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CHARACTERS IN MARY SHELLEY'S **FRANKENSTEIN** DESPERATELY SEEK but never find ideal sympathetic companionship, and the novel's plot "repeatedly dramatizes the failure of social sympathy" (1). But if sympathy in the novel can be said to fail because it is madly but fruitlessly pursued or disastrous in its results, it might alternatively be understood to succeed in that it leads, as I argue, to the textual production and narrative levels that structure the novel itself. **Frankenstein** offers a version of sympathy that is constituted by the production and transmission of narrative as compensation for failures of face-to-face sympathetic experience. Behind any consideration of sympathy in the early nineteenth century is Adam Smith's Theory of Moral Sentiments (1759), which defines sympathy as an abstract system of shifts in perspective juxtaposed with sensory, embodied response. Shelley's novel reflects Smith's abstraction in its shifts between narrative levels but, more importantly, revises his definition in two ways. First, sympathy in **Frankenstein** ultimately depends on auditory, not just visual experience, and, second, it is manifested most reliably not in the imaginative space between two individuals but rather in the textual space of the novelistic page. **Frankenstein** parses sympathy's elements and repeatedly makes the simultaneous alignment of physiological resemblance, visual experience, and auditory engagement impossible. At these moments, **Frankenstein** reformulates sympathy as a narrative phenomenon that implicates engaged listening and textual production. Shelley posits the novel as a genre that relies on compensatory sympathy.

The monster's artificial body creates artificial circumstances that isolate sympathy's physiological or visual elements which, by their absence, force him as well as the novel's other characters to seek alternatives. These compensatory models of sympathy involve telling the story of another in either oral or written form. When feeling for another becomes impossible, narrating for another, in speech or text, becomes the novel's most reliable substitution. Shelley's consideration of species difference addresses the opposition between embodiedness and abstraction in Smith's moral philosophy: although his imagination brings sympathy within his grasp, the monster's hideous body consistently precludes sympathetic experience.

I begin in the middle of the novel's embedded levels, with the brief story of Safie and the exiled De Laceys. The textual source of Safie's story is a series of letters that Victor **Frankenstein's** monster discovers and, after eavesdropping on her linguistic education, manages to copy. This document is twice said to prove the truth of his tale, first to **Frankenstein**, then again to Robert Walton, the narrator of the outermost frame. (2) In a novel composed of interpolated first-person narratives, this third-person summary, at the novel's structural center, is somewhat puzzling, and the document itself, in validating both the story and existence of the monster, becomes a remarkable piece of evidence. The monster claims that the setting sun leaves him time only to give the "substance" of these letters, but I argue that the suppression of their original form raises questions about the novel's oscillation between written, spoken, epistolary and narrative modes. (3) What, for example, is the relationship between these letters, first transcribed and later summarized, and **Frankenstein's** story, which Walton transcribes in the first person? Is it possible to account for the dissonance between the letters' textual materiality--the bundle that passes from hand to hand--and their narrated, third-person summary? Why would the monster, if he manages to obtain these letters, transcribe them and offer copies, rather than originals, as proof of his story? The novel's narrative levels must, of course, stop somewhere--but why here?

The monster's encounter with Safie, both emotional and textual, imitates a pattern of simultaneous sympathetic experience and narrative shift that produces the novel's frames. His copy of her letters mimics the novel's transmission of stories, from the monster to **Frankenstein**, then from **Frankenstein** to Walton. He reads, copies, and then summarizes Safie's story; **Frankenstein** and Walton listen, transcribe, and cite the respective stories of the creature and the creator. I will address in some detail the meaning of "sympathy" and its implications for novelistic perspective below, and I want to emphasize that it is by testing the limits of sympathy and, in fact, offering its own definition of the concept, that the novel proposes narrative, and ultimately the novel, as compensation for the impossibility of sympathy. Details of transcription and transmission provide the background against which the monster's copy and summary of Safie's letters indicate that where sympathetic experiences may fail, narrative can succeed.

Throughout the novel, moments of narration, transcription, and transmission are consistently marked by experiences of sympathy. This convergence of the experience of sympathy with the logistics of narration suggests that sympathy itself produces the impetus for narrative to be both told and recorded, to be spoken and then transcribed. At the beginning of the novel, Walton is a letter-writer and first-person narrator when he meets **Frankenstein** and almost immediately sympathizes with him. **Frankenstein** in turn becomes a first-person narrator himself, telling his story in a new narrative level. The novel's third narrative level opens when **Frankenstein** meets the monster, reluctantly feels sympathy for him, and cites his story. At the center of these narrative levels, however, the monster tells Safie's story in his own voice but in the third person, and this story exists in the distinct forms of speech and text, as narrative summary and epistolary document. The difference between these two forms--oral and written-points, on one hand, to the phenomenological limitations of sympathy and, on the other, to its novelistic potential. The monster's summary of Safie's letters is also the novel's second turn away from epistolarity, after Walton replaces his letters to his sister with a novel transcribed from **Frankenstein's** speech. The process by which the monster can identify with Safie and, in the act of transcribing her letters, adopt her voice marks the limit of the simultaneous experience of sympathy and shift in perspective that allows Walton to speak for **Frankenstein**, and **Frankenstein** to speak for his creature. But by generating this transcription of letters, the desire for a sympathetic experience that seems within reach also produces a physical document that attests to both the truth of the monster's tale and the narrative and novelistic functions that sympathy performs. The monster's telling and transcription of Safie's story is not only the structural center of the novel but also, in my reading, the conceptual pivot of Shelley's reformulation of sympathy.

