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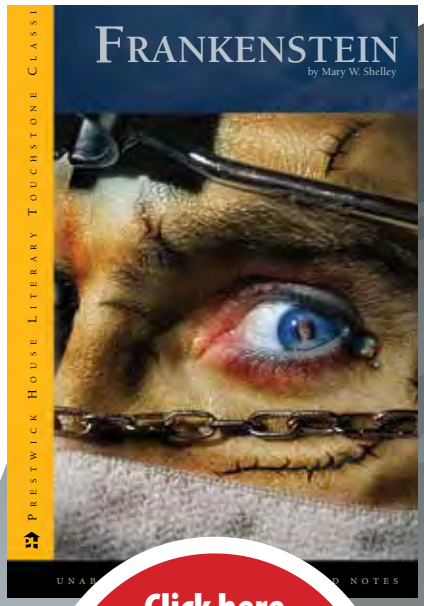

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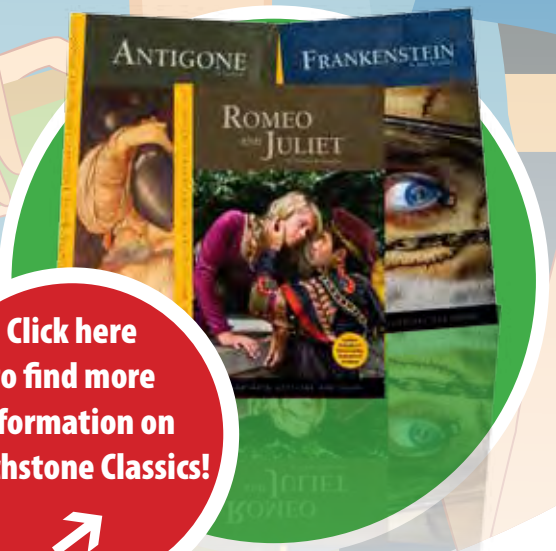

