

An Anarchist's Guide to Frankenstein

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Contents

I: The Monster, The Myth, The Madness	3
II: The Monster Mash	4
III: The Monster Squad	6
IV: Monster's Ball	9
V: Monsters, Inc.	13
VI: Destroy All Monsters	17
VII: Monster a Go-Go	21
VIII: I Turned Into A Monster (Whoa-Oh-Oh)	24
IX: Stigmata Monster	27
X: Monster Truck Madness	31
XI: Monster from the Black Lagoon	34
XII: Monsters Unleashed	38
XIII: Percy, The Three-Headed Monster	42
XIV: All Monsters Attack	46
XV: I Married A Monster From Outer Space	49
XVI: Bride of the Monster	52
XVII: The Water Monster	55
XVIII: The Ice Monster	60
XIX: The Monster from the Deep	61
XX: The Abominable Snow Monster	67
XXI: The Monster's Widow	68
XXII: Monster Movies	77

A great proportion of the misery that wanders, in hideous forms, around the world, is allowed to rise from the negligence of parents.

-Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, 1792

I: The Monster, The Myth, The Madness

Mary Shelley wasn't just an anarchist, she was the daughter of anarchists, which was more difficult than it sounds, especially for Mary. Her parents, Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin, were widely despised by mainstream British society for their anarchist beliefs, and their daughter Mary Shelley inherited this social animosity.

After the French Revolution, which Mary Wollstonecraft participated in, the British establishment began labeling anyone who espoused libertarian beliefs as part of the Illuminati, a secret society that respected no established government or borders. Largely fictitious, this Illuminati myth was used to bolster British royal power and isolate anyone attempting to import the French Revolution to the isle of Britain.

However, Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin dove right into their cultural isolation, carrying the flame of anarchism on their very shoulders. Amid their separate struggles, Mary and William came together to have a daughter, but tragedy struck after Mary gave birth, and she passed away from a post-partum infection. In her honor, William named their only child Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, now known as Mary Shelley.

Mary Shelley wrote the now immortal *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*, which was not only the birth of modern science-fiction, it remains one of the greatest novels ever written, still vital and relevant over 200 years after its publication. Unfortunately, the twentieth century didn't approve of Mary Shelley's vision, and her monster from *Frankenstein* was largely transformed into the green, unintelligent flesh-machine of the 1931 film *Frankenstein*.

Unlike the original monster, who could speak, write, and have complex thought, the bolt-necked Hollywood monster lumbered around and grunted. This monster was so popular he came back life for the 1935 sequel *Bride of Frankenstein*, and while World War II broke out across the world, a whole cinematic monster universe was being created. The third film, *The Ghost of Frankenstein*, was released in March 1942, shortly after the Pearl Harbor attack on the US, and it was followed in 1943 by the historic cross-over *Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man*.

These cross-overs continued with *House of Frankenstein* in 1944 and *House of Dracula* in 1945, but while US military-scientists harnessed and detonated the power of the atom in Japan, the public would never think to compare these same scientists to the mad Doctor Frankenstein. Instead, the US public had largely forgotten about Doctor Frankenstein and preferred to laugh at his bumbling green monster, who was just one lovable monster in a world filled with monsters.

This green monster would reign across cinema until 1994, when actor and director Kenneth Branagh released *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*, the first full-length film to cleave to the original text, and the movie-going public was astounded when a flesh-colored monster played by Robert De Niro had actual lines. Despite trying to emulate the theatrics of its predecessors, this modern *Frankenstein* reintroduced the English-speaking world to Mary Shelley's masterpiece, paving the way for Guillermo del Toro's upcoming 2025 version, which will do so once again.

In that vein, we wish to remind the English reader of Mary Shelley's anarchist vision, and while it was mostly purged from history through the twentieth century, the twenty-first century

is providing us another opportunity to tell the story of how Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin's daughter protected the flame of anarchy through a time of immense darkness.

II: The Monster Mash

As many critics have noted, *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*, begins on the Arctic ice sheet, an area of the planet currently being melted by the same Western science Mary Shelley would critique in her novel. This prescience is uncanny, bewildering, poetic, transcendent, but *Frankenstein* also begins as a simple epistolary novel, composed of letters purportedly written by one Robert Walton, a Western explorer about to set sail for the Arctic.

Technically, the book begins in Saint Petersburg, where Robert is waiting to travel north, and the first chapter of *Frankenstein* is a letter he writes to his sister Margaret Saville, where he informs her, *I am already far north of London; and as I walk in the streets of Petersburg, I feel a cold northern breeze play upon my cheeks. Robert claims to be inspired by this wind of promise, my daydreams become more fervent and vivid. I try in vain to be persuaded that the pole is the seat of frost and desolation; it ever presents itself to my imagination as the region of beauty and delight.*

This is the first sign of Robert's madness to explore, and as he goes on, *I may there discover the wondrous power which attracts the needle and may regulate a thousand celestial observations that require only this voyage to render their seeming eccentricities consistent forever.* Robert is referring to what sailors know as *magnetic declination*, where the Earth's magnetic field pulls a magnet's compass away from the exact northern pole, or *true north*.

To this day, *magnetic north* continues to wander around the pole, but most sailors like Robert now have a Global Positioning System (GPS) monitor connected to an orbiting satellite, which automatically takes the *magnetic declination* into account, and only die-hards rely solely on a compass, a chart, and the tedious calculations of declination, which Western explorers like Robert were forced to do before orbital satellites mapped everything for them.

The date on Robert's first letter is December 11 17—, meaning sometime in the mid to late 1700s, a time when Western explorers were very much obsessed with the mythical Northwest Passage, which would allow one to sail straight north from England to Alaska, or from Saint Petersburg to New York. Robert also shares this obsession and he dreams of *discovering a passage near the pole to those countries, to reach which at present so many months are requisite.* While no such passage existed, one is now being enlarged by the same Western science which is currently melting the Arctic, allowing trade to flow through the ice.

Robert goes on to remind Margaret of all the books on exploration he read as child in their Uncle Thomas's library, how his father had forbid Robert from sailing with family funds, and how Robert inherited his dead cousin's fortune six years prior to writing this letter, enabling him to learn how to sail until he felt himself capable of reaching the Arctic. With his skills maxed-out, Robert sailed for Saint Petersburg where he writes to his sister, asking, *do I not deserve to accomplish some great purpose?*

Despite spending six years learning to sail, Robert plans to make part of the journey north by land, and as he tells Margaret, *this is the most favorable period for travelling in Russia. They fly quickly over the snow in their sledges; the motion is pleasant, and, in my opinion, far more agreeable than that of our English stagecoach.* Wrapped in furs, Robert plans to ride a sled north on the post-

road between St Petersburg and Archangel, the northernmost port of the Empire where he will hire a ship and crew for his expedition into the Arctic.

Robert soon ends his letter and travels north, with his next correspondence written from Archangel over three months later on March 17. He tells his sister, *I have hired a vessel and am occupied in collecting my sailors, but there is one want which I have never yet been able to satisfy. As he goes on, I have no friend Margaret: when I am glowing with the enthusiasm of success, there will be none to participate in my joy.* He elaborates further, writing, *I desire the company of a man who could sympathize with me, whose eyes would reply to mine.*

As for his officers, his lieutenant is *a man of wonderful courage and enterprize; he is madly desirous of glory*, while his ship-master possessed *well-known integrity and dauntless courage*, although apparently neither met Robert's standards for friendship. He explains that his voyage is *only now delayed until the weather shall permit my embarkation. The winter has been dreadfully severe, but the spring promises well.*

In one final burst of inspiration, Robert tell his sister that *there is love for the marvellous, a belief in the marvellous, intertwined in all my projects, which hurries me out of the common pathways of men, even to the wild sea and invested regions I am about to explore.* Robert concludes this second letter by writing, *remember me with affection, should you never hear from me again.*

However, four months later, Robert's ship passes a merchant ship on its way back to England, allowing him a chance to send mail, and he writes Margaret a letter dated July 7. He tells her *my men are bold and apparently firm of purpose, nor do the floating sheets of ice that continually pass us, indicating the dangers of the region towards which we are advancing, appear to dismay them.* His ship has reached *a very high latitude*, and he concludes by writing, *thus far I have gone, tracing a secure way over the pathless seas, the very stars themselves being witnesses and testimonies of my triumph.*

Possessed by this manic urge to explore, with his crew seemingly wrapped up in his scheme, Robert finishes his third letter and proceeds north into the Arctic. The letters that follow are dated from August, but as Robert makes clear to Margaret, *it is very probable that you will see me before these papers can come into your possession*, meaning they are written but unsent, for purposes of the plot.

In the August 5 letter, Robert narrates that *last Monday (July 31st) we were nearly surrounded by ice, which closed in the ship on all sides. Mashed against the ice sheets, we perceived a low carriage, fixed on a sledge and drawn by dogs, pass on towards the north, at the distance of half a mile; a being which had the shape of a man, but apparently of gigantic stature, sat in the sledge and guided the dogs.* This is first appearance of the legendary monster, and the crew watched him go *until he was lost among the distant inequalities of the ice.*

This monster doesn't appear again for many pages, and after his departure, the ice breaks around Robert's ships, although they remain where they are, *fearing to encounter in the dark those large loose masses which float about after the breaking up of the ice.* The next morning, Robert awakes to find the crew *talking to some one in the sea. It was, in fact, a sledge, like that we had seen before, which had drifted towards us in the night on a large fragment of ice.*

As many other Western explorers would have noted, this man on the ice *was not, as the other traveller seemed to be, a savage inhabitant of some undiscovered island, but a European.* This man asks where they are going before accepting an invitation aboard, but upon learning the crew was *on a voyage of discovery towards the northern pole*, he quickly accepts. This stranger is barely alive,

but after two days the crew brings him back to health, and when asked how he came with his sledge to the middle of the ice, he replies that he wished *to seek one who fled from me*.

Upon learning that the crew saw a giant man on a sledge days before, the stranger *asked a multitude of questions concerning the route which the daemon, as he called him, has pursued*. Robert can give the stranger no certainty about whether this *daemon* was crushed by the ice, and in the following days the stranger is above-deck as often as possible, scanning the horizon for the monster.

According to Victor, the stranger's *manners are so conciliating and gentle that the sailors are all interested in him*. More importantly, Robert has finally found the friend he sought after, writing, *I begin to love him as a brother, and his constant and deep grief fills me with sympathy and compassion. He must have been a noble creature in his better days, being even now in wreck so attractive and amiable*.

In the following August 13 letter, Robert records that the stranger *entered attentively into all my arguments in favour of my eventual success and into every minute detail of the measures I had taken to secure it*. In their conversations, Robert expresses *how gladly I would sacrifice my fortune, my existence, my every hope, to the furtherance of my enterprize. One man's life or death were but a small price to pay for the acquirement of the knowledge which I sought, for the dominion I should acquire and transmit over the elemental forces of our race*.

Upon hearing this sentiment, the stranger exclaims, *unhappy man! Do you share my madness? Have you drunk also of the intoxicating draught? Hear me; let me reveal my tale, and you will dash the cup from your lips!* However, after vaguely explaining that he *lost everything and cannot begin life anew*, the stranger goes to bed and says nothing more.

It is only in the August 19 letter that the stranger begins telling Robert his story, and as he explains to the young captain, *when I reflect that you are pursuing the same course, exposing yourself to the same dangers which have rendered me what I am, I imagine that you may deduce an apt moral from my tale*. In this manner, a Western scientist begins his long, sad story, as told to Captain Robert Walton, a Western explorer. In case you hadn't guessed, this scientist is none other than Doctor Victor Frankenstein.

III: The Monster Squad

Like many anarchist children, Mary Shelley didn't listen to her parents, although Mary's mother died when she was born, leaving only her father to rebel against. The genesis of her *Frankenstein* occurs within this familial rebellion, but to understand how it occurred, it's useful to begin with her anarchist mother, whom Mary Shelley came to emulate both through and beyond her will.

Mary Shelley only knew her mother through her father's memories, but also through the written texts Mary Wollstonecraft left behind. As she came to learn, her mother was born on April 27, 1759 in Spitalfields, a neighborhood in East London. Before the metropolis devoured it, Spitalfields was just a vast expanse of fields, on which a Spital, or Priory, was built hundreds of years before.

In the late-1600s, the fields were encroached on by new row houses, which soon became the homes of immigrants from across England, Ireland, and even France, who all worked in the nearby weaving and textile workshops. One of these immigrants was Edward Wollstonecraft,

born in Lancashire in 1688, and he came to London seeking his fortune like all the others. He soon became a weaver's apprentice and eventually married the master weaver's daughter, a woman named Jane. She had many children with Edward, none of whom survived, and she died after twenty years of marriage to this now wealthy capitalist.

Edward remarried to a woman named Elizabeth, and their only child to survive was Edward John, who eventually became a handkerchief weaver. The family house Edward John grew up in was a cottage on Primrose Street, and after his domineering father built a giant new house in 1756, he remained behind in the cottage. Edward John married an Irish woman named Elizabeth Dixon, and now with their own house, they decided to have children. Edward, or Ned, was born in 1757, followed by Mary, born on April 27, 1759.

Edward John was haunted by the deaths of all his siblings in London, just as he and Elizabeth's third child died in infancy, so Edward John soon bought a farm twenty miles northeast in Epping, a place where his children could be in nature. Because of this, Mary Wollstonecraft had her fondest childhood memories of Epping, not industrial Spitalfields.

The family patriarch Edward Wollstonecraft died in 1765 when Mary was almost six, although her seven year old brother Ned would be the heir to this fortune, not her. After this windfall, her family moved to a farm in Barking, about ten miles downriver from London, and it was here that Mary tasted the family's height of luxury, experiencing wealth as it was known to a family of silk merchants. However, Edward John was a reckless drunk, and he soon damaged their fortunes so badly the family was forced to move to the town of Beverley two hundred miles north in Yorkshire.

Despite the chaos, Mary met a friend in Beverley named Jane Arden, who came from a family of wandering philosophers, and she exposed Mary to a familial life far different than her own. Edward John regularly beat his wife Elizabeth during his drunken rages, just as young Mary often protected her mother from the blows, something which made her hate her father and envy Jane Arden's, who was decent, kind, and never hit anyone.

Mary Wollstonecraft, teenager

Jane was the first woman that Mary fell in love with, although her love was intense and possessive, which scared Jane off. Tensions were eased when Mary's crumbling family was forced to move again, and in 1774, when she was fourteen, Mary returned to London. The family settled in Hoxton, just north of their childhood cottage, and while Mary still wrote to Jane, she soon met Fanny Blood, the second woman she fell in love with.

Illustration by Fanny Blood from the *Flora Londinensis*

Fanny also came from an abusive household with a drunken father, although the Bloods were much poorer than the Wollstonecrafts. Despite their dreams of freedom, Fanny decided she needed to marry to secure independence from her family, and despite Mary's protests, she got engaged to a businessman named Hugh Skeys. Despite this setback, Mary dreamed of eloping with Fanny, and when her brother Ned set up his own household, Mary wanted the same privilege. This was obviously denied to her, so she took a job as a companion for a wealthy woman in Bath, a former Roman spa town named for its ancient Roman steam baths.

Mary's job chaperoning the rich made her dislike the upper-class that her family had tried to enter, especially after she experienced a sexual assault, something which she described only as *painful circumstances which I wish to bury in oblivion*. This event increased her hatred for the men of her era, and Mary was likely enthralled by the tale of Lady Eleanor Butler and Sarah Ponsonby, who eloped together in 1779, settled in Wales, and lived openly, free of men.

Eleanor Butler and Sarah Ponsonby

As she wrote to her first love Jane Arden, *it is a happy thing to be a mere blank, and to be able to pursue one's own whims, where they lead, without having a husband and half a hundred children at hand to teaze and controul a poor woman who wishes to be free.* As if to drive the point home, Mary's mother Elizabeth soon grew ill in late-1781, so she quit her job and traveled to the latest family home in Enfield, a village in Middlesex. Worn down by her own husband, Elizabeth died in April 1782, and her last words to Mary were, *a little patience, and all will be over.*

Mary didn't return to Bath but instead went to live with Fanny and the Bloods in Fulham, just upriver from central London. She lived here from 1782 through 1783, a dark time by all accounts, especially after she learned that her beloved Fanny had tuberculosis. Meanwhile, her younger sister Eliza was married in October 1782 to a boat-builder named Meredith Bishop, who Mary soon hit up for £20 to help the poor Bloods.

Eliza gave birth to a daughter on August 10, 1783, although the birthing was extremely painful and she suffered a breakdown in the following months. By November, her husband asked Mary to care for her, having no one else to turn to. When Mary finally talked with her sister, Eliza claimed her husband had been treating her badly, and as Mary described, Meredith couldn't *look beyond the present gratification*, implying he demanded sex at his command.

Tired of this endless misery, Mary recruited Fanny into a plan to rescue Eliza from this marriage, and in January 1784 they ran away to Hackney, just northeast of central London. After taking rooms under false names, Mary made plans to open a shop to support them before their money ran out, although tragedy struck on August 4, 1784 when Eliza's daughter died before her first birthday.

Eliza needed something to do amid her grief, so instead of a shop, in February 1785 they opened a school two miles west in Islington, although this didn't work out, so they moved over a mile north to Newington Green, where their school met with greater success. Mary's other sister Everina soon joined them at this school. Which was situated in a radical community of Dissenters, whose chapel in Newington Green was ministered by Dr. Richard Price.

Dissenters believed that the state should have no say in personal or religious affairs, and they broke from the Church of England over numerous theological points. However, the movement was also a haven for crypto-republicans and free-thinkers who used the trappings of chapels and ministers as a cover for their liberatory activities.

Dr. Richard Price was a major figure in this movement, and like many of its adherents, he dressed all in black. He corresponded with American figures like Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson, but he also stayed out of politics, officially at least. Mary was soon introduced to this radical figure, and not only was she taken into the fold at Newington Green, she also began to dress all in black.

The school wasn't providing enough money, so Mary transformed it into a boarding house and rented rooms out to a family of Dissenters, making her a landlord, although the arrangement seems to have been mutually agreed to and facilitated by the community. Mary was busy at all of this when Fanny, now gravely ill from tuberculosis, was summoned by her businessman fiance Hugh Skeys, who wanted to marry her in Lisbon. Mary was crushed, but also relieved that Fanny would be in a warmer climate, although Fanny soon became pregnant and wrote to Mary of her misery.

Fearing for her welfare, Mary sailed for Lisbon in late-November 1785, the ticket paid for by Dr. Price, and when she arrived Fanny was already in labor. After giving birth, both Fanny Blood

and her child passed away, more victims of the male desire for children, no matter the cost. After making her peace with Skeys, who truly loved Fanny, she sailed back for London after the New Year of 1786, and on the way she convinced the captain to rescue some French sailors whose ship was sinking, something he wouldn't have otherwise done, a hint of the commanding fire she would soon yield as a woman rebel.

After returning to Newington Green in February 1786, she sent the Blood family £10 to help move to Ireland, and this money was an advance on her first book, *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters*. It was published by Joseph Johnson, a radical Dissenter who encouraged Mary to begin her literary career rather than drudge away, and her book didn't disappoint him.

In this early text, Mary pointed out that for women, *few are the modes of earning a subsistence, and those very humiliating*. A woman in Mary's time could be a companion, a schoolteacher, a governess, and a few other professions *gradually falling into the hands of men, and are certainly not very respectable*. This book was informed by Mary's experiences as a schoolteacher, although her own efforts would soon come to an end.

With debts mounting and Fanny now dead, Mary had little will to continue their runaway women's commune, and soon enough her sister Everina went back to their brother Ned, while Eliza went off to teach in Leicestershire. In this dark moment, with all her dreams unraveling, Mary took a job as a governess in Ireland, the only immediate means of securing her independence.

In 1787, Mary traveled to the Mitchelstown Castle, which was 120 miles south of Dublin and the home of Lord Kingsborough, heir to a colonial earldom which was stolen from the Irish during the late 1550s. It was here that Mary watched over the Lord's three eldest daughters for £40 a year, and one of the daughters remembered her as *an enthusiastic female who was my governess from fourteen to fifteen years old, for whom I felt an unbounded admiration because her mind appeared more noble and her understanding more cultivated than any others I had known*.

Under the surface, Lady Kingsborough grew jealous of how not only her children, but several men had fallen under Mary's influence, and in the winter of 1788 all of creeping jealousy caused Mary to have a nervous collapse, which kept her in bed into the spring. Despite pretending to care for Mary's health, the Lady continued to grow insanely jealous, which all came to a head after Mary finally recovered and accompanied the family to a spa across the sea in Bristol.

Mary was dismissed here in August, and Lady Kingsborough quickly spread word among the nobility that Mary had seduced her Lord husband. This noble gossip turned Mary into a monster, a hired servant who betrayed the trust of her Lady and exploited the weakness of her Lord. Mary could do nothing to assuage this damage to her reputation, nor did she appear to care very much. And so, in the summer of 1788, the monster Mary Wollstonecraft stepped onto a carriage in Bristol and began her journey west to London, fearless in the face of society's judgment.

IV: Monster's Ball

Mary Shelley learned a lot from her mother Mary Wollstonecraft, but only through her writings, and it's no coincidence that her 1818 novel *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* largely takes place between 1770 and 1797, the years when Mary Wollstonecraft lived as a single woman under British monarchical capitalism, cursed to wander from England to Ireland until the bright light of the French Revolution changed her life forever, but that's a story for later. For now, just

know that not only is the monster from *Frankenstein* partially based on Mary Wollstonecraft, it is largely based on Mary Shelley, both of them ignored by their negligent fathers, or creators.

As mentioned above, *Frankenstein* begins in the form of Captain Robert Walton's letters to his sister Margaret, written sometime in the 1780s. These letters constitute the first four chapters, but after this begins the tale of Doctor Victor Frankenstein, as told to Robert aboard his ship. This novel within a novel starts with its own first chapter, of which there are twenty-four, giving *Frankenstein* a total of twenty-eight chapters.

Victor opens his narrative by telling Robert, *I am by birth a Genevese, and my family is one of the most distinguished of that republic. My ancestors had been for many years counsellors and syndics.* Geneva was a Roman fortress colony 1,700 years prior, and many native Celts were made into citizens of the Empire and given the duties of governing their ancestral lands, a tradition which continued through the collapse of the Empire and into the Christian era. By the 1300s, these governing bodies had formed into a Confederation, which Mary Shelley referred to as a *republic*, given it had no king.

The Swiss Confederation was idealized by the republican radicals of Mary Shelley's time, and she set her *Frankenstein* specifically within Europe's closest approximation of a republic. Victor being from one of Geneva's ancestral families is significant, as Mary Shelley could have made him a French noble or British lord, and it was her intention to show what could happen in her generation's ideal republic.

As the narration continues, Victor explains that his father Alphonse met a man *who, from a flourishing state, fell, through numerous mischances, into poverty.* When this poor man dies, leaving his daughter Caroline Beaufort alone, Victor's father *came like a protecting spirit to the poor girl, who committed herself to his care.* Two years later, Victor's father marries this young French girl, and as he tells Robert, *there was a considerable difference between the ages of my parents, but this circumstance seemed to unite them only closer in bonds of devoted affection.*

Caroline soon gives birth to baby Victor, and the young family spends years living in Italy. As he tells Robert, *I was their plaything and their idol, and something better—their child, the 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.*

This happy family soon meets a poor peasant family near Lake Como, and Caroline decides to adopt one of the girls, whose missing father *was one of those Italians nursed in the memory of the antique glory of Italy—one among the schiavi ognor frementi, who exerted himself to obtain the liberty of his country. He became the victim of its weakness. Whether he had died or still lingered in the dungeons of Austria was not known.* Victor soon explains that the Frankenstein family consulted their village priest, and the result was that Elizabeth Lavenza became the inmate of my parents' house—my more than sister—the beautiful and adored companion of all my occupations and pleasures.

Caroline presents Elizabeth to Victor by saying, *'I have a pretty present for my Victor—tomorrow he shall have it.'* And when, on the morrow, she presented Elizabeth to me as the promised gift, I, with childlike seriousness, interpreted her words literally and looked upon Elizabeth as mine—mine to protect, love, and cherish. This first chapter of Victor's tale ends with the wealthy Swiss family plucking the poor daughter of an Italian partisan out of her village, and Elizabeth being referred to as a *pretty present* is the first clue that all is not well in the ideal republic. Just as Caroline was lifted out of poverty when she married her older husband, Elizabeth is lifted from poverty by being the *pretty present* to young Victor Frankenstein.

Growing up around Geneva, these siblings grow surrounded by immense natural beauty, and while young Elizabeth *contemplated with a serious and satisfied spirit the magnificent appearances of things, I delighted in investigating their causes*. In his youth Victor also has another companion, a boy with the French name Henry Clerval, who *was the son of a merchant of Geneva*, meaning he was below Victor in the class hierarchy, and Henry *loved enterprize, hardship, and even danger for its own sake. He was deeply read in books of chivalry and romance*. Between the forces of ecstatic Elizabeth and gallant Henry, young Victor stands apart for his insatiable curiosity.

As he recalls, his parents *were not the tyrants to rule our lot according to their caprice, but the agents and creators of all the many delights which we enjoyed. When I mingled with other families I distinctly discerned how peculiarly fortunate my lot was, and gratitude assisted the development of filial love*. It is in this privileged household that Victor finds a volume of Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa, an alchemist and occultist from the early-1500s.

When his father sees Victor reading this old work, he scoffs, *Ah! Cornelius Agrippa! My dear Victor, do not waste your time upon this, it is sad trash*. Victor doesn't agree, so he not only finds more Agrippa, he finds the works of Paracelsus, another alchemist from the early-1500s, as well as Albertus Magnus, a Dominican friar scientist from the 1200s. Victor explains that *under the guidance of my new preceptors I entered with the greatest diligence into the search of the philosopher's stone and the elixir of life; but the latter soon obtained my undivided attention. Wealth was an inferior object*.

In this regard, Victor embodies the values of Western science in its quest to understand and control every aspect of life, and as he explains, *the raising of ghosts or devils was a promise liberally accorded by my favourite authors, the fulfilment of which I most eagerly sought; and if my incantations were always unsuccessful, I attributed the failure rather to my own inexperience and mistake than want of skill or fidelity in my instructors. And thus for a time I was occupied by exploded systems*.

Frustrated by his failures, Victor witnesses *a most violent and terrible thunderstorm. It advanced from behind the mountains of Jura, and the thunder burst at once with frightful loudness from various quarters of heavens*. After witnessing this display of electricity, Victor meets a scientist who teaches him about *the subject of electricity and galvanism, which was at once new and astonishing to me*. This new galvanism, which could make a dead animal move electrically, pushes Victor away from ancient alchemy and towards *the mathematics and the branches of study appertaining to that science*.

At the start of the third chapter, Victor explains that *when I had attained the age of seventeen my parents resolved that I should become a student at the university of Ingolstadt*. Mary Shelley could have picked a variety of European universities to situate her budding Western scientist, but she very specifically has Victor's parents send him to Ingolstadt, the birthplace of the actual Illuminati.

In reality, a man named Adam Weishaupt became a professor of law and philosophy and the University of Ingolstadt in 1773. This Bavarian university was run by the Jesuits, something which angered and displeased secular Weishaupt, so in 1776 he formed a secret society with four students, all of whom were given code-names. Weishaupt himself was known as *Spartacus*, the rebel Roman gladiator, and by 1778 this small group became the *Illuminatenorden*, or the Order of the Illuminati. By 1784, there were nearly 1,000 members who had formed their own Lodge in an attempt to infiltrate and subvert the Freemasons, who clung to their religious and state-respecting framework.

These Illuminati were so successful in their state and institutional infiltration that Charles Theodore, Prince-Elector of Bavaria, banned all secret societies on March 2, 1785, and after losing his position at the university, Adam Weishaupt was forced to flee to Thuringia where he continued to write about the Illuminati.

Over the next years, a conspiracy theory arose that the Illuminati never vanished after their legal suppression but rather diverted their remaining strength to triggering the French Revolution of 1789. However, let it be clear the Mary Shelley had Victor Frankenstein attend the University of Ingolstadt precisely in those years when the Illuminati had taken it over.

However, before he can leave for Bavaria, his mother Caroline Frankenstein passes away from scarlet fever, but before she dies, she tells Victor and Elizabeth, *my children, my firmest hopes of future happiness were placed on the prospect of your union*. Despite this entreaty, Victor and Elizabeth don't immediately marry after Caroline's death, and Victor continues his preparations for the journey to Ingolstadt.

Victor's friend Henry Clerval wants to accompany him, but Clerval's father *was a narrow-minded trader and saw idleness and ruin in the aspirations and ambition of his son*. Henry deeply felt the misfortune of being debarred from a liberal education. Without his friend, Victor realizes, *I was now alone. In the university whither I was going I must form my own friends and be my own protector*.

After a *long and fatiguing* journey, Victor arrives at Ingolstadt, gets settled, and the next morning he visits some of the professors, among them M. Krempe. In his conversation with this professor, Victor *mentioned the names of my alchemists as the principal authors I had studied*. The professor stared. 'Have you,' he said, '*really spent your time in studying such nonsense?*' After telling Victor that he must begin his studies from scratch, he *wrote down a list of several books treating of natural philosophy*, as well as informing him that *M. Waldman, a fellow professor, would lecture upon chemistry the alternate days that he omitted*.

Set on this new academic path, Victor realizes that his beloved alchemists *sought immortality and power; such views, although futile, were grand; but now the scene was changed*. The ambition of the enquirer seemed to limit itself to the annihilation of those visions on which my interest in science was chiefly founded. Despite being influenced by Professor Krempe, Victor *could not consent to go and hear that little conceited fellow deliver sentences out of a pulpit*, so instead he goes to hear Professor Waldman lecture on chemistry.

On that day, Waldman tells the class that *the ancient teachers of this science promised impossibilities and performed nothing*. The modern masters promise very little...but these philosophers, whose hands seem only made to dabble in dirt, and their eyes to pore over the microscope or crucible, have indeed performed miracles...they have acquired new and almost unlimited powers; they can command the thunders of heaven, mimic the earthquake, and even mock the invisible world with its own shadows.

This lecture sets Victor's brain on fire, and as he tells himself, *I will pioneer a new way, explore unknown powers, and unfold to the world the deepest mysteries of creation*. Victor resolves to return to his studies of ancient texts, while also incorporating modern chemistry, and when he visits Professor Waldman the next day, Waldman doesn't dismiss the ancient alchemists like Krempe. He says they *were men to whose indefatigable zeal modern philosophers were indebted for most of the foundations of their knowledge...if your wish is to become really a man of science and not merely a petty experimentalist, I should advise you to apply to every branch of natural philosophy, including mathematics*.