Sympathy determines the novel's frame structure. **Frankenstein** opens and closes with Walton's letters, and chapter headings mark the narratives of both **Frankenstein** and the monster as explicitly novelistic. As the frames open, and as the letter is replaced with the novel, each shift in both perspective and genre is simultaneous with an experience of sympathy, as I will elaborate below. Conversely, as those frames close, and as the text returns to its outermost level and original epistolary form, the impossibility of sympathy silences each voice and concludes each frame. These narrative shifts parallel but ultimately revise the shifts in perspective that define Smith's concept of sympathy. When experiences of sympathy prove to be impossible, the transcribed narrative suggests that textual production approximates, preserves, and replaces the visual and auditory engagement that sympathy would otherwise allow. As it redefines sympathy, **Frankenstein** also dramatizes a redefinition of the novel as a genre. Beth Newman has identified the novel's inversion of a "hackneyed convention" by which an editor produces a recit trouve in Walton's transformation of oral narratives into written text. (4) Written documents are explicitly produced rather than found. Shelley's redefinition of the novel also, however, reverses this transition from spoken to written text, in Walton's transcription, by including shifts from epistolary immediacy to monologic narrative, from eighteenth-century novels of letters to nineteenth-century first-person narratives. Sympathy lies at the nexus of these transitions.

The conception of sympathy at work in my analysis arises from Shelley's novelistic negotiation and elaboration of Smith's philosophical definition. Throughout its history, the precise meaning of the term has been difficult to establish. Most comprehensively, sympathy could refer, both before Smith and until at least the early nineteenth century, to a phenomenon in which one element comes to resemble another, whether those elements be emotions, thoughts, human organs, heavenly bodies, chemicals or objects. Attempts to account for these similarities call on both metaphysical affinities and immediate physiological response. Before Smith, sympathy was commonly understood as a kind of unreasoned contagion or immediate sensory communication triggered by exclusively visual cues. (5) Physiological response persists through more abstract accounts that prioritize imaginative shifts in perspective, and distinctions between sympathy's cognitive and physiological components are difficult to make until the coining of the word "empathy" in the early twentieth century. (6) Shelley's contribution to this history lies in her insistence on the composite, durational quality of sympathetic experience and, in the realm of fiction, in the central role sympathy has in the production of this particular form of the novel.

The significance of sympathy in **Frankenstein** has been insightfully analyzed by David Marshall and Janis McLarren Caldwell. (7) Caldwell's assessment of the conflict the novel stages between vision and language is central to my argument. She concludes that Shelley is "redefining sympathy as an active reception of difference" that is based on "sympathetic listening, or straining to hear what one cannot see" rather than physiological or visual immediacy. She argues that Shelley reformulates sympathy's presumed passivity as an "active accommodation of difference" by means of "attentive exertion" (42, 45, 42). This difference is, after all, the difference between human beings and a galvanized composite corpse, and it is a necessary understatement to note that problematic species status would strain any attempt to accommodate such difference. Attentive to problems of species, Marshall's study notes the fundamental similarities between patterns of sympathy and structures of comparison, especially those which determine a "fellow-creature" (198). Building on these studies, I claim that sympathy in **Frankenstein** moves away from vision and towards the speaking voice in order to conclude, through failures of comparison and insurmountable difference, with the compensatory written text, the transcribed narrative of another. Sympathy guides textual production, and in telling its own story of novel-formation, **Frankenstein** positions sympathy as it is experienced, desired, or lost at the center of the genre.

Smithean Sympathy

David Marshall's analysis of sympathy's inherently theatrical nature has laid the groundwork for the growing body of criticism on its literary manifestations. His Figure of the Theater locates Smith's sympathy on the stage, based on the Theory's attention to spectators, roles, and performance. (8) I agree, however, with John Bender, who revises Marshall's thesis to argue that, although Smith's language is theatrical, sympathy is, by its nature, narrative: "the state of being he characterizes as theatrical must always be staged in a nontheatrical mental field that much more closely resembles the transparency of the realist novel than the non-narrative fictions of theater." (9) While it is hardly a realist novel, **Frankenstein**, I argue, brings Smith's sympathy firmly into the genre of the novel.

Smith charts, through intellectual abstraction that is dependent on perspective, the stages of the process by which one person comes to experience the suffering of another. He characterizes sympathy through the figure of the impartial spectator, an imagined observer who views both sufferer and sympathizer and, by a process of repeated comparisons, provides the standard by which they gauge their own emotional reactions. The sufferer moderates his response according to the level of emotion the sympathizer displays, and the sympathizer doubles his perspective, considering the sufferer from both his own point of view and that of the impartial spectator.

Smith's sympathy takes place in and by means of the imagination, but repeated figures of entering the sufferer's body destabilize the actual location of the sympathetic encounter. His sympathizer never quite feels the same sensations of the sufferer: the sympathizer feels those sensations he would feel if he were placed in the situation of the sufferer, not the sensations that the sufferer actually feels. In making this distinction, and in prioritizing the role of the imagination in experiences of sympathy, the senses come to mark the distance between the sympathizer and the sufferer, the limit of sympathy's potential for identification. They are, in the end, that to which the sympathizer can never have full access. Smith's first and frequently-cited example of sympathy begins with a conclusive distinction between the potential of the senses and that of the imagination: "Though our brother is on the rack, as long as we ourselves are at our ease, our senses will never inform us of what he suffers. They never did, and never can, carry us beyond our own person, and it is by the imagination only that we can form any conception of what are his sensations." (10) Here, bodies are distinct and impenetrable, the distance between the sufferer and the sympathizer impossible to cross. Almost immediately thereafter, however, the imagination transcends the barriers of the body and nearly duplicates sensory response: "By the imagination we place ourselves in his situation, we conceive ourselves enduring all the same torments, we enter as it were into his body, and become in some measure the same person with him, and thence form some idea of his sensations, and even

feel something which, though weaker in degree, is not altogether unlike them" (4). In this instance, the imagination allows the sympathizer to fuse with the sufferer's body. Sensations of each individual remain distinct, but the body of one delves, albeit figuratively, into that of the other. This language betrays an underlying ambivalence about physiological sympathy: Smith's "as it were" does little to contradict his insistence on literal physical difference while it registers the metaphoric nature of such sensory duplication.

