Chapter 3

‘Two Great Sexes Animate the World’: Laying the Spectre of ‘Milton’s Bogey’ in Mary Shelley’s ‘*Frankenstein*’

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Generations of readers have acknowledged *Frankenstein* (1818) to be one of the most remarkable readings of Milton’s *Paradise Lost* to issue from the Romantic period.[1] It is relatively easy to account for the presence of Milton’s epic in Mary Shelley’s first novel. Her own personal copy of the poem was a gift from her lover inscribed, ‘Mary W G. from Percy B. Shelley, June 6, 1815’; we know from their shared journal entries that they both read and re-read *Paradise Lost* in the two years before she wrote the novel, and that, moreover, Percy was accustomed to read the poem aloud to her in the evenings while she was writing the novel.[2] Intriguingly too, since it was generally believed that, as a young poet, Milton had stayed in the ‘Villa Diodati’, when visiting the theologian, Giovanni Diodati, on his way back from Italy in 1639, something of Milton’s presence may have seemed to linger in the house on the shores of Lake Geneva where the idea for the novel first took shape.[3]

While Mary Shelley’s mother, Mary Wollstonecraft, had regretted the comparative lack of ‘social intercourse […] between the sexes’ in polite society, where it was customary for women to withdraw after dinner and leave the men at table, by contrast, Villa Diodati, like Milton’s Eden, seems to have offered the possibility of a more inclusive social space.[4] More than one reader has been struck by the similarities suggested in the Author’s Introduction between Mary Shelley’s representation of herself as ‘a devout but nearly silent listener’ (1831: 8) to the conversations between Byron and Shelley that lasted late into the night and Eve’s situation ‘retired in sight’ (8.41), as Raphael and Adam discourse together through the long afternoon in Paradise.[5] The likeness drawn may be troubling at first, reminiscent of the sternly

worded Pauline injunction, 'But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence' (1 Tim. 2:12). Yet although, to be sure, neither takes an active part in the discussion, neither listens passively nor uncritically either. Each in her own way offers a tacit comment on the nature of the discussion: Eve leaves; Mary Shelley stays. But in doing so both women offer an incisive critique of masculine imaginative speculation.

For the most part, unfallen Adam and Eve are seen working collaboratively to maintain the garden rather than engaging in separate 'gendered' activities. As Laura Knoppers has persuasively argued, Milton's stress on Adam and Eve's communal life and labour makes of Eden a naturally 'hybrid space' (2014: 141) with the couple declaring themselves 'happy in our mutual help / And mutual love, the crown of all our bliss'(4.727-28); in this domestic commonwealth there is no inherent distinction between public and private, masculine and feminine spheres and spaces; the artificial separation of the two is a damaging characteristic of the fallen world as *Frankenstein* and the final books of the epic make clear. However, when Eve observes the familiar signs, as Adam 'by his countenance seemed / Entering on studious thoughts abstruse' (8.39-40), she concludes that her time would be more productively spent working in the garden. Eve's departure can be read as betokening a certain impatience with Adam's abstract intellectualizing brought out by the negatively charged 'abstruse' which hints at the misdirection of Adam's creative energies here.[6] This impression is reinforced by the way Milton celebrates the maternal and nurturing power of *her* presence – the reiteration is strongly emphatic – as Eve

> ... went forth among *her* fruits and flowers,
> To visit how they prospered, bud and bloom,
> *Her* nursery; they at *her* coming sprung
> And touched by *her* fair tendence gladlier grew. (8.44-47; my emphasis)[7]

In the constant and loving attention Eve devotes to her young charges that, as yet, fill 'her nursery' – and which we later learn have been set aside for her to name (11.273-79) – Milton

stresses the virtuality of her motherhood. Eve's mothering of the flowers and its positive influence strongly exemplifies her present and future role as 'Mother of all things living' (11.161). This reading seems confirmed by the burden of Raphael's parting words to Adam which remind him of what should be his priorities, while the readiness of Adam's response registers his new-found understanding that:

> to know
> That which before us lies in daily life,
> Is the prime wisdom, what is more, is fume,
> Or emptiness, or fond impertinence (8.192-97)[8]

This scene from the epic that simultaneously celebrates the importance of Eve's active nurturing role, as well as cautioning Adam against the dangers of being caught up in imaginative flights of fancy, seems to have a direct bearing on the nature of Mary Shelley's response to the animated exchange between Percy Shelley and Byron concerning the source of life she was a party to that evening at Villa Diodati. To a mother whose own energies were much taken up with 'the cares of a family' (1831: 6), Shelley and Byron's eager speculations as to whether 'perhaps the component parts of a creature might be manufactured, brought together, and endued with vital warmth' (1831: 8) without any thought for the consequences and larger ethical issues involved in such an experiment, not only supplied the seed for the story that germinated in the reverie she experienced in the early hours of the following morning, but as importantly suggested the need for a realising context in which to situate the projected experiment in order to draw out its disturbing implications to the fullest extent.

Milton's great poem of his maturity naturally offered a rich abundance of material to flesh out the skeleton of Shelley's initial idea and quicken to life her modern creation myth, especially since the pursuit of knowledge is presented as the cause and occasion of moral disaster in both works. Eating fruit from the Tree of Knowledge is a story of human aspiration, a determination to challenge boundaries and make an imaginative leap – whatever the

consequences – into the unknown. Ironically, it is Eve rather than Adam who first takes this irrevocable step. Yet it is surely telling that Milton's Eve is rarely numbered amongst the great tragic 'overreachers' of literature and myth, like Prometheus and Satan, Faustus and Frankenstein himself. Curiously, while no explicit mention is made of Eve, she remains, as we shall see, a felt presence in the novel. This chapter will demonstrate how the foregrounding of Adam and Eve's reciprocal relationship, together with the establishment of the domestic sphere as the vital stage of human activity in Milton's epic, allows for a deeper and more richly nuanced understanding of the absent presence of Eve in *Frankenstein*. At the unseen heart of Shelley's novel is the role of the family in society and how women's central role within the family has been displaced, together with the implication that, while societies may prosper materially, they ultimately founder unless founded on the sympathetic understanding that should be instilled by family life. This chapter will also show some of the intriguing ways in which Mary Shelley manipulates her novel's complex design, with its overlapping, but distinct perspectives, to critique key moments in the narrative. Through a controlled use of Miltonic allusion, Shelley employs a covert strategy of evoking missed opportunities and repressed alternatives, offering the reader insights into how things could and should have been.