With his speech concluded, Waldman takes Victor into his laboratory and *explained to me the uses of his various machines, instructing me as to what I ought to procure*. This third chapter ends with Victor calmly stating, *thus ended a day memorable to me; it decided my future destiny*. In truth, this is last calm chapter of *Frankenstein*, and as you'll see, Victor soon plunges into the derangement and madness known as Western science.

V: Monsters, Inc.

Rather than reference *Western science* in her novel *Frankenstein*, Mary Shelley refers to *natural philosophy*, as it was known in the West of her time. Not only was her father William Godwin a philosopher, so was her mother, Mary Wollstonecraft, although they were *political philosophers* as opposed to *natural philosophers*. Regardless, all philosophers were bound together in those days, especially under the vengeful eye of the Church, which still reigned over Europe, whether Protestant, Catholic, or the Church of England.

It was within this religious oppression that Mary Wollstonecraft returned to London in 1788, now tainted by the scandal of seducing the Lord who employed her as governess in Ireland. Mary went directly to her publisher, Joseph Johnson, who printed her *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* two years earlier. She found him at his shop in St. Paul's Churchyard and he immediately offered her a bed, although the likely gay Joseph had no amorous intentions and truly believed in Mary's fiery gifts. In exchange for lodging and economic support, Mary helped Joseph with the press and quickly met a variety of radicals who came in and out of the shop.

Among them was the painter and polymath Henry Fuseli, a close friend and likely lover of Joseph Johnson. However, unlike his friend, Henry was bi-sexual, and Mary soon grew enamored of this eccentric rebel, her first major attraction to a man, which quickly turned to love. In the meantime, Mary visited her sisters when they came to London in December 1788, although she resolved to never live with them again, that chapter of her life having closed forever.

The Nightmare by Henry Fuseli, given to Joseph Johnson

Another regular at Joseph's print-shop was a poor, unknown artist named William Blake, and after Joseph published Mary's collection *Original Stories* in 1788, it was William who illustrated the second edition. William was vaguely religious and believed in God, just like Mary, although the scene which clustered around the print-shop cared little for institutional religion, whether it was Dissenter or the Church of England.

Even more secular and anti-religious was Thomas Paine, yet another regular at the print-shop. Thomas had gone to North America in 1774 and become an anti-monarchical agitator, penning the 1776 pamphlet *Common Sense*, largely credited with uniting colonists for the American Revolution. It's likely that Thomas also helped draft the Declaration of Independence, and in 1780 he agitated against colonial slave-owners like George Washington and Thomas Jefferson when he wrote his *Public Good*, which advocated that the western lands be owned by the government, preventing future speculation and allowing the indigenous to briefly continue their traditional ways of life, which he greatly admired.

Now a pariah of the alleged *founding fathers*, Paine went to Paris to raise money for the war against the British, and with the help of Benjamin Franklin, they moved millions in silver across the Atlantic, and despite his protests, Thomas was awarded \$3,000 by the American government in 1785. He returned to Paris in 1787, although he settled in London later that year, and his

frequent haunt was Joseph's print-shop in St. Paul's Churchyard, where he became a good friend of Mary Wollstonecraft's by 1788.

Mary also met Thomas Holcroft, the actor who memorized *The Marriage of Figaro* opera and first performed it in London in 1786, where he starred as Figaro. Thomas was friends with a writer named William Godwin, who Mary also met, and William will soon feature heavily in this narrative, although for the moment he was simply another regular at the print shop, where Joseph recruited many of his friends for his new paper, the *Analytical*, for which Mary wrote and did translations. It was also in this time that Mary published her first novel, *Mary: A Fiction*, which was her response to the accusations spread by her former employers in Ireland.

In the meantime, Mary continued her amorous infatuation with Henry Fuseli, although Henry was married, something which didn't bother him. Soon enough Mary was visiting Henry at his artist's studio where, according to one historian, he *assumed artificial raptures and revived in imagination the fading fires of his youth*. Henry was forty-seven, while Mary was twenty-nine, and Henry didn't think anything of introducing Mary to his wife, nor did Mary seem to mind. In this regard, Henry Fuseli embodied the values of the *libertine*, the allegedly enlightened male of that era, to whom sexual morals were simply an impediment to their unhindered pleasure, which they pursued regardless of the consequences, especially to women like Mary Wollstonecraft.

Despite the excesses of *libertines* like Henry Fuseli, religious sexual repression was rampant across Europe and England, propped up by the various churches. This ecclesiastical tyranny was first challenged in France on June 17, 1789, when the National Assembly was formed in defiance of King Louis XVI. On June 30, a giant mob formed at the National Assembly and stormed the Prison de l'Abbaye to free soldiers imprisoned for refusing to fire on the people earlier that spring. The deluge truly began on July 12, when pitched battles began in the streets of Paris, followed by mass-looting and the sacking of churches.

Military defections began, and soon a *bourgeois militia* of 12,000 was given the name of National Guard, commanded by the Marquis de Lafayette, who fought with George Washington in the American Revolution. The famous French tri-colors of red, white, and blue were chosen by the *bourgeois* bunch, and as Pyotr Kropotkin would later write, *thus began on the side of the adroit middle-class leaders the system of betraying the Revolution*.

On July 14, the people of Paris besieged the Bastille prison, with the first wave breaking in and lowering the drawbridges, only to be massacred. When word of this butchery spread, tens of thousands swarmed towards the prison, along with captured cannons, which began to pound the Bastille. The garrison surrendered to the people early that evening, and as described by Kropotkin, *as soon as the bridges of the Bastille had been lowered the crowd rushed into the courtyards and began to search the fortress and free the prisoners entombed in the oubliettes. There was great emotion, and tears were shed at the sight of the phantoms who issued from their cells, bewildered by the light of the sun and by the sound of the many voices that welcomed them*.

The French Revolution distracted Mary Wollstonecraft from her crumbling affair with Henry Fuseli, who had increasingly retreated to the safety of his marriage. In this place of this personal passion, Mary embraced her passion for the uprising in France, and soon several of her friends had booked passage across to Channel to see this glorious transformation for themselves. However, the Revolution also triggered the first waves of reaction in England, with the Dissenters losing some of their supporters in Parliament. All of this came to a head on November 4, 1789 when the Dissenter minister Dr. Richard Price delivered a public sermon in London.

Mary and her friends, including William Godwin, were in the audience when Richard said, *and now methinks I see the ardour for liberty catching and spreading; a general amendment beginning in human affairs; the dominion of kings changed for the dominion of laws, and the dominion of priest giving way to the dominion of reason and conscience*. Richard then suggested that they all compose a congratulation letter to the French National Assembly, which was later printed along with the full text of his sermon. The reaction to his words was immediate.

Edmund Burke, a famous British philosopher who had supported the American rebels, grew so enraged at Dr. Richard Price's sermon that he began writing his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, a reactionary attack on the values of the Revolution and a defense of the old monarchies. When this pamphlet was published in November 1790, it so threw Mary into a rage that she immediately began her response, *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*.

This pamphlet was published by Joseph Johnson soon after Burke's pamphlet, and by January 1791 the first edition was sold out, requiring a second. For the first time, Mary Wollstonecraft was famous, and Henry Fuseli's friend William Roscoe not only painted her portrait, he composed a ballad which honored Mary's attack on Burke, writing, *an lo! an amazon stept out, one WOLLSTONECRAFT her name, resolv'd to stop his mad career, whatever chance became. An oaken sapling in her hand, full on the foe she fell, nor could his coat of rusty steel her vig'rous strokes repel. When strange to see, her conq'ring staff, returning leaves o'erspread, of which a verdant wreath was wove, and bound around her head*.

Anti-Dissenter propaganda, 1790

Unfortunately for the radical Dissenters, the great Dr. Price passed away in April 1791, although Edmund Burke didn't relent in his attacks, and by June riots broke out in Birmingham against the Dissenters. Dubbed the Church and King mobs, these proto-fascists smashed and burned Dissenter houses, and all those who wished to be spared from the destruction wrote *no philosophers* on their front doors, helping to make *philosopher* a dirty word in England.

Shortly before these riots, Thomas Paine published his *Rights of Man*, another refutation of Burke, although after publishing Mary's attack, Joseph Johnson was wary of publishing another incendiary text, so Thomas found a different publisher and then took William Blake's advice, which was to flee England for Paris. Thomas left the publishing of the *Right of Man* up to his London comrades, among them William Godwin, and when it was released, the pamphlet sold over a million copies.

Thomas returned to London sometime in the fall of 1791, and he had dinner with Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin in November, likely while Thomas was preparing the second part of *Rights of Man*, which was published in February 1792. It's likely that Thomas asked Mary to write something specifically about the rights of women, and her book *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* was anonymously published just before his pamphlet in January 1792.

This is the work that Mary is now well-known for, and in its pages she became the first author to refer to marriage as *legal prostitution*. As she boldly declared in this age of male *libertines*, her desire was to *strengthen the female mind by enlarging it, and there will be an end to blind obedience; but, as blind obedience is ever sought for by power, tyrants and sensualists are in the right when they endeavour to keep women in the dark, because the former only want slaves, and the latter a play-thing*. Like her French contemporaries, Mary dreamed of a day when women would fight in wars and *the true heroism of antiquity might again animate female bosoms*.

In the spring of 1792, shortly after *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* was published in French, a woman named Théroigne de Méricourt addressed the Jacobin Club in Paris, and she

declared that *it is time at last that women should throw aside their shameful inactivity in which ignorance, pride, and the injustice of men have kept them for so long. Let us return to the times when our mothers, the Gauls and proud Germans, spoke in the public Assemblies, and fought beside their husbands.*

While fiery Théroigne agitated in Paris for women's right to bear arms, Mary was now just as famous as Thomas Paine, with her latest *Vindication* prompting one critic to describe her as a *hyena in petticoats*. In May, a threatened King George III issued a proclamation against seditious groupings and their written texts, while at the same time Edmund Burke argued in Parliament against allowing civil rights to Dissenters, as well as attacking what he called *the Constitutional, the Revolutionary and the Unitarian Societies*.

In June 1792, Thomas Paine was put on trial for *seditious libel* for his *Right of Man*, although it was a drawn-out process, and during this time he and several others made plans to leave London for Paris. Among those who decided to leave was Mary, who wanted to get away from Henry Fuseli. Their affair continued to disintegrate, and it's likely that Mary was addressing Henry at the end of her *Vindication* when she wrote, *yes, let me tell the libertine of fancy when he despises understanding in women—that the mind, which he disregards, gives life to enthusiastic affection from which rapture, short-lived as it is, alone can flow!*

Mary Wollstonecraft, 1791

In one final act of desperation, Mary told Henry's wife the truth of their affair and demanded to be able to live openly with him. This caused his wife to permanently forbid Mary from their home, and Joseph encouraged Mary to leave London for a while, promising to fully subsidize her. However, this trip to Paris was postponed due the sudden insurrection that took place that summer, and while Mary was hiding from her failed love affair, the situation in France rapidly intensified.

On June 20, 1792, the indomitable Théroigne de Méricourt organized a mob to help storm the Tuileries Palace, and as Pyotr Kropotkin would later write, *it was only then that the Robespierres, the Dantons and, at the very last moment, the Girondins decided to follow the people's lead and declare themselves more or less at one with the insurrection*. These male leaders saw an opportunity that June 20, and it ended with the mob literally surrounding King Louis XVI and forcing him to wear a wool hat, although they didn't kill him, not yet.

The remains of the old ruling class grew enraged at this insult to their King, and a definitive battle was now inevitable. On August 10, Théroigne de Méricourt once again mobilized a mob to storm the Tuileries Palace, this time for good, and she is alleged to have personally executed some of the royalist prisoners. King Louis XVI was soon captured and two days later he and his family were imprisoned in the old Temple of the Knights Templar. After three years, the monarchy was finally abolished in France, changing the world forever.

This sent shock-waves through British society, and several of Mary's comrades left the struggle behind, including William Blake, who retreated into his religious mysticism. The imprisonment of a monarch, the sacking of churches, the execution of priests, all of it was too much to bear for many of these British radicals. Simultaneously, the government began to repress the Dissenters and other radicals, with a Church and King mob attacking the house of a radical in Manchester. Amid this chaos, Mary left behind her lover Henry Fuseli and sailed alone for France on December 8, 1792, never imagining the types of monsters she would soon encounter.

VI: Destroy All Monsters

Around the time Mary Shelley published her *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*, the word *illuminism* was being widely used to describe Freemasons who did not abide by the laws of the states which hosted them. Talk of *illuminism* was rampant in Russia, where Emperor Alexander I allowed Freemasonry to flourish under his reign, although in the years following *Frankenstein's* publication in 1818, the Emperor grew increasingly paranoid, leading him to ban all political clubs in 1822, including the Freemasons. Three years later, many of these same Freemasons participated in the Decembrist Revolt, making them *illuminists*.

Mary Shelley knew exactly what she was doing when she had Victor Frankenstein bring his monster to life in the same university that birthed the Illuminati, and after two years in this environment, Victor explains to Captain Robert Walton that *I made some discoveries in the improvement of some chemical instruments, which procured me great esteem and admiration at the university.*

Having acquired these technical skills, Victor then sets out *to apply myself more particularly in those branches of natural philosophy which relate to physiology*, and after becoming proficient in anatomy, he begins to focus on the process of death, explaining that *I was led to examine the cause and progress of this decay and forced to spend days and nights in vaults and charnel-houses.*

It is in one of these Ingolstadt morgues that Victor has his grand epiphany, beholding *a light so brilliant and wondrous, yet so simple, that while I became dizzy with the immensity of the prospect which it illustrated, I was surprised that among so many men of genius who had directed their inquiries towards the same science, that I alone should be reserved to discover so astonishing a secret.* Armed with this knowledge, Victor gets busy, and within days he *succeeded in discovering the cause of generation and life; nay, more, I became myself capable of bestowing animation upon lifeless matter.*

However, the process of getting to this breakthrough *was so overwhelming that all the steps by which I had been progressively led to it were obliterated, and I beheld only the result.* It's at this point in the narrative that Victor speaks directly to Captain Robert Walton, remarking, *I see by your eagerness and wonder and hope which your eyes express, my friend, that you expect to be informed of the secret with which I am acquainted.* Victor refuses to divulge any particulars and says *I will not lead you on, unguarded and ardent as I then was, to your destruction and infallible misery.* To make matters clear, Victor implores Robert, *how dangerous is the acquirement of knowledge and how much happier that man is who believes his native town to be the world.*

Victor continues his narrative, explaining that he needed *a frame for the reception of his new life-giving technology, with all its intricacies of fibres, muscles, and veins*, and he resolves *to make the being of a gigantic stature; that is to say, about eight feet in height, and proportionally large.* As he explains, *the dissecting room and the slaughterhouse furnished many of my materials*, and he works through the summer in his laboratory, *insensible to the charms of nature.*

As he elaborates on this isolation from nature, Victor claims that *if the study to which you apply yourself has a tendency to weaken your affections and to destroy your taste for those simple pleasures in which no alloy can possibly mix, then that study is certainly unlawful, that is to say, not befitting the human mind.* *If this rule were always observed; if no man allowed any pursuit whatsoever to interfere with the tranquility of his domestic affections, Greece had not been enslaved, Caesar would have spared his country, America would have been discovered more gradually, and the empires of Mexico and Peru had not been destroyed.*

With this passage, Mary Shelley links the Western science of Doctor Frankenstein with the process of Western colonization, in no uncertain terms, although Victor does immediately remark, *but I forget that I am moralizing in the most interesting part of my tale, and your looks remind me to proceed.* Victor does proceed, although he continues his tangent on isolation from nature, explaining that *winter, spring, and summer passed away during my labours; but I did not watch the blossom or the expanding leaves.* As he goes on, *the leaves of that year had withered before my work drew near to a close, and now every day showed me more plainly how well I had succeeded.*

Mary Shelley viewed isolation from the natural world as a condition of Western science, and as Victor begins the fifth chapter, *it was on a dreary night of November that I beheld the accomplishment of my toils.* After using his technological apparatus to *infuse a spark of being into the lifeless thing at my feet,* Victor sees the *dully yellow eye of the creature open; it breathed hard, and a convulsive motions agitated its limbs.*

In this initial description of the monster, Victor explains that its *yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath; his hair was of a lustrous black, and flowing; his teeth of pearly whiteness.* Additionally, the monster has *watery eyes,* as well as a *shrivelled complexion and straight black lips.* However, this creature terrifies Victor, and he hides in his bedroom, *unable to endure the aspect of the being I had created.*

When he finally rouses from his self-pity, Victor is startled when he sees the creature, *by the dim and yellow light of the moon, [and] as it forced its way through the window shutters, I beheld the wretch—the miserable monster whom I had created.* In this moment, the monster's *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.*

Victor spends the rest of the night out in the courtyard, listening for sounds of the monster, but then *morning, dismal and wet, at length dawned and discovered to my sleepless and aching eyes the church of Ingolstadt, its white steeple and clock, which indicated the sixth hour.* Victor doesn't return to his laboratory, instead he wanders the streets of Ingolstadt, and in his delirium, he sees his childhood friend Henry Clerval step out of a carriage.

Henry is now going to attend the University of Ingolstadt, having convinced his bourgeois merchant father that *all necessary knowledge was not comprised in the noble art of bookkeeping.* Henry notices that Victor doesn't look well, and when Victor summons the courage to take Henry to his laboratory apartment, the monster has completely vanished, although Victor imagines the monster is grabbing him and goes into hysterics. After he collapses, Victor explains that *I was lifeless and did not recover my sense for a long, long time.* In his delirium he sees the monster, ranting and raving about the evil he loosed on the world, although Henry writes this off to Victor's illness.

When he finally regains his faculties, Victor notices *that the fallen leaves had disappeared and that the young buds were shooting forth from the trees that shaded my window. It was a divine spring, and the season contributed greatly to my convalescence.* Henry remains by his side, having put off his winter studies to tend to Victor, and he soon hands his friend a letter from Elizabeth Frankenstein, his adopted Italian sister.

The sixth chapter begins with the full text of this letter, in which Elizabeth wishes that Victor get well, as well as informing them of their little brother Ernest, who was now sixteen and *looks upon study as an odious fetter; his time is spent in the open air, climbing the hills or rowing on the*

lake. However, the bulk of this letter concerns Justine Moritz, a poor woman who their mother Caroline Frankenstein educated and hired as a servant.

As Elizabeth makes clear, *the republican institutions of our country have produced simpler and happier manners than those which prevail in the great monarchies that surround it. Hence there is less distinction between the several classes of its inhabitants; and the lower orders, being neither so poor nor so despised, their manners are more refined and moral. A servant in Geneva does not mean the same thing as a servant in France or England.*

Mary Shelley utilized this passage to further present the Swiss Confederation as an ideal republican state, at least in Elizabeth's eyes, and having herself been adopted out of Italian poverty, she narrates how their late-mother Caroline lifted Justine up by hiring her as a servant. Justine was by Caroline's side until she died, coming down with the same scarlet fever, and after recovering, Justine learned that all of her siblings had died, leaving only her superstitious mother, who *sometimes begged Justine to forgive her unkindness but much oftener accused her of having caused the deaths of her brothers and sister.* This is the first mention of superstitious guilt, and as you'll see, it won't be the last.

Victor immediately writes Elizabeth back, after which he introduces Henry to *several professors of the university.* Seeing how Victor is terrified of his laboratory, Henry gets rid of all the equipment, although Victor refuses to tell his friend of the monster he created with this technology. Professor Krempe prods Henry and Victor for the truth of what happened in that laboratory, claiming that Victor has *set himself at the head of the university; and if he is not soon pulled down, we shall all be out of countenance.*

Henry has no interest in natural philosophy and *turned his eyes towards the East as affording scope for his spirit of enterprise. The Persian, Arabic, and Sanskrit languages engaged his attention, and I was easily induced to enter on the same studies.* Victor spends the entire summer finding consolation in the works of the Orientalists, and his return to Geneva is planned for that fall.

Before he departs, Victor insists they take a long hike outside of Ingolstadt, and Victor recalls that his friend *called forth the better feelings of my heart; he again taught me to love the aspect of nature and the cheerful faces of children.* As they tramp through the hill, Victor explains that *a serene sky and verdant fields filled me with ecstasy. The present season was indeed divine; the flowers of spring bloomed in the hedges while those of summer were already in bud.* This is the last peace that Victor will feel for some time, and as he concludes the sixth chapter, *we returned to our college on a Sunday afternoon; the peasants were dancing, and every one we met appeared gay and happy.*

When he returns to his apartment at the start of the seventh chapter, Victor finds a letter from his father, explaining that one of his two brothers, William, was found strangled to death, with the killer yet to be located. This letter also informs the reader that Victor's father is named Alphonse Frankenstein, making clear the family's combined French and Germanic ancestry.

Upon learning of his brother William's death, Victor immediately says goodbye to Henry and sets out for Switzerland, although he becomes terrified of returning home to Geneva and *remained two days at Lausanne in this painful state.* From this lakeside city, Victor can see the Jura Mountains and distant Mont Blanc, the sight of which makes him cry, *dear mountains! My own beautiful lake! How do you welcome your wanderer? Your summits are clear; the sky and lake are blue and placid. Is this to prognosticate peace or to mock at my unhappiness?* In this manner, Victor feels the first pangs of superstitious guilt, believing nature itself to be judging him.

Victor eventually hikes to Geneva, but as he explains, *the gates of the town were already shut, and I was obliged to pass the night at Secheron, a village at the distance of half a league from the city.* He remains restless, however, and decides to visit the spot where William was murdered, and as he rows around Geneva, he sees *lightnings playing on the summit of Mont Blanc in the most beautiful features.* The lightning storm intensifies, and just at the crescendo, when Victor thinks the heavens are honoring his dead brother, he glimpses *in the gloom a figure which stole from behind a clump of trees.*

Victor realizes this is his monster, and as he tells Captain Robert, *I thought of pursuing the devil, but it would have been in vain, for another flash discovered him to be hanging among the rocks of the nearly perpendicular ascent of Mount Salève.* This is the first exposition of the monster's superhuman strength, and upon seeing his creation, Victor asks himself, *two years had now nearly elapsed since the night on which he first received life, and was this his first crime?*

Suddenly convinced the monster killed his brother William, he then *considered the being whom I had cast among mankind and endowed with the will and power to effect purposes of horror, such as the deed which he had now done, nearly in the light of my own vampire, my own spirit let loose from the grave and forced to destroy all that was dear to me.*

Despite knowing the monster is the killer, Victor resolves to tell no one of his creation, given no one would ever believe him. After returning to his childhood home, Victor's surviving brother Ernest hopes that his *persuasions will induce poor Elizabeth to cease her vain and tormenting self-accusations* over William, for whom she feels a superstitious guilt and accuses *herself of having caused his death.* Ernest then informs Victor that *the murderer has been discovered,* although this revelation causes Victor to suddenly blurt out his thoughts.

As he yells to Ernest, *the murderer discovered! Good God! How can that be? Who could attempt to pursue him? It is impossible; one might as well try to overtake the winds or confine a mountain stream with a straw. I saw him too; he was free last night!* Ernest is confused by these statements and informs him that their late-mother's servant Justine Moritz was found with a stolen picture of Caroline which, along with her *extreme confusion of manner,* led to her arrest under the charge of murdering William Frankenstein.

Victor maintains that Justine is innocent, although when he says this to his father, Victor refuses to tell the story of his monster, for *my tale was not one to announce publicly; its astounding horror would be looked upon as madness by the vulgar. Did any one indeed exist, except I, the creator, who would believe, unless his sense convinced him, in the existence of the living monument of presumption and rash ignorance which had let loose upon the world?*

At this point in the narrative, the first time reader is meant to believe that Victor Frankenstein is likely insane, that his monster is imaginary, and that he's suffering from superstitious guilt regarding the death of his loved ones. Nevertheless, poor Justine is now awaiting trial, and Elizabeth tells Victor that *if she is condemned, I never shall know joy more.* Knowing his adopted daughter is an avid republican who believes in the Swiss state, Alphonse tells her, *dry your tears. If she is, as you believe, innocent, rely on the justice of our laws.* With this naive hope in the republican legal system, the Frankensteins attend the trial of Justine Moritz, the servant who Caroline once saved from poverty.

VII: Monster a Go-Go

Mary Wollstonecraft arrived in Paris on December 11, 1792, just as the trial against King Louis XVI was taking place. She stayed with a school-teacher friend of her sisters in the Marais district, not far from the Temple where the royal family was imprisoned. On December 26, Mary saw the King being driven down a street lined with revolutionary soldiers on his way to defend himself in court, and as she wrote to her London publisher and funder Joseph Johnson, *I want to see something alive; death in so many frightful shapes has taken hold of my fancy.*

Mary soon met up with her comrades, among them Thomas Paine, who was found guilty of sedition in England and permanently exiled. He was now living freely in Paris, although back in London they were burning his effigies in the streets. Little did these British reactionaries know that Thomas was trying to save the life of King Louis XVI, arguing in court that he be exiled to America, although his defense was interrupted and cut-off by Jean-Paul Marat, the Jacobin figurehead, who called Thomas a weak Quaker whose religious beliefs against the death penalty disqualified him from having a say.

King Louis XVI was beheaded on January 21, 1793, a measure favored by the Montagne faction of the Jacobins, who now ruled the French state. Thomas Paine and Mary Wollstonecraft were seen as part of the Girondin faction, all of whom were now suspect for being against the King's execution. Despite this, Thomas was helping to draft the French constitution, while Mary helped out with an education committee. Among the radical women Mary met in Paris was Manon Roland, the Girondin writer, and as she later wrote, *in France the women have not those factitious, supercilious manners, common to the English; and acting more freely, they have more decision of character, and ever more generosity.*

Manon Roland

The French Republic declared war on the Kingdom of Great Britain on February 1, 1793, and later that month all foreign aliens in France were ordered to renew their passports, just as foreigners were under increased suspicion by the Montagne. Mail boats stopped crossing the sea in March, all French houses had to list their residents on the front door, and on April 12 all foreigners were prohibited from leaving the country, including Mary.

Up to this point, there were no conscious, self-identifying anarchists in France, but that all began to change in the spring of 1793, when the charge of being an *anarchist* was hurled back and forth between the Montagne and the Girondins. On the one hand, Montagnard leader Maximilien Robespierre cautioned against anything that would *lead to anarchy and to despotism*, while on the other hand Girondin leader Jacques Pierre Brissot stated that *the real enemies of the people and of the Republic were the anarchists, the preachers of agrarian law, the excitors of sedition.*

Given the lack of textual evidence, it's unclear exactly what Mary got up to in the winter and spring of 1793 when everyone was calling each other an *anarchist*. However, we do know that by spring Mary had fallen in love with an American army captain named Gilbert Imlay, who was now a bourgeois merchant staking his claim in the revolutionary bonanza. His wife and children were back in America, but *libertine* Gilbert didn't believe in marriage, and he said all the right things to Mary as spring turned to summer. Unfortunately, the situation in France quickly grew out of control.

Mary's friend Manon Roland was arrested on June 1, 1793, marking the beginning of what became known as the Terror. Rather than the Girondins calling the Montagnards *anarchists*, the Montagne was now labeling its enemies *anarchists* before placing their heads under the guillotine.

Just like the terms *gnostic* and *witch*, the term *anarchist* now became a negative identity imposed by the forces of order on all those it wished to eradicate.

Again, there were no self-identified anarchists during the French Revolution, but as Pyotr Kropotkin would later write, *the “anarchists” were the revolutionists scattered all over France. They had given themselves to the Revolution body and soul; they understood the necessity for it; they loved it, and they worked for it.* Afraid to be labeled one of these *anarchists*, Mary fled to Neuilly, which was far outside the gates of Paris. This isolation from the Revolution pushed Mary further into the arms of Gilbert Imlay, and by August they had conceived a child.

While this was unfolding, Robespierre ordered all foreigners expelled that June, although Gilbert was exempt from repression, given he was an American, and the Montagne needed the United States as an ally. Beyond this, Gilbert made his money importing iron, soap, and coal into wartime France from neutral countries like Sweden, where he was paid in silver, and so he was doubly protected against any state violence, a protection which extended to Mary Wollstonecraft.

On June 24, the French constitution that Thomas Paine helped compose was finally proclaimed, although the Montagne removed and edited huge sections of the original text. That same June, the insurgent Theroigne de Mericourt was delivering a speech in Paris when a mob of Montagne aligned women stormed the stage, stripped off her clothes, and began smashing her head with stones, causing a severe injury from which she never recovered. With the Montagne now attacking the very women who brought about the Revolution, a young Girondin decided to act, and on July 13, 1793, twenty-four year old Charlotte Corday stabbed to death Montagne leader Jean-Paul Marat while he was taking a bath.

Charlotte was guillotined four days later and the Montagne, already hostile to women, now let loose all their patriarchal tendencies against the radicals in their midst, with one writer stating, *decent men do not care for such women, and because of this they in turn profess to despise men; they come to regard their own scorn as a sign of character, and their bitterness as energy; and their tastes and habits soon degenerate into foolishness and licence, which they label philosophic behavior.*

Women philosophers like Mary Wollstonecraft were now threatened with the guillotine, and the early feminist movement was knocked from its soaring heights, not to recover for nearly a century. Mary wrote almost nothing about these events, and given the number of denunciations and beheadings, a kind word about the wrong person could have cost Mary her life. In this manner, Mary became an *anarchist*, the name for those threatened by the guillotine's blade.

One of these *anarchists* who lost their head was the Marquis de Condorcet, one of the few male revolutionaries to champion feminism, and as he wrote, *one of the most important advances in human thinking must be the total destruction of the prejudices which have established differences in the rights of the two sexes (a difference which harms the favoured sex too).* These words were written for his *Sketch for a Historical Picture of the Progress of the Human Mind*, and for these *anarchist* words, the Marquis de Condorcet was sentenced to death in September 1793, although he was able to go into hiding.

Despite being Condorcet's comrade, Mary was brave enough to return to Paris that fall, protected by papers from the American embassy, listing her as Gilbert Imlay's wife. These papers helped her on October 9, 1793, when every British citizen in Paris was arrested, including several of Mary's comrades. On October 16, the infamous Queen Marie Antoinette was beheaded, followed on October 31 by a mass-guillotining of Girondins, including several of Mary's comrades.

On this same day, all of the women's clubs were banned, and by November famous Girondin women like Olympe de Gouges and Manon Roland were also beheaded for their *anarchist* beliefs.

It was in this time period that Mary would recall walking through a square drenched in blood but forced to act as if nothing was wrong, that piles of heads were normal.

Amid this endless massacre, Gilbert Imlay claimed he needed to attend to business in Le Havre and left Mary alone to her pregnancy. In this loneliness, Mary not only wrote, she visited the prisons where her comrades were being held, pushing her American papers to the limit. When her friend Helen Williams was released, she told Mary it was unsafe to keep writing, but Mary persisted, even after her comrade Thomas Paine was arrested that December.