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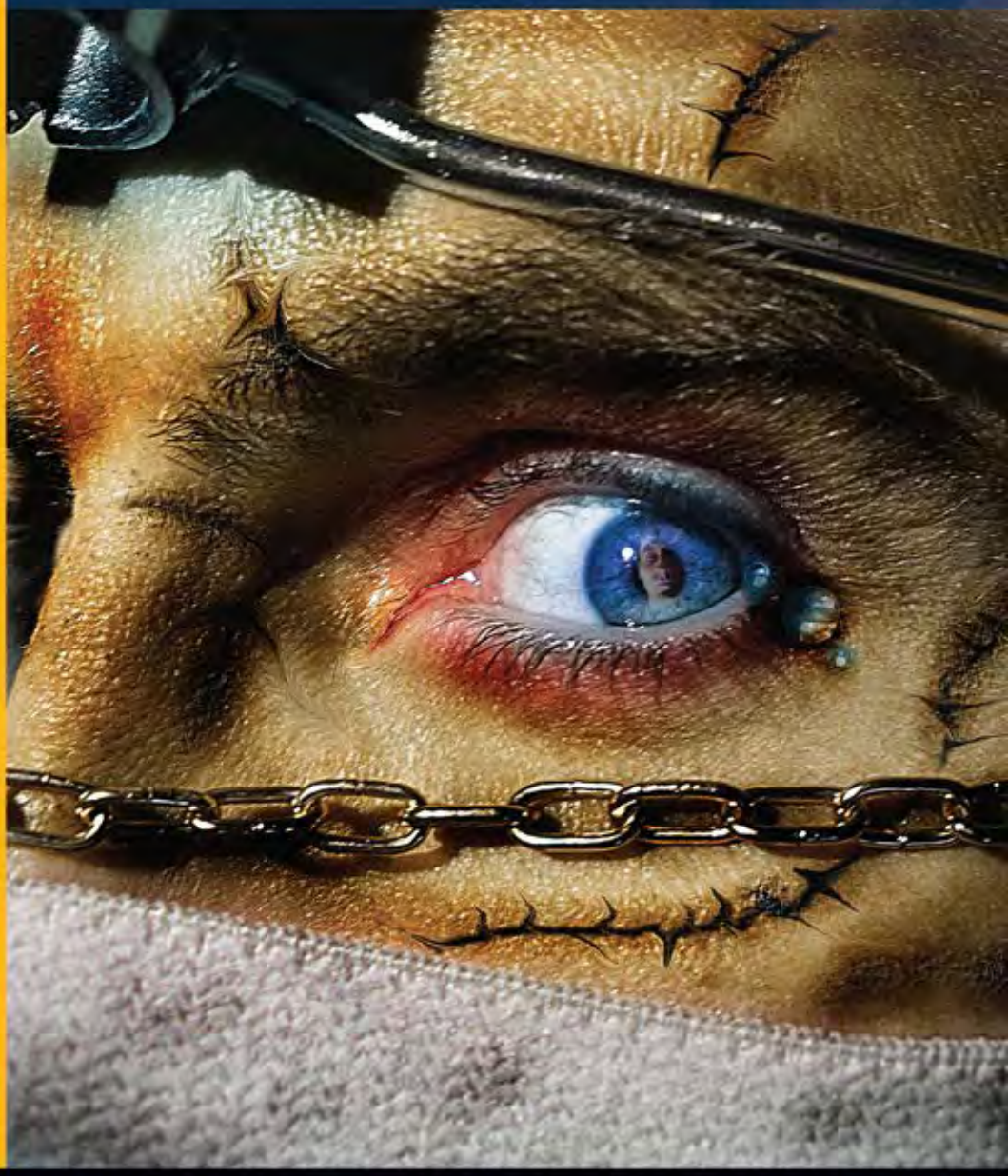
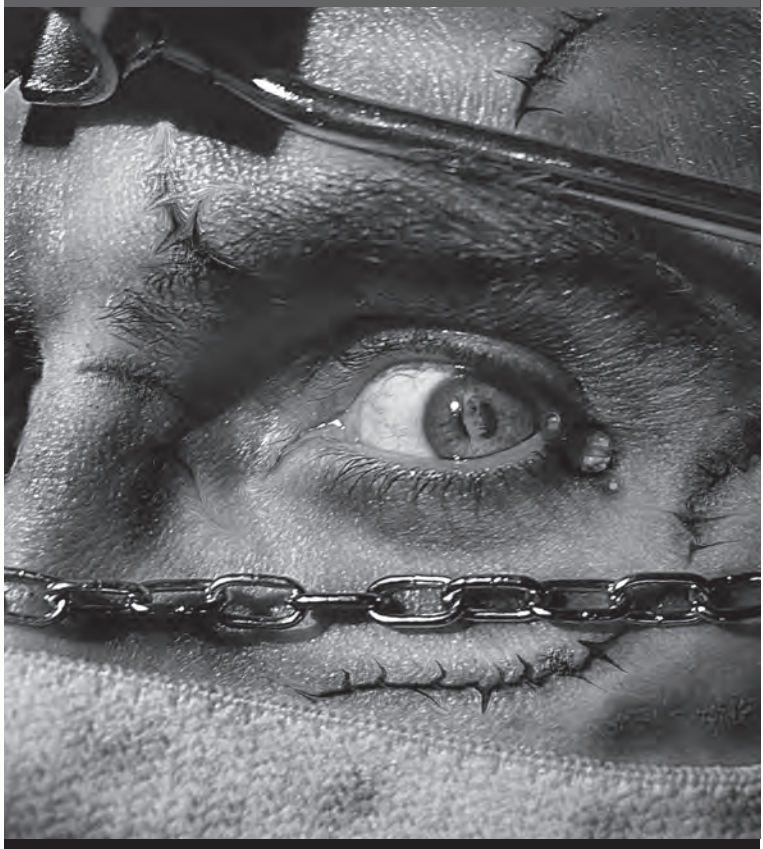
FRANKENSTEIN