I

Shelley makes no secret of the epic's importance as an interpretative key to her work. Nowhere is this more evident than in the choice of epigraph that appears on the title page of each of the three volumes of the 1818 edition. Taken from fallen Adam's bitter reproach to his creator, 'Did I request thee, Maker, from my clay / To mould me man? Did I solicit thee / From darkness to promote me?' (10.743-45), these lines become charged with accumulating force at each successive iteration, as the novel's multilayered narrative design allows the reader to see the act of creation from opposing perspectives. Initially, the reader is naturally predisposed to share

the viewpoint of the brilliant but naive creator, as he discloses his terrible secret for the first time to the sympathetic ears of the pioneering explorer, Walton, who shares his ambitious aim of being celebrated as a benefactor of mankind. Frankenstein recalls how, as the product of his labours comes to independent life and being, he is immediately filled with horror. Frankenstein defends these sudden and irrevocable feelings of loathing and appalled disillusionment as a natural response to acute disappointment when confronting the monstrous life-form. He feels himself entirely justified in his instinctive aversion to the Creature and in his fearful recoiling from what he takes to be the menacing advances of his handiwork. Later the scene is to assume an entirely different shape when seen through the eyes of the Creature. Ironically, it is Frankenstein himself who relates the event as recounted to him by the Creature who, reaching out to his maker, is so pitilessly and irresponsibly rejected and abandoned at birth.

Although Milton uses a narrator in *Paradise Lost,* the story is not simply told from a single unitary perspective: a number of speakers recount events from their own point of view and these jostling perspectives, in which Satan as well as the Father, Eve as well as Adam, are assigned valid viewpoints, form a vital part of the epic's rich narrative texture. For instance, Milton deliberately opposes contrasting perspectives on the creation of Eve and her first meeting with Adam. Eve shares her experience with Adam, and later Adam recounts the same events from his point of view. The shift in viewpoint has a subtle effect and has only recently drawn much in the way of critical attention.[9] Despite having already heard Eve's own candid confession of why she had turned away from him at first – she preferred her own image reflected in the pool – Adam notably fails to take account of her reason for initially rejecting his advances when he recalls their first meeting to Raphael. Frankenstein exhibits a comparable narrowness of perspective in failing to allow another's point of view to influence retrospectively his own understanding of a situation and correct his own misapprehension of the Creature's motives when seeing him 'with one hand stretched out, seemingly to detain me',

Frankenstein had taken flight 'and rushed down stairs' (1818: 36). As an attentive reader of Milton's poem, Shelley famously creates an unexpected and powerful reversal of sympathy and judgement by this shift in perspective from creator to Creature which remains one of the most celebrated narrative effects of the novel.

As well as evoking the reader's sympathy for his plight, the Creature's version of events works retroactively not only to unmask more fully the exclusive self-preoccupation that informed so much of Frankenstein's own narrative, but also to expose how the latter has remained blind to the true nature of his fatal error which lay, not so much in the presumptuous act of creation itself, but in creating with no real thought for the consequences, a failure both of imaginative sympathy and ethical responsibility. Frankenstein betrays an utter lack of a sense of parental duty towards his Creature, even though 'in the first enthusiasm of success', he had imagined creating a whole 'new species' and had even boasted, 'No father could claim the gratitude of his child so completely as I should deserve theirs' (1818: 33). The creation of life should not be an end in itself: both mothers and fathers have a part to play in childrearing responsibilities; as Mary Wollstonecraft had pointedly observed, only 'If parents discharge their duty [can] they have a strong hold and sacred claim on the gratitude of their children' (2004: 190). It is certainly worth remembering that Shelley was reading her mother's work, the *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, from the 6th to 9th December 1816, while she was also at work on the novel (Jones 1947: 70), especially since the Creature's story is almost a literalisation of Wollstonecraft's observation that 'A great proportion of the misery that wanders in hideous forms, around the world, is allowed to rise from the negligence of parents' (2004: 191). Indeed, Frankenstein's self-congratulatory air seems all the more shocking given that his opening remarks to Walton focus precisely on the parental nurturing that he had withheld from the Creature by creating him motherless and leaving him fatherless. With unconscious irony he celebrates his parents' 'deep consciousness of what they owed towards

the being to which they had given life', and what that parental responsibility involved: to them he was an 'innocent and helpless creature bestowed on them by Heaven, whom to bring up to good, and whose future lot it was in their hands to direct to happiness or misery, according as they fulfilled their duties toward me' (1831: 35). But while Frankenstein indulges in self-pitying feelings of guilt for the deaths caused by his creation, he does not really feel himself directly to blame and never fully grasps why he is culpable. It becomes evident to the reader, however, that it is this originary lapse, his failure to parent his offspring, which makes him ultimately responsible for all that happens in its wake.

In stark contrast to Milton's Adam, who awakes to full maturity in paradise, moving, thinking and speaking effortlessly, the Creature, who literally remains nameless, is left utterly unprovided for; forsaken, confused and incapable of anything more than 'inarticulate sounds' (1818: 7), he must fend for himself in what initially seems an utterly bleak and hostile environment. While his rapid development is accelerated by his close observation of the De Lacey family and by sharing Felix's tutelage of Safie, the Creature's efforts to attain self-knowledge famously centre on his reading of *Paradise Lost* and the profoundly affecting impact it has on him. Offering a kind of surrogate parenting,[10] the Creature's engagement with the poem proves one of his most important formative experiences, shaping his understanding of himself and heightening his sense of dislocation in the world, as well as suggesting to him the remedy to his loneliness with the creation of a female companion. It is a remedy that holds the promise of reversing the damaging effects of his lonely existence, the violence of his repeated rejections and the tormenting feelings of exclusion which have combined to diminish, but not altogether replace, his natural feelings of empathy and benevolence with bitter resentment and a hardening desire for vengeance.

Frankenstein, on the other hand, has remained fixed and unrelenting in his attitude towards his creation, repeatedly discounting his Creature's claim to humanity. By persistently

accounting him as something less than fully human, Frankenstein has not felt the Creature entitled to make any claim upon him and has felt free of any obligation to him. When finally given the opportunity to confront his own creator, the Creature eloquently upbraids Frankenstein for his negligent disregard of his duty of care towards him and, in an anguished outburst, poignantly declares, 'I ought to be thy Adam; but I am rather the fallen angel, whom thou drivest from joy for no misdeed. Everywhere I see bliss, from which I alone am irrevocably excluded' (1818: 68). Chillingly, it is only at this point that Frankenstein admits to feeling for the very first time 'what the duties of a creator towards his creature were, and that I ought to render him happy before I complained of his wickedness' (1818: 69-70). The Creature demands of his maker a female companion, and claims movingly:

> My vices are the children of a forced solitude that I abhor; and my virtues will necessarily arise when I live in communion with an equal. I shall feel the affections of a sensitive being, and become linked to the chain of existence and events, from which I am now excluded (1818: 103-04).