His description of sympathy aroused by physical pain further complicates the issue of physiological sympathy. Pain that originates in the body, he argues, arouses less sympathy than pain originating in the imagination because "[t]he frame of my body can be but little affected by the alterations which are brought about upon that of my companion; but my imagination is more ductile, and more readily assumes, if I may say so, the shape and configuration of the imaginations of those with whom I am familiar" (35). When confronted with such a friend's pain, Smith concludes that "our imaginations can more readily mould themselves upon his imagination, than our bodies can mould themselves upon his body" (36). Sympathy allows the matching of perspectives, not the matching of bodies, and marks a boundary that **Frankenstein** repeatedly attempts to stretch. A creature of indeterminate species, when he transcribes a series of letters and practices speaking for another, tests the limit of the imagination's capacity to overcome physiological difference and achieve sympathy by reconfiguring it as an experience of textual production.

One particularly vivid passage in Smith's Theory physicalizes sympathy to an extent almost worthy of **Frankenstein's** science. In a process of "illusive sympathy" with a man murdered and buried, "we put ourselves in his situation.... we enter, as it were, into his body, and in our imaginations, in some measure, animate anew the deformed and mangled carcase of the slain" (99). **Frankenstein's** plot of corpse reanimation is a clear, though somewhat hollow, echo of this passage; the novel more productively offers an elaboration of sympathy's reanimating potential by means of textual production, not transgressive science. Shelley relocates Smith's sympathy from the figurative movement between imagination and body, from David Marshall's stage, to the novelistic page.

Shelleyan Sympathy

**Frankenstein's** narrative frames have most frequently been interpreted as formal manifestations of various themes of either the novel or Shelley's own life. (11) In examining the role sympathy plays at each shift in narrative level, I hope to provide an account of rather than an analogy for the novel's structure. Despite the frequency of sympathy between characters, whether it is begrudgingly experienced or explicitly requested, many studies of sympathy in **Frankenstein** either focus on or conclude with the reader's alternating sympathies, which are typically strongest for the monster. (12) Without denying the value of such responses, I nevertheless insist on the distinction between the representation and solicitation of sympathy in order to isolate its role in the production rather than the reception of the novel. Sympathy's narrative effects shape **Frankenstein** itself while describing a small twist in the history of the novel. The anticipation, impossibility, or experience of sympathy yields structural features of both this novel in particular and the novel as a genre by facilitating and then precluding shared perspective.

Sympathy produces the novel's carefully-structured pattern of three narrative levels framed by Walton's epistolary voice. As it is experienced or anticipated, sympathy generates the shifts in genre and perspective that open the novel's narrative layers. Conversely, the impossibility or loss of sympathy closes each frame and produces the reverse shift from novel to letter. At the novel's outermost level, Walton writes letters while he longs for a sympathetic friend; shortly thereafter, he pens a novel while such a friend speaks to him; finally, he resumes his letters as that friend approaches death. Deeper within the novel's frames, the monster's tale begins when his creator feels reluctant sympathy for him; it ends with his request for a mate who would grant him the sympathy he has thus far been denied. This tidy structure is disrupted at the center of the novel when the monster furtively adopts, through transcription, the epistolary voice of an exiled Arabian woman.

The novel's generic shifts from letter to narrative, performed by both Walton and the monster, position sympathy at the center of a minor transition in literary history. In **Frankenstein** the letter indicates a lack of sympathy, and the first-person narrative is facilitated by experiences of sympathy. (13) **Frankenstein** dramatizes the transition from the epistolary novel of the eighteenth century, slowly dying out in the years before the novel's publication, to the first-person narrative more characteristic of the nineteenth century. Leah Price has noted that epistolary novels of the eighteenth century were, in early nineteenth-century anthologies and abridgments, transformed into retrospective summaries. (14) The monster's summary of Safie's letters mirrors this historical shift while his studious transcription complicates the role of sympathy in novelistic production established by the novel's three narrative levels. These transcribed letters appear as physical documents, but never as first-person text. The novel proposes, as its means of internal authentication, a combination of the letter's status as a true document and the process of sympathy that allows the monster to adopt, in transcription but not in speech, Safie's voice. Letters are written or copied when sympathy is desired, and they frame and authenticate the novel.

I use the phrase "internal authentication" to refer to attempts by the monster, and his creator, to prove that this unbelievable story is real. **Frankenstein** does not, unlike many novels of letters, suggest to its readers that its contents are true, non-fictional documents, but within its explicitly fictional limits, it does posit similar forms of verification. Indeed, although the novel's two prefaces, the first written by Percy, and the second by Mary for the revised 1831 edition, state that the novel's central event of corpse reanimation is not considered impossible, they nevertheless confirm the novel's status as fiction. (15) These texts hint at scientific possibility only to emphasize fictional production. Of course, **Frankenstein** makes for more compelling science fiction if there is some effort to establish proof of the monster's existence, and it is the method, and not the fact of such attempts that I mean to problematize. The novel does make reference to other potential means of authentication, all of them "series" that carry narrative connotations. (16) The question of narrative authenticity that arises from the novel's use of Safie's letters raises more difficult and productive questions about the role of sympathy in novel-making. Safie's story, to which I will return, is conveyed by a process that imitates **Frankenstein's** pattern of sympathetic encounter and subsequent shift in point of view, the details of which I will now examine.

The novel's concern with sympathy is first made evident in Walton's second letter, in which the explorer complains to Mrs. Saville, his married sister at home in England, of his lack of a sympathetic friend. There is nobody to share his joy or amend his faults, and paper, he says, is "a poor medium for the communication of feeling." His one desire in his polar expedition is "the company of a man who could sympathize with me, whose eyes would reply to mine." When Victor **Frankenstein** is brought on board, he quickly feels "sympathy," "compassion," "affection," and "pity" for his new shipmate. With his eager and, as he admits, romantic, desire for a friend met, his fourth letter then continues as a brief "journal" (15) before he begins the transcription of **Frankenstein's** tale. The prelude to this transcription indicates a change in Walton's attitude towards textual representation and suggests a version of sympathy with reanimating potential by moving away from a dependence on aural and visual experience: instead, sympathy in **Frankenstein** comes to be constituted by experiences of textual production and, in this case, anticipated reception.