by Mary W. Shelley



UNABRIDGED WITH GLOSSARY AND NOTES

Frankenstein



Mary W. Shelley

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Frankenstein

or, The Modern Prometheus

By Mary W. Shelley

Contents

READING POINTERS

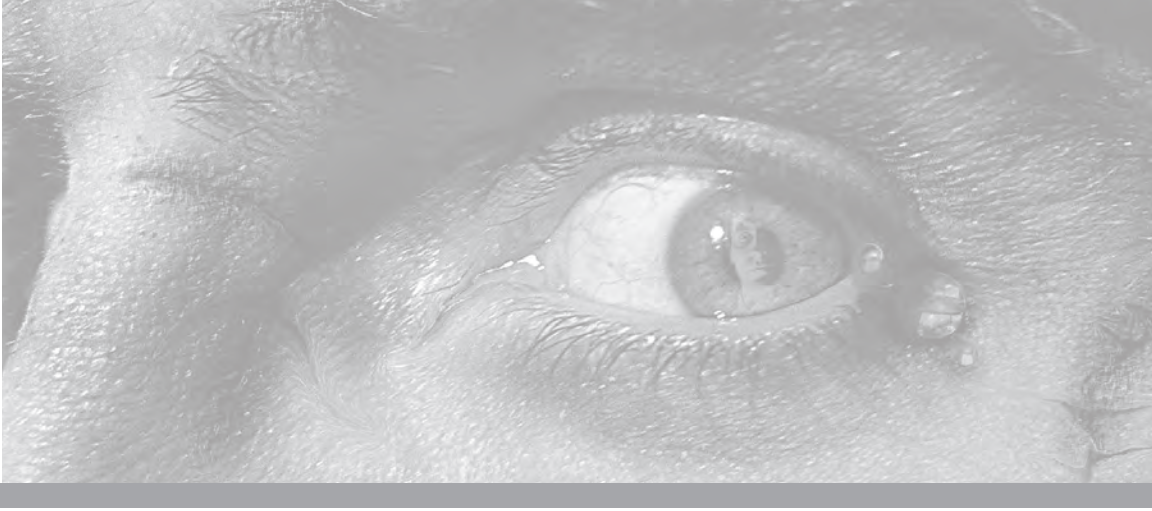
Reading Pointers for Sharper Insights

1. *Frankenstein* has been interpreted numerous times since its original publication. Most modern representations of Mary Shelley's classic portray the monster as an inarticulate being, incapable of attaining advanced intelligence, and as a symbol of pure, unrepentant evil. Shelley, however, gave the creature the ability to learn, to speak properly with passion, logic, and eloquence, and to know the difference between right and wrong.

2. To better appreciate *Frankenstein*, it is important to consider the philosophical beliefs that influenced Mary Shelley's writing:

   A. Shelley lived and wrote during the Romantic Era. Some characteristics of Romantic literature are:
      - a passion for human emotion
      - the belief that all humans are innately good
      - the advocacy of free thought
      - the idea that comfort is found in healing elements of nature
      - an opposition to political authority and social convention
      - a strong sense of human individuality
      - a belief in the supernatural
      - the use of the morbid and grotesque

   B. *Frankenstein* is also considered a prime example of a Gothic novel. Characteristics of Gothic literature include:
      - the use of intense emotion
      - the evocation of fear
      - using weather to depict a character's mood
      - the use of specific vocabulary: e.g., *diabolical, lamentable, melancholy, misery, wretched,* etc.
      - giving nature the power to destroy