During the onset of winter, Mary grew tired of relying on the money Imlay was mailing from Le Havre, so in January 1794 she took a carriage there during the fifth month of her pregnancy. Imlay made sure Mary was situated in a comfortable home, although by March he cited more business concerns and left for Paris. As usual, Mary kept writing, using her days in Le Havre to finish her *Historical and Moral View of the French Revolution*, one of the first texts to present a green-anarchist perspective.

As she described, thanks to industrial civilization, *whole knots of men [were] turned into machines, to enable a keen speculator to become wealthy; and every noble principle of nature is eradicated by making a man pass his life in stretching wire, pointing a pin, heading a nail, or spreading a sheet of paper on a plain surface.*

It was in this same text that Mary presciently described the fruits of the French Revolution, describing the new dictatorship as *a race of monsters*. Mary would go on to elaborate that, *if therefore it be the contrivance of any government to preclude from a chance of improvement the greater part of the citizens of the state, it can be considered in no other light than a monstrous tyranny.*

Despite her criticism of the Jacobin tyranny, Mary also wrote to her sister Everina that *I certainly am glad I came to France because I never would have had else a just opinion of the most extraordinary event that has ever been recorded—AND I have met with some uncommon instances of friendship which my heart will ever gratefully store up, and call to mind when the remembrance is keen of the anguish it has endured for its fellow-creatures at large—for the unfortunate beings cut off around me and still more unfortunate survivors.*

While she was writing, her comrade the Marquis de Condorcet was captured and imprisoned, although he poisoned himself with datura seed in his cell on March 29, 1794. As a testament to his relationship with Mary and her British comrades, Joseph Johnson later published Condorcet's feminist text *Sketch for a Historical Picture of the Progress of the Human Mind*.

Meanwhile, Mary's comrade Thomas Paine was rotting in a prison cell, haunted by the twin monsters he helped create. Not only did Thomas believe that George Washington conspired to land him in prison, the American government was now making peace with various native tribes in order to better consolidate its power while the British were distracted by war with France.

After fighting against George Washington's armies for years, tribes like the Cherokee were making steps towards peace in the south, while up north a confederation of tribes was defeated, forcing them to cede Ohio to the United States in 1794. All of this was done under the presidency of George Washington, and as he sat in prison cell, Thomas Paine grew more certain that Washington had put him there, given that Thomas had criticized his recent peace treaty with the British.

Of all the alleged *founding fathers* of the United States, only Thomas Paine is remotely capable of redemption, but that's because he was simply a tireless agitator against all monarchies, and the US provided him an opportunity to strike against the British. However, like many European

radicals of our era, Thomas had no idea what he was unleashing in America, or in France, and now the monster of the French Republic had Thomas in its jaws, with only the guillotine awaiting him.

Satirical cartoon of Thomas Paine awaiting trial

While he brooded in his cell, Mary gave birth to her daughter Fanny on May 14, 1794. Unlike most women of her era, Mary went on a walk eight days after giving birth, and as she wrote, *my mind has hitherto enabled my body to do whatever it wished*. Her alleged husband Gilbert Imlay showed up, and Mary appears to have enjoyed a peaceful spring nursing Fanny in the presence of her father. They discussed moving to America to escape the Terror, but soon enough it all came to an end.

A new calendar had been invented following the French Revolution, and July was now Thermidor, the month when the Terror ended and Robespierre was beheaded. However, as pointed out later by Pytor Kropotkin, *the opponents of the Terror, who were always talking of clemency, wanted it only for themselves and their friends. The first thing they did when they came into power was to execute all the partisans of the Montagnards whom they had overthrown. In the three days, the 10th, 11th, and 12th Thermidor (July 28, 29, and 30) there were a hundred and three executions. Denunciations poured in from the middle classes and the guillotine was working hard—this time on the side of reaction.*

There is little documentation of Mary's thoughts during the reaction of Thermidor, although she was clearly happy to have survived the Terror. Gilbert Imlay eventually joined her in Paris that August, but he soon claimed he needed to visit London and promised to send for Mary. September passed with Imlay wasting his money on his new mistress, all the while ignoring Mary, so she quickly got fed up and returned to Paris with her baby, who had just recovered from smallpox.

Mary remained in Paris while Imlay gas-lit her, constantly postponing her return to London until finally extending a lukewarm invitation in the spring of 1795, and she left France that April, never to return. While it hadn't happened yet, Mary must have known that Imlay was going to abandon her just like Victor Frankenstein when he beholds his monster, which *might have spoken, but I did not hear; one hand was stretched out, seemingly to detain me, but I escaped and rushed downstairs.*

VIII: I Turned Into A Monster (Whoa-Oh-Oh)

While growing up, Mary Shelley learned that not only had Henry Fuseli abandoned her mother, so had Gilbert Imlay. However, unlike Fuseli, it was Imlay who got Mary Wollstonecraft pregnant, and he cared as little for his daughter Fanny as he did for her mother. While such abandonment was common among male *libertines* of that era, Mary Shelley grew up resenting such wanton cruelty, and Doctor Victor Frankenstein abandoning his creation was her way of critiquing these *libertines* who left only destruction and sorrow in their wake.

It wasn't just the *libertines* that earned Mary Shelley's wrath, it was Switzerland, the ideal republic of those same *libertines*, and in her *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*, she intentionally had the servant Justine Moritz imprisoned and put on trial by the Swiss state. Charged with murdering Victor's brother William, a crime actually committed by the monster, poor Justine's trial takes place at the beginning of the eighth chapter, where Victor sits in the audience.

As he waits for the trial to begin at eleven o'clock, Victor considers telling the court of the monster, but he fears it *would have been considered as the ravings of a madman and would not have exculpated her who suffered through me*. After the trial commences, the main evidence against her is the locket image of the late Caroline Frankenstein found in her possession, an item which, *an hour before the child had been missed*, Victor's adopted sister Elizabeth had *placed round his neck*.

Justine has no answer for the court and tells them, *I am only left to conjecture concerning the probabilities by which it might have been placed in my pocket*. None of Justine's friends step forward to speak for her good character, leaving Elizabeth as the sole witness for the defense, and as she explains, *when I see a fellow creature about to perish through the cowardice of her pretended friends, I wish to be allowed to speak, that I may say what I know of her character*.

Elizabeth explains how Justine, a poor local servant, tended to the dying Caroline Frankenstein until her last days, just as she was devoted to poor late William. Despite her emotional testimony, her words don't work *in favor of poor Justine, on whom the public indignation was turned with renewed violence, charging her with the blackest ingratitude*.

For his part, when Victor *perceived that the popular voice and the countenances of the judges had already condemned my unhappy victim, I rushed out of the court in agony*. *The tortures of the accused did not equal mine; she was sustained by innocence, but the fangs of remorse tore my bosom and would not forgo their hold*. Victor doesn't sleep that night, and when he returns to court the next morning for the sentencing, *the ballots had been thrown; they were all black, and Justine was condemned*.

Stunned that republican Swiss justice would condemn an innocent, Victor finds a random person to spill his guts to, only to learn that Justine confessed her guilt. As the stranger explain, the evidence *was hardly required in so glaring a case, but I am glad of it; and, indeed, none of our judges like to condemn a criminal upon circumstantial evidence, be it ever so decisive*.

Upon learning this, Victor begins to seriously consider that he's in fact insane, something that Captain Walton and the reader are also considering. As he narrates to Captain Walton, *had my eyes deceived me? And was I really as mad as the whole world would believe me to be if I disclosed the object of my suspicions?* In this uncertainty, Victor returns home to find Elizabeth, who didn't attend the sentencing, given her faith in the Swiss justice system. Elizabeth can't believe that Justine would have killed William, and when Justine asks for Elizabeth to visit her in prison, Victor accompanies her to *the gloomy prison chamber and beheld Justine sitting on some straw at the further end; her hands were manacled, and her head rested on her knees*.

After a brief exchange, Justine explains that *I did confess, but I confessed a lie. I confessed, that I might obtain absolution; but now that falsehood lies heavier at my heart than all my other sins*. One of the main reasons Justine confessed was because of religious superstition, and as she goes on, *my confessor has besieged me; he threatened and menaced, until I almost began to think that I was the monster that he said I was. He threatened excommunication and hell fire in my last moments if I continued*. The only thing Justine regretted was that Elizabeth and Victor would believe her guilty, and after assuring her they know she's innocent, Justine says, *I feel as if I could die in peace, now that my innocence is acknowledged by you*.

These two Frankensteins appeal to the court on Justine's behalf one final time, *but on the morrow Justine died. Elizabeth's heartrending eloquence failed to move the judges from their settled conviction in the criminality of the saintly sufferer. My passionate and indignant appeals were lost upon them. And when I received their cold answers and heard the harsh, unfeeling reasoning of these*

men, my purposed avowal died away on my lips. Thus I might proclaim myself a madman, but not revoke the sentence passed upon my wretched victim. She perished on the scaffold as a murderess!

In simple terms, Justine was elevated from her poverty into the Frankenstein's employment only to find herself falsely accused of a crime against the wealthy family, a common pattern in domestic servants, such as Mary Wollstonecraft. In this case, the alleged crime is murder, and none of the Frankensteins can stop the hanging of this poor servant, accused of killing a son of the Swiss ruling class. That eighth chapter ends with Victor telling Captain Walton that *I beheld those I loved spend vain sorrow upon the graves of William and Justine, the first hapless victims of unhallowed arts.*

Victor falls into melancholy after the hanging, and he joins his family when they leave Geneva for their second house in Bellerive, around ten miles north of the walled city. This retreat into nature makes Victor feel better, and *often, after the rest of the family had retired for the night, I took the boat and passed many hours upon the water.* Drifting like this, Victor contemplates suicide, and as he narrates, *I had been the author of unalterable evils, and I lived in daily fear lest the monster whom I had created should perpetrate some new wickedness.* More than this, Victor claims that *I ardently wished to extinguish that life which I had so thoughtlessly bestowed.*

The execution of Justine also hits Elizabeth extremely hard, and she tells Victor that *now misery has come home, and men appear to me as monsters thirsting for each other's blood.* Her faith in Swiss justice has been shattered, and she cries, *alas! Victor, when falsehood can look so like truth, who can assure themselves of certain happiness?* Despite her own sadness, Elizabeth can tell Victor is taking it hard, so she tells him, *banish these dark passions. Remember the friends around you, who center all their hopes in you.*

Despite her encouragement, only Victor knows the truth about his monster, and in his grief he wanders on foot up the Arve River valley where he *sought in the magnificence, the eternity of such scenes, to forget myself and my ephemeral, because human, sorrow. My wanderings were directed towards the valley of Chamounix,* around 90 miles from Bellerive near the source of the Arve River, which resided on the French side of the border.

As he narrates, *I plunged yet deeper in the ravine of Arve. The immense mountains and precipices that overhung me on every side, the sound of the river raging among the rocks, and the dashing of the waterfalls around, spoke of a power mighty as Omnipotence—and I ceased to fear or to bend before any being less almighty than that which had created and ruled the elements, here displayed in their most terrific guise.* Victor goes on to describe the *impetuous Arve* and the mountains *as belonging to another earth, the habitations of another race of beings.*

These mountains are the famed Swiss Alps, and Victor was just beneath their peaks, most notably Mont Blanc, which currently resides on the Franco-Italian border. As he describes it, *immense glaciers approached the road; I heard the rumbling thunder of the falling avalanche and marked the smoke of its passage. Mont Blanc, the supreme and magnificent Mont Blanc, raised itself from the surrounding aiguilles [pinnacles], and its tremendous dome overlooked the valley.*

Victor finally reaches the village of Chamonix itself, and that night at an inn, *I remained watching the pallid lightnings that play above Mont Blanc and listening to the rushing of the Arve, which pursued its noisy way beneath.* The ninth chapter ends with these meditations, while the tenth begins with Victor continuing up the Arve until it widens into the Arveiron, which is fed directly by a glacier. Victor calls this alpine valley the *glorious presence-chamber of imperial nature*, and the natural world appears to heal Victor, reminding him of its power and beauty.

To get a better view of the *ever-moving glacier*, Victor climbs to the summit of Montanvert, and after taking in the raw power of nature, he recites a poem titled *Mutability* from Percy Bysshe Shelley, the husband of Mary Shelley, thereby breaking the historicity. However, this poem is unattributed in *Frankenstein*, and an uninformed reader would likely assume that this poem was composed by Victor Frankenstein himself, which was likely Mary's intention. As you will soon see, there are many reasons that Mary Shelley might have compared her husband Percy Shelley to the Western scientist Victor Frankenstein, the man who abandons his creation.

Regardless, nature is so awe-inspiring to Victor that he implores the ghosts of Justine and William, *wandering spirits, if indeed ye wander, and do not rest in your narrow beds, allow me this faint happiness, or take me, as your companion, away from the joys of life*. In this exact moment, Victor sees the *figure of a man, at some distance, advancing towards me with superhuman speed. He bounded over the crevices in the ice, among which I had walked with caution*.

Victor quickly realizes this is his monster, and when it arrives, he verbally wishes death upon it. To his surprise, the monster now possesses the power of speech, telling him, *I expected this reception. All men hate the wretched; how, then, must I be hated, who am miserable beyond all living things!* The monster then explains that if Victor complies with his conditions, he won't harm another member of the Frankenstein household, and at this Victor tries to attack him, only to be brushed aside.

The monster tells him to be calm, and that *life, although it may only be an accumulation of anguish, is dear to me, and I will defend it*. The monster claims *I ought to be thy Adam, but I am rather the fallen angel, whom thou drivest from joy for no misdeed*. In short, the monster just wants to be happy, and he promises Victor, *make me happy, and I shall again be virtuous*. Victor still refuses, spurring the monster to ask, *what hope can I gather from your fellow creatures, who owe me nothing? They spurn and hate me*.

As the monster continues, *if the multitude of mankind knew of my existence, they would do as you do, and arm themselves for my destruction. Shall I not then hate them who abhor me? I will keep no terms with my enemies. I am miserable, and they shall share my wretchedness*. The monster implores Victor to come to his hut and hear his tale, after which Victor could make his decision on *whether I quit forever the neighborhood of man and lead a harmless life, or become the scourge of your fellow creatures and the author of your own speedy ruin*.

Having no choice, Victor follows the monster across the glacier to the opposite slope where they *entered the hut, the fiend with an air of exultation, I with a heavy heart and depressed spirits. But I consented to listen, and seating myself by the fire which my odious companion had lighted, he thus began his tale*. As you will remember, the text of *Frankenstein* begins with the letters of Captain Robert Walton, followed by the tale Victor Frankenstein. With the beginning of chapter eleven, Mary Shelley introduces the monster's story, creating a book within a book within a book. Of these three narrators, it is the monster who Mary Shelley most identified with, and as you'll now see, she was born with an intense hatred for all those who abandoned their creations.

IX: Stigmata Monster

As mentioned above, Mary Wollstonecraft and her daughter Fanny returned to London in April of 1795, moving into a furnished house at 26 Charlotte Street. Her pseudo-husband, Gilbert Imlay, was still off with his mistress and refused to live with Mary, who sank into a dark depres-

sion. In one of her letters to Imlay, she wrote, *I am nothing*, and that summer Mary tried to kill herself with laudanum. Imlay showed up after this, but his solution was to send her to Scandinavia as his business agent, along with little Fanny. Mary said she would consider it, but rather than focus her energy on Imlay's scheme, she began to write for the *Analytical*, still run by her loyal friend Joseph Johnson.

Mary eventually accepted Imlay's offer and sailed for Gothenburg with Fanny on June 21, 1795. She left her daughter there with a nurse and traveled across Scandinavia from July to August, much of which she chronicled in her book *Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark*, which was later published by Joseph Johnson, who also published her *Historical and Moral View of the French Revolution* while she was still in France.

After returning to England that September, Mary learned that Imlay was going to set up house with his latest mistress, and all of her hope for a partner and father disintegrated into dust. The following month, Mary wrote Imlay a suicide note, filled her pockets with weights, and then jumped off Putney Bridge into the Thames River. Thanks to some local river-workers, Mary was pulled out of the water, taken to a public house, and tended to by a doctor, all organized by strangers who knew nothing about her.

Meanwhile, a riotous mob surrounded the royal carriage of mad King George III on October 29, 1795, which they then pelted with stones. This mob had been marching to demand food, which was scarce thanks to the war with France, and they chanted things like *Peace, Down with George, No War*, and also simply *Bread*. It was the first sign of the French revolt spreading to England, and the government soon banned all gatherings of over 50 people, as well as texts which criticized the crown and state.

This was the context in which Mary recovered from her near-drowning, and upon learning of this second suicide attempt, Imlay the *libertine* showed some minor concern, although he refused Mary's suggestion of living with him and his mistress. This appears to be when Mary finally began to give up on Imlay, and she quickly returned to her writing, as well as preparing her *Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark*, which was published in January 1796.

Her travel *Letters* became an instant success and went on to inspire an entire generation of Romantic writers, a notable achievement for a single mother of that era. One female reader told Mary that *as soon as I read your letters from Norway, the cold awe which the philosopher excited, was lost in the tender sympathy called forth by the woman. I saw nothing but the interesting creature of feeling and emotion.*

Despite this praise for her book, Mary still harbored much sadness, and as she wrote to a friend, *I have been treated with unkindness—and even cruelty, by the person from whom I have every reason to expect affection*, namely Gilbert Imlay. After confronting him with Fanny one final time, Mary wrote that *I part with you in peace*, and the last time she saw him was in March 1796. She soon moved west across the city to Cumming Street, which was then the rural edge of London, and it was on April 14 that she decided to go visit her old friend William Godwin, who lived nearby on Chalton Street.

William had expressed little interest in Mary before this, but he eventually got a copy of her *Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark*, and he later claimed that, *if ever there was a book calculated to make a man fall in love with its author, this appears to be the book*. He tried to contact Mary but failed numerous times, although it became clear William was interested in her, which ultimately led to Mary knocking on his door.

While she was in France, William published his *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice and its Influence on Morals and Happiness* in February 1793, one of the first major texts of what became European anarchism. Today the Wikipedia entry for William Godwin prominently features the circle (A) anarchist symbol, but back then his *Political Justice* was simply the first text to spell out some major tenets of the philosophy of anarchism without referring to it as such. Again, calling oneself an *anarchist* in the 1790s was tantamount to calling oneself a *witch* during the witch trials, and such a thing wouldn't become fashionable for another half-century.

Unlike the pamphlets of Thomas Paine, which cost around 5 pence, the two bound volumes of *Political Justice* cost over a pound, and the government allowed its publication under the assumption it wouldn't sell. However, to everyone's surprise, the first edition of *Political Justice* sold over 3,000 copies, making it a best-seller and spreading anarchism across England.

In 1794, a year after Godwin published *Political Justice*, the Treason Trials took place in London, targeting thirty writers, speakers, and philosophers alleged to have committed seditious libel and treason, among other crimes, for which they faced a potential death sentence, although William Godwin wasn't one of them. All of this was a direct reaction to the French Revolution, the first major crackdown on England's scattered radicals.

In response to King George suspending *habeas corpus* during the arrest of the defendants, William published his *Things as They Are; or, The Adventures of Caleb Williams*, which was released on May 12, 1794, the same day as the first arrests. Widely considered to be the first thriller, *Caleb Williams* follows the titular character as he evades an unjust state seeking him for crimes he didn't commit. William wrote the book to further elaborate the anarchist philosophy of his *Political Justice* and, thanks to the Treason Trials, the book was widely read across London.

William Godwin also helped these defendants by anonymously publishing his *Cursory Strictures on the Charge Delivered by Lord Chief Justice Eyre to the Grand Jury, 2 October 1794*, a text which likely saved their lives by publicly demolishing the prosecution. Despite all of the defendants escaping the death penalty, the banning of political groups that followed the attack on King George all but crushed the radical movement in England, and it was precisely during this repression, in the spring of 1796, that Mary Wollstonecraft knocked on the door of William Godwin.

Mary and William soon became entangled in what is now known as *poly-drama*, with one participant writing that *the report of the world is that Mr Holcroft is in love with [Mary], she with Mr Godwin, Mr Godwin with me, and I am in love with Mr Holcroft! A pretty story indeed!* This whole scene that Mary and William were part of cared little for modern conventions, but William was adamantly against marriage and for free love. It should also be pointed out that William was likely a virgin when he met Mary, and his viewpoints had been formed outside of love's intoxication, as you will see.

Mary soon asked William for a love letter, *a bird's-eye view of your heart*, as she put it, and William wrote back, *shall I write a love letter? May Lucifer fly away with me if I do!...Well then, what shall be my subject? Shall I send you an eulogium of your beauty, your talents & your virtues? Ah! that is an old subject: besides if I were to begin, instead of a sheet of paper, I should want a ream.*

It was in the midst of this amorous frenzy that Mary began writing *Maria; or, The Wrongs of Woman*, her second novel. Much of her own life story is fictionalized in *Maria*, just as Mary advanced her own anarcho-feminist viewpoint, declaring that in men, *accustomed to submit to every impulse of passion, and never taught, like women, to restrain the most natural, and acquire, instead of the bewitching frankness of nature, a factitious propriety of behaviour, every desire became a torrent that bore down all opposition.*

Faced with these double standards, characters like Jemima *picked the pockets of the drunkards who abused me*, while one male character falls into *a thoughtless career of libertinism and social enjoyment*. Jemima is the vehicle for Mary's anarcha-feminism, and she questions *that every person willing to work may find employment? It is the vague assertion, I believe, of insensible indolence, when it relates to men; but, with respect to women, I am sure of its fallacy, unless they will submit to the most menial bodily labour; and even to be employed at hard labour is out of the reach of many, whose reputation misfortune or folly has tainted*.

Jemima also embodies much of the anti-capitalist viewpoint, and as she tells the character Maria, *unable to stand at the washing-tub, I began to consider the rich and poor as natural enemies, and I became a thief from principle*. In a line very similar to those spoken by Victor Frankenstein's monster, Jemima says that *I could not now cease to reason, but I hated mankind*. Jemima is very much the monster created by the world of men, a monster who Mary Wollstonecraft had every sympathy for.

Mary boldly wrote that men allow women *to have minds, because mind would be an impediment to gross enjoyment. Men who are inferior to their fellow men, are always anxious to establish their superiority over women*. Given these various oppressions, Mary asked the reader, *is it then surprising, that so many forlorn women, with human passions and feelings, take refuge in infamy?* Beyond this, Mary was exceptionally clear when she wrote, *the heart of a libertine is dead to natural affection*.

While she was writing these words, William Godwin proposed to one of their polyamorous friends on July 10, 1796, only to be turned down, after which he wrote Mary a flirty letter. After another month of drama, Mary and William finally slept together, although Mary's trauma and William's inexperience did cause some initial turbulence in the months that followed. However, both of them had their lives turned upside-down when Mary realized she was pregnant in the winter of 1797.

The pregnancy was confirmed by a doctor that February, and despite his prior beliefs on free love, William married Mary at Saint Pancras Church on March 29, 1797. What followed were some of the happiest months in Mary's life, and she enjoyed living with William and Fanny in the closest she came to having a family. Their friend Joseph Johnson helped them all he could, but other radicals turned up their noses when they found out Mary and William were married.

Mary did become jealous when Godwin didn't turn away his previous admirers, and they did suffer some conflicts, although by August they were at peace again and enjoyed one final month together. On the night of August 29, 1797, Mary and William were in bed reading a favorite book of theirs, *The Sorrows of Young Werther* by Johann Wolfgang Goethe, when all of a sudden Mary's water broke.

By the next morning, it was immediately apparent something was wrong. The birth was extremely slow and painful, and after her daughter Mary Godwin was successfully delivered, the placenta remained attached inside Mary's body. While no longer as fatal, this was near certain death in 1797, and despite the doctor removing as much of it as possible, Mary Wollstonecraft died of sepsis on September 10, 1797. According to William, her last words were, *I know what you are thinking*.

X: Monster Truck Madness

Mary Shelley was with her mother for less than two weeks before Mary Wollstonecraft passed away, creating in her what modern therapists call an *anxious attachment style*, meaning she was predisposed to cling to whoever took the place of her departed or negligent parents, given they might vanish at any moment. As mentioned above, Mary Shelley was neglected by her father William Godwin, making her *anxious attachment* even more pronounced, a trait also shared by the abandoned monster in her first novel *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*.

The eleventh chapter of her novel begins the monster's story, written in quotations through the first person perspective. This novel-within-a-novel-within-a-novel begins with the monster telling Victor, *it is with considerable difficulty that I remember the original era of my being; all the events of that period appear confused and distinct*. In this regard, the monster is like most human infants, whose eyes squint at all the light they've never seen.

In the monster's case, this first light is from the sun as he wanders out of Ingolstadt and into the forest where *he lay by the side of a brook resting from my fatigue, until I felt tormented by hunger and thirst*. The monster eats some berries, drinks some water, takes a nap, but when he wakes it is dark and cold, and in his misery he *sat down and wept*. To his surprise, the monster looks up and beholds *a radiant form rise from among the trees*, a sentence with the novel's first footnote, indicating that this light is the moon. For some reason, Mary Shelley made certain to emphasize this to the reader, and the moon certainly plays a prominent role in the novel, as you'll see.

The moon is the monster's first companion, although he soon discovers that *a pleasant sound, which often saluted my ears, proceeded from the throats of the little winged animals who had often intercepted the light from my eyes*. When he attempts to imitate their song, *the uncouth and inarticulate sounds which broke from me frightened me into silence*. Not only does the monster babble like an infant, he struggles to apprehend what child psychologists now refer to as *object permanence*, and as the monster tells Victor, he eventually *distinguished the insect from the herb, and by degrees, one herb from another*.

In this same manner, the monster finds a campfire *left by some wandering beggars and was overcome with delight at the warmth*. However, the inexperienced monster tries to touch the fire and burns his hand, as many young children have also done, if left unsupervised. Slowly, the monster learns the nature of fire, that some branches *were wet and would not burn*, and he keeps it going for several days, afraid to leave what he *knew not how to reproduce*.

Hunger eventually drives him away from the warmth which he anxiously clings to, and the monster soon finds a hut, although when he walks inside, an elder who lives there *shrieked loudly, and quitting the hut, ran across the fields with a speed of which his debilitated form hardly appeared capable*. This is the first of many human rejections the monster will experience, but for the moment he's overcome with awe at the food and objects in the hut. After eating his fill, the monster takes a nap until noon, gathers some supplies, and continues onward in his wanderings.

The monster eventually comes to a village, but just like the hut, the first human children he encounters begin screaming, with the inhabitants forming a mob and chasing him off into the countryside, where he finds refuge *in a low hovel, quite bare, and making a wretched appearance after the palaces I had beheld in the village*. The hovel, however, *joined a cottage of a neat and pleasant appearance*, and it was here that Victor Frankenstein's monster hid himself from *the barbarity of man*.

From this hovel, the monster can spy through a boarded up window into the adjacent cottage, and eventually he sees the inhabitants, a young girl, a young man, and an old man. As he observes, the young girl *sat down beside the old man, who, taking up an instrument, began to play and to produce sound sweeter than the voice of the thrush or the nightingale. It was a lovely sight, even to me, poor wretch! who had never beheld aught beautiful before.* The young man eventually returns with a load of wood, just as the young girl harvests vegetables from their garden, and the monster observes their nightly routine until they fall asleep.

Over the next months, the monster hides in the hovel and watches the family, *endeavoring to discover the motives which influenced their actions.* The monster soon discovers *one of the causes of the uneasiness of this amiable family: it was poverty, and they suffered that evil in a very distressing degree.* All at once, the monster develops a class-consciousness, and he not only stops pilfering from their stores, he begins gathering and chopping wood for them, which he leaves anonymously outside their front door.

Above all, the monster eventually *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.* Over the following winter, the monster learns rapidly, even discovering the names of the young siblings, Agatha and Felix, who he admires as if they were gods.

The monster eventually discovers text and reading, and while he *eagerly longed to discover myself to the cottagers, I ought not to make the attempt until I had first become master of their language, which knowledge might enable me to make them overlook the deformity of my figure.* It is with much pain that the monster first beholds himself, and as he tells his creator, *how was I terrified when I viewed myself in a transparent pool! 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. Alas! I did not yet entirely know the fatal effect of this miserable deformity.*

By spring, the monster can speak whole sentences, although he only utters them to himself. One day, Felix' lost lover Safie turns up at their door, and after settling in, Felix begins to teach her his family's native language. One of the books Felix uses for Safie's instruction is *The Ruins: or, a Survey of the Revolutions of Empire* by Constantin-François Chassebœuf, or the Comte de Volney, written in 1791 during the French Revolution. This is one of the texts that definitively date the time-frame of when *Frankenstein* takes place, implying that Felix had obtained it in revolutionary France. Beyond this, the book was published in English by Joseph Johnson, comrade of Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin.

Just like Mary Shelley's mother, the Comte was imprisoned in France during the Terror, although after the reaction of Thermidor he moved to the United States under the protection of Thomas Jefferson. Despite this ally, President John Adams accused the Comte of espionage and he was forced to flee back to France in 1798, although he soon joined up with Napoleon Bonaparte for the coup of November 9, 1799, when Napoleon was installed as First Consul. He rewarded the Comte by restoring his full title and making him a senator, but after Napoleon was overthrown and the monarchy restored in 1814, the Comte was rewarded by being named Peer of France by King Louis XVIII himself.

All this to say, the Comte de Volney lived through the reign of Louis XVI, the reign of the Jacobins, the reign of Napoleon, and the reign of Louis XVIII, and when Mary Shelley began her *Frankenstein* in 1816, she had her monster read his *Ruins of Empire*, evoking the same author

who had seen her mother's *race of monsters* come and go. Beyond this, this book is the first indication that Agatha and Felix are French speakers, although the location of the cabin is not yet established.