The novel's revised edition elaborates and extends sympathy's narrative power by further explaining its ability to recreate, by means of transcription, the lost friend. (17) Brief journal entries lie between the numbered letters and the novelistic "Chapter I" heading, between Walton's epistolary voice and **Frankenstein's** narrative voice. Walton tells **Frankenstein** of his longing for a friend, and revisions in his admission of this desire change the nature of the sympathy he seeks from discrete experiences in the first edition to a continuous relationship in the second. In the novel's first edition, he reveals "the desire I had always felt of finding a friend who might sympathize with me, and direct me by his counsel" (16). In the second, he states "I spoke of my desire of finding a friend, of my thirst for a more intimate sympathy with a fellow mind than had ever fallen to my lot" (14). This alteration from a potential experience ("might sympathize") to a nominalized certainty characterizes Walton's desire as more extensive and insatiable. The sympathy desired in the revised edition is sustained--precisely the kind of sympathy that the plot of the novel proves to be impossible for all its characters. **Frankenstein** presents experiences of sympathy that are not only strained or illusory, but, like the narrative levels that they generate, they all come to an end. This liminal passage, between letter and novel, declares a desire for an unbroken sympathy, a state that would, in my reading, preclude the shifts in perspective that define the text.

This "journal" ends with Walton's expectations of the transcribed narrative that follows. For his addressee, his sister, it "will doubtless afford ... the greatest pleasure," but for himself, he will read it with "interest and sympathy ... in some future day" (17). Writing, which Walton originally rejected as unequal to the expression of his feelings, now functions as an intended surrogate for the sympathetic friend in his impending absence. The journal of the first edition ends with this line, with anticipated sympathy the final word between letter and chapter, before the novel, marked as such, begins. The revised edition, however, contains a short addition that grants the act of writing powers of reanimation: "Even now, as I commence my task, his full-toned voice swells in my ears; his lustrous eyes dwell on me with all their melancholy sweetness; I see his thin hand raised in animation, while the lineaments of his face are irradiated by the soul within" (16). Textual reanimation may be a formal parallel to the novel's plot of corpse reanimation, but sympathy's role here suggests that its novelistic function extends beyond that of structure mirroring plot: the novel reproduces, in its acts of transcription, experiences of sympathy. The revised edition specifies that rereading this &once, the first-person narrative, will elicit a textual experience of sympathy that revives and duplicates the human experience of sympathy that is occasioned by the enonciation. Sympathy, by guiding the transition between media, thus generates the novel in its particular form--a written version of spoken tales.

The circumstances of the second narrative shift, from **Frankenstein's** story to that of the monster, indicate the centrality of listening in Shelley's version of sympathy. The novel's third narrative level opens in the middle of **Frankenstein's** tale when, after chasing his tormentor, he is eventually compelled by "curiosity" and "compassion" to listen to the monster's story (67). The monster, unlike **Frankenstein**, must request his listener's attention and sympathy: "Let your compassion be moved.... Listen to my tale ... hear me" (66-67). He begs to be heard, but his hideous appearance repeatedly shocks his potential auditors into a disgusted aversion of the eyes and refusal to listen. **Frankenstein** initially insists that the monster "relieve me from the sight of your detested form," to which the monster responds by covering his creator's eyes. **Frankenstein** then throws the monster's hands off, and the monster persists, "Still thou canst listen to me, and grant me thy compassion" (67). Monster and maker then retire to a hut where the monster lights a fire before relating his story. Mary Favret claims that "verbal sympathy" takes precedence over "visual evidence" in this scene: "From the 'blind faith' and distance required by the letter form emerges the possibility of a language that mediates difference and communicates life" (186). Sympathy that is based on listening to narrative challenges the conception of sympathy that is based on visual immediacy, physiological similarity, and sensory response.

By insisting on sympathy's auditory component, Shelley redefines sympathy as intrinsically narrative while she suggests its role in the history of the novel. To transcend the immediacy of visually-based sympathy is to explore the possibility of sympathy based on listening to narrative, on the prolonged, attentive engagement of the imagination. In **Frankenstein**, such engagement produces narrative levels; more broadly, it suggests that the alternations in perspective that sympathy entails foster a reformulation of novelistic media and temporality, from letter-writing to story-telling, from epistolary immediacy to narrative retrospection.

In the scene between the monster and his maker, language may overcome sight, but remnants of that struggle appear in the transcription of the narrative that follows. Whereas **Frankenstein's** revived figure lingers encouragingly over Walton's transcription (his "voice swells" in his ears, and his "eyes dwell" on him "in melancholy sweetness"), **Frankenstein** instead tolerates the sight of his creation by the light of a fire only as an alternative to being blinded by the touch of the creature's hands. Walton's point of view is thoroughly absorbed by that of **Frankenstein's** narrative, as the explorer's quick assumption of uncited first person pronouns indicates. He seamlessly adopts **Frankenstein's** voice. Quotation marks that surround the monster's narrative and appear at the beginning of every paragraph he utters maintain **Frankenstein's** dominating narrative perspective. A reluctant experience of sympathy makes for a transcription that is repeatedly marked as citation. Walton, as the novel's scribe, would of course be responsible for these marks, but, without speculating about his motivation in including them, I want to emphasize their subtle but persistent indication of distance, the distance of printed or spoken language, either of which they equally suggest. Indicators of citation that come across only in print, these marks register the novel's frequent transitions between spoken and written forms and its foundation on citation and transcription.