The Creature recognises himself to be, like Adam, in 'unity defective' (8.425) and that a companion, one 'fit to participate / All rational delight' (8.390-91), 'with whom I can live in the interchange of those sympathies necessary for my being' (1818: 101), is essential for a fulfilling human life.[11] For both authors the primary relation is that of 'wedded love', the ultimate source of and 'all the various relationships which bind one human being to another in mutual bonds' (4.750-57; 84). It is this shared insight into the human condition which, I shall argue, holds both works together at a deeper level than the many verbal echoes and allusions to Milton's epic that are such a distinctive feature of the textual surface of Shelley's novel. '[T]he exhibition of the amiableness of domestic affection' (Percy Shelley's phrasing in the Preface, 1818: 6), may be one of the principal objectives of both works, but each in its own way demonstrates the fatal consequences that ensue when such ties are severed or domestic values are sacrificed in the pursuit of other ends.[12]

II

Creator as well as creation repeatedly see themselves as re-enacting the parts of the male protagonists in the epic. In a bewildering hall of mirrors, Frankenstein and the unnamed Creature continually oscillate between identifying themselves as either Adam or Satan, but more frequently the latter. This holds true, especially after Frankenstein, recognizing the autonomy of his creation, becomes fearful of endowing a female creature with reproductive power to make monstrous 'multitudes like [her]self' (4.474) and reneges upon their agreement, violently dismembering the body of the half-made female in plain sight of the Creature. Filled with despair, the Creature determines to turn the tables and recreate his maker in his own image: bereft of partner, family and friends. Both thus become entrapped in an intractable agon, hell-bent upon mutual destruction.

As has been commonly observed, amongst all these shifting Miltonic figurations, surprisingly no explicit mention is made of Eve; and yet, in spite of this notable omission, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar have claimed that in *Frankenstein*, 'the part of Eve *is* all the parts', most memorably aligning Eve with the Creature (2020: 230). Feminist readings of the novel in the 70s and 80s, especially this brilliant, provocative essay, often found it difficult to look past 'Milton's Bogey' (Virginia Woolf's expressive phrase).[13] From this partial perspective, *Frankenstein* is a retelling of the misogynistic story at the core of *Paradise Lost*, in which 'femaleness and fallenness' are rendered 'essentially synonymous' (2020: 234). More recently, critics have felt Mary Shelley to be, like her mother, a more resistant and critically responsive reader of the epic.[14] Wollstonecraft expressly endorsed Adam's conclusion that the 'fellowship' he seeks must be founded on reciprocity for, as he reasons, 'Among unequals what

society / Can sort, what harmony or true delight? / Which must be mutual, in proportion due / Given and received' (8.383-86), but she took issue with Milton's actual portrayal of Eve as 'our first frail mother' (2004: 28) which she felt to be directly at odds with the terms of Adam's request for an intellectually capable companion. Wollstonecraft detected what she felt to be a 'true Mahometan strain' underlying Milton's representation of women as merely 'formed for softness and sweet attractive grace', since in her eyes this consigned them to a childlike position of 'docile blind obedience' and the provision of leisure-time amusement, 'to gratify the senses of man when he can no longer soar on the wing of contemplation' (2004: 28-29). *Frankenstein* has thus understandably been viewed as a conscious critique of the epic's masculinist 'monologic and monolithic voice' (Lamb 1992: 304) and oppressively patriarchal ideology.[15] More recently still, however, the epic has begun to be celebrated as 'a polyphonic masterpiece whose many voices cannot in the nature of things concur' (Davies 1991: 100), and, rather than presuming the novel to be a 'straightforwardly agonistic response' to Milton's epic, *Frankenstein* has been found to be 'surprisingly sympathetic to aspects of *Paradise Lost*'s Reformist ethos' (Shohet 2018: 157). The possibility of finding a more nuanced relationship between the two works is in keeping with important trends in Milton studies which have established the pivotal role Eve plays in the narrative as instigator not only of the Fall, but also of the process of regeneration afterwards (Green 2017: 84-85).

In response to Gilbert and Gubar's influential essay, the tireless interrogation of the sexual politics of *Paradise Lost* has alerted readers to the way that, while the text may loudly proclaim a gender hierarchy, it is at the same time 'quietly subverting patriarchal paradigms' (Wittreich, 1997: 34), assigning 'voice and status to the feminine' (Marcus 2010: 61) and endowing Eve with an authentic female perspective and agency in the events leading up to the Fall and its aftermath (Green 2016: 17). Attention too has been drawn to the way Milton's epic challenges an exclusively masculine gendering of creative power. To be sure, on the level of

surface statement at least, creativity appears to be an exclusively male prerogative in Milton's scheme. Accordingly, Gilbert and Gubar have insisted that *Paradise Lost* is an example of 'the patriarchal etiology that defines a solitary Father God as the only creator of all things' (2020: 188). However, such a view is too much of a convenient over-simplification: by using parturient imagery Milton deliberately introduces a female dimension into an otherwise male cosmic scheme. Initially, the earth is dramatically pictured as a developing foetus:

> The earth was formed, but in the womb as yet
> Of waters, embryon immature involved,
> Appeared not. (7.276-78)

But this is nothing to compare with the daring simultaneity of effect whereby the placental waters which encompass the maturing embryo are seen to act as seminal fluid, impregnating the whole surface of Mother Earth as one fertile and receptive womb:

> … over all the face of earth
> Main ocean flowed, not idle, but with warm
> Prolific humour softening all her globe,
> Fermented the great mother to conceive,
> Satiate with genial moisture. (7.278-82)

Until, her time ripe, the 'great mother' (7.281) effortlessly:

> Opening her fertile womb teemed at a birth
> Innumerous living creatures, perfect forms,
> Limbed and full grown. (7.454-56)[16]

The miracle of life, the natural process of conception, gestation and giving birth at full term to countless 'perfect forms', contrasts decisively with the painstakingly laborious and gruesome assembling of body parts in Frankenstein's dismal attic. His efforts result in a single end-product, a miserably misshapen living being whose defects are directly attributable to Frankenstein's hasty handiwork. Frankenstein's impatience with any delay tempts him to work on a larger than human scale: 'As the minuteness of the parts formed a great hindrance to my

speed, I resolved, contrary to my first intention, to make the being of a gigantic stature' (1818: 33). It seems not by chance that the Creature tellingly contrasts the 'perfect forms' that he admires in the De Lacey family with the 'deformity of [his own] figure' (1818: 78).

Indeed, Gilbert and Gubar's insistence that *Paradise Lost* illustrates the 'historical dispossession and degradation of the female principle' (2020: 199) seems more in keeping with Frankenstein's revisionary creation than God's creations. In creating the Creature, Frankenstein does not so much attempt to appropriate female reproductive power as sidestep it altogether. Natural motherhood, and indeed women, are thus rendered superfluous, a consequence chillingly borne home in the symbolic language of Frankenstein's nightmare where he moves to embrace Elizabeth and finds himself with his dead mother decomposing in his arms.[17] With the primary relationship between male and female bypassed, male as well as female reproductive capacity would become redundant too. Just how Frankenstein had envisaged creating a new species is left uncertain: did he originally intend to create a new Eve as well as a new Adam? Or had he conceived his brave new world to be peopled 'without feminine' (10.893), so as to be entirely the products of his own hands, owing their being exclusively to him? The latter feels more likely, yet clearly the process of creation, unlike God's deft handiwork, was so labour intensive that such beings could hardly be mass produced by this method, or perhaps his imaginings had not extended to that level of detail because he had been so absorbed by the creation of the first creature.