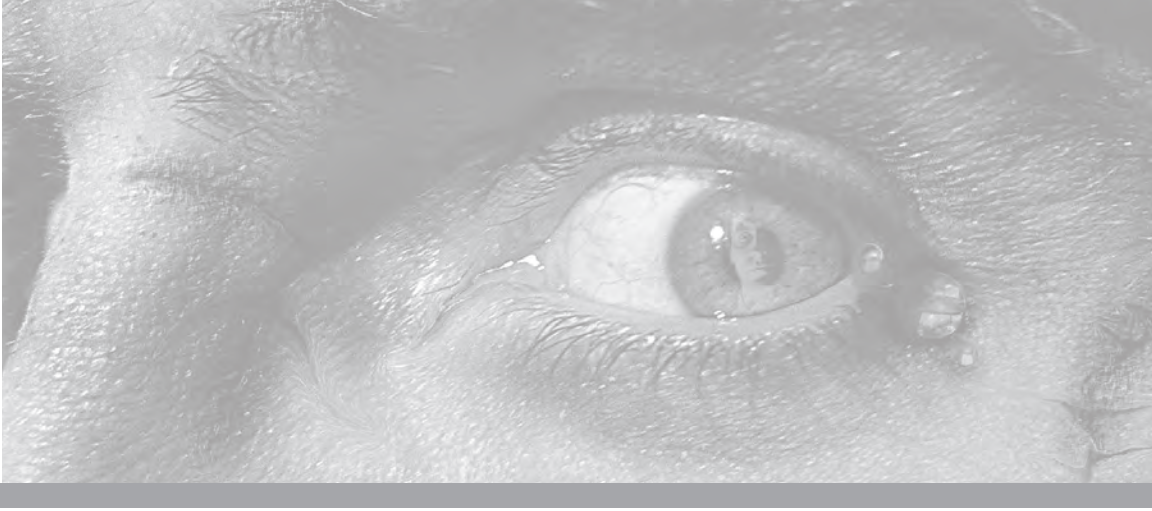
Preface

PREFACE

THE EVENT ON which this fiction is founded has been supposed, by Dr. Darwin, and some of the physiological writers of Germany, as not of impossible occurrence. I shall not be supposed as according the remotest degree of serious faith to such an imagination; yet, in assuming it as the basis of a work of fancy, I have not considered myself as merely weaving a series of supernatural terrors. The event on which the interest of the story depends is exempt from the disadvantages of a mere tale of spectres or enchantment. It was recommended by the novelty of the situations which it developes; and, however impossible as a physical fact, affords a point of view to the imagination of the delineating of human passions more comprehensive and commanding than any which the ordinary relations of existing events can yield.

I have thus endeavoured to preserve the truth of the elementary principles of human nature, while I have not scrupled to innovate upon their combinations. The *Iliad,* the tragic poetry of Greece—Shakespeare, in the *Tempest* and *Midsummer Night's Dream*—and most especially, Milton, in *Paradise Lost*, conform to this rule; and the most humble novelist, who seeks to confer or receive amusement from his labours, may, without presumption, apply to prose fiction a licence, or rather a rule, from the adoption of which many exquisite combinations of human feeling have resulted in the highest specimens of poetry.

The circumstance on which my story rests was suggested in casual conversation. It was commenced partly as a source of amusement, and partly as an expedient for exercising any untried resources of mind. Other motives were mingled with these as the work proceeded. I am by no means indifferent to the manner in which whatever moral tendencies exists in the sentiments or characters it