The monster is greatly affected by the reading of *Ruins of Empire*, and as he tells Victor, *I obtained a cursory knowledge of history and a view of the several empires at present existing in the world; it gave me an insight into the manners, government, and religions of the different nations on earth.* After listing the general contents of the book, the monster tells him that *I heard of the discovery of the American hemisphere and wept with Safie over the hapless fate of its original inhabitants.* This is the most anti-colonial passage in the novel, and the monster feels a clear affinity with these natives who were just as hated and despised as himself. As the monster asks, *was man, indeed, at once so powerful, so virtuous, and magnificent, yet so vicious and base?*

The monster goes on to explain that *for a long time I could not conceive how one man could go forth to murder his fellow, or even why there were laws and governments; but then I heard details of vice and bloodshed, my wonder ceased and I turned away with disgust and loathing.* Through these French lessons, as well as his eavesdropping, *the strange system of human society was explained to me. I heard of the division of property, of immense wealth and squalid poverty; of rank, descent, and noble blood.*

Not only does the monster have an anti-colonial analysis, his class-consciousness rapidly advances, and as he explained, *I learned that the possessions most esteemed by your fellow creatures were high and unsullied descent united with riches, or breeding and wealth.* But as he asks, *and what was I? Of my creation and creator I was absolutely ignorant, but I knew that I possessed no money, no friends, no kind of property.*

On top of this wealth disparity, the monster understands that he was *endued with a figure hideously deformed and loathsome; I was not even of the same nature as man. I was more agile than they and could subsist upon coarser diet; I bore the extremes of heat and cold with less injury to my frame; my stature far exceeded theirs. When I looked around I saw and heard none like me. Was I, then, a monster, a blot upon the earth, from which all men fled and whom all men disowned?*

This last passage echoes not only Mary Shelley's abandonment, but also her mother's, and just like Mary Wollstonecraft, the monster *learned that there was but one means to overcome the sensation of pain, and that was death—a state which I feared yet did not understand.* As the monster laments to Victor, *I admired virtue and good feelings and loved the gentle manners and amiable qualities of my cottagers, but I was shut out from intercourse with them, except through means which I obtained by stealth, when I was unseen and unknown, and which rather increased then satisfied the desire I had of becoming one among my fellows.*

As you will soon see, Mary Shelley channeled her own trauma and pain into her monster, a creature capable of thoughts, emotions, and speech. Just like Mary Shelley, her monster has a mind, but as Mary Wollstonecraft wrote before she was born, men did not want monsters, or women, *to have minds, because mind would be an impediment to gross enjoyment. Men who are inferior to their fellow men, are always anxious to establish their superiority over women, or monsters.*

XI: Monster from the Black Lagoon

Despite her extremely radical beliefs, Mary Wollstonecraft retained a core of religious belief which she inherited from the Dissenters of the 1780s. For this reason, Mary was buried in the Saint Pancras churchyard on September 16, 1797, although her husband William Godwin was too emotional to attend, saving him the ridicule of his atheist friends. He did eventually visit the gravestone, which read MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT GODWIN, Author of *A Vindication of the rights of Woman*. Born 27th April 1759, Died 10th September 1797. On either side of her gravestone were planted two weeping willows, providing some shelter for all those who'd come to visit this fallen firebrand.

The Polygon

William, who was now 41, would soon write to a friend, lamenting *the two poor animals left under my protection*, meaning four year-old Fanny Imlay and an infant Mary Godwin. He moved with his daughters into a building called the Polygon and left them in the care of Louisa Jones, a friend of his sister Hannah. While she watched over his daughter and step-daughter, William composed his *Memoirs of the Author of A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, published in January 1798, which was soon followed by the *Posthumous Works*, as well the fragments of *Maria; or, The Wrongs of Woman*, which remained unfinished after her death and was published by her good friend Joseph Johnson.

It was the *Memoirs* which landed William Godwin in trouble, for he frankly told Mary's life-story in a time of near-universal repression, and the reaction to her feminism was immense. Even one of their old friends wrote, *hard was thy fate in all the scenes of life, as daughter, sister, parent, friend and wife, but harder still in death thy fate we own, mourn'd by thy Godwin—with a heart of stone*. Few of their old comrades believed William had treated Mary favorably, and their criticism was soon followed by that of the conservative Tories, who depicted *Mary as a whore and Godwin as a pimp*.

In truth, Godwin had represented little of Mary's actual beliefs and motivations, instead focusing on his own obsession with free love, something which ultimately drove Mary to suicide. In one revealing passage, he stereotypically explained that *the strength of her mind lay in intuition* rather than logic and reason, and that, *in a robust and unwavering judgment of this sort, there is a kind of witchcraft*. Put simply, his *Memoirs* drastically set back the cause of feminism in England, with the public now more concerned with her scandalous life than her anarcha-feminist philosophy.

The repression in England continued, with Joseph Johnson going to jail for six months in 1798 on the charge publishing seditious literature. The *Analytical* was shut down and Joseph Johnson retreated from public after his release, although he encouraged authors like Mary Hays, a comrade of Mary Wollstonecraft, who published her *Appeal to the Men of Great Britain in behalf of the Women* that same year. Despite her candle in the dark, more conservative writer's began to rise, with one British woman writing in 1798 that *girls must very soon perceive the impossibility of their rambling about the world in quest of adventures*.

As another conservative British woman would write, *if we wish our girls to be happy—we must try to make them docile, contented, prudent, and domestic*. This author, Jane West, would later be referred to as *good Mrs West* by the novelist Jane Austen, although it's unclear if she was being sarcastic. In any case, this docile, conservative world was exactly what Jane Austen

would mercilessly critique in her anonymous novels, although those wouldn't appear for another decade.

Leading this repression was the *Anti-Jacobin Review*, a monthly journal secretly bankrolled by the British state, and as one biographer put it, *from 1798 on, Godwin and his late wife were repeatedly singled out as wrong-headed, irresponsible enemies of public safety*. It was the *Anti-Jacobin Review* that helped shut down the *Analytical* and persecute Joseph Johnson, just as they would soon begin labeling enemies of the Crown as the *Illuminati*.

This hysteria about the *Illuminati* began in 1798 when a French writer named Augustine Barruel published his *Memoirs Illustrating the History of Jacobinism*, which alleged that the French Revolution was orchestrated by the *Illuminati*, who he claimed were perpetually searching for *the means of working a revolution of impiety and anarchy*. Barruel used the word *anarchy* numerous times to describe the goals of the Bavarian *Illuminati*, just as he labeled Mary Wollstonecraft's friend the Marquis de Condorcet as a member of this *anarchist* conspiracy.

It was also in 1798 that a conservative British writer named John Robison first published his *Proofs of a Conspiracy against All the Religions and Governments of Europe, carried on in the Secret Meetings of the Free Masons, Illuminati, and Reading Societies*, which repeated and amplified the allegations made by Barruel in his *Memoirs*. Because of these texts, Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin were seen as acolytes of this *Illuminati* despite both of them having religious Dissenter backgrounds, and while neither of them were ever Freemasons or *Illuminati*, this hysteria offered William a chance to tell his own story.

After the *Memoirs Illustrating the History of Jacobinism* was published, William read it cover to cover, thoroughly enjoying this mostly historical work. The conspiratorial methods of the alleged *Illuminati* inspired him to begin another novel, so while his sister's friend took care of Fanny and baby Mary, a grieving William wrote *St. Leon: A Tale of the Sixteenth Century*, which depicted the wandering of Reginald, who discovers the philosopher's stone, which can impart long life and the ability to transmute other elements into gold. This discovery is also a curse, and Reginald experiencing his wife Marguerite's death is widely viewed as a parable of Mary Wollstonecraft's death.

Published in 1799, *St. Leon* prefigured future anarchist novels like *Q*, published in 1999 by the anonymous Luther Blissett, which also followed a besieged antagonist across Europe in the 1500s. Many passages in *St. Leon* evoke his daughter Mary's future *Frankenstein*, and when Reginald bemoans his penchant for gambling, he describes it as *a demon that poisoned all my joys, that changes the transport of a meeting with the adored of my soul into anguish*.

Mary Godwin was not yet two years-old when her father William had the character Marguerite explain to her husband Reginald that *it is, too true, that the splendour in which we lately lived has its basis in oppression; and that the superfluities of the rich are a boon extorted from the hunger and misery of the poor!* This passage reflects Mary Wollstonecraft's brazen anti-capitalism, just as William expressed his own anarchism through Reginald, who discovers that *wealth serves no other purpose than to deprave the soul, and adulterate the fountains of genuine delight*.

When her husband Reginald comes into possession of the philosopher's stone, Marguerite warns him that the *police has its eyes upon you; superstition will regard you as the familiar of demons; avarice will turn upon you a regard of jealousy and insatiable appetite*.

Describing the fate that will follow a now immortal and infinitely wealthy Reginald, she exclaims, *how unhappy the wretch, the monster rather let me say, who is without an equal; who looks through the world, and in the world cannot find a brother; who is endowed with attributes which*

no living being participates with him; and who is therefore cut off for ever from all cordiality and confidence. This passage certainly evokes Victor Frankenstein's monster, and William Godwin has these lines delivered through the voice of Marguerite, the character he based on Mary Wollstonecraft.

Despite his good heart, William couldn't help his own limitations as a man of his era, and one of Mary's biographers would later write about *St Leon*, explaining that the character *Marguerite*, supposedly a portrait of Mary, appeared as an almost totally passive and dependent wife and mother without a thought or ambition outside the domestic circle.

St. Leon was published in 1799 as a four-volume set, with the first edition selling out and a second one printed in 1800. In the meantime, William was desperately trying to find a new wife, and after several rejections, he eventually met a neighbor, Mary Jane Clairmont, on May 6, 1801, and by July 6, both of their families were going on outings together. Mary Jane also had two young children, Charles and Jane, who became the playmates of Mary and Fanny Godwin.

Mary Jane and her daughter Jane

William often took little Mary to see her mother's grave at Saint Pancras, just as he felt that he lacked the skills *to direct the infant mind. I am the most unfit person for this office; she was the best qualified in the world.* Their family apartment in the Polygon was a frequent meeting place for radicals, and most beloved by Mary was Samuel Taylor Coleridge, the now famous poet, who often stayed for days.

One night, Mary and her sister-in-law Jane hid behind the couch while Samuel read his *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, which forever etched into Mary's young mind its stanzas, *the ice was here, the ice was there, the ice was all around: it cracked and growled, and roared and howled, like noises in a swound! At length did cross an Albatross, thorough the fog it came; as if it had been a Christian soul, we hailed it in God's name.* When her gasps of terror were noticed, Mary and Jane were chased off to bed where they continued to imagine the ice and snow.

Mary and Fanny first went to a neighborhood school where most of the other student were children of French exiles, while back at the home Mary Jane, a Catholic, took greater control of the family's domestic affairs after her marriage to William in December 1801. Mary Jane was also a noted translator, the first to publish *The Swiss Family Robinson* into English, just as she was extremely generous to those in need. It was thanks to Mary Jane that Mary and the other children received daily lessons from a tutor rather than go to an outside school, something which pleased William, who was busy writing children's books rather than personally teach his children.

William published his first illustrated children's book in 1803, first titled *Bible Stories*, then *Sacred Histories*. As he believed, imagination was *the ground-plot upon which the edifice of a sound morality must be erected*, and he retold Bible stories in order to convey his anarchist philosophy. William published this book under a false name, and it was so successful he published another in 1805 entitled *Fables, Ancient and Modern*, which utilized the same retelling technique. His *Fables* were so popular that his old foes as the *Anti-Jacobin Review* praised it to the sky, claiming it possessed the greatest retelling of Aesop's fables every written in the English language. Mary read both these books when she was a young girl, absorbing all of the anarchist lessons imparted by her otherwise distracted father.

It was also in 1805 that the Godwins opened their first bookstore off Tottenham Court Road, although under the name of their single employee, given they were alleged *Illuminati*. Still writing anonymously, William published another children's book, *The Looking Glass: A True History*

of the *Early Years of an Artist*, followed in 1806 by *The Life of Lady Jane Grey*, which included bits about tolerance towards Catholics, who had no rights in England or Ireland.

William eventually took a more active part in the children's education, and as Mary Jane wrote her friend, *the girls have been taught by Mr Godwin Roman Greek and English history, French and Italian from masters. Frances [Fanny] and Mary draw very well*. Every book that Godwin published between 1803 and 1810 became a textbook for his children, all of whom absorbed his anarchism as if it were water, but none more so than Mary.

In 1807, the Godwins began looking for a building that could house their family as well as their bookstore, which they found at 41 Skinner Street. It was a five-story cornerhouse that cost £150 a year to rent, so first Mary Jane and the children moved in that August, while William stayed at the Polygon wrapping up their affairs, and he left in November without paying their back-rent.

Despite the poverty of the surrounding neighborhood, the house and bookstore became a cozy retreat for many radicals, among them Aaron Burr, who fled the United States in 1808. The former Vice President during the Jefferson administration, it was also Aaron Burr who shot and killed Alexander Hamilton in a 1804 duel. At the end of his term in 1805, he then proceeded to organize an aborted coup against the US government, leading to his 1807 treason charges, which he beat despite slave-owning Jefferson trying to send him to gallows. It should be noted that Burr was an early-abolitionist and didn't own any slaves as Vice President, unlike Jefferson the *libertine*, who did own slaves as President.

Despite being a *libertine* himself, Aaron Burr had a portrait of Mary Wollstonecraft in his home so that his daughters could grow up under her influence, and when he fled to England in 1808, her widowed husband William Godwin gave him shelter. Aaron played with all the children, including Mary, who he claimed didn't resemble her famous mother whose portrait watched over his own children.

1809 was a dark year, with Joseph Johnson passing away on December 20, persecuted to the end by the British state, who considered him part of the *Illuminati* like his old friends William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft. Meanwhile, back in the United States, their comrade Thomas Paine lived his last days a tried and bitter man. George Washington had ensured he lost his right to vote, and he died at his home in Greenwich Village on June 8, 1809.

The war with England that Thomas Paine had once dreamed of finally arrived three years later on June 18, 1812, although with disastrous results. After the White House was torched and a peace concluded with the British, the United States Army transitioned to the outright genocide of the indigenous, not just those who aided the British, but all those who remained in the Southeast. In every respect, Thomas Paine helped birth this genocidal monster, a lesson not lost on Mary Godwin.

Her childhood friendship with Aaron Burr only encouraged this belief, and by 1811 she became one of what he called *les goddesses*, including Jane and Fanny, who all called him *Gamp*. The girls would try to coax him from games of whist, which he played with William and Mary Jane, although he sometimes escorted them to functions. Just like her siblings, Mary Godwin had an active social life, suffering none of the deprivations known to other home-schooled children, and they helped pull Aaron out of his depressions with their outings. As he wrote, *that family really does love me*.

Aaron also noticed that Mary didn't have *the air of strong health*, but luckily Mary Jane took the family out of the city every summer, escaping the industrial pollution for the sunny coun-

tryside. Nevertheless, Mary was sent away for her health in the summer of 1811, spending the next half-year at a boarding school in Ramsgate, although she was likely suffering stress-induced eczema or psoriasis, which spread from one hand and up her arm.

Just as her characters in *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* would blame themselves for the deaths of others out of superstitious guilt, Mary Godwin blamed herself for the death of her mother Mary Wollstonecraft, and as she learned exactly how respected and loved her mother was, it's likely that this superstitious guilt only increased, possibly contributing to her skin condition, but it wasn't the only cause.

There is a tremendous lack of information on Mary from her birth up through 1814, when the record resumes, but it's likely this skin irritation was a symptom of her animosity toward her step-mother Mary Jane, who bossed Mary around at the bookshop, where she now worked as an employee. While she was the daughter of William Godwin, she was simply a worker to Mary Jane, who managed everything and drove Mary out of her mind with stress, given the family was always broke.

Like good anarchists, the Godwins were terrible with money, and Mary Jane clearly took out much of her economic stress on her step-daughter, who would say, *I detest Mrs Godwin. She plagues my father out of his life.* In fact, after bringing Mary to Ramsgate that summer, Mary Jane and William had such a bad fight that Mary Jane stayed alone in the countryside the rest of that summer.

Mary returned to London that December of 1811, and in January 1812 she and a friend went to go see their beloved Samuel Taylor Coleridge give the last of a lecture series. At the time, Mary was 14 years-old, while someone else at that lecture, Lord Byron, was then 24 years-old. It's unlikely that they met, but as you will see, their paths would soon cross in the future.

As mentioned, the Godwins were bad with money, and desperately needed a loan, which prompted Mary to often run the bookshop single-handedly. William was amazed by this capacity in not just Mary but the other children, and as he wrote to a prospective patron, *I have again and again been hopeless concerning the children. Seeds of intellect and knowledge, seeds of moral judgment and conduct, I have sown, but the soil for a long time seemed 'ungrateful to the tillers care.'* *It was not so. The happiest operations were going on quietly and unobserved, and at the moment when it was of the utmost importance, they unfolded themselves to the delight of every beholder.*

William wrote this in March 1812, soliciting funds from a perspective patron named Percy Bysshe Shelley, a wealthy 20 year-old anarchist with a future inheritance as the eldest son of Sir Timothy Shelley, Baronet of Castle Goring. Percy had become an avid fan of *Political Justice*, which was his sacred anarchist text, and when Percy found out that his hero William Godwin needed money to get out of debt, it was only a matter of time before the name Shelley entered the lives of the Godwins.

XII: Monsters Unleashed

As mentioned above, Percy Bysshe Shelley was the most direct inspiration for the character Victor Frankenstein, and in chapter fourteen of *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*, his monster continues the tale of how he came to learn the history of his hosts, those kind people who lived in the cottage adjacent to his hut.

This was the De Lacey family, who resided in Paris until a Turkish merchant ruined their fortunes, although the merchant's daughter Safie fell in love with Felix De Lacey before they were separated. Safie was the daughter of *a Christian Arab, seized and made a slave by the Turks; recommended by her beauty, she had won the heart of the father of Safie, who married her*. As the monster continues, this mother *instructed her daughter in the tenets of her religion and taught her to aspire to higher powers of intellect and an independence of spirit forbidden to the female followers of Muhammad. This lady died but her lessons were indelibly impressed on the mind of young Safie*.

During the narration of these events, the monster speaks directly to Victor, claiming he has documents to support his story, telling him that *before I depart I will give them to you; they will prove the truth of my tale*. As the monster continues, he reveals that the cottage was in the woods of southwestern Germany, and that Safie fled from her father in Italy and found her exiled lover, where he continued to teach her French, this time using the *Ruins of Empire* by the Comte de Volney as their instruction book, through which the monster learns not just French, but history, as noted above.

One day when he's out gathering food for himself and wood for the cottagers, the monster finds a leather case with three books: *Paradise Lost* by John Milton, the *Lives* of Plutarch, and *The Sorrows of Young Werther* by Johann Wolfgang Goethe. It's the *Sorrows* that captures the monster's imagination more than the others, just as it was one of Mary Wollstonecraft's favorite book, which she and William Godwin were reading aloud before her labor started and she passed away giving birth to Mary Shelley.

Just like her mother, and likely Mary Shelley herself, the monster finds in the novel *a never-ending source of speculation and astonishment*. Beyond this, the monster *thought Werther himself a more diving being than I had ever beheld or imagined; his character contained no pretension, but it sank deep*. While this novel teaches the monster about the depths of the soul, it's Plutarch's *Lives* that teaches him *of men concerned in public affairs, governing or massacring their species*, leading the monster *to admire peaceable lawgivers*.

It is *Paradise Lost* that excites different, more rebellious emotions, and as he tells Victor, *like Adam, I was apparently united by no link to any other being in existence*, although unlike Adam, the first man from the Bible, the monster was *wretched, helpless, and alone*. In this regard, the monster *considered Satan as the fitter emblem of my condition, for often, like him, when I viewed the bliss of my protectors, the bitter gall of envy rose within me*.

The monster's internal rebellion against his own God creator continues when he *discovered some paper in the pocket of the dress which I had taken from your laboratory*. Now that he can read these notes, the monster realizes they are the *journal of the four months that preceded my creation*. To prove he's not lying, the monster waves them in front of Victor's face, saying, *here they are*.

As the monster tells him, it was in these notes that a *description of my odious person is given, in language which painted your own horrors and rendered mine indelible. I sickened as I read. "Hateful day when I received life!" I exclaimed in agony. "Accursed creator! Why did you form a monster so hideous that even you turned from me in disgust? God, in pity, made man beautiful and alluring, after his own image; but my form is a filthy type of yours, more horrid even from the very resemblance. Satan had his companions, fellow devils, to admire and encourage him, but I am solitary and abhorred"*.

The monster resists this solitude, convincing himself that if the cottagers *should become acquainted with my admiration of their virtues they would compassionate me and overlook my personal deformity*. However, the monster is discouraged when he beholds himself *reflected in water*,

and in his sadness he *remembered Adam's supplication to his creator. But where was mine? He had abandoned me, and in the bitterness of my heart I cursed him.*

As the seasons roll on, the monster notices, *with surprise and grief, the leaves decay and fall, and nature again assume the barren and bleak appearance it had worn when I first beheld the woods and the lovely moon. Yet I did not heed the bleakness of the weather; I was better fitted by my conformation for the endurance of cold than heat. But my chief delights were the sight of the flowers, the birds, and all the gay apparel of summer.* After cursing his own creator, it's notable that Mary Shelley provides a passage of the monster reveling in the beauties of nature, the true creator of them all.

Exactly one year had elapsed since the monster took refuge in the hut behind the cottage, and he decides to first approach the blind old man Mr. De Lacey. After briefly conversing, the old man says, *by your language, stranger, I suppose you are my countryman; are you French?* After more dialogue, Mr. De Lacey assures the monster, *to be friendless is indeed to be unfortunate, but the hearts of men, when prejudiced by any obvious self-interest, are full of brotherly love and charity.*

In this one scene, Mary Shelley was taking a swipe at an aspect of her father William Godwin's anarchism, and just as she painted her father as a blind old man, she revealed that his philosophy took little account of those deemed monstrous by society. Her monster expresses Mary's same reservations, telling the old man that where most people *ought to see a feeling and kind friend, they behold only a detestable monster.* The old man assures the monster his family is also unfortunate, a band of outcasts exiled from France and Turkey, and after seeing a year of their kindness, the monster is filled with hope when the rest of the family walks into the cottage.

As the monster tell his creator, *Agatha fainted, and Safie, unable to attend to her friend, rushed out of the cottage. Felix darted forward, and with supernatural force tore me from his father, to whose knees I clung; in a transport of fury, he dashed me to the ground and struck me violently with a stick. I could have torn him limb from limb, as the lion rends the antelope. But my heart sank within me as with bitter sickness, and I refrained.* In this traumatic moment, the monster runs out of the cottage and disappears back into the forest.

The monster wander through the trees, and he tells Victor that *I gave vent to my anguish in fearful howlings. In his bitter soul, the monster realizes that all, save I, were at rest or in enjoyment; I, like the arch-fiend, bore a hell within me, and finding myself unsympathized with, wished to tear up the trees, spread havoc and destruction around me, and then to have sat down and enjoyed the ruin.* In a passage that went on the inspire dozens of similar stories, the monster resolves, *from that moment I declared ever-lasting war against the species, and more than all, against him who had formed me and sent me forth to this insupportable misery.*

However, the monster wavers in his resolve, and he attempts to speak to blind old Mr. De Lacey again, although when he reaches the cottage and listens through the walls, he finds that the entire family is in the process of fleeing for their lives from the *horror* and willing to forsake three months' rent to break their lease, as well as abandon their garden. With this poor family further impoverishing itself to be free from his presence, the monster loses all hope of being part of humanity, and once the family departs, he *lighted the dry branch of a tree and danced with fury around the devoted cottage, my eyes still fixed on the western horizon, the edge of which the moon nearly touched.*

After burning the cottage to the ground, the monster returns to the woods and ponders where to go next, *but to me, hated and despised, every country must be equally horrible.* With no better options, the monster thinks of Geneva, the native city of his creator, and as he walks there, *the sun*

was my only guide. He leaves Germany in late autumn and travels only at night, using the setting sun as his reference for westward. As he tells Victor, *the nearer I approached to your habitation, the more deeply did I feel the spirit of revenge enkindled in my heart.*

On his journey to Geneva, the monster sees a young girl fall into a river, and *I rushed from my hiding-place and with extreme labour from the force of the current, saved her and dragged her to shore.* Sadly, when her brother sees the monster carrying his sister to safety, *he darted towards me, and tearing the girl from my arms, hastened towards the deeper parts of the wood. I followed speedily, I hardly knew why; but when the man saw me draw near, he aimed a gun, which he carried, at my body, and fired. I sank to the ground, and my injurer, with increased swiftness, escaped into the wood.*

As if his isolation couldn't get any worse, the monster curses, *this was then the reward of my benevolence! I had saved a human being from destruction, and as a recompense I now writhed under the miserable pain of a wound which shattered the flesh and bone.* The monster recovers in the forest, and *after some weeks my wound healed, and I continued my journey.* It takes him two months to reach the outskirts of Geneva, and he was *too unhappy to enjoy the gentle breezes of evening or the prospect of the sun setting behind the stupendous mountains of Jura.*

The monster suddenly beholds *the approach of a beautiful child,* and he convinces himself that this child *had lived too short a time to have imbibed a horror of deformity.* Once again, the monster's hopes are dashed when the child *placed his hands before his eyes and uttered a shrill scream.* After the monster grabs him, the boy screams, *let me go, monster! Ugly wretch! You wish to eat me and tear me to pieces. You are an ogre. Let me go, or I will tell my papa.*

The child then clarifies that *my papa is a syndic—he is M. Frankenstein—he will punish you,* and just as William Frankenstein evokes his father's role in the Swiss legal system, the monster declares, *Frankenstein! You belong then to my enemy—to him towards whom I have sworn eternal revenge; you shall be my first victim.* After strangling William, the monster exclaims to the sky, *I too can create desolation; my enemy is not invulnerable; this death will carry despair to him, and a thousand other miseries shall torment and destroy him.*

The monster then takes William's locket depicting his late-mother and soon finds Justine the poor servant sleeping in a barn. Whispering in her ear as if he were Satan and she were Eve in *Paradise Lost*, the monster says, *awake, fairest, thy lover is near—he who would give his life but to obtain one look of affection from thine eyes; my beloved, awake!* She fails to wake, but the monster realizes she will know he is William's murderer if she does, so he plants the locket on her and vanishes, thereby assuring that Justine is executed for murder by the Swiss justice system.

As the monster ends his tale, he tells his creator he will stop his campaign of revenge if Victor will create another monster *as deformed and horrible as myself.* The monster clarifies that *my companion must be of the same species and have the same defects. This being you must create.* These are the final lines of the monster's tale, encompassing chapters 11 to 16 and constituting the middle of the novel.

Victor resumes his narrative to Captain Robert Walton in chapter 17, and as the monster tells him, *you must create a female for me with whom I can live in the interchange of those sympathies necessary for my being. This you alone can do, and I demand if of you as a right which you must not refuse to concede.* Unfortunately for the monster, Victor absolutely refuses his request, thereby condemning his family to be murdered.

As the monster promises him, *mine will not be the submission of abject slavery. I will revenge my injuries; if I cannot inspire love, I will cause fear, and chiefly towards you my arch-enemy, because*

my creator, do I swear inextinguishable hatred. The monster cannot believe how selfish his creator is, explaining that with a companion, *I would make peace with the whole kind!* The monster begs and begs for a companion, or bride, giving rational arguments why she would solve everything, until finally Victor tells him, *I consent to your demand on your solemn oath to quit Europe forever.*

The monster is ecstatic, but he also promises to watch Victor and make sure he's keeping up his end of the bargain. After making this deal, Victor watches the monster *descend the mountain with greater speed than the flight of an eagle, and quickly lost among the undulations of the sea of ice.* Alone once again, Victor descends from the glacier back to the village of Chamounix, after which he follows the Arve River to his family's house along Lake Geneva. As he tells Captain Walton, *I resolved to dedicate myself to my most abhorred task*, and thus begins the final section of Victor Frankenstein's story, where the student of Ingolstadt embarks on his second creation.

XIII: Percy, The Three-Headed Monster

As mentioned above, William Godwin wasn't very good with money, which is why he didn't have any. Like many anarchists today, William gave money to his comrades in need, but soon the creditors were after him, so he turned to Percy Bysshe Shelley, the anarchist aristocrat who was enamored by his *Political Justice*, the defining text of what became European anarchism. In truth, Percy was what is now called a *fan-boy*, and he projected himself into William Godwin's philosophy.

On March 25, 1811, Percy was thrown out of University College in Oxford for writing and printing *The Necessity of Atheism*, along with his friend and co-author Thomas Hogg. In addition to his passion for poetry, Percy also was fond of conducting basic scientific experiments, or alchemy, a trait which would one day be exaggerated into the character of Victor Frankenstein.

Later in August 1811, at the age of nineteen, Percy eloped with Harriet Westbrook, the sixteen year-old daughter of an oppressive coffee-house owner, and they married in Scotland on August 28. However, just like the future Russian nihilists, this marriage was simply meant to free Harriet from an oppressive boarding school, at least at first.

Percy eloping with Harriet

Shelley was banished from his family home for this marriage, so first he and Harriet lived nearby with the Duke of Norfolk, then they stayed with the poet Robert Southey, who informed Percy that his hero William Godwin wasn't dead, as Percy thought, but was running a bookstore with his family in London. Upon learning this, Percy wrote to William on January 3, 1812, pledging his unwavering assistance. William wrote back to his fan for clarification, with Percy responding on January 10 with a promise of money, or patronage.

This was all very exciting in the Godwin house, and as William wrote to Percy on March 14, *you cannot imagine how much all the females of my family, Mrs. G. and three daughters, are interested in your letter and your history.* Soon enough, William was all in, writing to Percy on March 30 that he considered him *a lasting friend, who, according to the course of nature, may contribute to the comforts of my closing days.* This last letter didn't reach Percy until June 1812, leaving William hanging in suspense, although when Percy finally wrote back, he promised that *I should regard it as my greater glory should I be judged worthy to solace your declining years*, implying he would support William for the rest of his life.

However, shortly before this letter arrived, Mary Godwin left London for her health, this time to Dundee, Scotland. She left on June 7, 1812, sailing down the Thames River and up through the North Sea, although unfortunately she was robbed by pick-pockets, and as she bemoaned years later, *the first money I ever had, was so carried, and lost*. Despite this loss, she soon made it to the banks of the Tay River, which she would later described as *the eyry of freedom, and the pleasant region where unheeded I could commune with the creatures of my fancy*.

Mary stayed with the family of Robert Baxter, a firm supporter of the French Revolution and associate of her father. Of all his children, Mary became closest with Isabella, a young woman who admired feminists like Charlotte Corday, Manon Roland, and Mary Wollstonecraft. Across the water from the Baxter house was the harbor where the northern whaling fleets returned from the icy abyss, and many believe this was when Mary Godwin began imagining her future novel *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*.

While she was in Dundee, her father was still hoping to secure Percy Shelley's financial backing, although William had no idea Percy had just fled Lynmouth after being accused of putting anti-monarchical propaganda in sealed glass bottles and throwing them in the sea, as well as distributing an anonymous pamphlet titled *Declaration of Rights*.

Meanwhile, the great Luddite Revolt was taking place in the British midlands, with dozens and dozens of attacks against this new industrial textile technology, machines that were leaving weavers like the old Wollstonecrafts out of work. It's likely that Percy supported the Luddites, and while the police were trying to catch Percy distributing propaganda, they were also looking for the dreaded Luddites, who continued their attacks through 1814 and beyond. In his existing writings, Percy left abundant evidence of which side he was on in this industrial battle.