As we have noted, the Creature's first response to life had been to reach toward his creator: with that independent movement had come the abrupt realisation to Frankenstein that he had created an autonomous being, not merely an echo of his will; this understanding brought with it the uncertainties and responsibilities that attend actual biological fatherhood. Though God believes he has created Adam and Eve, 'Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall' (3.99), Frankenstein lacks this faith in his creatures' potential for good. It occurs to

Frankenstein that creating a new Eve, independently minded and physically powerful with, unlike the first Eve, a choice of partners whom she could wrest to her desire, would have repercussions beyond his, and even perhaps the Creature's control. Frankenstein destroys the female creature because her reproductive capacity would be independent of them both (McWhir 2001: 161-62). His dream had been of a new species that would owe their being to him, to issue directly from him; he is confronted with the nightmarish prospect of a monstrous race that could supplant humankind altogether.

Nor is the female contribution to the creative process relegated to a merely passive role in Milton's epic, as is often claimed. The physical universe of *Paradise Lost* is animated by '*two* great Sexes' (8.151, emphasis added) conjoined in a dynamic interdependent relationship. Suns and moons actively 'Communicating male and female light' (8.150)[18] become an emblematic expression of this constantly renewable source of creative energy, an ongoing conversation of giving and receiving at the very heart of life. God involves Eve in the primary act of creation by promising her that she will multiply her own image in bearing 'multitudes like thyself' (4.474). Yet Milton's God does not create Eve female simply 'for race' (11.530); the angels, who have no reproductive capacity, nevertheless 'either sex assume, or both' (1.424) to enjoy the totally immersive experience of angelic intercourse. As early as *Tetrachordon* (1645), Milton disposes of the 'crabbed opinion' that 'manly friendship' would have been preferable company for Adam (*R* 1032-33). In the divorce tracts, Milton saw in the fruitful give and take of conversational exchange, in which partners learn about, and from one another, the most secure and enduring foundation for married life. In the *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* he confidently declared a 'meet and happy conversation' to be 'the chiefest and noblest end of marriage' (*R* 938). Milton proposed, too, that love-making was simply an extension of such conversation, even claiming that the conversation of an intellectually well-matched couple would serve to re-animate their desire for one another, since

the act of sexual intercourse 'of itself soon cloies', he maintained, 'unless it be cherisht and re-incited with a pleasing conversation' (*Colasterion,* 1645: 14). Adam's reasoning leads him to recognise that on his own he is incomplete, while Eve instinctively looks for a sense of relationship with another to complete her sense of self and is content at first to be in silent communion with 'the *answering* looks of sympathy and love' (4.464, my emphasis), she finds reflected in the pool. The imagery here clearly had great personal resonance for Milton as it did for Mary Shelley.[19]

III

This iconic scene in which Eve sees the human form for the very first time, but is quite unaware that the figure she catches sight of in the lake is a reflection of herself, is, of course, one of the most famous episodes in the epic. Eve's attraction to the apparent responsiveness of her reflected image, the 'answering looks / Of sympathy and love' is suggested syntactically by the mirroring of subject and image along the line of symmetry at the end of two successive verses: 'I started back, / It started back', and 'pleased I soon returned, / Pleased it returned as soon' (4.462-65). Shelley deliberately evokes this episode to very different effect on the first occasion the Creature glimpses his own reflection 'in a transparent pool' (1818: 78). Until that point his standard of beauty is, as we have just remarked, the 'perfect forms of the cottagers'; he has only been able to guess at his own form from the horrified reactions reflected on the faces of those he has encountered. This delayed anagnorisis is made more powerful by the appalling shock of self-recognition as he too 'starts back' but in disgust rather than delight:

> At first I started back, unable to believe that it was indeed I who was reflected in the mirror; and when I became fully convinced that I was in reality the monster that I am, I was filled with the bitterest sensations of despondence and mortification. (1818: 78-79).

Besides his gigantic stature, Shelley is guarded when describing the external appearance of the Creature. While Frankenstein insists that he had carefully 'selected his features as beautiful' with 'lustrous black, and flowing' hair and 'teeth of a pearly whiteness'; these only serve to heighten the 'horrid contrast' with the way the 'skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath' (1818: 35). It is perhaps here we need to pause. God's exquisite handiwork keeps the working parts of the body concealed by a covering of skin, whereas Frankenstein's Creature shockingly exposes what lies beneath, in the manner of an anatomical drawing or rather an animated example of plastination.[20] The trauma of such a confrontation makes the mastery of spoken language of even more consequence to the Creature as the only means available to make contact with humankind in a way that will enable them to look past his 'miserable deformity' (1818: 79).

By the same token, both Milton and Shelley suggest failed communication, whether through an 'unconversing inability of mind' (*R* 938) or a deliberate lack of openness, to be irreversibly damaging to relationships. Initially, the domestic harmony in the Frankenstein household appears idyllic: Elizabeth, as 'the living spirit of love to soften and attract' (1831: 40), embodies Eve's defining qualities, 'softness and sweet attractive grace' (4.298) and, just as Eve's presence affects Adam, infusing 'Sweetness into my heart, unfelt before' (4.475), Frankenstein acknowledges that 'I might have become sullen in my study, rough through the ardour of my nature, but that she was there to subdue me to a semblance of her own gentleness' (1831: 40). Hints of an underlying lack of openness, however, predate Frankenstein's removal to Inglostadt where his self-isolation becomes complete. After his father had dismissed the books that he finds so fascinating as 'sad trash' (1831: 40), Frankenstein eagerly tries to engage Elizabeth in his studies 'but', as he recalls to Walton, 'she did not interest herself in the subject, and I was left by her to pursue my studies alone' (1818: 23). This perhaps marks the beginning of the gulf that widens and remains between them after he leaves for Inglostadt, as he no longer

sees her as an intellectual companion. Frankenstein celebrates the way he and Elizabeth 'were strangers to any species of disunion or dispute' (1818: 20), but it seems that rather than voice her true feelings about the egotistical ambitions fostered by such reading – that he might 'banish disease from the human frame, and render man invulnerable to any but a violent death' (1818: 23) – she suppresses them to avoid any open conflict between the two of them. We may be put in mind of Walton confiding to his sister that he was greatly in need of 'a friend who would have sense enough not to despise me as romantic, and affection enough for me to endeavour to regulate my mind' (1818: 10). It is clear that Elizabeth would have no truck with the kind of aspiration cherished by Frankenstein, and by Walton too for that matter. When she writes to Frankenstein during his convalescence at Inglostadt, after his physical and mental breakdown, Elizabeth reflects on what profession his younger brother Ernest might be encouraged to follow. Rather than pursuing the fame and glory craved by pioneers like Frankenstein and Walton, she advocates a pursuit that looks back to the originary occupation of Adam and Eve. To her mind, 'to cultivate the earth for the sustenance of man', is to engage in 'the least hurtful, or rather the most beneficial profession of any' (1818: 41); whether Frankenstein senior will take heed of her recommendation is left very much in doubt, however. With hindsight her failure to speak her mind at this critical juncture, when the foundations of Frankenstein's future ambitions were being laid, seems a missed opportunity 'to regulate' his imaginings.