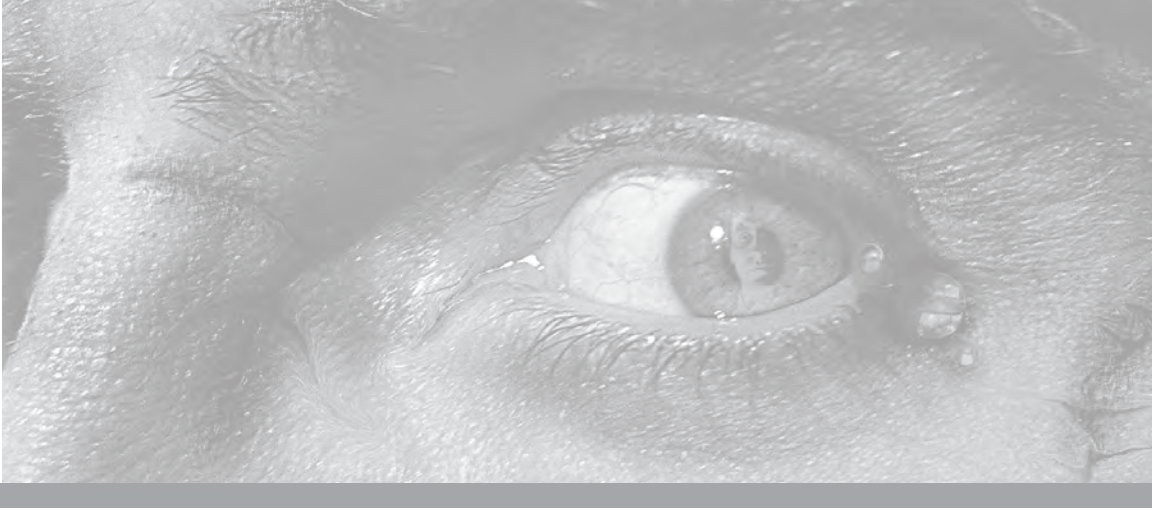
2 Letter II

To Mrs. Saville, England

Archangel, *March 28th, 17—.*

HOW SLOWLY THE time passes here, encompassed as I am by frost and snow! yet a second step is taken towards my enterprise. I have hired a vessel, and am occupied in collecting my sailors; those whom I have already engaged appear to be men on whom I can depend and are certainly possessed of dauntless courage.

But I have one want which I have never yet been able to satisfy; and the absence of the object of which I now feel as a most severe evil. I have no friend, Margaret: when I am glowing with the enthusiasm of success, there will be none to participate my joy; if I am assailed by disappointment, no one will endeavour to sustain me in dejection. I shall commit my thoughts to paper, it is true; but that is a poor medium for the communication of feeling. I desire the company of a man who could sympathise with me; whose eyes would reply to mine. You may deem me romantic, my dear sister, but I bitterly feel the want of a friend. I have no one near me, gentle yet courageous, possessed of a cultivated as well as of a capacious mind, whose tastes are like my own, to approve or amend my plans. How would such a friend repair the faults of your poor brother! I am too ardent in execution, and too impatient of difficulties. But it is a still greater evil to me that I am self-educated: for the first fourteen years of my life I ran wild on a common, and read nothing but our Uncle Thomas's books of voyages. At that age I became acquainted with the celebrated poets of our own country; but it was only when it had ceased to be in my power to derive its most important benefits from such a conviction that I perceived the necessity of becoming



3 LETTER III

To Mrs. Saville, England

July 7th, 17—.

MY DEAR SISTER,—I write a few lines in haste to say that I am safe and well advanced on my voyage. This letter will reach England by a merchantman now on its homeward voyage from Archangel; more fortunate than I, who may not see my native land, perhaps, for many years. I am, however, in good spirits: 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. We have already reached a very high latitude; but it is the height of summer, and although not so warm as in England, the southern gales, which blow us speedily towards those shores which I so ardently desire to attain, breathe a degree of renovating warmth which I had not expected.

No incidents have hitherto befallen us that would make a figure in a letter. One or two stiff gales, and the springing of a leak are accidents which experienced navigators scarcely remember to record,; and I shall be well content if nothing worse happen to us during our voyage.