The monster ends his narrative with a request--that **Frankenstein** construct a "companion ... of the same species" (97). Narrative levels conclude, and the enclosing level resumes, when a lack of sympathy is expressed. After a chapter break and **Frankenstein's** initial response, their conversation continues, now under **Frankenstein's** narrative control. The monster bases his request for species companionship on the necessity of sympathy: he states, "You must create a female for me, with whom I can live in the interchange of those sympathies necessary for my being" (98), and "My evil passions will have fled, for I shall meet with sympathy" (99). **Frankenstein's** narrative levels end with requests for future action-**Frankenstein** insists to Walton that he destroy the monster--and Beth Newman has argued these requests gesture beyond the limits of the narrative levels that contain them, that each embedded tale "violat[es] its own frame" (178). I want to emphasize instead the importance of sympathy's stated absence in generating the conclusion of a narrative level. **Frankenstein** acknowledges that the monster's desire carries a sexual connotation here, worrying that "one of the first results of those sympathies for which the daemon thirsted would be children" (114). The novel's frames explore the narrative potential of sympathy, but the sui generis creature marks the limit of that potential by returning to a notion of sympathy that explicitly requires the most basic physiological resemblance. One narrative level concludes precisely at the moment when the novel articulates most vividly the desire for a version of sympathy that is threatening in its potential physicality. The narrative pacts that the monster and **Frankenstein** forge with their auditors--for **Frankenstein** to construct a mate, for Walton to destroy the monster--are ultimately dissolved. Structurally, then, the novel returns to a physiological foundation of sympathy even as it explores the abstraction of narrative embedding that sympathetic moments facilitate.

At the end of the novel, an anticipated loss of sympathy produces the final shift in narrative level and genre when, as **Frankenstein** approaches death, Walton understands he is soon to lose his sympathetic friend. Walton speaks in his own voice only to resume his letters to his sister upon realizing that the sympathy he has desired, and briefly experienced, is coming to an end: "I have sought one who would sympathize with and love me ... I have gained him only to know his value, and lose him" (147). With this loss of sympathy, sparse trappings of the letter are resumed--five dated entries, only one salutation, and no signatures. At the limits of the novel, in Walton's restricted epistolary voice, sympathy is possible only in its textually and novelistically recreated form.

Thus far, I have argued that sympathy produces the novel's frame structure by facilitating shifts in point of view, that sympathy generates by its existence and its absence the opening and closing of narrative levels. At the center of the novel, though, where the novel's frames reach their center and begin their outward movement, the monster's appropriation of Safie's story complicates the pattern by which experiences of sympathy produce the novel's narrative layers. Like Walton before him, the monster longs for sympathy, and he transcribes and narrates for another, but although he generates a copy and third-person summary of Safie's letters, he produces narrative, not a new narrative level. He approximates, through the novel's proposed textual processes, a written version of phenomenologically impossible sympathy.

The story of Safie and the De Laceys functions materially, thematically, and structurally. In the strictest sense, the letters themselves almost certainly do not describe the events of the De Laceys' betrayal by Safie's father, which the monster in all likelihood learns from simply eavesdropping on the cottagers. Because the letters serve to verify the monster's tale in its entirety, their authenticating function must necessarily apply to the narrative of Safie's involvement with the De Laceys as well, regardless of that story's unspecified source. Her letters are said to convey her biography ("Safie related ..." [83]), which tells in one short paragraph of her Christian Arab mother's audacious espousal of intellectual freedom despite her enslavement by Muslim Turks. This brief story contains clear thematic echoes of the monster's struggle for independence and unquestionably supports the claim that the monster would identify with this marginalized "other." Indeed, Joyce Zonana has argued that her letters validate the monster's story "only if we accept an identity between Safie and the monster." (18) This identity needs to be troubled, though, and I argue that its limitations necessitate the end of the novel's embedded levels, that the novel's logic of sympathy requires him to summarize her letters without adopting her voice. Offered as material proof of his story, these letters attest more significantly to the narrative potential of thwarted sympathetic desire.

As authenticating documents, Safie's letters verify the stories the monster tells--that of the cottagers and of his own development. The letters are first mentioned in the middle of the cottagers' story when the monster tells **Frankenstein** that "they will prove the truth of my tale" (83), and they reappear to validate **Frankenstein's** story to Walton, giving the explorer "a greater conviction of the truth of his [**Frankenstein's**] narrative than his as severations" (146). It is possible, although not stated, that the explorer includes them with his own letters to his sister. In the novel's proposed story of its textual form, Zonana has suggested, these letters, at the novel's center, could pass materially to its outermost layer (171). The moment in novel history that **Frankenstein** fictionalizes also registers the material function of Safie's letters: the possibility that these letters are included in Walton's packet to his sister suggests a reversal of the pattern by which thin narrative frames often, in an allegedly editorial voice, authenticated novels of letters or journals. If these copied letters indeed make that journey, then **Frankenstein** would not only model the historical turn from the epistolary novel, but it would also invert the pattern of the framed epistolary novel by presenting letters as both the frame (Walton's) and the authentication (Safie's) of the first-person novel.

Thematically, the story of the cottagers tells of the dangers, rather than the limits, of sympathy. The pity Felix has for Safie's father, perhaps the novel's most promising candidate for successful sympathetic behavior, leads only to the betrayal and exile of both the De Laceys and Safie. Felix witnesses the trial of Safie's father and attempts to aid his escape from prison. Safie's father encourages Felix's devotion to securing his liberation by promising wealth but realizes that his daughter, visiting him in prison, offers a more alluring reward. He encourages their affection, even after fleeing prison unaided, only to abandon them both while the old De Lacey and Agatha, Felix's father and sister, are themselves imprisoned when the original plot is discovered. Although this story makes no explicit reference to sympathy, its social benevolence and transcultural charity echo the moral discourse of sympathy's public ramifications in texts of the Scottish Enlightenment including Smith's Theory, Hugh Blair's sermons, and Henry Mackenzie's The Man of Feeling. (19) By dramatizing not the failure of sympathetic feeling, as the novel does, but the destabilizing consequences of sympathetic action, this story, in its transmission, reflects anxieties about sympathy's social dangers while pointing to its potential to generate narrative.