Although Walton admits that writing to his sister is 'a poor medium for the communication of feeling' (1818: 10) and an inadequate substitute for the male companionship he seeks, her presence in his thoughts helps to ensure that Margaret Saville's 'gentle and feminine fosterage' (1831: 20) continues to influence him in the wider world, even while they are far apart physically, and promotes his sense of a duty of care to his men, finally strengthening his resolve to disregard Frankenstein's exhortation for them to continue their quest and steeling his determination not to sacrifice his crew's safety to the pursuit of his dream of discovering a

new world. Frankenstein on the other hand entirely disregards Elizabeth's 'intreaties that I would write often' (1831: 46). The reader might feel that if Frankenstein had kept up a correspondence with Elizabeth instead of self-isolating so completely while he was in Inglostadt, he might have become 'the constant friend and companion' that she longs for in her 'airy dreams of futurity' (1818: 131), and he would have benefited from her continuing influence. Indeed, Milton had urged 'the apt and cheerful conversation of man with woman' would guard 'against the evill of solitary life' (*R* 935). This is subtly intimated by his response to the letter from Elizabeth that reaches him after he begins to recover from his second breakdown:

> Sweet and beloved Elizabeth! I read and reread her letter, and some softened feelings stole into my heart and dared to whisper paradisiacal dreams of love and joy; but the apple was already eaten (1818: 136)

Even though Elizabeth openly acknowledges the unspoken divide between them, helplessly lamenting, 'But you are distant from me' (1818: 135), Frankenstein still chooses to keep this knowledge from Elizabeth even after they are reunited once again. The fatal consequences of this decision are hard to exaggerate, as we shall see.

IV

Frankenstein, like Adam, has shown an inclination to objectify his female companion from the outset: he sees Elizabeth as his 'promised gift' (1831: 37), while Adam hails Eve as 'Heaven's last best gift' (5.19). Felix exhibited a similar tendency when he first catches sight of Safie, regarding her as 'treasure' whose possession 'would fully reward his toil and hazard' (1818: 85) in assisting her father's escape. However, it is intimated that Felix's attitude to Safie changes as they exchange letters and he embraces the ideal of intellectual companionship to which she is committed. Through her letters Felix learns of the high ideals Safie's Christian

mother had instilled in her: ‘to aspire to higher powers of intellect, and an independence of spirit, forbidden to the female followers of Mahomet’ (1818: 86). These ‘lessons were indelibly impressed’ (ibid.) on her daughter who continues to live by them even after her mother’s death. Accordingly, Safie rejects the future her Turkish father would condemn her to and ‘is sickened at the prospect of […] being immured within the walls of a haram, allowed only to occupy herself with puerile amusements, ill suited to the temper of her soul, now accustomed to grand ideas and the noble emulation for virtue’ (ibid.). Ironically unaware of the culturally and socially imposed constraints on the freedom of movement accepted by western women even from educated, well-to-do families like the Frankensteins, Safie exhibits her ‘independence of spirit’ by taking the initiative and venturing on a quest to find Felix herself. Sadly, such agency is unimaginable to Elizabeth.[21] The reader sees how Elizabeth herself becomes circumscribed by domestic responsibilities, doomed to occupy herself with ‘trifling occupations [that] take up my time and amuse me’ (1831: 66). Elizabeth deeply regrets not being the one to nurse Frankenstein to health – ‘how often have I regretted not being able to perform it [that office] myself!’ (1831: 65) – and when Frankenstein sets out for London, she generously secures for him a substitute for herself again in Clerval, as we learn from Frankenstein who acknowledges her thoughtfulness in the arrangement: ‘It had been her care which provided me a companion in Clerval’ (1831: 159). Yet, even the compliant and long-suffering Elizabeth grows restless and repines at the prospect of her confinement to a ‘narrow circuit’ (9.323) and wistfully longs to see more of the world, regretting that ‘she had not the same opportunities of enlarging her experience, and cultivating her understanding’ as Frankenstein and Clerval (1818: 110). It should be noted that, for all Shelley’s focus on the crucial role to be played by the domestic affections in civilised life, she does not imply that either sex should be ‘cooped up in one place’ (1818: 27). We should remember that the author herself was a great traveller, and no stranger to flouting social constraints: when just sixteen she had run away with Percy Shelley, who was

already married, and her half-sister Claire Clairmont. After crossing the Channel, they made an intrepid journey by donkey, mule, carriage, and foot through war-torn France to Switzerland. Mary and Percy recorded their experiences in a shared journal, which they published in 1817 under the title *History of a Six Weeks' Tour*. Mary later recalled the adventure as 'acting a novel, being an incarnate romance'.[22]

V

The failure of Frankenstein and Elizabeth's relationship is brought into even sharper focus with the arrival of Safie in the De Lacey household, witnessed from the Creature's perspective, who is a silent observer of events in the cottage. The De Laceys' fall from material prosperity and social standing has enforced a simple life of gardening labour and shared chores. Their life in exile seems to this silent witness, however, a domestic idyll in which 'they enjoyed one another's company and speech, interchanging each day looks of affection and kindness' (1818: 76). As Wollstonecraft had reasoned, the domestic affections should 'grow out of the habitual exercise of a mutual sympathy' among family members (2004: 189), serving to enlarge the capacity for empathy and sympathetic understanding which should then be continually cultivated within and beyond the domestic sphere. With the addition of Safie to the household, and the mellowing spring weather, their life together begins to seem a veritable paradise regained, a fully integrated and hybrid sphere in which Safie's longing for knowledge is satisfied by Felix' willing tutelage.

Besides the 'rational delight' that Adam and Eve enjoy in each other's company and conversation, one of the other defining qualities of the first human pair's prelapsarian existence is a similarly balanced and harmonious alternation of activity and leisure. Only the animals in Milton's Paradise 'Rove idle unemployed' (4.617), whereas 'Man hath his daily work of body or mind' (4.618) to keep them both active physically and intellectually. While Adam is happy

to maintain a balanced approach to their 'daily work of body or mind', it is Eve, surprisingly, Eve, who first threatens to disturb this equilibrium by too exclusive a preoccupation with her work in the garden at the expense of her relationship with Adam. Shelley too, ironically using Frankenstein as her mouthpiece as well as her exemplum, warns of the dangerous consequences of allowing any pursuit to become so all-engrossing as to interfere with 'the tranquillity of [the] domestic affections' (1818: 34). Frankenstein becomes utterly obsessed and addicted to his work, which, as he acknowledges, had taken such 'an irresistible hold of my imagination', that he found himself wishing, 'to procrastinate all that related to my feelings of affection until the great object, which swallowed up every habit of my nature, should be completed' (1818: 34). Eve likewise seems naturally hard working and displays a deeper sense of vocation and commitment to their duties and responsibilities in the garden than Adam. Unlike Adam, who is content merely to keep the pathways clear (9.244-45), she is closely observed in a range of gardening activities, displaying a practical, 'hands-on' approach to gardening. Driven like Frankenstein by a similar desire to improve upon Nature, the 'thick-woven arborets and flowers / Embordered on each bank' all offer evidence of 'the hand of Eve' (9.437-38). This takes a more sinister turn in her fatal encounter with Satan.