The young anarchist eventually showed up in London with his wife Harriet in October 1812 and the couple were invited over to the Godwin house where they visited numerous times, even lighting off fireworks with them on Guy Fawkes night. Percy and Harriet were dining at the Godwins after Mary returned from Scotland on November 10, although she appears to have been sleeping in her room after the long journey, given neither she nor Percy would later mention meeting that night.

Percy and Harriet left for Wales on November 13, although Percy had yet to give William Godwin any money, leaving the family in a precarious position, especially after the bookstore was hit with a small fire. While she was back at home, Mary met the industrial reformer Robert Owen, who came to seek William's council. Robert Owen, a factory owner, believed that human's couldn't improve themselves unless they were placed in the proper structure, while William Godwin, the anarchist, believed all humans could improve themselves if simply given the freedom and means to do so.

Mary remained in London for six months, after which she returned to Dundee where her skin irritation disappeared over the course of 1813, implying she'd resolved whatever issues had been causing the outbreak. Meanwhile, her friend Isabella married her late-sister's widowed husband, causing them to be excommunicated from their Glassite Church, an act which young Mary Godwin thought to be the height of true love. Mary wanted to remain in Scotland much longer, but she was needed behind the book-counter at home, so Mary left Scotland on March 20, 1814. She was sixteen years old.

The day after Mary returned to London, the last of the French Empire surrendered, followed by the deposing of Emperor Napoleon. The monster unleashed by the French Revolution, scorching across Europe all the way to Russia, leaving over ten million corpses in its wake, had finally been

brought to heel by the royal powers, and there were massive celebrations in the street of London, although none were held at the Godwin bookshop, which was in dire straits.

In order to help Percy obtain access to his family fortune, William Godwin did all the paperwork for Percy and Harriet to be legally married in the Church of England, which occurred on March 23, 1814. In the days that followed, Percy and Harriet were often with the Godwins. According to William's journal, Mary first met Percy on May 5, 1814, and it's possible that her half-sister Fanny fell in love with Percy first, given she was sent off for a *holiday* in Wales on May 23.

It's also quite possible that Fanny felt rejected when Percy showed a preference for Mary, which is known to have become apparent by June 8, when Percy's friend Thomas Hogg recalled visiting the bookstore with him. Percy made a show of asking for William, knowing he wasn't there, but then *a thrilling voice called, 'Shelley!' A thrilling voice answered, 'Mary!' and he darted out of the room*, implying Percy and Mary had been intimate for some time before June 8.

Thomas Hogg didn't know who this Mary was yet, but he caught a glimpse of a young woman who was *fair and fair-haired, pale indeed, and with a piercing look*. When he finally asked Percy who she was, Percy ecstatically replied, *the daughter of Godwin and Mary*. Percy was enamored, and he was constantly at the bookstore that June, just as he and Mary wandered through London together with her sister-in-law Jane, who acted as their messenger, given the affair was kept secret from William Godwin.

It was on June 26, 1814, that the trio made their way to Saint Pancras cemetery, where Jane gave them some privacy. Standing over Mary Wollstonecraft's grave, Percy *opened, at first with the confidence of friendship, & then with the ardour of love, his whole heart*. However, Percy lied to Mary that day, claiming his wife Harriet had been unfaithful to him, even hinting that their child might not be his own. Mary was too smitten to doubt his story, and after a passionate night of baring their souls to each other, Mary and Percy had sex for the first time the following June 27, likely at the cemetery.

Percy would tell his friend Thomas Hogg that Mary's intellect *was made clear by a spirit that sees into the truth of things, & affections preserved pure and sacred from the corrupting contamination of vulgar superstitions. No expressions can convey the remotest conception of the manner in which she dispelled my delusions. The sublime & rapturous moment when she confessed herself mine, who had so long been her's in secret cannot be painted to mortal imaginations*.

Their love affair developed quickly, and Percy contacted William Godwin on July 6, explaining that not only were he and Mary in love, he could only give William the sum of £2,500, with the rest needed for his and Mary's new life. William tried to talk Mary out of it, although she refused, and when Harriet came to speak with Percy on July 14, he told her he was freeing Mary from *the tyranny which is exercised upon her*, meaning her mother-in-law Mary Jane Godwin.

Percy was quickly banned from the bookstore, although Jane smuggled his letters to Mary, as well as smuggling out her responses. Mary couldn't understand why her father, who had written of and defended free love in his books, should suddenly be preventing her loving who she wished. It's entirely possible that William Godwin was exercising a basic precept of anarchist parenting, and by denying Mary the right to something that he and Mary Wollstonecraft had notoriously defended, he ensured that Mary's rebellion was channeled precisely in the direction of unbridled free love. There is no documentation of such a motivation, but as you will see, William Godwin could be extremely cold.

Things escalated when Percy burst into the house, ran to Mary's room, and urged her to drink a bottle of laudanum before he shot himself with a pistol. Mary promised to love him forever if he would stop this insanity, which he did, although within the week he'd overdosed on laudanum. William tried his best to deescalate all the raging passions, but his efforts came to nothing, and on July 28, 1814, his daughter Mary and his daughter-in-law Jane, both in black dresses, crept out of the bookstore and met Percy at a waiting carriage.

The trio sailed from Dover later that evening, reaching Calais on July 29, where they stayed at a local hotel. Mary Jane easily tracked them down here, but they were firm in their resolve and sent her back to London empty-handed. The trio then traveled to Paris, where they spent the first week of August, although the city was a disappointment to them, especially given its recent revolutionary history. Mary and Jane (now referred to as Claire) stayed inside their lodgings while Percy desperately tried to pawn his watch, although no one would buy it.

Percy eventually got a loan for £60, which enabled them to leave on a journey to Switzerland, and they bought a donkey on August 8 for this purpose. They were only several miles from Paris when the donkey sank to the ground, unable to carry their luggage, so they traded the poor creature for a mule. Not only were they staying in filthy attics at night, Percy sprained his ankle on the journey and had to ride on the mule while Mary and Claire (formerly Jane) walked onward in their black dresses. Finally, on August 13, the trio gave up, sold the mule, and used the money to ride a carriage the rest of the way. However, before their carriage departed, Percy wrote a tactless letter to his wife Harriet, suggesting she come stay with them in Switzerland, an offer she didn't take up.

On the journey, the trio met a young girl named Marguerite Pascal, and just like the character Alphonse Frankenstein, it was Percy Shelley who wanted to adopt Marguerite, although her father refused. It was all for the best, given Percy didn't actually have any money of his own, and the trio continued through the Swiss Alps. As Percy described on August 19, *their immensity staggers the imagination & so far surpasses all conception that it requires an effort of the understanding to believe that they are indeed mountains.*

They took some rooms in Brunnen along Lake Lucerne, although their £60 had shrunk down to £30, prompting them to travel by boat down the Rhine River to Holland, where they would then cross back over to England. Left out of the discussions, Claire agreed to their plan, and while she often felt excluded by the amorous couple, they all read Mary Wollstonecraft's *Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark* together on the journey.

Unfortunately, the trio seems to have suffered some sort of predation along the German stretch of the Rhine, and as Mary would describe, the men of these German taverns were so bad that their *only wish was to absolutely annihilate such uncleansable animals*. It was around Mannheim on September 2, 1814 that the couple left Claire with the boat and wandered into the hills where it's possible Mary first learned of the alchemist Johann Konrad Dippel, who was not only born in the nearby Castle Frankenstein in 1673, he raided graveyards for his medical experiments, claiming he could bring the dead back to life.

It was also on this journey that Percy introduced Mary to one of his favorite books, the *Memoirs Illustrating the History of Jacobinism*, which first made the claim that the Illuminati from the University of Ingolstadt conspired to trigger the French Revolution, as mentioned above. While written by the counter-revolutionary Abbé Augustin Barruel and used by the British monarchy to condemn people like William Godwin, enough of it was true to inspire young anarchists like Percy, who longed to emulate the conspiratorial methods and sheer commitment of the actual

Illuminati. Just as Percy *fan-boyed* it for William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft, he was also an Illuminati *fan-boy*, and as he rambled on about their conspiracies, Mary began to fashion the character of Victor Frankenstein.

The trio had just enough money to reach Holland, but not enough to pay their boat passage to London, so acting on good faith, the captain brought them to the docks on September 13, 1814 and sent one of his crew to follow the trio until they'd paid up, and of all the people Percy hit up for money, it was his poor wife Harriet, who not only gave it to him, she was now pregnant with their second child. True to his own *libertine* selfishness, Percy found them rooms on Margaret Street, which was easy walking distance from Harriet's, allowing him access to all the women he claimed to love.

XIV: All Monsters Attack

Percy Bysshe Shelley was certainly a major inspiration for Victor Frankenstein in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, and as you will later see, her experiences with Percy in Switzerland formed much of the bedrock upon which Mary created her immortal masterpiece, and just like Victor, the birthplace of her novel was also Geneva.

When the eighteenth chapter of *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* begins, Victor continues his narration to Captain Robert Walton, explaining that after returning to Geneva, *I could not collect the courage to recommence my work. I feared the vengeance of the disappointed fiend, yet I was unable to overcome my repugnance to the task which was enjoined me.*

Hearing about *some discoveries having been made by an English philosopher, the knowledge of which was material to my success*, Victor makes plans to travel to England, although his father Alphonse has a last request before. As he tells Victor, *I have always looked forward to your marriage with our dear Elizabeth*, the daughter of an Italian insurgent he adopted into their family. Victor assured his father he wants this also, but he secretly think of this marriage with *horror and dismay. I was bound to a solemn promise which I had not yet fulfilled and dared not break, or if I did, what manifold miseries might not impend over me and my devoted family!*

Victor tells his father he will marry Elizabeth when he returns from England, which Alphonse agrees to, and he soon makes plans to meet up with his childhood friend Henry Clerval in Strasbourg. When they finally meet, Victor explains, *alas, how great was the contrast between us!* Henry is filled with joy in life and reveled in the beautiful landscapes along the Rhine. As he tells Captain Robert Walton, *you, my friend, would be far more amused with the journal of Clerval, who observed the scenery with an eye of feeling and delight, than in listening to my reflections. I, a miserable wretch, haunted by a curse that shut up every avenue to enjoyment.*

Mary Shelley had Victor and Henry travel by boat down the Rhine from Strasbourg to Rotterdam, just as she and her husband Percy had done with Claire (Jane) Godwin in 1814. Just like Mary, the friends *stayed a day Mannheim, and on the fifth from our departure from Strasbourg, arrived at Mainz*. Henry goes on at length about the beauty of the Rhine, but Victor feels nothing, just a sad love for his friend, who he envies and fears for.

or the second time, Mary Shelley has Victor think of a poem, although unlike the previous Percy Bysshe Shelley poem (which she left unattributed and undated), Mary has Victor recite the words of William Wordsworth, a friend of her late-mother Mary Wollstonecraft. Specifically, he recites a section of *Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey, On Revisiting the Banks of*

the Wye during a Tour, which was written in 1798, likely setting the approximate end date of the novel.

Victor recites to Captain Walton the following lines: *the sounding cataract haunted him like a passion: the tall rock, the mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood, their colours and forms, were then to him an appetite; a feeling, and a love, that had no need of a remoter charm, by thought supplied, or any interest unborrow'd from the eye.* In another rare footnote, Mary Shelley made clear this extract was from Wordsworth's 'Tintern Abbey,' thereby preserving the historicity of the text. As mentioned further above, the novel *Frankenstein* is set in the vague year 17— sometime after the French Revolution, making the 1798 date of this Wordsworth poem seem like a realistic marker of when book ends.

Regardless, Mary Shelley used the poem to highlight aspects of Henry Clerval's personality, given Victor recites it to convey his friend's essence. The two continue down the Rhine until they eventually reach Rotterdam, *whence we proceeded by sea to England. It was on a clear morning, in the latter days of December, that I first saw the white cliffs of Britain.* The friends continue down the Thames River until they reach London, and the nineteenth chapter begins in the city of Mary Shelley's birth where they *determined to remain several months in this wonderful and celebrated city.*

Victor busies himself learning from the *distinguished natural philosopher* in London, while his friend Henry resolved to visit India, *in the belief that he had in his knowledge of its various languages, and in the views he had taken of its society, the means of materially assisting the progress of European colonization and trade. In Britain only could he further the execution of his plan.* To be clear, Mary Shelley was vehemently against European colonization, she shared her monster's viewpoint on the matter, and her decision to describe nature-loving Henry as a colonist was deliberate, as you will see.

The friends spend several months in London, during which Victor *began to collect the materials necessary for my new creation.* When an associate encourages them to visit his home in Scotland, the friends make plans to travel north, and as Victor explains, *I packed up my chemical instruments and the materials I had collected, resolving to finish my labours in some obscure nook in the northern highlands of Scotland.*

On their northern pilgrimage, the friends stop in Oxford, with Victor remarking that *it was here that Charles I had collected his forces. This city had remained faithful to him, after the whole nation had forsaken his cause to join the standard of Parliament and liberty.* For the next few pages, Victor rambles on about the history of Oxford and the English Civil War, culminating in the friends visiting the tomb of John Hampden, who died in 1643 fighting against the Crown.

After visiting the field where John Hampden fell, Victor explains that *for a moment my soul was elevated from its debasing and miserable fears to contemplate the divine ideas of liberty and self-sacrifice of which these sights were the monuments and the remembrancers.* Unfortunately for Victor, this feeling doesn't last long, and he *sank again, trembling and hopeless, into my miserable self.*

Victor and Henry continue their northward journey, eventually reaching Edinburgh, and from there they follow the Tay River past Dundee, the town where Mary Shelley spent the happiest days of her youth. The friends continue upriver past Dundee to the town of Perth, where their associate invited them to stay at his home, although upon arriving Victor *told Clerval that I wished to make the tour of Scotland alone,* and after his friend reluctantly agrees to part, Victor takes his

equipment across the highlands and across the sea to the remote Orkney Islands, all the while knowing *that the monster followed*.

Victor *fixed on one of the remotest of the Orkneys*, meaning he moved to either Papa Westray Island or North Ronaldsy Island, and as he described it, *on the whole island there were but three miserable huts, and one of these was vacant when I arrived. This I hired*. It is inside this hut that Victor Frankenstein resumes his work to create a bride for his monster, toiling all day long, although *in the evening, when the weather permitted, I walked on the stony beach of the sea to listen to the waves as they roared and dashed at my feet*. After a few months of this routine, Victor explains that his work was *considerably advanced*, thus ending the nineteenth chapter.

The twentieth chapter begins one evening in Victor's laboratory hut, and as he tells Captain Walton, *three years before, I was engaged in the same manner and had created a fiend whose unparalleled barbarity had desolated my heart and filled it forever with the bitterest remorse. 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 and delight, for its own sake, in murder and wretchedness*. Victor realizes the two creatures might have children, *and a race of devils would be propagated upon the earth who might make the very existence of the species of man a condition precarious and full of terror. Had I a right, for my own benefit, to inflict this curse upon everlasting generations?*

In this state, Victor sees *by the light of the moon the daemon at the casement*. *A ghastly grin wrinkled his lips as he gazed on me, where I sat fulfilling the task which he had allotted to me*. Suddenly filled with rage, Victor *tears to pieces the thing on which I was engaged*. *The wretch saw me destroy the creature on whose future existence he depended for happiness, and with a howl of devilish despair and revenge, withdrew*. Victor remains nearby, and after several hours, he hears someone arrive on the shore by boat, followed by the sound of approaching footsteps.

Victor explains that *the door opened, and the wretch whom I dreaded appeared*. *Shutting the door, he approached me and said in a smothered voice, 'You have destroyed the work which you began; what is it that you intend? Do you dare to break your promise? The monster, emotionally crushed, eventually asks his creator, do you dare destroy my hopes? Victor maintains that he will refuse to make him a bride, to which the monster replies, slave, I before reasoned with you, but you have proved yourself unworthy of my condescension. Remember that I have power; you believe yourself miserable, but I can make you so wretched that the light of day will be hateful to you. You are my creator, but I am your master; obey!*

Victor refuses to obey, so the monster assures his creator, *you can blast my other passions, but revenge remains—revenge, henceforth dearer than light or food! I may die, but first you, my tyrant and tormentor, shall curse the sun that gazes on your misery*. After some more curses, the monster assures Victor that *I shall be with you on your wedding-night*, although when Victor tries to threaten the monster and hold him back, his creation pushes him aside and gets into a boat, *which shot across the waters with an arrowy swiftness and was soon lost amidst the waves*.

This sight makes Victor apprehensive, given the monster rowed off toward the mainland, and he *shuddered to think who might be the next victim sacrificed to his insatiate revenge*. Victor broods as he walks around the island, although a boat soon arrives with mail from Henry, who asks Victor to meet up with him in Perth, given Henry soon needs to return to his associates in London *to complete the negotiation they had entered into for his Indian enterprize*.

Before he can leave, Victor needs to pack up his chemical instruments, as well as his aborted creation. As he tell Captain Walton, *the remains of the half-finished creature, whom I had destroyed, lay scattered on the floor, and I almost felt as if I had mangled the living flesh of a human*. This key

word, *almost*, puts Victor in the camp of the European colonizer, and he realizes, *I ought not to leave the relics of my work to excite the horror and suspicion of the peasants; and I accordingly put them in a basket, with a great quantity of stones, and laying them up, determined to throw them into the sea that very night*. Once again, just like British slave merchants who crossed the Atlantic, Victor hurls his victim into the water, still not realizing he has doomed his loved ones to death.

After he rows out into the sea and erases any trace of his creation, Victor falls asleep in the boat, which drifts southward with the current, implying he was likely on Papa Westray Island, given that Victor ultimately ends up on the northern shores of Ireland. After landing near a small village, Victor is soon surrounded by hostile peasants, and he asks, *'Why do you answer me so roughly? Surely it is not the custom of Englishmen to receive strangers so inhospitably.'* In response, one of the peasants tells him, *'I do not know what the custom of the English may be, but it is the custom of the Irish to hate villains.'*

Victor quickly learns he is being detained, not just by the peasants, but Mr Kirwin, the local magistrate, to whom Victor is meant *to give an account of the death of a gentleman who was found murdered here last night*. Once again, the monster appears to have killed an innocent, and now Victor faces the same mob rage that his monster was once subjected to in Germany. This is perhaps the clearest example of Mary Shelley identifying Victor Frankenstein with his monster, although now their roles are reversed.

The twentieth chapter ends with Victor being led off to a trial, and as he tells Captain Walton, *I must pause here, for it requires all my fortitude to recall the memory of the frightful events which I am about to relate, in proper detail, to my recollection*.

XV: I Married A Monster From Outer Space

William Godwin and his wife Mary Jane were furious with Percy Bysshe Shelley for eloping with two of their daughters, especially when married, and while Claire was given the option of returning home if she broke off relations with Percy, this same option wasn't extended to Mary Godwin, who was banned from the house and bookstore. Regardless, the trio remained together, first on Margaret Street, then in lodgings at Church Terrace near Saint Pancras, the grave-site of her mother.

Mary was often left alone here with Claire, and shortly after moving in that October, Percy had to hide to avoid the bailiffs, who would throw him into jail for debt, and he took shelter with his friend Thomas Peacock. Mary only got to see Percy on Saturdays, when the law forbade arrests, and Claire griped that they spent all day in bed, writing, *to sleep & talk—why this is merely vegetating*. However, there was likely another reason for this griping, as you will now see.

Claire

On the night of October 7, 1814, Percy told Mary and Claire some scary stories, and Claire ran out in fright. Much later, Claire claimed to be frightened and asked Percy to come to her room, where he saw *her horror & agony increased to the most dreadful convulsions. She shrieked & writhed on the floor*. These convulsions ceased as soon as Mary walked in, but by October 14, these frights had driven Percy out of Mary's bed, given Claire needed to sleep there. Many scholars agree this is likely when Claire began to fall in love with Percy, something he would fail to discourage.

On November 9, the trio moved to rooms in Nelson Square near the Lambeth Marsh, a gloomy place by all accounts. Mary's half-sister Fanny came to visit them there on November 13, although

she was scared of being seen with Mary, having been forbidden from doing so by William Godwin, who told Fanny he would never speak to her again if she met with her sister. Mary hated all of this, not understanding how her anarchist father could have abandoned the free love principles once cherished by him and Mary Wollstonecraft. In this regard, she largely blamed Mary Jane Godwin, *a woman I shudder to think of* who had taken over *my poor father*.

Fanny let Mary and Percy know that the Godwins were still financially struggling, so on November 22 the matter was settled when Percy met with William and assured him funds would soon arrive, although William refused to thank him, unlike Mary Jane. In total, Percy gave them £700 by December 1814, and he assured Mary that *among women there is no mind equal to yours—and I possess this treasure*. Mary had grown especially needy, even promising to be *a good girl & never vex you any more*, but she was in fact pregnant and unsure of the future.

Mary

Harriet Shelley gave birth to Percy's second child that same November, and Percy appears to have sent his friend Thomas Hogg to court Mary while he visited Harriet. Claire had gone back home to the bookstore for a short visit, something Mary wasn't allowed, but after she returned, Percy would often go out with Claire while Thomas stayed and talked with Mary. However, despite initially liking Thomas, she wrote on November 27 that *he is sadly perverted and I begin to lose hope*. They kept at it over the course of December, but when he finally professed his love to her on New Year's Day, she wrote back, *you love me you say. I wish I could return it with the passion you deserve*, a standard rejection even in 2025. In this manner, Mary refused the free love Percy had arranged for her.

As her pregnancy advanced, Thomas Hogg was still trying his hand, forcing Mary to explain she wasn't going to sleep with anyone, not even Percy, until after the baby was born. Meanwhile, Percy and Claire continued to go out together, and when Percy's grandfather died, he took Claire along to settle the will. It's unclear how sexual Percy and Claire's relationship was at this point, although they were likely sleeping together, and Claire's presence at the Shelley house was seen as a gross insult to Sir Thomas Shelley, who refused to let his son inside.

Once they returned to London, the trio moved to Hans Towns, now known as Knightsbridge, although on February 8, 1815, Percy and Claire got their own apartment, leaving Mary to her visits with Thomas Hogg. Unfortunately, on February 22, Mary gave premature birth to her first child, a girl who was not expected to live. William Godwin didn't come to visit, but he allowed Fanny to console her sister, and on March 2 the trio moved to new rooms on Arabella Row.

Thomas Hogg

It was here that tragedy struck, with Mary's baby girl dying on March 5. As she wrote to Thomas Hogg, *it was perfectly well when I went to bed—I awoke in the night to give it suck it appeared to be sleeping so quietly that I would not awake it—it was dead then but we did not find that out till morning—from its appearance it evidently died of convulsions—Will you come—you are so calm a creature & Shelley is afraid of a fever from the milk—for I am no longer a mother*. Mary was seventeen years-old when she lost her first child, and she soon grew bitter towards Thomas and Claire and Percy and their anarchist free love commune. Not only had Mary blamed herself for her mother's death, she now blamed herself for her daughter's death.

Mary told Percy that Claire needed to leave, explaining on March 14 that *the prospect appears to me more dismall than ever—not the least hope—this is indeed hard to bear*. Five days later she began having dreams that her child hadn't died, *that it had only been cold & that we rubbed it by the fire & it lived*. As soon as Percy won a court battle related to his family estate, he took Mary

off to the Windmill Inn in Salt Hill, which is now part of Slough. They had a wonderful time, by all accounts, and Mary enjoyed being alone with her lover for the first time since they eloped. In fact, Mary was so happy that she likely conceived her second child during this vacation.

The sadness was still there when they returned, Claire was still in their lives, and the trio moved to new rooms on Marchmont Street. However, it's possible that Claire soon revealed she was pregnant by Percy, although four pages were torn out of Mary's diary which accounted for this period. In any case, Mary was firmly committed to Claire leaving their household, and she departed on May 12, 1815. Percy went out with Claire, spending all day with her, and just as Mary began to fear he wouldn't return, Percy appeared at six in the evening. As she wrote, *the business is finished*.

Meanwhile, Percy finally got a hold of his family's money, securing an allowance of £1,000 a year, just as his wife Harriet was given £200 up front with a future allowance of £200 a year, all at a time when most British people were lucky to make £20 a year. Percy also secured £1,200 for William Godwin, although he kept £200 aside, partly to pay for Claire to settle in Lynmouth and cover her expenses, implying she was in fact pregnant with his child. However, as Claire wrote to her step-sister Fanny, she was relieved to finally be free from a situation with *so much discontent, such violent scenes, such a turmoil of passion & hatred*.

Despite this, Claire kept in correspondence with Percy, and her isolation in the Devon countryside seemed much more appealing than industrial London, so that June he and Mary moved to Clifton, which wasn't very far from Lynmouth. The next month was peaceful and happy for Mary, although Percy left on July 1 to go find them a new house in Windsor, as well as see Claire.

Left alone in Clifton, it's likely that Mary saw and interacted with the local Black population, which was sizable because of its proximity to Bristol, which was a major slave-trade market before the Abolition Act of 1807. While slavery in the British Empire continued despite this act, Mary was a firm abolitionist and anti-colonialist, refusing to eat sugar from the West Indian plantations, and her time in Clifton only proved that the Abolition Act had done little to improve the lot of the Black population. Several scholars agree that Clifton is likely where Mary imagined the major elements of the monster in *Frankenstein*, and the parallels between his journey and that of a slave are undeniable, especially given that Mary was also being tormented by her own monster in Clifton.

While details are sparse, Percy was gone for four weeks, and Mary exhibited her *anxious attachment style* by writing to Claire to see if Percy was with her. When she failed to respond, Mary grew even more anxious, given she was pregnant and that Percy appeared to have abandoned her. Unfortunately, Mary debased herself yet again by writing to Percy that *your Pecksie is a good girl & is quite well now again—except a headache when she waits so anxiously for her loves letters—dearest best Shelley pray come to me—pray pray do not stay away from me*.

It's possible that Percy was with Claire, but he truly did find them a house near Windsor, where they moved in August 1815. They had few visitors, although Thomas Hogg stopped by, as did Mary's half-brother Charles, as well as Thomas Peacock, although Claire was not invited. One night, Percy was inspired to take a row-boat down the Thames, so along with Charles, Peacock, and Mary, they traveled as far as Oxford. Ten days later, Charles would write, *we have all felt the good effects of this jaunt, but in Shelley the change is quite remarkable; he has now the ruddy healthy complexion of the Autumn upon his countenance, & he is twice as fat as he used to be*.

Later that October, Thomas Hogg paid off at least £200 of William Godwin's debt, taking some pressure off the family, and meanwhile Percy had finished his poem *Alastor*, which Mary

felt proud of, as it was his first major work since they met. The poem's most scandalous aspect was its description of an orgasm, where *he reared his shuddering limbs and quelled his gasping breath, and spread his arms to meet her panting bosom:...she drew back a while, then, yielding to the irresistible joy, with frantic gesture and short breathless cry folded his frame in her dissolving arms.*

Just as Percy was preparing his *Alastor* for publication, Mary gave birth to their son William on January 24, 1816. Despite her father William Godwin being happy at the successful birth, he and Mary were still estranged, and by March there was an explosion between William and Percy, with the young poet writing to him, *do not talk of forgiveness again to me, for my blood boils in my veins, and my gall rises against all that bears the human form, when I think of what I their benefactor and ardent lover, have endured of enmity and contempt from you and all mankind.*

Meanwhile, Claire had since returned to London, and after living at home for a short while, she got her own place on Foley Street that March. At the time, the infamous poet Lord Byron was living nearby, having been estranged from his wife Annabella Milbanke the year before. Claire likely got drawn into the gossip that spring, and she began writing letters to Byron, eventually meeting up at his house regardless of scandal. The two began an affair, but only Claire was in love, and when Claire wanted to follow Byron to Geneva, he couldn't stand to be alone with her, so he asked if she would invite Mary Godwin and Percy Shelley, given they were all infamous.

Everyone agreed, and the trio followed behind Byron on their second trip to Switzerland. While they were in Paris, Claire wrote ahead to Byron, encouraging him to fall in love with Mary. As she wrote, *she is very handsome & very amiable & you will no doubt be blest in your attachment; nothing can afford me such pleasure as to see you happy in your attachments.* It's unclear why she was encouraging the *libertine* Byron to seduce Mary, but it's likely because Claire still wanted Percy.

In any case, the trio rode a carriage from France into the Swiss Alps, all while Mary held infant William, a harrowing journey that required ten men to hold the wagon along certain passes. Little did Mary know that the novel which had been brewing in her mind would soon come gushing out, and those fateful days in Switzerland cemented what became *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*.

XVI: Bride of the Monster

When Mary Shelley began writing *Frankenstein*, she had lost a daughter, given birth to a son, and was pregnant with her third child, all before her nineteenth birthday. Mary had suffered much persecution in that time, and she was seen as a *fallen woman* who deserved only scorn, much like her monster. Writing through unspeakable loss and heartbreak, Mary Shelley had her character Victor Frankenstein ultimately face persecution at the hands of an Irish village court, which suspects him of villainy, specifically murder.

Victor sits there as multiple witnesses testify regarding a body that was found washed up on their shore, *apparently been strangled, for there was no sign of any violence except the black mark of fingers on his neck.* While the reader knows Victor is innocent, the village court does not, and one witness testifies that he saw a man row away from the body in a boat identical to the one Victor arrived in. Again, the reader knows that this was the monster, but the court still believes

in Victor's guilt, so they take him to see the body, and when he enters the morgue, Victor beholds *the lifeless form of Henry Clerval stretched before me.*

Victor goes crazy after that, throwing himself on the corpse and screaming out loud, *have my murderous machinations deprived you also, my dearest Henry, of life? Two I have already destroyed; other victims await their destiny; but you, Clerval, my friend, my benefactor.* Victor soon collapses into convulsions and is carried out of the morgue. For the next two months, Victor is gripped with a fever, hovering on the edge of death, and as he explains, *I was doomed to live and in two months found myself as awaking from a dream, in a prison, stretched on a wretched bed, surrounded by jailers, turnkeys, bolts, and all the miserable apparatus of a dungeon.*

Just like poor Justine, the servant his family elevated from poverty, Victor is now trapped in the jaws of the legal system, framed for a crime he didn't commit. However, unlike Justine, Victor finds friends inside prison, Irish strangers who care for him simply because he's human. One of these people, a hired nurse, brings him back to life, while the magistrate Mr. Kirwin ensures that Victor has *the best room in the prison.*

Mr. Kirwin happened to find some of Victor's documents while he was recuperating, so he wrote to the Frankensteins, and soon after Victor recovers, his father Alphonse arrives in Ireland to comfort him, and his appearance *was to me like that of my good angel, and I gradually recovered my health.* Despite the arrival of his father, Victor remains in prison where he *often sat for hours motionless and speechless, wishing for some mighty revolution that might bury me and my destroyer in its ruins.*

After three months in prison, Victor is taken a hundred miles to the nearest government court-house, and given that he was seen on the Orkney Islands when Clerval's body was discovered, Victor is found innocent and released. While his father is ecstatic, Victor shares none of *these feelings, for to me the walls of a dungeon or a palace were alike hateful,* and all he can truly see are visions in his mind of *the watery, clouded eyes of the monster, as I first saw them in chamber at Ingolstadt.*

With this passage, Mary Shelley reminds the reader that the monster was birthed in the same city as the Illuminati, and just like that shadowy organization, her monster's reach extended from Germany to Ireland. If the reader already believes the Illuminati triggered the French Revolution, then it appears as if Mary Shelley is equating the monster with the forces unleashed during that titanic struggle, forces which ultimately lead to Napoleon's war against Britain and Europe, a conflict which claimed the lives of millions and culminated in the restoration of the French monarchy.