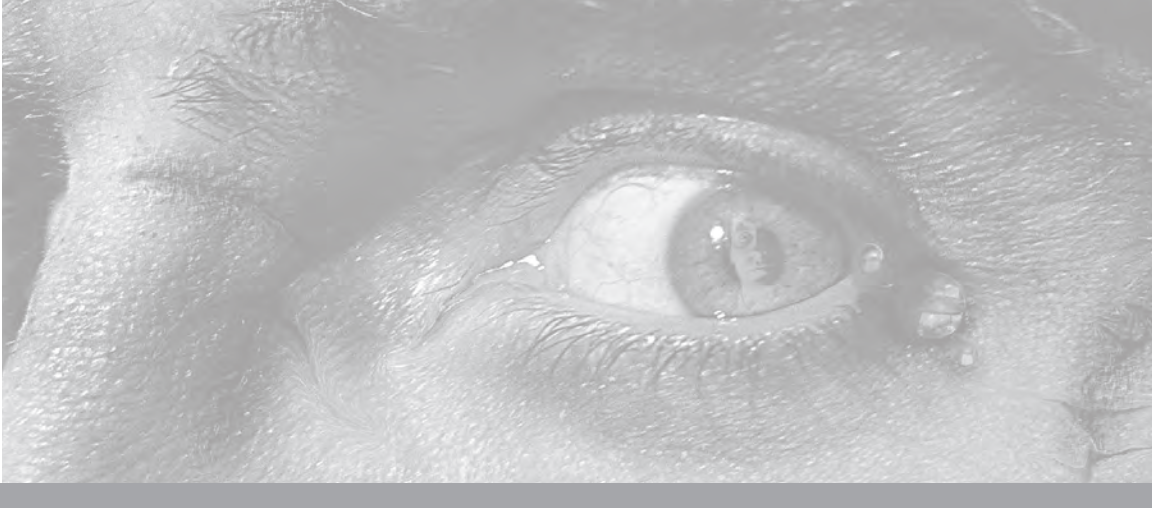
Adieu, my dear Margaret. Be assured that for my own sake, as well as yours, I will not rashly encounter danger. I will be cool, persevering, and prudent.

But success *shall* crown my endeavours. Wherefore not? Thus far I have gone, tracing a secure way over the pathless seas: the very stars themselves being

witnesses and testimonies of my triumph. Why not still proceed over the untamed yet obedient element? What can stop the determined heart and resolved will of man?

My swelling heart involuntarily pours itself out thus. But I must finish. Heaven bless my beloved sister!

R.W.



Chapter 3

III

WHEN I HAD attained the age of seventeen, my parents resolved that I should become a student at the university of Ingolstadt.[1] I had hitherto attended the schools of Geneva; but my father thought it necessary, for the completion of my education, that I should be made acquainted with other customs than those of my native country. My departure was therefore fixed at an early date; but before the day resolved upon could arrive, the first misfortune of my life occurred—an omen, as it were, of my future misery.

Elizabeth had caught the scarlet fever; her illness was severe, and she was in the greatest danger. During her illness, many arguments had been urged to persuade my mother to refrain from attending upon her. She had, at first, yielded to our entreaties; but when she heard that the life of her favourite was menaced, she could no longer control her anxiety. She attended her sick bed—her watchful attentions triumphed over the malignity of the distemper—Elizabeth was saved, but the consequences of this imprudence were fatal to her preserver. On the third day my mother sickened; her fever was accompanied by the most alarming symptoms, and the looks of her medical attendants prognosticated the worst event. On her death-bed the fortitude and benignity of this best of women did not desert her. She joined the hands of Elizabeth and myself:—"My children," she said, "my firmest hopes of future happiness were placed on the prospect of your union. This expectation will now be the consolation of your father. Elizabeth, my love, you must supply my place to my younger children. Alas! I regret that I am taken from you; and, happy and beloved as I have been, is it not hard to quit you all? But these are not thoughts befitting me; I will endeavour to resign myself cheerfully to death, and will indulge a hope of meeting you in another world."