There is no frame shift in the narration of Safie's story because the monster's experience of her never includes direct auditory engagement. His knowledge of her is confined to limited visual and textual exposure, to observing her through a chink in the cabin wall and reading and copying translations of her letters. He displays an emotional identification with her when the music she plays elicits his tears (79), and they both shed tears when Felix instructs them in the injustices of history (80), but despite this shared sensibility, without an unmediated experience of her voice, the monster cannot in turn adopt that voice when he tells her story. Told in letters, Safie's brief tale would necessarily register the immediacy characteristic of the epistolary novel; as translations from her native Arabic, however, these letters simultaneously present her voice as linguistically and textually mediated. These documents imply both temporal proximity, the "here and now" of the letter, and the distance of translated language--they represent a kind of mediated immediacy. The monster's transcription differs from Walton's not only in the simple fact that Walton's is reproduced in the text of the novel and the monster's is not but also because the monster copies translated, stolen letters instead of words originally intended for his ears.

There are many reasons for the monster to sympathize with Safie: he could easily identify with the theme of paternal deception and betrayal in her story, they share a tearful sensibility, and he is similarly exiled from the society in which he finds himself. According to the novel's extension of Smith's account, however, merely seeing one's brother on the rack, to take the well-known example, would be insufficient in Shelley's version of sympathy. There is no reciprocity in the monster's experience of her. Shelley's parsing of sympathy's elements creates conditions that test the possibility of sympathy beyond physiological resemblance and direct visual and auditory engagement. This sympathy, of course, fails in actual experience but, I argue, succeeds in the production of an appropriative narrative. Walton's transcription of **Frankenstein's** story and the monster's copies of Safie's letters recast sympathetic longing as an act of writing, the production of a physical document to replace either another text, the enonce of Safie's letters, or the enonciation of **Frankenstein's** narrative, the person and his speaking voice.

It is a copy of translated letters that serves as both the monster's nearest approximation of a sympathetic encounter and the novel's most trusted evidence of narrative authenticity. The novel proposes various "series" to authenticate the tale of unbelievable science and monstrous creation--the progression of **Frankenstein's** narrative, the details of his lab journal, or this transcribed series of letters. Of these, the authenticating document is that which specifies the auditory requirements of Shelleyan sympathy.

Narrative Figures

The secret of the monster's origin is, of course, never revealed, but the wide range of terms by which the novel attempts to identify the unnamed creature establishes patterns of comparison as an unstable foundation of determining both species identity and the possibility of sympathy. The novel's engagement with the context of contemporary science has received substantial critical attention, and I would like to focus instead on the related issue of the novel's lexicon for the human and the inhuman, on the figurative language that, by failing to maintain clear species distinctions, emphasizes patterns of comparison that are fundamental to establishing identity as well as experiencing sympathy. (20) First christened "the creature" (34), the monster might, it seems, be able to associate with the "fellow creatures" who populate the novel, a possibility Marshall considers the crux of Shelley's consideration of sympathy. The term 'creature' is itself profoundly unclear on this question--the Oxford English Dictionary defines the term as "an animal ... as distinct from 'man,'" on one hand, or "a human being" on the other. The novel's terminology and figures of speech insist that we ask--can this creature rightly consider human beings his own fellow-creatures?

These "figures" correspond to that other "figure"--the monster himself. Marshall's analysis specifies the double significance of "figure," physical and representative, for the monster. He is figurative not only in the sense that he resembles a man, but also "in the sense that he stands as a simile: he is in fact a being like his creator--and it is this likeness that makes him so monstrous" (Surprising Effects of Sympathy 208). Similar to humans but also unlike any other creature, he himself represents that which he seeks--resemblance. Terms used for both **Frankenstein's** creation and human beings establish a semantic fluidity that makes distinctions between literal and figurative language, as well as those between human and inhuman, increasingly difficult to make. The monster is frequently described as "the figure of a man," and human beings, repeatedly called "creatures" or described as "wretched," are said to resemble "monsters" and carry "fiends" within them. (21) The novel's terminology characterizes the boundary between human and inhuman, as well as the concept of monstrosity, as imprecise and elastic. For the language-learning monster, this imprecision hints at the possibility of sympathy only to give false hope.

The monster's experience with the De Lacey family and Safie calls on the lexicon of "human," "monster," and "creature" and provides his education in human sentiment and the humanities, in species designation and literary sympathy. Marshall considers the monster's observation of them "the central and in some ways the paradigmatic scene of sympathy in **Frankenstein**--the scene of the origins of the monster's sympathy" (Surprising Effects of Sympathy 214). Spying on this family and Safie also presents a striking scene of pedagogy that links methodical linguistic education with instruction in personal relationships, species difference, and sympathy. According to Maureen McLane, language learning in this scene is objectified "through the technology of print and the combinatoire of the alphabet," and this classroom provides instruction in "an always already mediated orality, a speech acquired through a technology of the letter." (22) The monster's experience of language relies, from its beginnings, on the written word, and it is in some sense appropriate that the copied letters of an exiled, oriental "other" serve the strictly pedagogical purposes they do. Writing is, for the monster, an early, essential step in the humanizing process of language-learning.

The humanistic texts the monster happens upon--Paradise Lost, a volume of Plutarch's Lives, and Goethe's Sorrows of Werther--elicit his sympathetic response and, returning to the problematic body, raise the question of species status: "I found myself similar, yet at the same time strangely unlike the beings concerning whom I read.... I sympathized with, and partly understood them, but I was unformed in mind.... My person was hideous, and my stature gigantic: what did this mean? Who was I? What was I?" (86). Responding sympathetically to literary works, despite the imaginative abstraction such identification entails, the monster nevertheless returns again to the problem of physiological resemblance. Capable of Smith's perspectival sympathy, he is quickly reduced to the physiological elements that dominate earlier conceptions of sympathy.