Victor unleashed his own monster in Ingolstadt, and having broken his promise to create him a bride, Victor realizes that *one duty remained to me, the recollection of which finally triumphed over my selfish despair. It was necessary that I should return without delay to Geneva, there to watch over the lives of those I so fondly loved and to lie in wait for the murderer.* Alphonse wants his son to rest, but Victor is eager to return home, and they eventually sail for France, leaving behind what he calls *the detested shore of Ireland.*

During the crossing, Victor is plagued by flashbacks, and as he admits to Captain Walton, *ever since my recovery from the fever I had been in the custom of taking every night a small quantity of laudanum, for it was by means of this drug only that I was enabled to gain the rest necessary for the preservation of life. Oppressed by the recollection of my various misfortunes, I now swallowed double my usual quantity and soon slept profoundly.*

Now an opioid addict, Victor and his father arrive in Paris where they pause their journey so that Victor might gather his strength before crossing France and the Swiss Alps. Alphonse wants to take his son out into Parisian society and cheer him up, but Victor felt that he *had no right to share their intercourse. I had unchained an enemy among them whose joy it was to shed their blood and to revel in their groans.* This is the closest Mary Shelley gets to directly equating the monster with the forces of revolution, and she presents Victor as a class traitor to his noble origins, and as he remarks, *how they would, each and all, abhor me and hunt me from the world did they know my unhallowed acts and the crimes which had their source in me!*

Alphonse doesn't take Victor out to be with their class, and his son sits alone, blaming himself for the string of murders, although he refuses to tell his father about the monster he created in Ingolstadt. At some point he nearly blurts out the truth, telling Alphonse that *I am the assassin of those most innocent victims; they died by my machinations.* All these ramblings only convince Alphonse that his son is still recovering, and eventually Victor gets control of his emotions, explaining that *I no longer talked in the same incoherent manner of my own crimes; sufficient for me was the consciousness of them.* Soon enough, the father and son make plans to leave Paris, which is exactly when a letter arrives from Switzerland, written by Elizabeth, his adopted sister and future wife.

Elizabeth wants Victor back home, she's worried he's met someone else, and she writes, *I confess to you, my friend, that I love you and that in my airy dreams of futurity you have been my constant friend and companion.* While this letter moves Victor, he remembers the monster's promise to be with him on his wedding night, and he realizes his marriage is the quickest way to end his own life, and once the monster kills his creator, the need for vengeance would be extinguished.

After returning to Geneva, Victor vents some vague fears to his father, although Alphonse still doesn't know about the monster and tells his son to proceed with his marriage. Victor goes along with the preparations, but as he tells Captain Walton, *the monster had blinded me to his real intentions; and when I thought I had prepared only my own death, I hastened that of a far dearer victim.* However, the Austrian Empire had returned some of Elizabeth's family lands, and after their marriage ceremony, the couple would spend their honeymoon at her ancestral Villa Lavenza along Lake Como.

Despite being with the love of his life, Victor is increasingly paranoid and *took every precaution to defend my person in case the fiend should openly attack me. I carried pistols and a dagger constantly about me.* After their wedding, the couple sets out by boat, first to Évian along Lake Geneva, where they get a room at an inn. Victor can't sleep, he paces the hallways looking for the monster, but then he hears a scream, and when he rushes back to his room, Elizabeth has been strangled by the monster.

Victor screams beside her corpse, but with *a sensation of horror not to be described, I saw at the open window a figure the most hideous and abhorred. A grin was on the face of the monster; he seemed to be jeering, as with his fiendish finger he pointed towards the corpse of my wife. I rushed towards the window, and drawing a pistol from my bosom, fired; but he eluded me, leaped from his station, and running with the swiftness of lightning, plunged into the lake.*

The locals begin a hunt for the monster, and Victor accompanies them until he collapses, after which he's taken back to the inn and Elizabeth's body. As he stares at her among a crowd of weeping women, Victor realizes that the rest of his family might be in danger, so he travels by boat back to Geneva only to find that his father Alphonse and little brother Ernest are still alive.

Unable to cope with the loss, Victor blacks out for a month, and when he comes to he has been put in a solitary jail cell as a madman. After regaining his senses, Victor is released, and at his first court date regarding Elizabeth's murder, he finally tells the full truth about the monster to the local magistrate.

Surprisingly, this legal functionary believes Victor, but he tells him, *I would willingly afford you every aid in your pursuit, but the creature of whom you speak appears to have powers which would put all my exertions to defiance. Who can follow an animal which can traverse the sea of ice and inhabit caves and dens where no man would venture to intrude?* Victor understands, but he vows vengeance on the monster, and when the magistrate tries to talk him down, thinking he's insane, Victor cries, *'Man, how ignorant art thou in my pride of wisdom! Cease; you know not what it is you say.'* With this final exclamation, Victor storms out of the magistrate's office with *that haughty fierceness which the martyrs of old are said to have possessed*. In this manner, Victor rushes towards his doom.

XVII: The Water Monster

As you've seen, William Godwin and his second wife Mary Jane were pariahs of British society, and Mary Jane herself risked everything as a woman in marrying the notorious anarchist. However, none of this prevented Mary from viewing both of them as conservative, and after William broke off relations with his daughter for practicing the same free love he once championed, Mary Godwin felt cast off by her creator, a trait she wove into the monster of her *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*.

After reaching Switzerland in the spring of 1816, the trio of Mary Godwin, Claire Godwin, and Percy Bysshe Shelley got a hotel room in Geneva by posing as a husband, wife, and sister. Lord Byron arrived two weeks later, and Claire quickly resumed their love affair, leaving Mary to wander with Percy across the land with its *delightful scene of flowers and new mown grass, and the chirp of grasshoppers, and the song of the evening birds*.

Lord Byron

Mary's half-sister Fanny wrote her angry letters from London, and the two had been on bad terms since Mary eloped with Percy. They were still writing these letters on June 1, 1816 after the trio rented out the Maison Chapuis near the village of Cologny, while Byron rented out the nearby Villa Diodati on June 10. From this moment onward, the coordinates were set for the creation of her *Frankenstein*.

Among their visitors was the doctor John Polidori, then twenty-one, who became quite infatuated with Mary, although Mary didn't share his amorous intentions, merely a desire for friendship. Despite this, their relationship was quite fruitful, and on June 15, he remembered talking with Mary about *principles,—whether man was thought to be merely an instrument*, and if one could bring life to reassembled human and animal parts.

John Polidori

The following night, June 16, a fierce storm kept everyone inside Byron's villa, and he suggested they take turns reading German ghost stories, and as Percy would later describe, *these tales excited in us a playful desire of imitation*. Byron, Percy, and Mary immediately started writing, while John Polidori waited until following days, but what came out of Mary was the beginning of *Frankenstein*. On June 18, the group met up again, although Byron's recitation of 'Christabel'

by Samuel Taylor Coleridge made Percy so unnerved that, according to Polidori, the young poet, *shrieking and putting his hands to his head, ran out of the room with a candle*. Eventually a local doctor was called, and while Polidori stayed up with Percy, everyone else went to bed.

Four days later, Percy was recovered enough to go on a boat tour with Byron, leaving Mary with her admirer Polidori, who had begun his own tale, *The Vampyre*, basing his aristocratic vampire on Byron, thereby taking old Romanian folk tales and inventing a new genre of fiction. At the time, no one knew how influential *The Vampyre* would become, going on to inspire *Dracula*, nor did they know that Mary's tale would become the immortal *Frankenstein*.

Perhaps feeling jealous of her time with John, Percy took off with Mary and Claire to explore the alps that July, and they traveled up the Arve River to Chamonix, the same journey taken by Victor Frankenstein before reuniting with the monster. Just like them, Mary saw the alpine glacier which fed the Arve, and as she wrote on July 25, 1816, *this is the most desolate place in the world*. As recorded in her journal, Mary was working on *Frankenstein* before and after this journey.

The trio returned to Geneva on July 27, and Mary was happy to see her baby William. It had been two years since Mary and Percy had eloped with Claire, and their lives were now entangled in an amorous mess, with Claire likely pregnant with Shelley's child. Despite her animosity to Claire, Mary appears to have gotten along with her during their alpine journey, although she didn't know about the pregnancy. Percy not only kept this hidden from Mary, he changed his will to give the child £6,000 upon his death, indicating it was likely his child. For his part, Byron took little responsibility, despite sleeping with Claire numerous times.

Meanwhile, Percy was having no luck accessing his family fortune, just as Fanny Godwin wrote to Mary explaining how poor their family had become. To make her happy, Mary sent Fanny a gold Swiss watch, a gift which truly made her happy. Mary was devoting much of that August to her *Frankenstein*, and when Percy took his turn reading 'Christabel' on August 26, Mary saw her monster in a vision, a creature fabricated by a Promethean scientist.

Her creation became even more animated when the novelist Matthew Lewis, author of *The Monk*, stayed with Byron for a few days, and he told them all stories of the horrible conditions of Jamaican slave plantations, which he had just visited. Combined with her own experiences in Clifton, Mary now imbued her monster with the traits of the rebel slave determined to destroy his master.

With the novel half finished, the party made plans to disband. Byron finally agreed to take some future responsibility for Claire's child, and the trio left for England on August 29, 1816, the scattered pages of *Frankenstein* secure in Mary's luggage. They decided that Percy would go to London and try to get more money, while Mary and Claire would settle in Bath, named for the famous Roman baths which still stand there today. This decision was made largely for Claire, who was well-advanced in her pregnancy, although Mary soon left her with baby William and their Swiss maid.

Mary traveled to the family home of Thomas Peacock, which was in Marlow, and from September 19 to September 25, she had a vacation with Percy, although at night they discussed politics with Peacock. A new tariff had come into effect that summer, the Corn Laws, which prohibited corn imports until domestic wheat was 80 shillings a quarter. Thanks to a bad 1816 harvest, poverty and starvation was now rampant, and illegal political clubs blossomed across England that fall and winter.

Mary and Percy returned to Bath on September 25, and all seemed well with the trio until a letter from Fanny Godwin arrived on October 4. Fanny was now shunned by their aunts (Mary Wollstonecraft's sisters) because of her connection to Mary and Percy, but now the Godwins were in a worse financial situation, leaving Fanny to stress over the household, and she demanded that Percy finally hand over the money he promised Godwin.

Fanny

Mary wrote back on October 8, although both her letter and the reply are lost. What is known is that Fanny wrote to William Godwin from Bristol on October 8, stating that she would soon *depart immediately to the spot from which I hope never to remove*. William immediately went to Bristol but couldn't find her, but when he stopped in Bath he didn't consult Mary, returning to London the next day. Meanwhile, Mary received her own ominous letter from Fanny on October 9, and Percy set out for Bristol, only to return empty-handed like William.

The search went on until Percy traveled to Swansea on October 11, and he returned to Bath the next day with terrible news. On October 9, Fanny had anonymously checked into an inn and swallowed a bottle of laudanum, leaving behind a note which described herself as *a being whose birth was unfortunate, and whose life has only been a series of pain to those persons who have hurt their health in endeavouring to promote her welfare*. The only items which identified her were some stays (a type of corset) embroidered with the initials MW for her mother Mary Wollstonecraft, as well as the gold watch which Mary and Percy had given to her.

Mary wrote a warm letter to her father, and William wrote back on October 13, telling Mary, *I cannot but thank you for your strong expression of sympathy*, but he advised her to avoid rousing any attention and told her to not visit Fanny's body in Swansea. Suicide was a serious crime in 1816, and the details of Fanny's death remained known only to her family. Taking her father's advice, Mary concentrated instead on her novel *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*, and much of the monster's torment is also that of Mary Wollstonecraft's other daughter, Fanny Godwin.

Later in December, the first positive review of Percy's poetry ran in the *Examiner*, with critic Leigh Hunt calling Percy *a very striking and original thinker*. Percy not only befriended Leigh, he sent him money for future good reviews, and after meeting up with him in London, Percy returned to Mary and Claire in Bath. He'd found a new house in Marlow near their friend Thomas Peacock, something which excited Mary, but on December 15 the trio received horrible news: Percy's first wife Harriet had drowned herself while pregnant, likely with his child.

Harriet and Percy

Percy traveled to London immediately, writing back on December 16 and claiming the child wasn't his but that of another man who also deserted her, just as Harriet's family had cast her out. In short, Percy blamed everyone but himself, and in the same letter he also suggested they married, as it would strengthen their case for not only custody of Harriet's children, but access to the Shelley fortune. Despite the suicide of his previous wife, Mary said yes.

Mary went back to London, and on December 29 she and Percy finally sat down to dinner with William Godwin and Mary Jane, who accompanied them to church for their December 30 wedding ceremony. On that day, Mary Godwin forever became Mary Shelley. Thanks to this marriage, all was well in the Godwin household after years of strife, but soon William and Percy began assembling evidence of Harriet's infidelities to better win the custody lawsuit. While they engaged in this hypocrisy, Mary infused the monster in her *Frankenstein* with the pain and rage of *poor Harriet, to whose sad fate I attribute so many of my own heavy sorrows, as the atonement claimed by fate for her death*.

Meanwhile, Claire was pregnant in Bath, so Mary and Percy returned there on January 1, 1817, although Percy soon rushed back to London for the custody battle. The case was heard on January 24, although it was adjourned until spring, and Mary went to London to comfort Percy. At first she stayed at the bookstore, but by February 7 she was staying with Percy at their friend Leigh Hunt's house in the Vale of Health, a new neighborhood beneath the hills of Hampstead and Highgate.

Claire, now very pregnant, took apartments near the Hunt household, and a plan was hatched to have Claire's child passed off as that of Leigh Hunt's cousin, after which Claire could adopt her own daughter. While these discussions took place, the Hunts and their guests discussed politics and poetry, with Leigh raving about John Keats, who he first published in his *Examiner*, the same paper he used to give Percy his first good review. Keats stopped by for a visit that winter, although Percy appears to have been jealous of his rival, while Mary only found in him another disciple of her father.

Mary returned to the Marlow house in March 1817, where she completed the final chapters of *Frankenstein*, all while Percy prepared for the custody hearing. On March 27, it was decided that neither Percy or Harriet's family would have custody, and both parties would select nominees for guardianship, to be approved by the state. In effect, the children were now orphaned because their father was an open atheist, anarchist, and antagonist of the Church of England, the state-religion.

The Marlow house where Mary finished *Frankenstein*

Percy was crushed, but he channeled that rage into his poem 'Laon and Cyntha; or, The Revolution of the Golden City,' (later re-titled *The Revolt of Islam*) which begins with a dedication to Mary. In the thirteenth stanza, Percy makes his swipe at the government, writing, *one voice came forth from many a mighty spirit, which was the echo of three thousand years; and the tumultuous world stood mute to hear it, as some lone man who in a desert hears the music of his home:—unwonted fears fell on the pale oppressors of our race, and Faith, and Custom, and low-thoughted cares, like thunder-stricken dragons, for a space left the torn human heart, their food and dwelling-place.*

Percy was known to distribute everything he had to the poor people around Marlow, even sometimes Mary's clothing, as well as their shillings. Meanwhile, Claire arrived that April, the month she gave birth to her daughter Alba, or Allegra, and later that spring Percy and Claire could be seen walking together in Marlow, causing much scandal in the small town.

Around this time, Mary was five months pregnant, and she finished copying the final draft of *Frankenstein* on May 13, 1817. With unrelenting energy, she began compiling her travel book *History of a Six Weeks' Tour through a part of France, Switzerland, Germany, and Holland*, composed of her and Percy's journal following their elopement, a long letter Mary wrote to Fanny on the journey, and Percy's now famous poem *Mont Blanc*.

Mary went to stay with her family in London at the end of May, which is the first time she showed her father the full text of *Frankenstein*. William loved the text, but it would take nearly all summer to find a publisher, and the book was accepted that August by Lackington, Hughes, Harding, Mayor, & Jones, a printing house in Finsbury Square. Mary would receive a third of the profits, as well as retaining the copyright, and publication was set for the end of December 1817.

A month before its release, *History of a Six Weeks' Tour through a part of France, Switzerland, Germany, and Holland* was published anonymously, given how scandalous Mary and Percy were

to British society. Likely because of its anonymity, the book didn't fly off the shelves, and the small publisher failed to break even.

Meanwhile, the Hunts neglected to publicly claim Allegra as their cousin's child, and Claire was exposed as the mother of a fatherless child. While the girl was likely Percy's, they tried to convince Lord Byron to adopt her, although he refused. At the same time, Percy definitively lost the custody battle when the state ruled that Harriet's father would select a clergyman to adopt them. Not long after that, Mary gave birth to her daughter Clara on September 2, 1817.

Within weeks, Percy was briefly arrested by his uncle for debt, and he disappeared in London until returning to Marlow with William Godwin on October 19, a happy visit by all accounts. Later that November, Mary and Percy traveled to London where they heard of the three Pentrich Martyrs, executed for their June 1817 uprising in Derbyshire. Their names were Jeremiah Brandreth, Isaac Ludlam and William Turner, and in their honor Percy wrote a pamphlet against the tyranny of the British government, although the printer refused to put out more than twenty copies, given they could both be executed. Mary helped Percy write this text, just as she remained a steadfast anarchist, now twenty years old.

Shortly after this, Percy composed his now immortal poem *Ozymandias*, an anarchist parable on the ultimate doom of all empires, and as many still recite, *nothing beside remains. Round the decay of that colossal Wreck, boundless and bare the lone and level sands stretch far away*. This poem was first published in the *Examiner* on January 11, 1818, and it rose to fame alongside his wife's first novel.

In the first weeks of January 1818, the first printing of *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* was released in an edition of 500 copies, the author listed as anonymous. Percy wrote the introduction for Mary, also kept anonymous, in which he claimed that the novel *affords a point of view to the imagination for the delineating of human passions more comprehensive and commanding than any which the ordinary relations of existing events can yield*.

Mary's family, friends, and comrades loved *Frankenstein* and supported her wholeheartedly, although a conservative critic called the book *a tissue of horrible and disgusting absurdity*, just as he referred to the anonymous author as one of the *out-pensioners of Bedlam* who orbited William Godwin, to whom the book was dedicated. This critic believed Percy Shelley to be the author, although he didn't say so directly, and his view spread among the uninformed.

The cheer around Mary's book began to fade when Percy finally obtained another £2,000 from his family fortune, although he gave William Godwin only £150. In the meantime, Mary and Percy broke their lease at the Marlow house and planned to move to Italy with Claire, given the amount of scandal they faced in England. The conflict over money with William ensured that Mary and Percy stayed away from the bookstore that winter.

Some good reviews of *Frankenstein* began to roll in that March, notably from her father's friend Sir Walter Scott, the famed author of *Ivanhoe*. Around this time, on March 9, Mary had her children and Allegra baptized before the journey, and the Shelley family, including Claire, left for Dover on March 11. This unorthodox anarchist family, despised and shunned by British society, sailed for France the next day, arriving on March 13, exiles once again, although this time Mary had left behind a monster, one which would only grow as the years progressed. This was the context in which *Frankenstein* was published, and just like Victor Frankenstein, Mary quickly ran away from her creation, leaving it behind to terrorize Britain.

XVIII: The Ice Monster

No more than a few thousand British people read the first edition of *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*, and only a few dozen knew Mary Shelley to be the true author. In those first years after its publication, many believed the author to be Percy Bysshe Shelley, who wrote the introduction, promoted it around London, and had one of his stanzas printed in the text. Beyond this, some erroneously believed that Percy depicted himself as the mad Victor Frankenstein, rather than his wife.

After losing nearly all of his loved ones, Victor resolves to leave Geneva on his vengeance mission, but first he stops in the cemetery where his would-be bride Elizabeth and his brother William lie in their graves, both of them murdered by his creation. As he cries out into the night, *I call on you, spirits of the dead, and on you, wandering ministers of vengeance, to aid and conduct me in my work. Let the cursed and hellish monster drink deep of agony; let him feel the despair that now torments me.*

All of sudden, Victor hears laughter in the darkness, followed by the whispered words, *I am satisfied, miserable wretch! You have determined to live, and I am satisfied.* Victor runs towards the voice *but the devil eluded my grasp. Suddenly the broad disk of the moon arose and shone full upon his ghastly and distorted shape as he fled with more than mortal speed.* As mentioned numerous times above, Mary Shelley's monster can sprint faster than a cheetah and is a far cry from the lumbering monster of the 1930s film version, but that's a story for the concluding chapter.

Victor follows this swift monster, and as he tells Captain Robert Walton, *I pursued him; and for many months this has been my task.* After reaching the Mediterranean, he finds the monster boarding a ship for the Black Sea, although after securing passage on the same ship, Victor can't find the monster anywhere. He proceeds northward through Russia, tracking every rumor and sighting of his creation, and every so often he finds messages left by the monster.

As he tells Captain Walton, *sometimes, indeed, he left marks in writing on the barks of the trees or cut in stone that guided me and instigated my fury. 'My reign is not yet over'—these words were legible in one of these inscriptions—'you live, and my power is complete. Follow me; I seek the everlasting ices of the north, where you will feel the misery of cold and frost, to which I am impassive. You will find near this place a dead hare; eat and be refreshed. Come on, my enemy; we have yet to wrestle for our lives, but many hard and miserable hours must you endure until that period shall arrive.'*

Victor continues north, sometimes aided by his enemy, and the further he goes, the fewer peasants he sees in the frozen landscape. In this icy misery, Victor finds another inscription which reads, *Prepare! Your toils only begin; wrap yourself in furs and provide food, for we shall soon enter upon a journey where your sufferings will satisfy my everlasting hatred.* Despite this taunting, Victor obtains a sled with a team of dogs and eventually makes it to the Arctic Ocean, the monster no more than a day ahead of his vengeful creator.

At a coastal village, Victor learns the monster has raided a house, stolen all their food supplies, and ridden north on a dog-sled across an ocean of ice, which is actively breaking. The villagers assume the monster has to be dead, but Victor trades his old sled for a new one and starts his grueling journey through the frozen Arctic Ocean. Three weeks later, one of his sled dogs dies from exhaustion at the summit of an ice mountain, but this is when he *distinguished a sledge and the distorted proportions of a well-known form within. Oh! With what a burning gush did hope revisit my heart!*

However, the monster remains always ahead of Victor, and just when he disappears from sight, *the wind arose; the sea roared; and, as with a tremendous and overwhelming sound. The work was soon finished; in a few minutes a tumultuous sea rolled between me and my enemy, and I was left drifting on a scattered piece of ice that was continuously lessening and thus preparing for me a hideous death.*

After the death of his dogs, Victor is on the verge of dying himself when he sees Captain Robert Walton's ship *riding at anchor and holding forth to me hopes of succour and life. I had no conception that vessels ever came so far north and was astounded at the sight.* Only another madman like Victor would be trapped in the Arctic, so in the hope of obtaining a boat to chase his monster, Victor rows his iceberg over to the anchored vessel, and when he's taken on board, he asks if they're heading north. When he finds out they are, Victor collapses, as described at the beginning of the novel.

When he wakes up, Victor narrates the preceding tale to Captain Robert Walton, and when he finishes, Victor is still hovering near death, and if he passes away, he says to Robert, *swear to me, Walton, that he shall not escape, that you will seek him and satisfy my vengeance in his death.*

Victor doesn't ask Robert to blindly search for the monster, but *if he should appear, if the ministers of vengeance should conduct him to you, swear that he shall not live—swear that he shall not triumph over my accumulated woes and survive to add to the list of his dark crimes. He 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 fiendlike malice.* In conclusion, Victor tell Robert *to thrust your sword into his heart. I will hover near and direct the steel aright.* Thus ends the tale of Victor Frankenstein, as told to Captain Robert Walton while stranded in the frozen Arctic Ocean sometime in 1799, just before the birth of the industrial century.

XIX: The Monster from the Deep

With the first 500 copies of *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* circulating in England, the trio of Mary, Percy, Claire and her daughter Allegra traveled to Italy in March 1818. After briefly settling in Milan, Lord Byron wrote to Claire, stating that he would now claim Allegra as his daughter, although Claire would then be out of the picture for good. Claire refused at first, claiming Allegra was too ill to travel, but she eventually sent her off to Venice, where Lord Byron was then living.

The trio left Milan shortly afterward on May 1, 1818, traveling south to Pisa and then Livorno before settling in Lucca, where Percy had rented the Casa Bertini for the summer. It was a relaxing time for all, although Mary and Percy did sneak off together for horse-rides through the Tuscan countryside. Mary was particularly enraptured by the landscape, writing to a friend that *I like nothing so much as to be surrounded by the foliage of trees only peeping now and then through the leafy screen on the scene about me.*

One of the passions Mary and Percy shared that summer was his translation of Plato's *Symposium*, which frankly dealt with homosexual relationships and wasn't printed in English, only ancient Greek, which few British people could read, let alone speak. Eton educated Percy was the first author to not only translate the *Symposium*, which Mary copied for him, but to write an essay that stated the basic facts of Greek homosexual reality.

Mary also copied Shelley's poems, as well as editing them, and she was working on his *Rosalind and Helen* that August when bad news arrived from Venice. Lord Byron's mistress Teresa Guiccioli had put Claire's daughter under the care of the British consul in Venice, feeling they were ill-equipped to raise a child. However, a friendly maid informed Claire that Byron planned to raise Allegra to be his future mistress, and that she must be rescued at once. While this may or not have been true, Percy and Claire left for Venice on August 17.

While they were gone, Mary's daughter Clara became ill, but Percy soon asked that Mary bring their daughter to Venice to better convince Byron to permanently give Allegra back to Claire. On her twenty-first birthday, Mary packed for a journey across the Italian peninsula, all with a feverish baby to take care of. This fever turned to dysentery by the time they reached Este, which was southwest of Venice. After arriving, Mary took care of Clara and busied herself with reading, writing, and Italian translations, although her daughter's illness only grew worse.

Percy and Shelley took her a doctor in nearby Padua, but while Percy left Mary at an inn to go track down the doctor, their daughter Clara died on September 26, 1818. She was buried two days later at the edge of the sea on Lido, the long barrier island that protects Venice. With the death of her second child, Mary was broken, hollowed out, wracked with guilt, and she spent that October in Venice with Byron while Percy stayed with Claire out in Este. In the end, Claire left little Allegra in the care of a friendly family and the trio departed the Veneto region on November 5, 1818, their spirits all but depleted.

Mary took her son William along on this trip, something even crazy Byron advised against, but all was well as the trio rode down the ancient Via Emilia towards Rome, stopping in numerous cities on the way. The party arrived in Rome on November 21 where they remained several days, wandering through the ruins of the old capital city. They resumed their southward journey, this time on the Appian Way, which at the time was the most dangerous road in Europe. Nevertheless, they reached Naples at the start of December, taking lodgings at 250 Riviera di Chiaia, still one of the ritziest parts of the city.

Mary would later write that *I never found my spirits so good since I entered upon care as at Naples, looking out upon its delightful Bay. The sky, the shore, all its forms and the sensations it inspires, appears formed and modulated by the Spirit of Good alone unallotted by any evil. Its temperature and fertility would, if men were free from evil, render it a faery habitation of delight—but as a Neapolitan said it, "E' un Paradiso abitato dai diavoli," or "It's a Paradise inhabited by devils."*

It was from these unnamed devils that Mary and Percy rescued a newborn infant named Elena who they left with a still unidentified family, although some historians believe this Elena might actually have been Percy and Claire's second (or first) daughter. Sadly, the young girl died in 1820, and there will likely be no clarity on who she actually was.

The trio returned to Rome at the end of February 1819, staying at the Palazzo Verospi on the Corso, and during their rambles through the city, all three of them met the Pope, who left Mary feeling *dreadfully tired*. Amid these Roman adventures, Mary became pregnant again that March, and her friends couldn't help noticing how she'd recovered from the death of little Clara. Mary went out to numerous social functions, just as she wrote in her downtime, but malaria season soon descended on the Corso, and soon after little William Shelley sat for his first portrait, the boy took sick.

Acting on the advice of a doctor, Mary and Percy made plans to take him to the drier climate of Tuscany, although they were too late. William was gripped with fever before falling into a coma, and he died of malaria on July 7, 1819. His parents buried him in the Protestant cemetery,

and the trio fled Rome as soon as the funeral was over, taking refuge in Livorno. Mary fell into a dark depression, having now lost her third child by the age of twenty-two, and being pregnant with her fourth made Mary feel no better, and as before, she blamed herself for William's death.

Mary isolated herself in Livorno, and while Percy and Claire took long walks, Mary stayed inside the Villa Volsovano, doing little besides translated Dante's *Purgatorio* into English with Percy. Meanwhile, back in London, William Godwin and his family were now threatened with eviction from the bookstore over £2,000 in debt. In addition to asking Mary and Percy for funds, William also reminded his daughter not to fall into despair, writing in October that when others *see you fixed in selfishness and ill humour, and regardless of the happiness of every one else, they will finally cease to love you, and scarcely learn to endure you.*

Despite the harshness of this advice, Mary took it to heart, and she began writing original works again, although her next novel was charged with anger towards William Godwin, and in the darkness of grief, she wrote something that would scandalize even her anarchist father. *Mathilda* is a long suicide note written in the first person, depicting Mathilda, whose mother dies in childbirth and whose father leaves her for the colonies when she's just a child. When her father returns, he can only view Mathilda as an object to possess, much like the natives he encountered in colonial India where, *if I saw a lovely woman, I thought, does my Mathilda resemble her?*

Mathilda explains that *the burning sun of India, and the freedom from all restraint had rather increased the energy of her colonial father, and that he had seen so many customs and witnessed so great a variety of moral creeds that he had been obliged to form an independent one for himself which had no relation to the peculiar notions of any one country.* All of this culminates in Mathilda's father admitting his incestuous feelings for her, after which he drowns himself in the sea.

