiums.
I wanted her to take the Paris podium
last year at my Eiffel Tower donnybrook

but we know what happened: Fate's song always Contrary.

She lost Gregory. She asked if she could
come to visit me in the Hudson Valley.
Always exact, she named the date well in advance.
I changed my plans. Felt bad I never took the chance
to see her country place near my ancestral woods
& Brownback Church right up my Chester Co. family alley.

She came and then I saw what I'd divined:
It was her farewell tour, the end was near.
We spoke not a word of death but eternity
danced in our odes to poetic fidelity.
She barely touched her food but drank her wine—
our clinking glasses chimed, rhymed with *in memoriam* tears.

Sing your songs poets

follow will-o'-the-wisp treasure lights

Sing your songs scholars

guardian jack-o'-lantern ghost-candles ignite

And now, *Allhallowtide*, I look at the light
 in my garden where we talked the last time.
 It's scary warm at Midnight, Halloween—
 great storm-change coming, 73 degrees.
 It will drop 40-plus, freeze tomorrow night.
 The last late rose of summer shimmers sublime.

 Strange flickering light, trembling of the leaves
 in the shadows under streetlight, wind-rise,
 autumnal tree-limbs shake down their burden:
 Mischief Night past, All Saints promise guerdon.
 Emily was all Mind all Heart and now on All Souls' Eve
 she is all Soul—I place her rose with wisp-willed eyes:

Sing the song children

Christ Church bells are tolling

Sing the song children

Emily's gone a-souling

~ ~ ~

Dead Bird

Sarah Wyman

up the tree	housed in plywood
no one could	find a space
see where a bird cap	slaughtered by the dawn
left half under mulch	that creeps light in predictably
had surrendered its feathers	to smear a message
scalped red star	pointing south west at once
with black backbones	arrow aviaries
to each frond now flattened	as though the route were doomed
is it a squirrel	running over thick roots
that tumbles a dry seed	flexing muscled bark arms
down the polymer roof	to dirt declivities
or the wind's glancing puff	blows blown loam
as the pressure rises	too wet to fly
and gray storm clouds	that journey ended.
roll in?	

Lumina 2, Brooch by Jamie Bennett

Sarah Wyman

She opened a pocket watch to find the shadowed hours
pulling their clock faces to the distance,
little twigs vanishing in a whirl of snow.
Still, the long hands reached past forgotten plans
and each set of suggested routes
converged like a spider, centered on its urge to crawl
onto the next project, squared across a row of days
no hinge could clasp shut, no cover could collapse to the hilt
of a moment when some project pinned
and smoothing towards eleven
hovered on the bauble's golden ceiling.

And if these fronds could sweep away
the minutes left to sift through
to a waiting stage, the determined dial
could lure tiny springs and cogs
layered under an enamel plate,

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hidden beneath a wreath of numbers
to emerge as forms, rounded in their uselessness.

Here, clasped on its long chain
all the ephemera of a forgotten day,
the scraped knee that healed,
the ticking unheard amid
crowds and crows that flock
around a timing device lost in a pocket.

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Shawangunk Review Call for Papers

We welcome submissions from English faculty and graduate students in any area of literary studies: essays (criticism; theory; historical; cultural, biographical studies), book reviews, scholarly notes, and poetry. Manuscripts should be prepared in accordance with MLA style (8th edition) and should be submitted as an electronic file (emailed to the attention of Professor Cyrus Mulready: mulreadc@newpaltz.edu). Essays should not exceed 5000 words (15 pages), book reviews 1250 words, and MA thesis abstracts 250 words.

Poetry submissions of no longer than five pages should be submitted electronically and in hard copy to Joann Dejudicibus (dejudicj@newpaltz.edu). For this volume we will print a special section of poetry and writing dedicated to the life and work of Pauline Uchmanowicz; please indicate in your submission if your work is intended for this section.

The deadline for the 2021 issue is December 15, 2020.

Contributors

Eric Berman graduated from SUNY New Paltz in May of 2019, with a Master's in English and a certification to teach grades 7-12. He is delighted to have recently completed a thesis on David Foster Wallace's *Infinite Jest*. Before teaching in public schools, Eric's near-term plans include working in Austin Texas' solar industry and teaching English abroad in South Korea.

Joseph Curra is an English MA student at SUNY New Paltz. As an undergraduate student, he earned his BA in English with a Concentration in Creative Writing at New Paltz, as well. His work has appeared in the *Stonethrow Review* and the *Gandy Dancer*.