While Raphael's visit has left Adam content with his life in the garden, finding 'allayed / The thirst I had of knowledge' (8.7-8), and happy to follow the narrator's caution and 'know to know no more' (4.775), it seems to have had the unlooked-for effect of leaving Eve restless and uneasy. Having been virtually excluded from Adam's conversation with Raphael[23] and conscious of his evident delight in the novelty of sharing the angel's company, Eve is more inclined to have her appetite for knowledge and her desire for self-advancement amplified rather than curbed. She may also feel her earlier observation that

Adam can ‘Like consort to thyself canst nowhere find’ (4.448) more unsettling than she did previously and find Adam’s remark that ‘nothing lovelier can be found / In woman than to study household good’ (9.232-33) more irksome, since the Angel’s visit. That such concerns have been preying on her mind seem evident from the way, after eating the forbidden fruit, she contemplates whether to reserve

> … the odds of knowledge in my power
> Without copartner? so to add what wants
> In female sex, the more to draw his love,
> And render me more equal, and perhaps,
> A thing not undesirable, sometime
> Superior (9.820-25)

When Eve proposes to institute a division of labour that will increase their productivity and efficiency by removing the distractions prompted by the ‘sweet intercourse of / Looks and smiles’ (9.238-39) and ‘Casual discourse’ (9.223) between them, she is prepared to forego the very expressions of mutuality yearned for by the Creature. As we have seen, Frankenstein too purposefully sets aside his ‘domestic affections’ in order to focus entirely on the Creature. Possessed by this unhealthy obsession, he isolates himself in a ‘solitary chamber, or rather cell’ (34) and is so engrossed in his work that he becomes oblivious to all else, ‘insensible to the charms of nature’ and to the passage of time (1818: 34-35). In a rare moment of insight, he later cautions Walton, ‘If the study to which you apply yourself has a tendency to weaken your affections, and to destroy your taste for those simple pleasures in which no alloy can possibly mix, then that study is certainly unlawful, that is to say, not befitting the human mind’(ibid.). He goes on to reflect that all manner of man-made catastrophes would have been averted, ‘If this rule were always observed: if no man allowed any pursuit whatsoever to interfere with the

tranquillity of his domestic affections' (ibid.). Perhaps even the very first disaster, the Fall, could be included in this list.

In the exchange that follows Eve's suggestion of a temporary separation to Adam, it becomes evident that Eve is now assigning a higher priority to her work in the garden than to the loving relationship between them. Eve is gently reproved for too exclusive a preoccupation with the flowers and fruits of her nursery at the expense of human love: her single-minded devotion to promoting the fruitfulness of her garden has now become too narrowly focused, and she has become oblivious to all other claims upon her attention, 'mindless the while / Herself' (9.431-32). While Milton allows 'solitude sometimes is best society' (9.249), he nevertheless implicitly advocates fruitful interchange as a general principle: alternating periods of work with a little refreshing leisure time, endorsing the competing claims of love, friendship and family life that keep us grounded and work within bounds, for, as he observes in *Tetrachordon*, 'We cannot therefore alwayes be contemplative, or pragmaticall abroad, but have need of som delightfull intermissons' (*R* 1033).

On the morning of the Fall, it is Adam who attempts to act as a regulatory influence, trying to impress upon Eve the value of 'domestic affection' and the benefits of staying together:

> I from the influence of thy looks receive
> Access in every virtue, in thy sight […]
> Why shouldst not thou like sense within thee feel
> When I am present […]
> So spake domestic Adam in his care
> And matrimonial love (9.309-10; 315-16; 318-19)

Nevertheless, Eve understandably bridles at this attempt to curb her freedom of movement with the loss of independent agency that would entail: 'Was I to have never parted from thy side? / As good have grown there still a lifeless rib' (9.1154-54), she retorts after the Fall. In the

gardening debate, Eve voices Milton's own position in *Areopagitica* where he scorns, 'a fugitive and cloister'd vertue, unexercis'd & unbreath'd, that never sallies out and sees her adversary' (*R* 1006) and persists in her determination to garden alone. As 'adventurous Eve' (9.921) is set against 'domestic Adam' (9.318) we see how, in his treatment of the Fall, Milton offers us a subtly nuanced variation on the predicted pattern in which it is the male figure who possesses an independent spirit while the female is consigned intellectually and physically to the domestic sphere. This reverses the natural propensities that each had showed initially; surprisingly, as Liebert points out: 'Eve falls through a thirst for knowledge', Adam 'because he is sensitive to the necessity of relationships' (2003: 155).

Although created incomplete without the other, in a state of 'single imperfection' (8.423), Adam and Eve had started sharing in each other's particular qualities from the very outset. For 'softness and sweet attractive grace' (4.298) may seem pre-eminently feminine qualities, just as 'contemplation […] and valour' (4.297) may seem pre-eminently masculine qualities, but they are neither *exclusively* feminine nor masculine attributes; together they combine to make human complexity. That the difference between genders is more helpfully regarded as one of degree than kind is borne out by the mutually affective nature of their relationship: just as Adam confides in Raphael how his masculinity had been tempered by her softening presence, infusing 'Sweetness into [his] heart, unfelt before' (8.475), so, by the same token, it is Eve who first engages Adam in cosmographical speculation (4.657-58) and it is Eve who proves to have the more 'dauntless' spirit (9.694). In this way, Milton repeatedly unsettles the rigid binary of gender identity that his text habitually affirms and suggests something of the gender fluidity that the angels 'enjoy / In eminence' (8.623-24), since for them gender and sexual identity are neither essential nor defining qualities; their experience is entirely fluid, since they can 'either sex assume, or both' (8.424).

With this unexpected slippage in roles between the human couple, as Leah Marcus has so perceptively observed:

> ... it is Eve who is the protoempiricist, anticipating modern scientific method in her interest in collecting her own data – How is it possible that a serpent has come to speak? Which tree's fruit did he eat to attain his powers? – while Adam is content with prepackaged revelations and limits provided for him discursively by the angels who counsel him to be 'lowly wise' (8.173). (2010: 57)

Eve assumes, like Frankenstein, the role of the Faustian overreacher impatient with human limitations. While Frankenstein creates his new Adam superior to ordinary humanity in terms of accelerated development, strength, agility and resilience, Eve seeks a different pathway, one to personal transcendence. In line with Milton's monistic ontology, flesh is not set in opposition to spirit – they are rather different points on the same continuum – so Raphael had explained to Eve, as well as to Adam, the gentle metamorphic process of refinement whereby unfallen mankind, turned 'all to spirit', would eventually have made a 'winged ascend / Ethereal' (5.497-99). This promised future, conditional upon their obedience, is imaged through the natural evolution of a plant, 'by gradual scale sublimed', from the root to its culmination in 'flowers and their fruit' (5.483, 482). In his temptation of Eve, Satan cunningly offers her a fast-track promotion: she may anticipate the gradual ripening process outlined by Raphael and seize immediately in her grasp the fruit of a life by 'long obedience tried' (7.159) to become a 'goddess among gods' (9.547).