Comparison reinforces species difference as it focuses attention on the verbally human but visually repulsive monster. The scene of the monster's meeting with the De Laceys, like the meeting between the monster and **Frankenstein**, dramatizes the opposition between visual and verbal communication, as a number of critics have noted. (23) Armed with new learning in language and sympathy, the monster approaches the cottagers, only to be presented with the imprecision of species terminology and his distinctly different status. The monster's interaction with the blind De Lacey begins as a potential sympathetic encounter, and the father is on the verge of making a pact similar to those that have opened each of the novel's narrative frames when he asks the monster to "confide to me the particulars of your tale" and states, "I am blind, and cannot judge of your countenance, but there is something in your words which persuades me that you are sincere" (91). Of the man's children, the monster states, "they are the most excellent creatures in the world ... but a fatal prejudice clouds their eyes, and where they ought to see a feeling and kind friend, they behold only a detestable monster" (90). Literal blindness necessarily prioritizes the monster's human language and, by transcending the obstacles of the monstrous body and versions of sympathy based on visual perception, temporarily brings an alternative auditory and narrative sympathy into his reach. Vision, however, figuratively blinds the cottagers by placing physical monstrosity before verbal mastery. The moment between the old man's nascent sympathy and the entrance of Felix, Agatha, and Safie places the monster squarely between sympathy based on auditory, narrative progression and that which is based on physiological immediacy. The old man responds to his request: "it will afford me true pleasure to be in any way serviceable to a human creature." The adjective marks a distinct boundary which will soon conclusively isolate the monster from his desired companions, but the monster replies with the novel's more capacious terminology: "I trust that, by your aid, I shall not be driven from the society and sympathy of your fellow-creatures" (91). These hopes are dashed, of course, when the De Lacey children and Safie enter the cottage and witness the grotesque form of the monster. By momentarily suspending the requirements and limitations of physiological resemblance, visual perception, and sensory response, the monster's meeting with the blind De Lacey gestures towards an abstract version of sympathy based on shifts in imaginative rather than visual perspective, on progressive auditory engagement, not immediate visual response. It is this version of sympathy that Shelley aligns with the genre of the novel.

After this rejection, he briefly drops the benevolent language of "fellow-creatures" to declare "everlasting war against the species" (92) and soon demands a mate, as noted, "of the same species." This change in terminology suggests a realization of sharper species distinctions. While the terms of his request affirm the species boundary, it continues to be blurred by the lexicon of "human," "monster," and "creature." He uses both the newly-adopted term "species" as well as the problematic "creature," and competing vocabularies prohibit any real precision. The significance of his indeterminate species status becomes clear once he has experienced both the inadequacy of sympathetic reading and the impossibility of a complete sympathetic encounter, one that would involve physiological resemblance, auditory and visual engagement. His copy of Safie's letters approximates a full experience of sympathy by allowing the unique monster to adopt the perspective--in writing if not in speech--of another creature, but the third-person summary, rather than appropriated first-person speech, by which their content is conveyed emphasizes the differences of language and species that make sympathy impossible. His request for a mate is not, of course, fulfilled--**Frankenstein** destroys the female body--and the suggestive possibility that sympathy might paradoxically humanize him, by confirming his species through identification with another, remains unfulfilled.

When the monster makes this request, as in the moment that immediately precedes his narrative, Victor feels compassion for his creation, but, in this instance, he qualifies his response: "I compassionated him ... but when I looked upon him, when I saw the filthy mass that moved and talked, my heart sickened, and my feelings were altered to those of horror and hatred" (99). Physical monstrosity once again prevents the sympathy that the monster's eloquence is on the verge of eliciting. In separating the potential elements of sympathy, **Frankenstein** posits the novel, born of a desire for sympathy, as compensation for the differences, physical or cultural, that make immediate and direct experiences of sympathy either dangerous or impossible.

Smith's account is ultimately insufficient for the novel's exploration of sympathy. The senses in Smith, as I have argued, mark the limit rather than the site of sympathy, and **Frankenstein** similarly returns to the body, specifically the monstrous body, as an obstacle to experiences of sympathy. Shelley's novel extends Smith's account, however, by elaborating the potential textual ramifications of his abstraction. Where the body marks a limit of sympathy, the written word, specifically the transcribed narrative, indicates sympathy's potential to overcome this barrier by means of novelistic generation. Writing in **Frankenstein** eagerly reproduces, in Walton's transcription of **Frankenstein's** speech, and desperately approximates, in the monster's copy of Safie's letters, the lived experience of sympathy. The novel itself, as a genre, recreates the shifts in point of view by which Smith defines sympathy, but the specific transitions between epistolary immediacy and narrative summary constitute, through their consistent foundations in sympathy, Shelley's novelistic adaptation of philosophical sympathy.

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(1.) Janis McLarren Caldwell, Literature and Medicine in Nineteenth-Century Britain: from Mary Shelley to George Eliot (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004) 42.

(2.) I use the term "frame" to mean remarks that precede and conclude a narrative. Because **Frankenstein** is a textbook example of the framed narrative (a double-ended frame narrative, or a twice-embedded narrative), I avoid questions of terminology. I prefer the language of "narrative levels" to that of "diegetic levels" simply for reasons of accessibility. See Mieke Bal, Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative, trans. Christine van Bobeemen (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1985).

(3.) **Frankenstein**: The 1818 Text, Contexts, Nineteenth-Century Responses, Modern Criticism, ed. J. Paul Hunter (New York: Norton, 1996) 83. Subsequent references to the novel will be noted parenthetically. Unless otherwise stated, page numbers refer to the first edition.

(4.) "Narratives of Seduction and the Seductions of Narrative: The Frame Structure of **Frankenstein**," in New Casebooks: **Frankenstein**, ed. Fred Botting (New York: St. Martin's P, 1995) 170.

(5.) Lord Kames describes pity, sympathy's more charitable sister-term, so as to emphasize its reliance on visual immediacy: "distress painted on the countenance ... instantaneously inspires the spectator with pity, and impels him to afford relief" (Elements of Criticism [New York: Garland, 1972] 440). The Abbe Du Bos in his Reflections critiques sur la poesie et la peinture bases sympathetic response on visual perception and locates it beyond the realm of reason: "Les larmes d'un inconnu nous emeuvent meme avant que nous scachions le sujet qui le fait pleurer. Les cris d'un homme qui ne tient a nous que par l'humanite, nous font voler a son secours par un mouvement machinal qui precede toute deliberation" (Paris: P.-J. Mariette, 1733) 39. David Hume, Smith's precursor, suggests that sympathy works by elusive means of reverberation and impression-formation. See A Treatise of Human Nature, section 2.1.11 (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000) 206-8.