Joann K. Deiudicibus (MA, English 2003) is a writing instructor and Staff Assistant for the Composition Program at SUNY New Paltz. Her poems appear in *Chronogram*, *The Shawangunk Review*, *Awosting Alchemy*, as well as *A Slant of Light: Contemporary Women Writers of the Hudson Valley* (Codhill Press), the *Calling All Poets Twentieth Anniversary Anthology* and *Ekphrasis 2020* (CAPS Press). She is the poetry co-editor of *WaterWrites* (Codhill Press). Her essays appear in *Reflecting Pool: Poets and the Creative Process* (Codhill Press) and *Affective Disorder and the Writing Life* (Palgrave Macmillan). She's been reading poetry out loud in bars, coffee houses, motels, classrooms, and churches since her late teens. Her interests include cats, composition, creativity, and confessionalism.

Patrick Jonathan Derilus is a Nyack-born American-Haitian independent writer and author. He writes poetry, short stories, and essays that are centered on existentialism in the context of Blackness. Currently a student in the MA program in English at SUNY New Paltz, he plans to pursue a career as a Creative Writing professor after graduation.

Dennis Doherty teaches creative writing and literature and SUNY New Paltz. He has also enjoyed teaching, lecturing, and reading for many other public and

private schools in the region, from elementary to high school to prison. He is author of four volumes of poetry: *The Bad Man* (Ye Olde Font Shoppe Press, 2004), *Fugitive* (Codhill Press, 2007), *Crush Test* (Codhill Press 2010), and *Black Irish* (Codhill Press, 2016) as well as a book-length study of *Huckleberry Finn: Why Read the Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (New Street Communications, 2014). Essays, poems, and stories appear throughout the literary press.

Ryene Fenner is pursuing her MAT in adolescent education at SUNY New Paltz, where she also earned her MA in English in 2019 and her BA in English in 2017 (with a minor in creative writing). Ryene writes creatively for three reasons: 1) To give voices to the voiceless when she's feeling inspired, 2) To give people a good read, and 3) To escape mundane surroundings. When she isn't at school, she is at home raising her son, who inspired her latest project (a children's book).

Thomas Festa Professor of English at SUNY New Paltz, is the author of a book and two dozen articles, as well as co-editor of three anthologies, mainly focused on Milton, Donne, and other early modern English writers. Current projects include a fourth anthology, a study of W.S. Merwin, and new poems and translations.

Jacqueline George is Associate Professor of English at SUNY New Paltz. She has published articles about Romantic reading practices and relationships between books and people. She is currently at work on a monograph about genre, the history of reading, and late-Romantic prose fiction.

Nicole Halabuda teaches English at the secondary level. She earned her MAT degree from SUNY New Paltz in 2016, and she returned last fall to complete the dual MA/MAT degree program. Her interests include ecology, posthumanism, and popular culture.

Teresa Kurtz is a student in the MA program in English at SUNY New Paltz who will graduate in May 2020. She is interested in the intersection of feminist theory and queer theory as a way of exploring the representation of bodies in literature. She plans on writing more about female monstrosity, with a focus on *Frankenstein*, in her future academic career.

Jessica Leigh is a student in the MA English program at SUNY New Paltz. She has focused her studies on medieval and Renaissance England with an emphasis

on the development of beliefs surrounding magic and their influence on English literature. Her studies influence her ongoing creative writing in the fantasy genre. Her thesis, "Women and Magic in Medieval Literature," was completed in 2019.

Sabrina E Lopez is a 2014 graduate of CUNY Hunter College with a Bachelor of Arts degree in English Literature – Creative Writing. Originally from Brooklyn, New York, she is a first-generation graduate student in the MA program in English at SUNY New Paltz. Her interests include 21st century manifestations of the mixed body and Afro-Cuban spiritual folklore.

Stephanie A. Lopez graduated from SUNY New Paltz's English MA Program in December 2019. Her interests include Shakespeare studies, science/speculative fiction, and film criticism. In the past, she has written about feminist and postcolonial adaptations of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and the complicated adaptation history of Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*.

Julia Ponder is a teacher, poet, and writer living in the Hudson Valley region of New York. She will earn her MA in English from SUNY New Paltz in May 2020. Her poetry has appeared in numerous journals and literary magazines, including *Chronogram*, *The Susquehanna Review*, *805Lit*, *THAT Magazine*, and *The Sonder Review*.

Jared S. Richman is Associate Professor of English at Colorado College. His teaching and research centers on the literature and culture of Britain's Long Eighteenth Century (1660-1832). Professor Richman's work has appeared in such journals as *European Romantic Review*, *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, and *Eighteenth Century Theory and Interpretation*. He has published on the works of William Blake, the fiction of Charlotte Smith, and the poetry of Anna Seward. Professor Richman's research has been supported by fellowships from the Library of Congress, the Lewis Walpole Library, the Pew Charitable Trusts, the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies, the Folger Shakespeare Library, and most recently by the Huntington Library. His latest project, from which his Symposium keynote was drawn, traces the relationship between nascent elocutionary theories of the Enlightenment and disability in Anglo-American culture.