She died calmly; and her countenance expressed affection even in death. I need not describe the feelings of those whose dearest ties are rent by that most irreparable evil; the void that presents itself to the soul; and the despair that is exhibited on the countenance. It is so long before the mind can persuade itself that she, whom we saw every day, and whose very existence appeared a part of our own, can have departed for ever—that the brightness of a beloved eye can have been extinguished, and the sound of a voice so familiar, and dear to the ear, can be hushed, never more to be heard. These are the reflections of the first days; but when the lapse of time proves the reality of the evil, then the actual bitterness of grief commences. Yet from whom has not that rude hand rent away some dear connection? and why should I describe a sorrow which all have felt, and must feel? The time at length arrives, when grief is rather an indulgence than a necessity; and the smile that plays upon the lips, although it may be deemed a sacrilege, is not banished. My mother was dead, but we had still duties which we ought to perform; we must continue our course with the rest, and learn to think ourselves fortunate, whilst one remains whom the spoiler has not seized.

My departure for Ingolstadt, which had been deferred by these events, was now again determined upon. I obtained from my father a respite of some weeks. It appeared to me sacrilege so soon to leave the repose, akin to death, of the house of mourning, and to rush into the thick of life. I was new to sorrow, but it did not the less alarm me. I was unwilling to quit the sight of those that remained to me; and above all, I desired to see my sweet Elizabeth in some degree consoled.

She indeed veiled her grief, and strove to act the comforter to us all. She looked steadily on life, and assumed its duties with courage and zeal. She devoted herself to those whom she had been taught to call her uncle and cousins. Never was she so enchanting as at this time when she recalled the sunshine of her smiles and spent them upon us. She forgot even her own regret in her endeavours to make us forget.

The day of my departure at length arrived. Clerval spent the last evening with us. He had endeavoured to persuade his father to permit him to accompany me, and to become my fellow student; but in vain. His 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. He said little; but when he spoke, I read in his kindling eye and in his animated glance a restrained but firm resolve not to be chained to the miserable details of commerce.

We sat late. We could not tear ourselves away from each other, nor persuade ourselves to say the word "Farewell!" It was said; and we retired under the pretence of seeking repose, each fancying that the other was deceived: but when at morning's dawn I descended to the carriage which was to convey me away, they were all there—my father again to bless me, Clerval to press my hand once

Glossary

To give Frankenstein *more verisimilitude, Shelley names actual cities, rivers, places, and small towns throughout Europe. Some have been identified in the Glossary, but, in the interest of space, others, that are less important, less well-known, or no longer in existence, have not been explained.*

PREFACE

—

Letter I

Prometheus – In Greek mythology, Prometheus, a Titan, stole fire from the gods and gave it to human beings. Fire was forbidden to humans, and because of this crime, Zeus had Prometheus chained to a mountaintop to be tortured for eternity. Shelley subtitles her novel *The Modern Prometheus* because of Victor's thirst for forbidden knowledge. He is able to attain the knowledge necessary to bring life to inanimate objects, but this is information that is not meant for humans to learn. The consequences of attaining the knowledge lead to Victor's agony.

Letter I – Shelley begins the novel by giving the reader information through a series of letters; this technique is called *epistolary* writing.

"**secret of the magnet**" **–** How magnetism worked was not completely understood when *Frankenstein* was published. It was not until Michael Faraday's (1791-1867) experiments with magnetism and electricity in 1821 that these concepts became clear.

"**North Pacific Ocean…pole**" **–** a way for explorers to reach the Orient more quickly by traveling northward through the Arctic Ocean, rather than around South America or Africa; also known as the Northeast Passage.

St. Petersburgh; Archangel – a city and a harbor in Russia

LETTER II

"**I am going…'Ancient Mariner'** " **–** an allusion to Samuel Taylor Coleridge's 1798 poem, "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner." In this poem, the Mariner kills an albatross during a sea voyage. The albatross is a symbol of all God's creatures, and sailors consider the bird a symbol of good luck. Killing the albatross curses the entire ship.

LETTER III

—

LETTER IV

inhuman – Note that this is the first use of a word that alludes to the monster.
"**elemental foes of our race**" **–** the uncontrollable forces and obstacles of nature
"**the slave of passion**" **–** One aspect of Romantic/Gothic literature is the use and depiction of excessive emotion.
"**unfashioned…made up**" **–** a reference to Victor's philosophy and pursuit of creating life. It also foreshadows Victor's making of the creature.