Mathilda blames herself, exhibiting all the traits of a sexually abused woman, believing herself *to be polluted by the unnatural love I had inspired, and that I was a creature cursed and set apart by nature.* When a young poet based on Percy enters her life, not even he brings Mathilda any happiness. As she tells the reader, *unlawful and detestable passions had poured its poison into my ears and changed all my blood, so that it was no longer the kindly stream that supports life but a cold fountain of bitterness corrupted in its very source.* Mathilda begins to plan her suicide, and as she asks, *what slave will not, if he may, escape from his chains?*

Mary wasn't just trying to provoke her father with *Mathilda*, she was attacking liberalism itself, and like the anarchist she was, Mary went straight for the throat of all she despised, and in this way began to transmute the pain of her loss. Amid all this sadness, the Peterloo Massacre took place in Manchester on August 16, 1819, with hundreds of peaceful reformers injured and dozens murdered by charging cavalry, all under orders from the Tory government. While his wife wrote *Mathilda*, Percy composed perhaps his most famous anarchist poem, *The Masque of Anarchy*, which ended with immortal stanza, *rise like Lions after slumber, in unvanquishable number, shake your chairs to earth like dew which in sleep had fallen on you—Ye are many—they are few.*

Mary's fourth pregnancy was advancing, so the trio moved to Florence where little Percy Shelley was born safely on November 12. Despite the relief, Mary continued to withdraw, and she stopped having sex with Percy, telling a friend that *a woman is not a field to be continually employed either in bringing forth or enlarging grain.* Percy was hurt, so he sought out Claire's affections, and soon Percy began to imagine a platonic relationship with Mary, writing that *could she know a person in every way my equal, and hold close and perpetual communion with him, as a distinct being from herself; as a friend instead of a husband, she would obtain empire over herself.*

Mary just wanted Claire gone, but the trio remained together when they moved to Pisa on January 27, 1820. They took rooms at the Casa Frassi for the next months, but Mary didn't like Pisa, especially in the winter, and her depression only increased. Later that August, Percy took the drastic step of intercepting any mail from William Godwin, claiming it might throw Mary over the edge.

On August 6, Percy came back from a hike and composed his *The Witch of Atlas*, which apparently Mary didn't like, and in response Percy attacked her in the preface, writing, *to thy fair feet a winged Vision came, whose date should have been longer than a day, and o'er thy head did beat its wings for fame, and in thy sight its fading plumes display; the watery bow burned in the evening flame, but the shower fell, the swift Sun went his way—and that is dead.—O let me not believe that anything of mine is fit to live!*

This poem only increased Mary's depression, and in the end, Claire left for Florence on August 21, 1820, where she would teach English to the children of an eminent doctor. Percy and Mary had since moved to a village outside Pisa, and in this new environment, with the summer heat enveloping Tuscany, Mary slowly began to recover.

Their new home was the Casa Prini, which stood below the Monte di San Giuliano, and amid this natural beauty, Mary started to write again, inspired by the wave of revolt which had spread from Spain to Naples, Piedmont, and Sicily. In the comfort of this new privacy, Mary wrote her novel *Valperga*, which focused on the medieval Castruccio Castracani, ruler of Lucca, and through his story, she showed how all power is ultimately doomed.

Meanwhile, after sending her only copy of *Mathilda* to her father, William refused to publish it, or even send it back, and it remained unpublished until 1959, although a new comprehensive edition was just released in 2025. Had it been published in 1820, Mary would have surely become even more infamous, as well as her father, but the history of British feminism might have been fundamentally changed, and the power of women's words showcased in all their power. *Mathilda* is truly a neglected masterpiece, and should be read immediately after *Frankenstein* for the maximum effect.

Claire popped in and out of the Casa Prini that October, sometimes taking Percy with her, but she remained grudgingly in Florence and continued to correspond with Percy, who secretly pined for her. After a flood on October 25, the Shelleys moved to the nearby Casa Galletti, although their marriage continued to disintegrate, with Percy keeping secrets about Claire, and Mary acting cold in response. It was no joy for Mary when Claire joined them for three weeks that December, but she fully emerged from her depression that winter, with numerous guests starting to visit the Casa Galletti.

One guest would have been John Keats, whose poem *Hyperion* they had read and loved, but he turned down Percy's invitation and instead went to Rome, where he died on February 23, 1821, his *Fall of Hyperion* still unfinished. While they only met a few times before, John Keats and Percy Shelley are now immortalized as the prime Romantic poets of England, and thanks to the *Hyperion* science-fiction series by Dan Simmons, the poetry of Keats is still read outside of the academy, where it's currently gathering dust.

Among the other guests of the Shelley's was a Greek rebel named Alexanderos Mavrokordatos, and Mary spent every day of the winter of 1821 with him, likely having an affair. Mary also became a passionate supporter of Greek independence from Ottoman rule, and she eagerly awaited news of an uprising on the Peloponnesian Peninsula that March. Unfortunately, the up-

rising in Naples was crushed that same March by the Austrian Empire, but the example of their revolt had already spread to Greece.

In his usual fashion, Percy got jealous of Mary's relationship with Alexandros, so he suddenly became obsessed with the Greek struggle and began writing his famed *Hellas*, a lyrical drama written from the Sultan's point of view as the Greek rebels slowly rise against his tyranny. While he was writing this poem, a guerrilla army of 10,000 had been raised in Greece, so Alexandros said goodbye and left Pisa on June 26, 1821 to go join the war against the Turks.

Threatened by Mary's relationship with this passionate rebel, Percy started his own love affair with a Pisan named Teresa Viviani, nicknamed Emilia. Percy wrote the poem *Epipsychidion* for Emilia, although at first he kept the text a secret from Mary, given he compared her to a cold Moon that trapped him *into a death of ice, immovable*, while Emilia was painted as having an *expanding flame*, just as Claire was a *beautiful and fierce comet*.

Mary only read the poem after Percy's relationship with Emilia caused a scandal in Pisa, given Emilia had been set marry someone else. Percy was now stuck with Mary again, and as he wrote in a poem, *we are not happy, sweet! our state is strange and full of doubt and fear*. Rather than remain in Pisa, he went to visit Lord Byron in Ravenna at the beginning of August 1821, making sure to visit Claire in Florence on the way.

Claire was furious that Byron had sent little Allegra to the convent of Bagnacavallo, and while Percy was in Ravenna, she went to stay with Mary in Pisa until the end of August. After returning home, Percy wrote to Byron asking if Allegra could live in Pisa, and the trio, seemingly back together, went to La Spezia that September to look for a new house. Things were going well until Percy and Claire began to cause a scandal in Pisa, so Claire returned to Florence on November 1.

Tre Palazzi di Chiesa, Pisa

By that point, Mary and Percy had moved to the upper floor of the Tre Palazzi di Chiesa, the same building where the Williams family resided, some of the few British people who didn't care about the scandal which surrounded the Shelleys. When they weren't spending time with these Williams', Mary finished her novel *Valperga*, while Shelley prepared his *Hellas* for publication. Unable to find her own publisher under her own name, Mary entrusted *Valperga* to her father William Godwin, who would eventually get it printed.

Meanwhile, Lord Byron had come to visit them in Pisa, something which kept Claire away, and over the winter of 1822, Mary once again emerged from a depression, going out to numerous social events and dances, as well as initiating a brief romance with one Edward Trelawny. However, Percy was still jealous of anyone who captured Mary's affection, and he began to write letters to Jane Williams, telling her how cold Mary was to him, and in this way he turned Mary's friend against her. It was also around this time that Mary got bored with Pisan social life, writing that *the most contemptible of all lives is where you live in the world & none of your passions or affections are called into action—I am convinced I could not live thus*.

Isolation from Mary and Percy did nothing good for Claire, and she wrote them in March with a plan to kidnap Allegra from the convent, although Mary and Percy dissuaded her. Shortly after this, Percy and Byron got into a fight with an Italian soldier, who ended up stabbed on the night of March 24, 1822. It was doubtful the soldier would survive, and while Percy and Byron hid, it was Mary who went to the hospital to see if the man might live. Although the soldier survived, Byron was forced to leave Pisa for good, allowing Claire to arrive on April 15, still worried about her daughter Allegra. Her premonitions came true, and Allegra died of typhus on April 23.

Allegra

Having lost her only daughter, Percy and Mary kept Claire close, and they moved to La Spezia with the Williams family on May 1, hoping to leave the dark past behind them. Now living on the coast in the Villa Magni, the trio was three miles from a store, with their nearest neighbor over an hour's walk away. As Mary recorded, *had we been wrecked on an island of the South Seas, we could scarcely have felt ourselves further from civilization and comfort*. On top of everything else, Mary was pregnant again with another of Percy's children.

Villa Magni

For his part, Percy spent most of his time sailing, writing that *Mary has not the same predilection for this place that I have*. The *Don Juan*, a boat designed by Edward Trelawny soon arrived, affording Shelley much pleasure, although it was soon eclipsed on June 13 when Byron arrived in his warship, the *Bolivar*, with which he hoped to aid the Greek cause. During all of this sailing, Mary collapsed on June 9, although Shelley and his friends convinced themselves she was faking it for attention.

For once, Mary was happy to have Claire around, especially when she had another miscarriage on June 18, 1822, marking the fourth child Mary lost. In the weeks that followed, Mary was *ill most of this time. Ill & then convalescent*, as she described. Shelley was losing his mind, and one night he fell into a fit of sleepwalking, went into Mary's room, and began screaming. Mary ran out of the room, and when Shelley woke up, he described how *he saw the figure of himself strangling me* and that *fearful of frightening me he dared not approach the bed*.

Several days later, on June 24, 1822, Percy and Jane's husband Edward Williams were about to sail the *Don Juan* for Genoa, although Mary took a turn for the worse and Percy put off the journey. On July 1, he and Edward set sail for Livorno instead, where they would visit Byron, and as May recalled, *I called him back two or three times, I told him that if I did not see him soon I would go to Pisa with the child—I cried bitterly when he went away*. Percy was likely going to leave Mary after this trip to Byron's house, although history will never know.

On July 8, Shelley and Edward Williams, along with a young crew member, set out from Livorno during the summer storm season, and soon enough the ship had sunk. By July 11, there was no word of the lost sailors, so Mary and her friend Jane Williams went to meet Byron in Pisa, who explained all he knew of Percy and Edward's departure. The search went on for a week until Percy and Edward's bodies washed up on shore, and Percy was so disfigured he could only be identified by the copy of John Keats' poetry in his jacket pocket.

Having also lost her husband, Jane Williams accompanied Mary and Claire back to Pisa, away from the sea. Percy had been buried in the sand, but on August 16 he was dug up by Edward Trelawny, and in a ceremony that Mary didn't attend, Percy Bysshe Shelley was cremated on the shore. In this age before photographs, Percy's friends took his charred bones as keepsakes, and the item requested by Mary was his charred and calcified heart. Decades later, after Mary herself had passed, this heart was discovered wrapped in silk inside the pages of his poem *Adonais: An Elegy on the Death of John Keats, Author of Endymion, Hyperion, etc.* Some claim this couldn't possibly be Shelley's heart, although many prefer to believe this very gothic and very romantic story, which is most likely true.

XX: The Abominable Snow Monster

Just as William Godwin claimed that Mary Wollstonecraft was a witch with intuitive feminine powers, Mary Shelley's friends and family claimed she was gifted with prescience. As mentioned at the start of this text, many have marveled that Mary's novel *Frankenstein* begins and ends in the Arctic, a vast ice sheet which is currently being melted by the same Western science used to create Victor Frankenstein's monster. Mary Shelley was certainly prescient regarding the fate of the Arctic, but the final chapter of *Frankenstein* also presaged the watery death of Percy Bysshe Shelley, as you will soon see.

As mentioned above, there are a total of 24 chapters in Victor Frankenstein's tale to Captain Robert Walton, whose narrative resumes in a letter to his sister Margaret dated August 26, 17—. *You have read this strange and terrific story*, he begins, going on to write that Victor has handed over numerous documents which substantiated the story. Like a typical Western explorer and scientist, Robert asks about the exact technique with which Victor brought his monster to life, throwing Victor into a frenzy.

He asks if Robert is mad, *or whither does your senseless curiosity lead you? Would you also create for yourself and the world a daemoniacal enemy? Peace, peace! Learn my miseries and do not seek to increase your own.* Later on, Victor asks to see the notes Robert took of his story, and Victor soon corrects and edits them, thus accounting for the polish of the tale. Robert truly admires Victor, explaining that *on every point of general literature he displays unbounded knowledge and a quick and piercing apprehension. His eloquence is forcible and touching.* As he tells Margaret, *what a glorious creature he must have been in the days of his prosperity, when he is thus noble and godlike in ruin! He seems to feel his own worth and greatness of his fall.*

Not only does Victor resemble Percy Shelley in this description, he also resembles Lucifer of *Paradise Lost*, and Victor goes on to deliver a sermon and a warning to young Captain Walton, reminding him that *all my speculations and hopes are as nothing and like the archangel who aspired to omnipotence, I am chained in an eternal hell.* This sermon is the crowning moment of the book and contains the bulk of what morality Mary Shelley wished to impart, and as Victor goes on, *I trod heaven in my thoughts, now exulting in my powers, now burning with the idea of their effects.*

Much like the monster, and Mary Shelley herself, Robert has *longed for a friend* since the start of his journey, and as he tells his sister, *I have sought one who would sympathize with and love me. Behold, on these desert seas I have found such a one, but I fear I have gained him only to know his value and lose him. I would reconcile him to life, but he repulses the idea.* Robert's letter ends with the final transcription of Victor's sermon, where he states, *I must pursue and destroy the being to whom I gave existence; then my lot on earth will be fulfilled and I may die.*

The next letter, dated September 2, brings the reader back to the Arctic reality, and as Robert tells his sister, *I am surrounded by mountains of ice which admit of no escape and threaten every moment to crush my vessel. The brave fellows whom I have persuaded to be my companions look towards me for aid, but I have none to bestow, and just like Victor, the captain has seemingly led his crew to their doom. As he puts it, if we are lost, my mad schemes are the cause.*

Robert doubts any of his words will ever reach Margaret, but he writes another letter, dated September 5, and he explains that his crew sent a delegation to demand that *if the vessel should be freed I would instantly direct my course southward.* Robert hesitates, thinking he should grant their reasonable demand, but soon Victor is roused into another long sermon, this one the polar opposite of what he last sermonized to Robert. As he tells the crew, *do not return to your families*

with the stigma of disgrace marked on your brows. Return as heroes who have fought and conquered and who know not what it is to turn their backs on the foe.

There's total silence after this insanity, after which Robert explains that *I told them to retire and consider of what had been said, that I would not lead them farther north if they strenuously desired the contrary, but that I hoped that, with reflection, their courage would return.* Two days later, in a short letter dated September 7, Robert relates that *I have consented to return if we are not destroyed. Thus are my hopes blasted by cowardice and indecision; I come back ignorant and disappointed. It requires more philosophy than I possess to bear this injustice with patience.*

On September 9, the ices begin to crack, and by September 11 they are free to head south, although Victor refuses to follow them. He is resolute on destroying the monster, although he can hardly stand and is on the verge on death. In this moment, Victor delivers his final sermon to Robert, reminding him that *in a fit of enthusiastic madness I created a rational creature and was bound towards him to assure, as far as was in my power, his happiness and well-being,* something he failed to do, thus ensuring the monster's isolation and persecution. However, given the murders of his family member, Victor is set on revenge, although he passes away before actualizing his desire to destroy his creation.

Robert is heartbroken, but later that night he hears noises, and when he goes to check Victor's corpse, he finds *a form which I cannot find words to describe—gigantic in stature, yet uncouth and distorted in its proportions. As he hung over the coffin, his face was concealed by long locks of ragged hair; but one vast hand was extended, in colour and apparent texture like that of a mummy.* The monster goes for the window, but Robert asks him to stay.

Overcome, the monster stands over Victor and cries, *this is also my victim!* After this, the monster launches into his own sermon, sometimes interrupted by Robert, who at one point yells, *you throw a torch into a pile of buildings, and when they are consumed, you sit amid the ruins and lament the fall. Hypocritical fiend!* The monster doesn't care, launching back into his sermon, and as he explains to Robert, *I, the miserable and abandoned, am an abortion, to be spurned at, and kicked, and trampled on. Even now my blood boils at the recollections of this injustice.*

The monster concludes this sermon, during which he promises his murders are at an end, for he plans to return to the ice and build a bonfire upon which *I shall die, and what I now feel will be no longer felt. Soon these burning miseries will be extinct.* The monster says goodbye and *he sprang from the cabin window as he said this, upon the ice raft which lay close to the vessel. He was soon born away by the waves and lost in darkness and distance.*

The monster leaves the corpse of Victor Frankenstein, and just like Percy Shelley, the character he was modeled after, Victor dies aboard a boat. In this act of prescience, Mary Shelley not only foresaw her husband's watery death, she foretold the suicidal journey of Western science, which is now melting the Arctic and endangering all life on the planet. This is how Mary Shelley chose to end her *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*, first published in 1818.

XXI: The Monster's Widow

Most short biographies of Mary Shelley end with the death of her husband Percy, but this biography will not be one of them. For example, in the 1994 mass-market Puffin edition of *Frankenstein*, the editors actually wrote in her biography that after Percy's death, *Mary's life was effec-*

tively over: even though she lived for another thirty years, her flame never again burned as brightly as it had in the company of her brilliant husband and their friends such as Lord Byron.

This type of garbage was still being written about Mary almost 150 years after her death, but thanks to Miranda Seymour's brilliant 2000 biography *Mary Shelley*, along with the following decades of scholarship, the second half of Mary's Shelley life is now more broadly defined, although it's no less heartbreaking than her youth. While she's now recognized as the genius that she was, Mary spent the rest of her life fighting just to be respected as a human, let alone an author.

After the death of her husband, Mary remained the pariah of respectable British society, and no reputable person would have anything to do with this Illuminati free lover who was known to have slept not just with Percy, but also with Lord Byron. While the British royalty were privately allowed to be gay, lesbian, incestuous, unfaithful, and father numerous illegitimate children, their false conception of the British family-unit was projected downwards into the lower classes to ensure a healthy population of exploitable workers, and for this reason Mary was despised in all strata of British society for the anarchist free love she practiced with Percy, Claire, and Byron.

As you can imagine, Mary blamed herself for Percy's death, wondering if he'd sailed into a storm because she complained too much and wanted him back home. She was emotionally destroyed, on the inside, but Mary appears to have possessed what is now called *resting-bitch-face*, and people began to doubt whether she had any emotions at all, and as she wrote on October 1, 1822, *no one seems to understand or to sympathize with me. They all seem to look on me as one without affections.* Later, she would write, *a cold heart! have I a cold heart? God knows! but none need envy the icy region this heart encircles.*

At the same time, Percy's death unlocked old feelings in Mary, ones she likely carried since childhood, and as she wrote in her journal, *my heart would not permit me to seek another; but I have an intimate persuasion, that if the elastic feelings of youth, which have not yet deserted me, should ever lead me to form other prospects, they would be blighted...& I should be dragged back to the same necessity, of seeking for the food of life in my intellect alone.* In other words, Mary was warily contemplating a relationship with another woman, and her bisexuality may have had an early beginning, possibly even with Claire.

After the death of her husband, Mary waited in Pisa to assemble funds, and when Claire left for Vienna to be a governess, Mary sent her £12 while only having £50 to her name. Byron soon employed Mary as his copyist, and they appear to have had a love affair, which they likely had already. Mary did keep a lock of Byron's hair until the end of her days, she did write to him about coming over at *the usual hour*, and she did go with him to Genoa along with another family, the Hunts. However, once she was there, she found that the British community in Genoa would have nothing to do with her, given her anarchist reputation, and she fully shunned in her grief.

In an act of unusual selflessness, Byron truly supported Mary in this time and encouraged her to write, something he spurred when he asked her to copy his poems. Mary wrote through November, and her anarchist father William Godwin not only encouraged her to come home, he wrote to her claiming that *Frankenstein is universally known* and asked *if you cannot be independent, who should be?* As he wrote these words, William was also arranging publication of Mary's novel *Valperga*, and between his efforts and Byron's, Mary was able to resume working, something which helped her heal.

Unfortunately, Mary was not given an allowance by Percy's father, Sir Timothy Shelley, and he wrote that Mary, *in no small degree, as I suspect, estranged my son's mind from his family, and*

his first duties in life, although the exact opposite was true. Sir Timothy would only support their surviving son Percy if Mary gave him up, something Byron encouraged her to do, thereby ending their love affair.

Lord Byron, the Greek freedom fighter

Byron was donating his warship *Bolivar* to the Greek cause and planned to sail there himself, as well as donating all his money, leaving none to Mary or anyone else. His selfishness had returned, and as Mary described it, Byron was *so full of contempt against me and my lost Shelley that I could stand it no longer*. Eleven days later, Byron sailed off to Greece to fight the Turks, and Mary never saw him again.

Mary left Italy at the end of July, traveling back through Switzerland and passing Mont Blanc, a sight which brought back memories of her first elopement with Percy and Claire. She traveled with her son little Percy through all of August 1823, eventually arriving in London at the end of the month. Mary was quite surprised to discover that she was now famous, her father hadn't been exaggerating, and she quickly caught up on all the developments.

In the winter of 1823, the first edition of her *Valperga* was published, with 1,250 copies printed. In only a few months, almost half had been sold, and while the reviews were positive, none of the critics saw the clear prescience of the character Euthanasia's death at sea, and as Mary asked a friend, *is not the catastrophe strangely prophetic? But it seems to me that in what I have hitherto written I have done nothing but prophecy what has arrived to*. Percy Shelley himself immortalized Mary's prescience in his poem *The Revolt of Islam* when he asked *and what art thou? I know, but dare not speak*.

The last review of *Valperga* had appeared by August 1823, and while Mary was disappointed in the praise, her *Frankenstein* had been turned into a popular play that summer, and she was able to attend one of the performances. The production was entitled *Presumption; or, The Fate of Frankenstein*, and written by one Richard Brinsley Peake. It was put on at the famed Lyceum Theater, where just three years before *The Vampire, or The Bride of Isles* had a successful run.

The Vampire was based on *The Vampyre* by John Polidori, who began his story in Switzerland just as Mary began her *Frankenstein*. This was the first modern vampire story, and John took all of Lord Byron's aristocratic traits and fused them with the blood-sucking vampire of Romanian folklore, an act of satire which created a new genre that persists to this day with the latest *Interview with the Vampire* television series.

However, when *The Vampyre* was published in 1819, the short story was incorrectly attributed by the publisher to Lord Byron, although by the time *The Vampire, or The Bride of Isles* premiered at the Lyceum, the story was acknowledged to have been John Polidori's. Sadly, John killed himself on August 24, 1821, the second of their crew perished, leaving only Mary and Lord Byron.

An actor named T.P. Cooke played the vampire in 1820, and he returned to play Victor Frankenstein's monster in 1823, painting himself blue and creating so much terror that he *caused the ladies to faint away & a hubbub to ensue*. Mary first saw the play in August during its fourth week, attending with her father William Godwin and her friend Jane Williams, whose husband died with Percy on the sea. As Mary observed, there was *a breathless eagerness in the audience*, and after watching the hour-long production, Mary would write, *lo & behold! I found myself famous!* However, this fame cut both ways, and Mary was still despised, with conservatives walking around holding placards to boycott the play, yelling, *the subject is pregnant with mischief*.

At least five different *Frankenstein* productions were staged in 1823, allowing Mary to now write under her full name with the byline, *Author of Frankenstein*, dramatically increasing her

fame. It was possibly because of this fame that Sir Thomas Shelley finally agreed to give Mary an immediate £100 that September, followed by a £200 annual allowance for her and little Percy, although by accepting this money she was bound to never publish any of Percy's works or write about him.

Mary soon moved into her own place in Holborn, and by December her father had found her work writing articles for women's magazines, which she did off and on for the next two decades. Despite her promise to Sir Thomas, Mary wrote the preface for the *Posthumous Poems* of Percy Shelley, which was published in June 1824, although it included nothing incendiary like *The Masque of Anarchy*, which remained unpublished. 500 copies of it were printed, and 300 had sold before Sir Thomas got wise and had the remainder pulled off the market.

While she was preparing this volume for publication, Mary received word that Lord Byron had died in Greece on April 19, 1824, although not in battle, but from a fever. Now only Mary remained of their literary crew, with only distant Claire to remind her of those stormy days along Lake Geneva. Mary moved to 5 Bartholomew Place in Kentish Town that year, and after Byron's remains arrived in July, Mary watched his hearse pass by her window on its journey north to Newstead.

Part of why Mary moved to Kentish Town was that her friend Jane Williams lived there, but it was also far enough away from William Godwin and Mary Jane that she had an excuse to only visit for dinner once a week, which she regularly did. Percy went to a good local school and was fond of flying kites while his mother wrote her articles, as well as beginning her next novel, *The Last Man*, a science-fiction novel set in 2073 where the human species is wiped out by a global pandemic, leaving only a small crew of friends modeled on herself, John Polidori, Lord Byron, and Percy Shelley.

However, drama soon engulfed Mary's life when her friend Jane Williams was revealed to have been spreading slander behind her back, claiming Mary had been cruel to Percy in his last days. Percy had indeed turned Jane against Mary in his final months, and now that he was dead, Jane undermined Mary in his name. Beyond this, Jane began a romance with Thomas Hogg, the same friend of Percy who once courted Mary, and she proceeded to turn Thomas against her as well. All of this culminated in January 1825, when Thomas left for Italy, and once he was gone, it's highly likely that all the tension between Mary and Jane exploded in a passionate love affair.

Jane Williams

As many historians have pointed out, there are almost no historical figures from this period who overtly stated their homosexuality by pen or in print, and Mary and Jane were no exception. The only clues are certain passages from Mary's letters, describing the *divine summer* of 1825 she spent with her *sweet friend*, as well as her claim that she was *wedded to Jane*. It's entirely possible that these two *fallen women* had an affair which was so definitively sexual that Mary wrote in a letter of *our pretty N— the word is too strong I must not write it*. This proverbial *love that dare not speak its name* continued strong through the fall of 1825.

While this all transpired in Kentish Town, her father William Godwin was declared bankrupt, and he moved with Mary Jane to Grover Place, where Mary kindly helped them settle in. It was truly sad for her to have the family book-selling business dissolved by the state, but she quickly returned to Jane and resumed their romance, as well as finishing her novel *The Last Man*. The final chapters were handed in on January 1, 1826, with the novel published in three volumes on January 23. For her book, Mary was given just £300 where a male author would have expected £500.

Despite two editions of *The Last Man* being printed in 1826, nearly all of the reviews were bad, with one critic calling it *gloomy folly—bad enough to read—horrible to write*, while another claimed the novel was *the offspring of a diseased imagination and of a most polluted taste*. When one looks at the harshness of these reviews, it begs the question of what had changed in Mary's life since the tepid but generally positive reviews of *Valperga*.

Mary was already a fallen and shameful woman when she wrote *Valperga*, and *The Last Man* is a vastly superior novel, by all accounts, so it seems likely that Kentish Town wasn't isolated enough, and Mary was savaged in the press for loving Jane Williams too close to London society. On top of that, Mary had helped a woman obtain a male passport so that she could marry her lover and elope to France, making her anarchy-feminism even more infamous.

The 1820s were a time of deep reaction in England, as you've gathered, but Mary and Jane's romance continued through 1826, although when Thomas Hogg came back from Italy, their blissful period ended, and thinking of her own future, Jane decided to become straight again and be with Thomas. Mary was heartbroken, having considered Jane *my all, my sole delight—the dear azure sky from which I—a sea of bitterness beneath—catch alien hues & shine reflecting her loveliness*. After learning that Jane was pregnant in March 1827, she wrote to a friend that Jane's life was *was about to conclude—differently from mine*. This was the end of their relationship, and Mary would turn thirty that August, experiencing one of the most depressing birthdays of her life.

She lived that summer on the coast in Sompting, where she moved with Percy in July 1827, and over the next months she learned the extent of Jane's previous undermining of her reputation. They continued to write, mostly angry or defensive letters, and the full scope of what transpired between Mary Shelley and the now-married Jane Hogg remains largely a matter of conjecture, but it was obviously brutal and a true product of its time. Mary remained in a dark depression until the spring of 1828, when she decided to go to Paris and leave Percy with her comrades.

She left for Paris in the middle of April and moved into the flat of the Douglas family, which was on the Rue Neuve De Berry in the center of the city. The trip rejuvenated her, charging her spirits for the inevitable return to miserable England, which occurred at the beginning of June. She rented a cottage on the coast in Hastings that summer, where she began writing her next book, *The Fortunes of Perkin Warbeck*, a historical novel set in England of the 1400s. Percy lived with her in Hastings until the end of the summer, when they moved in with friend at Park Cottage.

Later that fall, on October 17, 1828, the entire Godwin clan met at the new family house in Gower Place and had their first meal together in over a decade. Claire remained in London for some months and rekindled her tumultuous relationship with Mary, which always vacillated between love and hate. Mary has just moved to 33 Somerset Street near Portman Square, and Claire lived with her for three months, although their emotions soon grew volatile. Mary eventually gave Claire the money to return to her position as governess in September 1829, and it appears that Claire's rage emerged from Mary's relationship with Lord Byron, given that Claire despised him, and they parted ways with the usual mixed emotions.

That same summer, Sir Thomas Shelley increased Mary and Percy's allowance to £300 a year, although she continued her magazine writing to supplement their income. Mary had hardly toned down her fiery rhetoric, and in one 1829 story, *The Mourner*, she continued her anarchist anti-colonialism, describing one Lord Eversham and how he traveled to speculate on plantations in Barbados. On the way back, his boat mysteriously catches fire, likely from a slave mutiny, and

while his daughter Clarice survives, this colonial perishes in the water. Just like in *Mathilda*, his daughter Clarice has been groomed only to be his object, and she kills herself in despair.

In addition to these stories for women's magazines, Mary finished her next novel. After submitting *The Fortunes of Perkin Warbeck* to the publisher, Mary got only £150, although the novel received generally good reviews, especially from her father William Godwin, who found her historical research impeccable, having just finished his own magnum opus *History of the Commonwealth of England*, which he'd been writing the past seven years.

There's much that remains unknown about Mary Shelley's life, but it's known she met the Marquis de Lafayette when she went to Paris in 1828, and she wrote to him on November 11, 1830, congratulating him on the successful July Revolution, which overthrew the Bourbon monarchy and replaced it with a new Orleanist constitutional monarchy under Louis Philippe.

While still a monarchy, it resembled a republic much more than its reactionary predecessor, and the Marquis de Lafayette had helped bring it about. Not only did Mary meet with him in Paris two years before the Revolution, she was still engaged enough to sending him congratulations on November 11, boldly declaring, *may England imitate your France in its moderation and heroism*. In addition, she wrote that *I rejoice that the Cause to which Shelley's life was devoted, is crowned with triumph*.