Aaron Ricciardi is a New York City-based writer and performer. He is currently a Core Apprentice at the Playwrights' Center, a member of Clubbed Thumb's Early-Career Writers' Group, and a lyricist in the BMI Lehman Engel Musical

Theatre Workshop. Work includes *Only Child*; *A Bushel and a Peck*, a play for one actor; *Nice Nails*; *The Travels*: an Epic play with songs (New York Musical Festival production); and *Hanukkah Harriet*, a play for young people (soon to be published by Stage Partners). Aaron graduated from the Theatre program at Northwestern University, where he studied playwriting under Laura Schellhardt, and he received his MFA in Playwriting from Indiana University, where he studied under Peter Gil-Sheridan. Aaron is currently on faculty at SUNY New Paltz. www.aaronricciardi.com

Jan Zlotnik Schmidt is a SUNY Distinguished Teaching Professor of English at SUNY New Paltz in the Department of English where she teaches autobiography, creative writing, American and contemporary literature, women's Literature, and Holocaust literature courses. Her work has been published in many journals, monographs, essay collections, and other venues. One chapbook, *The Earth Was Still*, was recently published by Finishing Line Press and another *Hieroglyphs of Father-Daughter Time* by Word Temple Press. *Legacies: Fiction, Poetry, Drama, Nonfiction*, a composition and literature textbook and anthology, co-authored with Lynne Crockett, published by Cengage is now in its fifth edition. Her full length volume, *Foraging for Light* was published in September 2019 by Finishing Line Press. She has a B.A. from University of Rochester (1969); an M.A. from University of Wisconsin, Madison (1970); and a Ph.D. from Syracuse University (1977).

Jeffrey Seitz is a graduate student at SUNY New Paltz, studying for his MA in English. Besides writing poetry, he is working on a novel titled *Tethered* which narrates the lives of conjoined twin brothers. His writings have been published in the *Chronogram*, *Hudson Valley Magazine*, and more recently *The Lakeville Journal*. He graduates this May.

Robert Singleton received both his BA Degree and MA Degrees from SUNY New Paltz. His mother, Natalie Tompkins Singleton was also a New Paltz graduate (Class of 1940). He taught in the Composition Program as a TA and later as an Adjunct Instructor for the English Department until his retirement from the department after being diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease in 2014. He also taught in the College Writing program at Marist College in Poughkeepsie, N.Y. His poems have appeared in *Xanadu*, *The Long Island Poetry Collective*, *Maelstrom*, *Foxtail*, *The Image of War* (the publican of *The Center for the Preservation of Civil War Photography*), as well as previous issues of *The Shawangunk*

Review. He currently lives in Schenectady, New York.

H. R. Stoneback (Distinguished Professor Emeritus, SUNY New Paltz) is the founding editor of the *Shawangunk Review* and the author of several monographs, essays, and poetry collections, including *Reading Hemingway's The Sun Also Rises* (Kent State UP, 2007), *Imagism: Essays on Its Initiation, Impact, & Influence* (UNO Press 2013), *Affirming the Gold Thread* (Florida English Press, 2014), and *Songs & Poems for Hemingway & Paris*. Despite (or because of) his retirement, his itinerary of keynote addresses and poetry readings over the past year has taken him to Philadelphia, Nashville, the Caribbean, and beyond.

Jeremy Strahan resides in Wallkill, New York, and earned his English Master's degree through SUNY New Paltz. He has both taken and taught courses in creative and academic writing, and continues to write from his home. He has a fondness for voice acting and tabletop games.

Sharon Strauss is a visual artist and poet who earned an MFA in painting and drawing in 2019 from SUNY at New Paltz, New York. Her itinerant youth, living in diverse places for one to three year periods has influenced the ways that Sharon moves through the world. Poetry and drawing helps her to understand and connect to the ecology of the everyday. Irrespective of the medium, visual or language arts, her work hinges on observations of her surroundings, bearing witness to the intrinsic magic contained within the universes that cross her path.

C. E. Witherow is a student at SUNY New Paltz studying for an MA in English and teaching first year composition. She spends too much time in nature waiting for the trees to tell her stories. Her fiction work has been published in *Crab Fat Magazine* and *The Stonestrow Review*; her poetry has been published in *The Stonestrow Review*.

Sarah Wyman teaches 20th & 21st century North American literature with a focus on poetry, drama, and the visual arts. Her poetry has been published in *Mudfish*, *Aaduna*, *Petrichor Review*, and other venues. Finishing Line Press published her chapbook *Sighted Stones* in 2018.