CHAPTER I

Lucerne – a large city in Switzerland
Reuss – an area in the center of Germany
"**as a fair exotic**" **–** a simile comparing the way Victor's father cared for Caroline to a gardener caring for a beautiful, exotic flower
"**poor…vale**" **–** a small shack in a valley
"***schiavi ognor frementi***" **–** [Italian] loosely translated as "slaves forever in a rage"

CHAPTER II

"**the eastern shore of the lake**" **–** Lake Geneva
Roncesvalles – a passageway through the mountains between France and Spain. The name also refers to the Legend of Roland, who defended the Christians in their conflict with Charlemagne and was killed at Roncesvalles (c. 778).
"**who…infidels.**" **–** During the Crusades (1096-1204), Christian knights invaded the Middle East and took control of Jerusalem from the Turkish Ottoman Empire. The phrase "holy sepulchre" refers to the tomb of Christ.
"**aught ill entrench**" **–** "anything evil intrude"
"**my after tale of misery**" **–** another instance of Shelley's foreshadowing and building of suspense
"**Natural philosophy**" **–** the study of nature; the belief that everything within the universe is alive and interconnected.
Cornelius Agrippa – a German physician (1486-1535) who wrote that the study of magic is a gateway to having a relationship with God
Paracelsus – a Swiss physician (1486-1541) and professor of physics, surgery, and medicine; he is noted for introducing mercury and opium to the medicinal world.
Albertus Magnus – a German theologian and Dominican monk (1193-1280), who was a favorite philosopher of many Romantics
Sir Isaac Newton – an English physicist, astronomer, and mathematician (1642-1727), known for his reliance on scientific observation to arrive at conclusions about the universe

Vocabulary

PREFACE
delineating – describing, explaining
enervating – weakening
expedient – a means to an end
scrupled – hesitated
spectres – ghosts, phantoms

LETTER I
ardent – enthusiastic, passionate
bent – an inclination, tendency
climes – climates, temperatures
conjectures – speculations, theories
consecrated – blessed
eccentricities – oddities, quirks
effusions – words
forebodings – suspicions about future events, premonitions
habitable – livable
inestimable – invaluable; precious, measureless
injunction – instruction, request
inspirited – stimulated, inspired
inuring – getting used to; hardening, strengthening
requisite – essential, necessary
satiate – to quench, satisfy
want – lack

LETTER II
capacious – vast, spacious
common – a park
dauntless – fearless, heroic
dross – waste, impurities
inexorable – unable to be moved
suppliant – a beggar

LETTER III
renovating – refreshing

LETTER IV
ameliorate – to improve
amiable – friendly, agreeable
apparition – a sudden, unusual appearance; ghost
capitulated – surrendered

conciliating – peaceful, tranquil
countenance – the face
culled – selected
discernment – insight, intelligence
draught – *Draught* usually refers to a drink; Shelley uses *draught* metaphorically here.
emaciated – extremely thin
evinced – indicated, displayed
forbear – to refrain from; to prevent
imperatively – urgently
impertinent – rude
irradiated – illuminated
irrevocably – irreversibly
lineaments – features
marvellous – full of wonder
melancholy – depressed, sad
paroxysm – an outbreak
perfectionate – to perfect
poignant – heartbreaking
quitted – left
relation – an account, telling
repose – relaxation, slumber, rest
solicitude – concern

CHAPTER I
abode – a dwelling, home
chamois – yellow-brown in color
cherub – angel
disconsolate – distressed
effectual – adequate, sufficient
indefatigable – not able to tire out; persistent, relentless
interment – a burial
mean – poor, common
pittance – a small amount
plaited – wove
rankling – aggravating
recompensing – repaying
restorative – a remedy, healing solution
reverential – respectful; loving
rude – Originally, *rude* meant "crudely cut stones."
subsistence – survival, living
syndics – magistrates, judges