(6.) Even so, there is frequent overlap between the two, in clinical psychology as well as common speech. For a brief, clear history of the two terms, see Thomas J. McCarthy, Relationships of Sympathy: the Writer and the Reader in British Romanticism (Brookfield, Vermont: Scolar P, 1997) 4-8. See Caldwell for an incisive survey of sympathy's historical connotations in medicine and philosophy, 30-32.

(7.) Marshall, Surprising Effects of Sympathy: Marivaux, Diderot, Rousseau, and Mary Shelley (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1988) 178-227; Caldwell 26-45.

(8.) The Figure of Theater: Shaftesbury, Defoe, Adam Smith, and George Eliot (New York: Columbia UP, 1986) 168-92.

(9.) Imagining the Penitentiary: Fiction and the Architecture of Mind in Eighteenth-Century England (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1987) 227.

(10.) Theory of Moral Sentiments (Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books, 2000) 3-4--Subsequent references to this text will be noted parenthetically.

(11.) Marc Rubenstein, for example, has argued that the enfolding narratives make story telling "a vicarious pregnancy" and the novel itself a womb. "'My Accursed Origin': The Search for the Mother in **Frankenstein**," SiR 15.2 (1976): 173, 194. Joseph Kestner reads the novel's frames as the structural embodiment of its narcissistic characters. His "Narcissism as Symptom and Structure: the Case of Mary Shelley's **Frankenstein**" has been reprinted in New Casebooks: **Frankenstein**.

(12.) See Caldwell and also Sydny M. Conger, "Aporia and Radical Empathy: **Frankenstein** (Re)Trains the Reader," Approaches to Teaching Shelley's **Frankenstein**, ed. Stephen C. Behrendt (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1990). I rely on Caldwell's argument, hut her analysis ultimately turns to the reader's sympathy for the monster.

(13.) For a more thorough analysis of epistolarity in the novel, see Mary Favret's Romantic Correspondence: Women, Politics and the Fiction of Letters (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993) 176-96.

(14.) The Anthology and the Rise of the Novel: From Richardson to George Eliot (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000) 15-16. Franco Moretti dates the epistolary novel to 1766-1795 in Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for a Literary History (London: Verso, 2005) 31.

(15.) Percy resolutely labels the text a "fiction," and significant attention, particularly in Mary's preface, is devoted to the details of the novel's inspiration and creation. He states that the creation of a monster like **Frankenstein's** is considered "as not of impossible occurrence" (5), and she justifies the possibility of such a process: "Perhaps a corpse would be reanimated; galvanism had given token of such things: perhaps the component parts of a creature might be manufactured, brought together, and embued with vital warmth" (**Frankenstein** [New York: Bantam, 2003] xxvi). References to the revised version of 1831, indicated in the text, will be to this edition.

(16.) **Frankenstein** persuades Walton to trust the progression and cohesion of his story: "my tale conveys in its series internal evidence of the truth of the events of which it is composed" (17). Favret argues that this insistence on the nature of narrative suggests that the novel, by skirting the issue of its most convincing means to prove the truth of its tale--the revelation of its science--intimates that fiction may, quite simply, authenticate itself by its series of interrelated, coherent events. Another group of sequentially narrated events, in **Frankenstein's** journal of his laboratory work, further suggests the self-authenticating capacity of narrative. The monster describes this document (which is not, of course, reproduced) as a "history ... mingled with accounts of domestic occurrences" that contains "the whole detail of that series of disgusting circumstances" that produced his "accursed origin" (87). The series of scientific events is mixed with a narrative of private events, and the ostensibly objective, clinical nature of this text--a story of origins that the monster discovers and reads immediately after Paradise Lost--is compromised by the interference of autobiographical, domestic details more appropriate to the genre of the confessional, or the diary, perhaps even the novel. For further discussion of narrative authority, see Favret 179-88.

(17.) For a careful analysis of the major revisions, see James O'Rourke, "The 1831 Introduction and Revisions to **Frankenstein**: Mary Shelley Dictates Her Legacy," SiR 38.3 (Fall 1999): 365-85. Marshall has noted, in Surprising Effects of Sympathy, that the second edition makes "the problem of sympathy even more explicit" (195-96). My analysis aims to specify this point.

(18.) "'They Will Prove the Truth of My Tale': Safie's Letters as the Feminist Core of Mary Shelley's **Frankenstein**," Journal of Narrative Technique 21.2 (Spring 1991): 174. Safie's letters have been used to support both a feminist reading of the novel and an argument that the monster's gender identification is female.

(19.) See John Dwyer, Virtuous Discourse: Sensibility and Community in Late Eighteenth-Century Scotland (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers Ltd., 1987) 10-65.

(20.) See Marilyn Butler, Introduction, **Frankenstein**: 1818 Text (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1994) ix-li, and Anne Mellor, Mary Shelley: Her Life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters (New York: Methuen, 1988) 89-110.

(21.) After the birth scene **Frankenstein** says of his recent creation, "A mummy again endued with animation could not be so hideous as that wretch" and then, three lines later, states, "I passed the night wretchedly" (35). Justine, wrongly accused of the murder of **Frankenstein's** young brother, is so relentlessly hounded by her confessor that she states, "I almost began to think that l was the monster that he said I was" (56). Elizabeth responds to Justine's trial by asserting that "men appear to me as monsters." Victor describes her demeanor during this conversation: "She shed tears as she said this, distrusting the very solace that she gave; but at the same time she smiled, that she might chase away the fiend that lurked in my heart" (61). "Fiend" is a term frequently associated with **Frankenstein's** creation.

(22.) Maureen McLane, Romanticism and the Human Sciences: Poetry, Population, and the Discourse of the Species (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000) 15.

(23.) See Favret 186; Peter Brooks, Body Work: Objects of Desire in Modern Narrative (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1993) 201, 207; Caldwell 43.

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