However, she was also trying to create a normal life for her only surviving child, Percy Shelley, who would one day inherit the entire Shelley estate, if they played their parts correctly. Despite her internal radical inclinations, Mary started to become more outwardly conservative, and when a publisher offered Mary £50 to reprint her *Frankenstein* as a single volume, she not only agreed, she significantly altered the text and wrote a new preface, all designed to make her scandalous anarchist past seem chaste and vanilla. For example, she claimed Percy had married her before their elopement and completely edited out Claire's presence. This new edition was published in 1831, becoming the standard text until the present day, when the 1818 edition is now the standard edition.

This second edition of *Frankenstein* was released just as England was sliding towards its own July Revolution, and even Sir Thomas Shelley had his estate surrounded by a peasant mob. Mary was still committed to the libertarian revolution when she wrote, *the people will be redressed—will the Aristocrats sacrifice enough to tranquilize them—if they will not—we must be revolutionized*. This wave of revolt, heralded by the uprising in France, suffered its first blow in the June Rebellion of 1832, when Louis Philippe crushed a republican uprising, events which would later inspire the 1862 novel *Les Misérables* by Victor Hugo.

In public, Mary merely supported the reformist Independents party in Parliament, while otherwise being a wholesome *good girl* who only cared for her son Percy, who she wanted to go to a good university. Beyond this, she started taking him to Sunday services, mostly to get back into the good graces of London society, for her son would one day be Sir Percy Shelley, and she meant to give him all the opportunities she was denied as the poor daughter of an anarchist bookseller.

With her son now attending Harrow, his father's old school, Mary once again visited the coast, this time moving to Sandgate in August 1832, where she remained until moving to Harrow to be near Percy in 1833. She was living there when an episode of British humor played out in London, and her father William Godwin was awarded not only an annual £200 salary by the leftist Whig government, but a house in New Palace Yard, as well as honorary job title. When the Tories briefly retook power in 1834, even they left this old anarchist with his pension, and

this old-time firebrand had now been accepted into leftist British society, who clearly valued his contributions.

While she was in Harrow, Mary began her next novel, *Lodore*, a fictionalized version of her romance with Percy, all the while working on her *Lives*, monographs on eminent Italians like Boccaccio and Machiavelli, supplying fifty in all over the next five years. While she was writing away in Harrow, her anarchist father William Godwin was technically involved in the burning of Parliament on October 16, 1834. His honorary job was ensuring that the fire-fighting equipment was properly maintained in Parliament, and whatever his involvement may have been, that equipment failed to stop the entire center of government from collapsing in flame, truly a blessed sight for many British rebels.

Lodore was published early in 1835, earning Mary just £100 pounds and selling nearly 1,000 copies. Mary's efforts to be integrated into society seemed to have worked, and all of the reviews of *Lodore* were positive. Just like in *Mathilda*, Mary used the colonization of the Americas as a metaphor for the unchecked excesses of liberalism, and in *Lodore* it is young Ethel in Illinois who is groomed into a dependent by her colonial father. Despite this critique of colonization and capitalism, *Lodore* was well received and earned Mary the praise of being called *one of the most original of our modern writers*.

In the spring of 1836, she moved back to London with Percy, although on April 2 she learned that her father William was now gripped with fever, and she quickly rushed to their New Palace Yard house. After some horrible nights, William Godwin passed away on April 7, 1836 at the age of 80. By his own request, he was buried next to his former wife Mary Wollstonecraft.

After his death, Mary threw herself into another novel, *Falkner*, which she wrote quickly, in great bursts. Writing was her method of processing the trauma of so many deaths and losses, although *Falkner* had a surprisingly happy ending. Reviews were colder than before, although there was no overt hatred, and it seemed Mary's past was behind her. Despite having become semi-respectable, *Falkner* was Mary's final novel, and she resided across London through 1837, eventually settling at 41 Park Street in Mayfair. She made an appeal to Lord Melbourne to allow Mary Jane Godwin to continue receiving William's salary, an appeal which was granted, and Mary Jane settled at ease in Kentish Town.

Mary's son Percy had gone to Trinity College in Cambridge to study in 1837, and by that time the works of his father Percy Bysshe Shelley had been widely printed, although not by Mary, who was still banned from doing so by Sir Thomas Shelley. Mary was 40 years old in 1837, and when she was offered £500 to help curate a four volume collection of Percy's works, she pleaded for Sir Thomas to allow it, which he did, under the condition there was no biography of their shameful deeds.

The Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley was published in January 1839, and the critics all disliked Mary's conservative edits of her husband's work. She was trying to protect her son from scandal while also spreading Percy's works, but even her former comrades like Hogg and Peacock disliked her choices. In response, Mary issued a one-volume edition which restored the more incendiary texts. Mary's concerns weren't all self-centered, and the publisher of this volume would later be charged with *blasphemous libel*, although he was acquitted.

Mary moved to a new house near Putney High Street in April 1839 and tried her best to have a normal life, even allowing herself to be briefly courted, but by the spring of 1840 she moved to some rooms in Richmond where she quickly decided to leave England for France, this time with her son Percy. They departed in June 1840, traveling across Italy through the summer, but Percy

left her in Milan to take his finals at Trinity, after which she returned to Paris. It was here that she met Alphonse de Lamartine, a poet and rebel who was against King Louis Philippe and his sham constitutional monarchy. What he discussed with Mary isn't clear, but it was Lamartine who sought her out, and as you will see, he would play a significant role in finally toppling the mad king.

Mary returned to London in the winter of 1841, and after being rejected by her suitor, she was so miserable that she wrote the following passage in her journal: *I gave all the treasure of my heart; all was accepted readily—& more & more asked—& when more I could not give—behold me betrayed, deserted; fearfully betrayed so that I wd rather die than any of them more—*. This entry breaks off, sounding every bit like the monster from *Frankenstein*, and it would be the last she ever wrote in that journal. Needless to say, she wasn't happy.

It was around this time that Mary likely learned of an 1840 book entitled *What is Property?* by Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, the first author to proclaim himself an anarchist, as well as elaborate its philosophy. In that text, Proudhon proclaimed, *I am (in the full force of the term) an anarchist. Listen to me*. While he would later elaborate an anti-feminist anarchism and prove himself to be an overt pig, Proudhon did make the term anarchist acceptable, at least in France.

Back in England, publishing the anarchist poetry of Percy Shelley had just become permitted by law, and now his son little Percy had passed his exams Trinity College. Sir Timothy gave him £400 for his birthday in 1841, funds that Percy and Mary wanted to use for another European adventure. Before they could depart, Mary Jane Godwin passed away that June after a drawn-out ordeal, and it wasn't until the spring of 1842 that Mary and Percy went on their trip, first to the coast, then onward to France that June.

Their journey took them to Germany, then south to Italy, where Mary lived first in Venice, which brought back terrible memories, before stopping in Florence at the start of 1843. They spent time in Rome and Sorrento before Mary decided to visit Claire, who was then living in Paris. At the time, many Italian republicans were exiled in Paris for their insurgent activities, and Mary soon became enamored with one of them, a writer named Ferdinando Gatteschi, to whom she gave 200 francs after borrowing them from Claire.

Mary returned to London at the end of August 1843, and she immediately began writing a book to raise funds for the Italian cause. Moving out to Putney with Percy, she wrote her *Rambles in Germany and Italy*, a travelogue of her recent journey and a defense of the Italian rebels who fought against the Austrian Empire. She kept up a correspondence with Ferdinando Gatteschi, but she began to be afflicted with eye pains and headaches, which would get worse in the years to come. Nevertheless, she was well enough in January 1844 to try and sell a forged painting for the Italian cause, although this sale appears to have been unsuccessful.

By February, her *Rambles* was published, with most of the reviews positive, and it appears to have sold well enough for Mary to send more money to the Italian cause. However, it wasn't enough money, and Ferdinando kept asking for more, knowing Mary would do her best to get it, even asking her son, who kindly gave it to her. Things got crazier when Sir Timothy finally died that April, making Mary and Percy the new heads of the Shelley estate.

For the first time in their lives, Mary and Percy were secure in their societal positions, and for this reason Ferdinando came to visit Mary that spring of 1844, although Percy didn't trust him. Ferdinando stayed until September, meeting with Mary an unknown number of times, and by winter she was still trying to get him funds for the Italian cause. However, despite inheriting

a literal castle and estate, there was very little money after the debts were settled, and Mary had no home to speak of by August 1845, around the time that Ferdinando decided to blackmail her.

Threatening to publish romantic letters she'd written him, Ferdinando now demanded more money, prompting Mary to take quick and ruthless action. *Oh what an easy dupe I have been—& worse*, she wrote on October 1, 1845, and within a week, she'd paid £250 to have corrupt Parisian police raid Ferdinando's home, retrieve the letters, and then have them destroyed. The radical Parisian press protested at this arbitrary harassment of Italian political refugees, shedding more light on the republican cause, but none seem to have suspected Mary's involvement, or the existence of the letters.

The hustlers kept coming, with a forger selling her several fake letters from Percy Bysshe Shelley before she got wise in March 1846. At that point, Mary and Percy had moved to a house at No. 24 Chester Square, and it was on March 12 that Mary collapsed for the first time, at first diagnosed with *neuralgia of the heart*, and she spent the next summer recuperating by the sea and at Baden-Baden. Her illness came in waves through 1847, often keeping Mary in bed.

She was still largely confined to No. 24 Chester Square near ritzy Belgravia when word spread of King Louis Philip's overthrow in the February Revolution of 1848, part of a wave of unrest that soon spread across Europe. Mary's friend Lamartine was now an official of what became the Second French Republic, as was the anarchist Pierre-Joseph Proudhon. This wave of unrest spread to London, where the radical Chartists planned a mega-march on April 10, an event which spread fear of insurrection among the British ruling class.

Mary herself feared that their house might be stormed, and she asked a friend if Percy and she could squat his land in Australia if London was sacked. This journey would have surely killed her, and the feared insurrection never took place, with the Chartists calling off the march rather than be massacred like in Peterloo. Many historians cite this as proof of Mary's drift to conservatism, but she was also dying of brain cancer and didn't want to die in a Terror.

After all these years of misery, she simply wanted to live in her house with Percy, and when she wrote that *countless uncivilized men, long concealed under the varnished of our social system, are breaking out with the force of a volcano & threatening order—law & Peace*, her viewpoint was likely informed by people like Percy Bysshe Shelley, Lord Byron, and Ferdinando Gatteschi, arrogant men who carried immense darkness under their *libertine* facades. In truth, the only thing that brought Mary comfort in 1848 was the marriage of her son Percy to a widow named Jane St. John, whom Mary loved.

Jane St. John also loved Mary, worshiped her even, and the trio moved into the Shelley estate at Field Place in the summer of 1848. It's highly likely that not only was Percy gay, but so was his wife Jane, who acted as his proverbial *beard*. In any case, they never had children of their own, and Jane was absolutely devoted to an increasingly ill Mary. As she explained, *to live with Mary Shelley was indeed like entertaining an angel. Perfect, unselfishness, selflessness indeed, characterized her at all times*.

The trio made one journey to southern France in 1849 and planned to move into a house on the coast in Boscombe where Mary could live out her last days. However, by the time the house was ready in the fall of 1850, Mary could barely get out of bed, and she remained at No. 24 Chester Square through the new year of 1851, when she experienced several seizures before falling into a coma on January 23. Mary Shelley passed away just after dusk on February 1, 1851, and as Jane would recall, *her sweet gentle spirit passed away without even a sigh*. To this day, as you read these

words, Mary Shelley's rebel monster is loved by millions across the earth, and she was a truly singular anarchist whose life story had been neglected for far too long.

XXII: Monster Movies

In her last days, Mary Shelley's one overarching passion was to allow her son Percy to live a normal life, and after she passed away, Sir Percy Shelley, 3rd Baronet of Castle Goring, built a theater at their Boscombe house along the coast where many small plays were performed over the years. It was the same in London, where part of their townhouse was transformed into a theater. While artists and their middle class fans often frequented Sir Shelley's theater, common working people went to see the latest adaptations of his mother's *Frankenstein* that intermittently played across London.

It's remarkable that Mary Shelley's first novel became a story for the common people, known by rich and poor alike, while her husband Percy's works were eventually raised into the academy. After the death of Sir Percy in 1889 and the end of their Godwin-Shelley line, his wife Lady Jane Shelley donated a beautiful statue to University College in Oxford, which they accepted, building a memorial room to accommodate it in 1893. Once expelled from this same school, Percy was now enshrined by it, all while his wife's *Frankenstein* was produced in theaters big and small across the land.

Percy was certainly elevated into the academy, but his poetry was quoted by anarchists as far away as Washington State in the 1900s, just as he was read by Chinese anarchists in the 1910s. The same was not the case for Mary, and while she may have escaped the eyes of early 20th century anarchists, the term *Frankenstein* became part of everyday English, a term used to describe any project that escapes the will of its creator. Despite this, it was Percy who appeared to be more renowned in the year 1900, while his wife Mary was seen more as a carnival freak-show with a good opening act.

This began to change in 1910 when Edison Studios released the 16-minute silent film *Frankenstein*, the first of many cinematic adaptations of her novel. Meanwhile, stage productions of *Frankenstein* were still common, and a woman named Peggy Webling wrote her own adaption, *Frankenstein: An Adventure in the Macabre*, which was first produced in Lancashire in 1927 before opening in London in February 1930. Peggy's play was a success, garnering good reviews, and as one critic summed up, Peggy had translated *into terms of the theatre Mary Shelley's one lasting and original contribution*.

This was how most literary critics viewed Mary Shelley, but just before *Frankenstein: An Adventure in the Macabre* was staged in London, the global stock market collapsed in 1929, hitting the United States first, then England. Over in sunny Hollywood, the Great Depression was setting in, with Universal Studios losing over two million dollars in revenue during 1930, and they needed a hit to pull themselves away from bankruptcy.

Turning to the stage, Universal talent scouts discovered a modern production of *Dracula* by Bram Stoker, itself based on *The Vampyre* by John Polidori. Seeing a future cash cow, Universal bought up the rights to the Bram Stoker material and began production of *Dracula* on September 29, 1930, spending over \$340,000 before it was finished. The film was released on February 12, 1931, and despite the economic depression, people spent their dimes and nickles to watch an aristocratic vampire suck people's blood, earning *Dracula* over \$700,000 that year. With such

a success on their hands, Universal quickly drew from the same well, and they immediately snatched up Peggy Webbling's stage adaptation of *Frankenstein*.

The film *Frankenstein*, released on December 4, 1931, was an even greater success than *Dracula*, earning the studio \$1.4 million dollars in less than a year. However, this film diverged heavily from Mary Shelley's novel, which credited her as Mrs. Percy B. Shelley alongside Peggy Webbling. In the film, Henry Frankenstein and his humpbacked assistant Fritz ghoulishly dig up a corpse and cut down a hanging victim, and Fritz is clearly meant to be the comic relief. When he is sent to retrieve a brain from a university, Fritz drops the healthy brain and mindlessly grabs the unhealthy brain, which then goes into Henry's monster. Fritz also climbs ropes, stumbles around, and generally tries to make the Depression era audiences laugh at someone more unfortunate than themselves.

The film bizarrely takes place in some alternate reality 1930s, with the film set in Golstadt, a play on Ingolstadt. While some characters wear 1930s clothing, others wear German peasant garb and speak in thick accents, and clearly no one at Universal cared if it made sense. What mattered were things like the Tesla-coil, which Nikola Tesla built himself, used as part of the set for Henry Frankenstein's laboratory. Once the monster is animated with his unhealthy brain, all he does is grunt and stumble around, and after escaping, the monster drowns a little girl. He eventually attacks the Frankenstein house but is chased off by a mob of torch-wielding German villagers, whom Henry joins, only to be knocked out by the monster and dragged to a windmill, where the monster is finally surrounded.

Henry manages to escape, but monster is burned inside the windmill, along with any anti-colonial metaphors from Mary Shelley's original. Instead, what was presented to the Depression-era US was a lynch mob burning the creation of an arrogant scientist, who is about to have kids with his wife Elizabeth in the final scene. The film *Frankenstein* was purely a money-making affair, and almost none of Mary Shelley's messages made it through to the screen, aside from the general *don't build a killer monster* sentiment, which certainly was apparent.

From all this, it would seem that Mary Shelley was doomed to even greater obscurity, but at least six new editions of her *Frankenstein* were published between 1932 and 1934, enough to keep the English reading world in supply through the 1935 release of *Bride of Frankenstein* and the 1939 release of *Son of Frankenstein*, at which point another three editions were printed by 1940, one of which was the first dual publication of *Frankenstein* and *Dracula* in a single volume. The stocks of these books lasted until the 1942 release of *The Ghost of Frankenstein*, when two more editions had to be released in 1943. Just as each film sequel diverged ever further from its source material, Mary Shelley's original novel spread itself ever further across the land.

This saturation occurred precisely during the build-up and outbreak of WWII, and it was one of the most common English books of that era, being read by millions as a bunch of mad scientists desperately scrambled to create the first atomic bombs. Universal's monster movies had become the equivalent of today's Marvel Cinematic Universe, and in 1943 they crossed-over two of their horror franchises to release *Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man*, another huge success, which prompted the 1944 cross-over *House of Frankenstein*, featuring *Dracula* and *Wolf Man*.

After Italy was liberated from the Fascists and Nazis, a 1944 Italian edition of *Frankenstein* was published in Rome, which was soon followed by an official Editions for the Armed Services version of *Frankenstein*, which would be issued directly to US troops. Just as this edition was in the works, set to be published in November 1945, the US dropped two atomic bombs on Japan between August 6 and August 9, killing almost 300,000 people with two devices. All at once,

the entire world saw that mad scientists like Victor Frankenstein had unleashed a monster they couldn't control, and thanks to the greed of capitalism, the English speaking world was saturated with copies of *Frankenstein*.

The last great Frankenstein cross-over, *House of Dracula*, was released on December 7, 1945, with the old 1931 monster gradually falling out of favor. However, this monster's image would remain the dominant one for all those who encountered Mary Shelley's text, and despite the monster retreating from the screen, the post-WWII era proved to be a small renaissance of *Frankenstein* publishing, with new editions released in Argentina, Belgium, Monaco, and Germany.

Between 1945 and 1950, there were at least seven new editions, and by 1960 there were Japanese, Indian (Bengali and Malayalam), Brazilian, Polish, and Egyptian editions. This trend only continued, ensuring that Mary Shelley was internationally known through the twentieth century. Beyond this, by 1953, the combined Frankenstein films had earned Universal Studios over twelve million dollars, cementing the model for the endless cross-overs of the contemporary Marvel Cinematic Universe.

Amid this saturation of Mary Shelley's first novel into the global psyche, a young anarchist poet named Diane di Prima found her way to the anarchist poetry of Percy Bysshe Shelley, then the journals of Mary Shelley herself. As she later wrote, describing the year 1957, *insofar as I knew/acknowledged Womanhood, it was as Mary Shelley I saw myself. Her journals had been models for me of what could be done. And how to accomplish it. Terse and unimpassioned, they recorded even death in a monotone, and then went on in the same entry to say who had visited, what she was reading. Some might call the journals cold. Reading my own journal for the weeks after [my daughter's] birth, I realize how much it sounds like Mary's.*

Diane di Prima, also bi-sexual like Mary, was a major figure in the Beat Movement, as it became known, and then in the radical counter-culture of the late-1960s, involving herself in several armed attacks, as well as living out in the woods where urban guerrillas could hide out. Through just Diane alone, the anarchist truths of Mary Shelley's life bled out into the long-haired bombers and dope-smoking anarchists of the 1960s and 1970s, although she was just one vector among many, and it was only appropriate that this modern revival of Mary Shelley continued in her birthplace of London, starting at a small theater packed with insane queer people.

Frankenstein had its own film adaptations in England, now known as the Hammer films, with *The Curse of Frankenstein* released in 1957, followed by four sequels, and the forth, *The Horror of Frankenstein*, was released in 1970. These full-color films, as well as the other Hammer movies, certainly influenced the glam-rock fashions of Roxy Music and David Bowie emerging in England during the 1970s, just as this glam-rock aesthetic influenced the London production of *The Rocky Horror Show*, a musical play vaguely based on *Frankenstein*, depicting one Doctor Frank-N-Furter, a mad transvestite scientist who creates Rocky Horror, an ideal specimen to be used for private pleasures.

A then-unknown British actor named Tim Curry was cast to play doctor Frank-N-Furter, and when *The Rocky Horror Show* premiered in London on June 19, 1973, it became an instant sensation, beloved by queers and straights alike, although the queers came to dominate the successive showings. The entire aesthetic of *Rocky Horror* was based on the Universal and Hammer horror movie aesthetics, although it was made even more ridiculous, as well as being laced with raunchy jokes and queer humor.

By some strange alchemy of culture, Mary Shelley's vision of *Frankenstein* had now become glossed with the same queerness she herself possessed. If young anarchists like Diane di Prime

were doing deep readings of Mary Shelley's journals, it's likely many others were doing so as well, for it's in the journals that the clues to her sexuality reside, and as each new person read Mary's innermost feelings, the truth of her life seemed to bubble ever-stronger out of the underworld.

Just as *The Rocky Horror Show* was having its success in London, the actor Gene Wilder and the director Mel Brooks decided to make a film mocking the previous Universal franchise, calling their film *Young Frankenstein*. They began shooting their film on February 19, 1974, and while they were underway, *The Rocky Horror Show* had its US premiere in Los Angeles at the Roxy Theater on March 24, 1974, although Tim Curry was the only member of the original cast to make it over.

Nevertheless, the Roxy premier was another instant success, going on to run there for nine months, during which time *Young Frankenstein* was released, also an immediate hit. Unlike the Universal film it mocked, *Young Frankenstein* gave credit to Mary by her full name, Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, and it even had Gene Wilder quote extracts from her actual text. While costing less than three million to create, *Young Frankenstein* earned \$86.2 million for its distributor, 20th Century Fox, and seeing another Frankenstein cash bonanza, the studio green-lit the production of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, a cinematic version of the hit play starring Tim Curry.

Released on September 26, 1975, the *Rocky Horror Picture Show* went on to become a cult classic despite barely breaking even after its premiere. For the next fifty years, crowds would dress up as characters and act out each scene in the theater, with the screenings usually starting at midnight. This queer version of Mary Shelley's story was the matrix in which her memory lived, still a beloved favorite of the common people. To this day, theaters pay 20th Century Fox to legally screen the film, and it is the longest continuously running release in cinema history.

Correspondingly, the academic world began to loosen up regarding Mary Shelley, who was still neglected in favor of the holy trinity of Percy Shelley, Lord Byron, and John Keats. The boldest author to really shake things up was the Scottish separatism firebrand Alasdair Gray, who in 1992 published his *Poor Things: Episodes from the Early Life of Archibald McCandless M.D., Scottish Public Health Officer*, a novel that pretended to be the real-life journal of a Scottish doctor, as well as copious commentary by the editor of these papers, Alasdair Gray. Filled with his own drawings, handwriting, and copious other illustrations, Alasdair unleashed a new monster on the world, one who more accurately told the true story of Mary Shelley's struggle against *libertines* and capitalism.

In his *Poor Things*, Alasdair depicts the tale of Archibald McCandless, who meets one Godwin Bysshe Baxter, named after Mary Shelley's father, her husband, and the family Mary stayed with in Scotland (the Baxters). McCandless soon learns that Godwin has taken the body of a pregnant woman who drowned herself, put the baby's head in the mother's body, and reanimated her in the same manner as Victor Frankenstein. Just like William Godwin, the mad doctor Godwin Baxter also spouts anarchist rhetoric, claiming that *until we lose our worldwide market British medicine will be employed to keep a charitable mask on the face of a heartless plutocracy*.

Meanwhile, Godwin has created Bella Baxter, who is a full grown woman with the mind of a child, and when she finally learns to speak, she calls her creator God instead of Godwin. Bella's subsequent flight of self-discovery is one of the most amazing tales in English literature, and as one defeated *libertine* predator writes of Bella, *AT FIRST SIGHT I knew this was a woman to whom class distinctions were meaningless*. Bella bests and defeats everyone who tries to prey on her seeming vulnerability, and when one of them breaks down in madness, he calls her the *White*

Daemon, writing that *FOR THE WHITE DAEMON IS IN EVERY AGE AND NATION THE PUPPET AND TOOL OF A VASTER, DARKER DAEMON!!!!*

The greatest part of *Poor Things* are the sections ostensibly written by Bella herself, who writes back home, *Dear God I am tired. It is late. Writing like Shakespeare is hard work for a woman with a cracked head who cannot spell properly.* As she begins her political education, Bella starts at the bottom with Robert Owen, the pseudo-socialist factory owner who Mary Shelley knew personally, before eventually coming to learn of the anarchists.

As her friendly tutor explains, *the VIOLENT ANARCHISTS or TERRORISTS dislike those who want power as much as those who have it. Since every other class depends on those who work the land, the mines, the factories and transport, they say such workers should keep what they make to themselves—should ignore money and exchange things by barter—should use explosives to frighten off folk who will not join them yet try to boss them.* To all of this, Bella instantly shouts, *so they should!* However, in the end, her tutor explains she should become a *Pacifist Anarchist. People will love you.* Upon hearing this, Bella begins to weep.

Bella experiences a much more advanced political education than Mary Shelley's monster, and she ends up a revolutionary socialist, much like Alisdair Gray, as well as becoming bisexual like Mary Shelley. In one single novel, Alisdair gave the English reading public a distilled shot of Mary Shelley's true history, beaming in its essence through Bella Baxter's flight from God. Not only is the novel brilliant, it's insanely funny, and certainly worth reading. When it was published, *Poor Things* was a moderate sensation in Scotland, England, and Ireland, although it didn't break out of academic or literary circles in the USA, where another Frankenstein revival was taking place.

These cultural revivals appear to come in waves, and just as *Poor Things* was published in 1992, the film *Bram Stoker's Dracula* was released on November 13 of that same year. Directed by Francis Ford Coppola, his *Dracula* revived the original source material, as well as making it hyper-sexual. The film was an incredible success, earning over \$200 million, prompting the production of *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*, which was released on November 4, 1994.

Unlike every other *Frankenstein* film which came before, Kenneth Branagh's version recreated all the major plot points of the original novel, becoming the first to faithfully adapt the text. However, unlike the sexy and bloody *Dracula*, audiences weren't as thrilled with the new flesh-colored monster played by Robert de Niro, a creature that could talk and think. While the movie doubled its investment, it appears that audiences much preferred a lumbering green brute they could laugh at, not a monster capable of abstract thought.

Regardless, many more copies of *Frankenstein* were put in circulation through the 1990s, and Frankenstein's monster remained a character in numerous shows and movies through the 2000s, although none of them even attempted to revive the original source material. It wouldn't be until 2014 that a movie about Mary Shelley's life with Percy and Claire was green-lit, and it was set to be directed Haifaa al-Mansour, the first woman director of Saudi Arabia. It was through this Arab woman's hands that the world received its first cinematic glimpse into the true life of Mary Shelley in the aptly titled *Mary Shelley*, released on May 25, 2018.

While the film edits out large segments of Mary and Percy's life, it does tell the basic story of what happened to them after they eloped with Claire, as well as how hard Mary struggled against the many forces tearing her apart. More importantly it revealed Percy to be the monster he often was, not the pure anarchist firebrand liberating everyone he encountered. While the film was widely promoted, the movie-going public of the US and England didn't seem to care about

Mary Shelley, and the film barely broke even, making future biographical efforts that much more unlikely.

However, before all this, a Greek film-maker named Yorgos Lanthimos had gone to Scotland to visit Alasdair Gray, hoping to turn his *Poor Things* into a movie. This project eventually got going in 2019 after Yorgos' film *The Favorite* achieved critical and financial success, although Alasdair Gray died that same year at the age of 85, content with knowing Bella Baxter would soon be unleashed even further across the earth. When it was finally released on December 8, 2023, *Poor Things* was a sensation, with millions falling in love with Bella, who runs away from God, destroys *libertine* predators, and learns to hate capital. Emma Stone won an Oscar for her portrayal of Bella, just as this weird film made over \$110 million, along with bagging the Golden Lion at Venice.

In one massive shift, it appeared that people were ready for the true life of Mary Shelley, as well as a more faithful representation of her *Frankenstein*. This was something noticed by Netflix, and they finally green-lit the longtime passion project of Guillermo del Toro: *Frankenstein*. Already long-famous for his antifascist *Pan's Labyrinth*, his new version of Mary Shelley's novel began production in 2024 and was released on October 17, 2025, becoming yet another success based on the source material. However, being a film-nerd, Guillermo del Toro not only honored all the previous campy *Frankenstein* movies, he surpassed them in extravagance, all while highlighting the most important elements of Mary Shelley's story.

While he took many liberties with the story, Guillermo del Toro's *Frankenstein* retains the basic structure of the Captain's story, Victor's story, and the monster's story, all converging at the finale. Along the way, it's made clear that this version's Victor Frankenstein derives his wealth from foreign plantations, and his creature being kept in chains certainly evokes the overt anti-colonial themes in the original *Frankenstein*, something entirely lacking in the previous iterations. In this manner, del Toro changes the story in order to highlight its content, much of which has been neglected for too long.

For example, the Henry Frankenstein of the 1931 movie gets to be married with children after the immolation of his monster, just as Doctor Frank-N-Furter from *Rocky Horror* ends up being a pretty sexy scientist who people like to dress up as. Even the 1994 film plays up Victor's redeemable traits, unable to fully side with the anti-colonial monster of Mary Shelley's novel.

All of this is corrected in del Toro's *Frankenstein*, with Victor overtly portrayed as a disgusting colonial tech-bro funded by an arm's dealer, highly relatable in 2025, given the monstrous creations of tech bros that now haunt our landscape. Victor is the true monster of *Frankenstein*, a villain who deserves to be destroyed, and in a transcendent act of redemption, del Toro doesn't have the monster self-immolate in the Arctic, as in the novel, but rather look forward across the ice to a different path, one where an indestructible super-being can begin correcting the ills of the cruel world he knows only too well. All the ingredients for a sequel are enabled by this ending, and given the public's reaction to del Toro's monster, it appears many are eager to watch a neglected creature rebel against his tyrannical creator, just like Lucifer of *Paradise Lost*.

Thus ends this *Anarchist's Guide to Frankenstein*, and hopefully you've learned something new about Mary Shelley, as well as her mother, Mary Wollstonecraft. These brave women carried the philosophy of anarchism on their backs at a time when there were few anarchists, making their burden that much heavier. Thanks to their sacrifices, our philosophy was allowed to survive through the dark repression that followed the French Revolution, and by some strange magic, Mary Shelley's presence has stayed with us for over 200 years, although often lacking her anar-

chist background. May we all be inspired by Mary's tale and it's reminder that no struggle is ever wasted, however painful, and that immortality is always within everyone's reach.

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