VI

During the aftermath of the Fall, Adam self-isolates and the unproductive twisting and turnings of guilty self-accusation that circle back upon themselves and finally lead nowhere are traced with fine precision by Milton. Frankenstein, likewise, having cut himself off from the emotional support of Elizabeth and his family, finds his mind recoils back upon itself, trapped

in ‘gloomy and narrow reflections upon self’ (1818: 21). Like fallen Adam, Frankenstein finds himself recapitulating Satan’s appalled experience of despair and damnation: ‘Anguish and despair had penetrated into the core of my heart; I bore a hell within me, which nothing could extinguish’ (1818: 59). Both are trapped in self-obsessive guilt and despair, but Adam is released from this deadlock, not by reason but by an appeal to his emotions. Adam is jolted out of his self-absorption by the approach of Eve; she becomes Adam’s guide out of the abyss. The emotional bond that had precipitated his turning away from God is now the direct cause of Adam’s return to him.[24]

Only moments before this pivotal moment in the epic, Adam had bitterly upbraided divine providence, demanding to know why his creator had not found another way of generating humankind, creating a world ‘without feminine’ (10.893). Adam’s question is now answered, and what had seemed flawed to him in God’s design is now fully revealed. Eve’s heroic initiative in meeting his misogynistic outburst with ‘soft words’ (10.866) and ‘tears that ceased not flowing’ (10.910) enables an infusion of softness that softens ‘the stony’ (11.4) in Adam’s heart. Thus, ‘softened’, Adam no longer despairs, and the regenerative process begins. Such a critical moment may be glimpsed in the novel when Elizabeth might have provided the means of reversing the downward spiral of destruction and despair which the Creature, as well as creator, seem fated to follow. Despite the evidence stacked against Justine and the hostility of the courtroom where everyone is convinced that she is guilty of the murder of young William Frankenstein, Elizabeth promises her, ‘I will melt the stony hearts of your enemies by my tears and prayers’ (1831: 88). Elizabeth’s own heroic initiative is doomed to failure because Frankenstein has withheld the truth from her, and, unlike Adam, he hardens his resolve to stay silent in the face of her emotional appeal. More telling still, given that it is only Elizabeth who fails to see a monster when everyone else cannot see beneath the appearance of guilt – when even Justine herself begins to have her doubts (‘I almost began to think that I was the monster

that he said I was', 1818: 58) – Shelley suggests that perhaps Elizabeth alone might not have prejudged the Creature and might have offered the sympathetic response he craved. Frankenstein's continued silence thereby denies to Elizabeth a potentially redemptive role.

Elizabeth herself passively accepts without reproach or question Frankenstein's decision not to confide in her the cause of his long silence, the nature of his breakdown and the distance he maintains between them even after his return from the disastrous trip to Scotland. By denying her any active involvement in his life, Frankenstein not only further isolates himself, depriving himself of a real companion, but he consigns her to a reduced sphere of action. Frankenstein finally promises to share his secret the day after their wedding night, but by not confiding in her the nature of the danger to hand, he inadvertently sends her to her death in ignorance of the fate that awaits her. Unlike Eve, Elizabeth has no conception of the fatal encounter before her; Gilbert's complaint that Eve is left to languish 'helpless and alone' (2020: 239) is truer of Elizabeth than of Eve. While Frankenstein may believe that he is trying to preserve her innocence, it is an innocence rooted in ignorance of the real situation and an overprotectiveness that tries to impose a 'cloistered virtue' which puts her at risk mentally, physically and spiritually, for her resulting sense of disillusionment is tellingly phrased: 'misery has come home, and men appear to me as monsters thirsting for each other's blood' (63). Frankenstein's inability to divulge his dark secret to friends and family condemns him to perpetual isolation: 'I answered no questions, scarcely did I speak. I felt as if I were placed under a ban – as if I had no right to claim their sympathies – as if never more might I enjoy companionship with them' (1831: 151). When he finally unburdens himself to Walton, it is already too late to make a difference, 'I – I have lost everything, and cannot begin life anew' (1818: 17).

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* is not so much a reworking of Milton's creation myth in the light of Romantic ideology as an implicit critique of Romantic individualism.[25] Shelley

unsettles the romantic paradigm of the lone genius creating directly from his own imagination, like Zeus giving birth to Athena from out of his head, by suggesting Frankenstein's sterile self-preoccupation to be more like Satan's narcissistic parody of parthenogenesis in authoring Sin. Shelley's novel has been held to convey 'her condemnation of masculine Romantic egotism, epitomised in her husband's naively idealistic – perhaps cavalier – attitude to marriage vows, family responsibility and societal conventions'.[26] This said, when Mary Shelley wrote *Frankenstein* she enjoyed a loving intellectual partnership with Percy in which the latter, through the advantages of superior educational opportunities and the seniority that comes with age and experience, played the role of supportive tutor, and Mary felt the benefits of 'improving my ideas in communication with his far more cultivated mind' (1831: 6). In this they replayed the intellectual companionship of the first couple in which Eve, delighting in 'what was high' (8.50) enjoyed Adam's tutelage, though conscious that he 'like consort' could 'nowhere find' (4.448). Both were apt and able students whose intellectual capacity rapidly closed the gap between their mentors and themselves. Notably, for our purposes here, Percy actively nurtured Mary's literary endeavours and ambitions; she emphasised how he was 'from the first, very anxious that I should prove myself worthy of my parentage, and enrol myself on the page of fame. He was for ever inciting me to obtain literary reputation' (1831: 6). Percy encouraged Mary to expand her haunting tale into a novel and proved an attentive reader and editor of the work. His editorial comments provide ample evidence, as Wolfson and Levao have remarked, of the 'lively and affectionate relationship between older published poet and his talented but less experienced lover' (2012: 54).[27] After his untimely death in 1822, she would, in turn, edit, publish and promote the works of her husband.

Recent theories about human development in the relatively new field of social neuroscience have returned to an Aristotelian emphasis on the way that 'man is by nature a social animal' (*Politics*, III.6). According to this shift in the conceptual framework behind

evolution, *homo sapiens* is a naturally social and empathic rather than individualistic species.[28] These findings are very much in keeping with the significance given to sociality and 'social communication' (8.428) with the consequent dangers of isolation and exclusion, whether chosen or imposed, in both works we have been discussing here.[29] An impressive body of evidence has exposed the insufficiency of the Romantic myth of the solitary genius working alone and has focused attention on the *Powers of Two: How Relationships Drive Creativity* (Joshua Wolf Shenk: 2015), identifying collaborative partnerships as the primary embodiment of the creative unit. At crucial moments both Frankenstein and Eve see themselves as examples of heroic individualism and willingly forego the fruitful interchange of domestic affection and take fatally flawed decisions in isolation. On the other hand, the adventurer Walton's decision to abandon his quest and turn back before the point of no return is shaped by his sense of responsibility for the safety of those in his charge and ultimately by the regulating influence of his sister on his actions, enlarging his capacity to feel a greater sense of concern for his men and a sense of community with them. Frankenstein's single-minded and solitary quest for vengeance is driven to its conclusion by the tragically deluded belief that the spirits of his family would aid and abet such a mission.[30] Whereas Eve is the first to put the domestic affections in jeopardy and set in train 'the fruitless hours' (9.1188) that ensue, she is also the first to begin repairing the damage by reaching out to Adam, thus ensuring that, while they may leave Eden as 'solitary', individuated beings, they choose to face the future together, 'hand in hand' (12.648-49).

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[1] See, for example, Tannenbaum, who observes how, 'In *Frankenstein* Mary Shelley is engaged in a continual dialogue with Milton, expressed by direct and oblique allusions to *Paradise Lost*' (1977: 101), or Oates, who claims that, 'The influence of John Milton on *Frankenstein* is so general as to figure on nearly every page' (1984: n1, 553).

[2] The inscription is reproduced in *The Annotated Frankenstein*, ed. by Wolson and Levao (2012: 49). Because of the meticulous records she kept -- see *Mary Shelley's Journal* (1947) – we know that she read *Paradise Lost* in 1815 (48) and again in 1816 (73), and that Shelley read the poem aloud to her every evening for a week, beginning Friday 15th November 1816, while she was at work on the novel: for example, the entry for Sunday 17th November succinctly notes, 'he [Shelley] reads "Paradise Lost" aloud in the evening. I write' (68).

[3] In the *Defensio Secunda*, Milton recalled how, 'In Geneva I conversed daily with John Diodati, the learned professor of theology' (*R* 1117). In his *Life of Shelley*, Dowden records that the Villa Diodati was 'where Milton, returning from Italy in I639, had visited his friend' (1886: II.14), but regrettably there seems to have been no truth in the claim, see Clarke (1935: 51-57).

[4] In the Dedication Wollstonecraft is contrasting 'the social intercourse [between the sexes] which has long subsisted' in France with the rest of Europe (2004: 3).

[5] Unless otherwise stated, quotations will be taken from Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein: The 1818 Text* (2012), ed. by J. P. Hunter; quotations from the revised edition of 1831 are taken from Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein* (2003) ed. by M. Hindle.

[6] This reading is reinforced by the only other use of this adjective in the poem where, appearing in the superlative form, it refers to Satan's plans to foment rebellion and the capacity of God's 'eternal eye' to penetrate the most hidden 'Abstrusest thoughts' (5.711-12).

[7] Indeed, there is no evidence that Eve experiences a sense of 'alienation from the masculine garden'; rather the garden seems, if anything, a peculiarly feminine space identified more strongly with Eve – who herself embodies the 'maternal, female principle' – than Adam (Gilbert & Gubar, 2020: 243).

[8] Frankenstein begins his narrative as a cautionary tale, strikingly similar to the one inculcated here by Raphael, that Walton may learn, 'if not by my precepts, at least by my example how dangerous is the acquirement of knowledge, and how much happier that man who believes his native town to be the world, than he who aspires to become greater than his nature will allow' (32).

[9] See, for example, Edwards (1997: 251) and Green (2016: 68-70).

[10] Gilbert and Gubar suggest of Mary Shelley herself that 'books appear to have functioned as her surrogate parents' (2000: 223).

[11] God is less than candid when he answers Adam's question about his own situation by asserting, 'none I know / Second to me or like, equal much less' (8.406-07). It is clear from the dialectical exchanges between the Father and Son, as they discuss the future of the human race, that the Father isn't simply talking to himself or to one infinitely inferior; the Son actively softens the Father's response to the repentant couple (11.20-47).

[12] See Levy, 'Discovery and the Domestic Affections in Coleridge and Shelley' (2004: 693-713).

[13] In 'Milton's Bogey: Patriarchal Poetry and Women Readers', Gilbert and Gubar offer a detailed discussion of the implications of Woolf's 'enigmatic' phrase (2020: 187-212); 'Horrors Twin: Mary Shelley's Monstrous Eve', the chapter devoted to *Frankenstein*, directly follows (2020: 213-247).

[14] See, for instance, Blakemore, 'Rebellious Reading: The Doubleness of Wollstonecraft's Subversion of *Paradise Lost*' (1992: 451-80).

[15]See too, Baldick, (1987: pp. 30-62) and Hatlen (1983: 19-47). See also Hoeveler's useful survey (2003: 45-62).

[16] Milton implicitly suggests the easy and effortless childbearing, unclouded by fear, pain and dread, that could have been Eve's had she remained unfallen, and contrasts it with the traumatic experience of Sin's first difficult delivery as Death 'tore through' her body (2.783).

[17]Critics have understandably drawn attention to what Homans has termed Frankenstein's 'Circumvention of the Maternal' (1986: 100-19); see too, Mellors, 'Usurping the Female' (1989: 115-26).

[18] The image is all the more striking because Raphael also offers the more familiar explanation in which the moon is 'borrowing her light' from the sun and reflecting it back as 'his mirror' (7.377).

[19] Walton notably uses the same image when explaining to his sister how he feels the lack of 'someone who could sympathise with me; whose eyes would reply to mine' (10), and Mary Shelley herself begins the 'Journal of Sorrow', started after Shelley's death, by lamenting that now 'No eye answers mine' (1947: 180).

[20] Plastination is a process used to preserve bodies and body parts, first developed by the German anatomist, Dr Gunther von Hagens in 1977; the exhibition, 'Body Worlds' (1995 onwards), revealed bodily systems under the skin and has attracted over thirty-seven million visitors around the world.

[21] For a fascinating discussion of Safie's contribution to the narrative, see Zonana (1991: 170-84). Ellis speculates about what might have happened if Elizabeth had 'followed Victor to Ingolstadt' but recognises that, 'As it is, Victor cannot conceive of involving Elizabeth in his work on any level; both are petrified in fatally polarised worlds' (1979: 141).

[22] From 'The English in Italy' unsigned review of three books, *The Westminster Review* 6 (October 1826: 326).

[23] As Mary Nyquist acutely observed, during the afternoon, Adam is 'specifically and repeatedly addressed […] while Eve (though still an auditor) very pointedly is not' (1987: 117).

[24] For more on this process, see Green (2017: 57-90).

[25]I am here adjusting the terms of Jacobus' argument that 'we should see *Frankenstein* not simply as a reworking of Milton's creation myth in the light of Romantic ideology but as an implicit critique of that ideology for its exclusive emphasis on oedipal politics' (1986: 99).

[26] Hoeveler (2003: 48) is here commenting on Poovey's analysis of *Frankenstein* (1984: 114-42).

[27] They also supply a useful summary of the controversy surrounding the extent of the Shelleys' collaboration (2012: 51-56).
[28] See Matusall, 'Social Behaviour in the "Age of Empathy"? (2013: 1-5).
[29] The pertinence of this point became even more pronounced in the time of the pandemic (2020).
[30] We have seen how Elizabeth was appalled by the demands of retributive justice, and Frankenstein's father had urged his son to put aside any 'brooding thoughts of vengeance against the assassin' before he came home. (47).