FREUD, FRANKENSTEIN, AND THE ART OF LOSS

Richard Brockman

Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus (M. Shelley, 1818) is arguably the most famous and most widely adapted work of science fiction and horror of all time. It was written by Mary Shelley when she was a girl in her teens. How is that possible? What life experiences could she possibly have drawn on? How did they come to her? Why did she hide them? Why would this book tower over all of her other literary efforts?

Psychoanalysis cannot answer all of these questions because psychoanalysis cannot explain genius. But psychoanalysis can help to explain the direction genius takes. It can help to explain the "need" that drives the creative act. And when the need is to reckon loss, psychoanalysis can provide a frame to better understand "how I, then a young girl, came to think of and to dilate upon so very hideous an idea" (M. Shelley, 1831, p. xxi). For by the time Mary had sat down to write her "hideous progeny," she had suffered many losses—more perhaps than most do in a lifetime. Indeed her first loss would be suffered almost with her first breath.

Mary was born on August 30, 1797. Eleven days later, her mother Mary Wollstonecraft would die. That birth and that death would be chronicled by William Godwin (1798) in his book *Memoirs of the Author of A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, written a year after the birth of his child, a year after the death of his wife. "The child was born at twenty minutes after eleven at night. It was not till after two o'clock on Thursday morning that I received the alarming intelligence that the placenta was not yet removed." At this point the mid-wife was discharged and "a male practitioner" was summoned. "He immediately proceeded to the extraction of the placenta, which he brought away in pieces, till he was satisfied that the whole was removed" (p. 176). But he was wrong.

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"In the evening she had a second fit. . . . Every muscle of the body trembled, the teeth chattered, the bed shook . . ." (p. 181). Godwin went on. "On Monday, Dr. Fordyce forbad the child's having the breast, and we therefore procured puppies to draw off the milk. This occasioned some pleasantry of Mary with me and the other attendants" (p. 184) But the pleasantries would not last. Unextracted bits of placenta would become infected and kill her.

And thus Mary Shelley's birth would lead to her mother's death. Such a person might be drawn to thoughts of death. Such a person might be obsessed with loss. Such a person might be obsessed with guilt. Such a person might need to create the mother she hardly knew, and then identify with her creation.

"The poor children!" Godwin wrote two months later, not really referring to their suffering but to his own." And when the wild cries of baby Mary fill the house, threatening to shatter the glass in the windows, I succumb to unreasoning panic" (Neumann, 1979, p. 6).

Mary, the child, did not know her mother except insofar as what a neonate can know of another. She did not know her mother except insofar as she would later have her father's book to read, a portrait in the hall to look up to, Wollstonecraft's books, a ring, a lock of her hair. But a child can, and of course will, dream, imagine, concoct what she might not know, touch, understand, especially if it is someone or something that she needs to know, touch, understand.

In her 1831 Introduction to the second edition of *Frankenstein*, Mary Shelley wrote, "I lived principally in the country as a girl and passed a considerable time in Scotland." It was there "where unheeded I could commune with the creatures of my fancy." It was there "beneath the trees of the grounds belonging to our house . . . that my true compositions, the airy flights of my imagination, were born" (pp. xxi–xxii). She wrote the Introduction at the request of her publisher and her readers, who expressed astonishment that such a young girl could write such a book. And thus looking back from the perspective of 1831, the author offered an explanation of how she began *Frankenstein* in the summer of 1816, while still in her teens. "And now once again, I bid my hideous progeny go forth and prosper. I have an affec-

tion for it, for it was the offspring of happy days, when death and grief were but words which found no true echo in my heart" (p. xxvi).

But, interestingly, Mary Shelley had lied. She was not a country girl. Indeed she spent most of her childhood in London (in a home close to Fleet Prison and close enough to the Smithfield Markets to hear the bellowing of animals awaiting their slaughter; Hoobler & Hoobler, 2006, p. 47). She had been sent to Scotland for a brief time during her adolescence to live with friends of her father's, the Baxters. And while the echoes of "death and grief" may have been somewhat distant in the beginnings of her affair with Percy Bysshe Shelley, they were never long absent from her heart: Her first baby had died just months before she began to write *Frankenstein*, and her half-sister Fanny would commit suicide in October 1816, when Mary was in the midst of writing the book. Soon thereafter, Harriet, Shelley's wife whom he had abandoned to be with Mary, would be discovered, drowned and pregnant, in the Serpentine, an apparent suicide. But in her Introduction she maintained a lighthearted tone: "Its [the book's] several pages speak of many a walk, many a drive, and many a conversation, when I was not alone" (p. xxvi). Although it may be true that while in Switzerland at the Villa Diodati Mary took many walks with Shelley, her lover, and Lord Byron, her host, one wonders why she would suggest that *Frankenstein* might recall walks, drives, and conversations when "not alone"?

But there certainly were conversations at the Villa Diodati relevant to the germination of *Frankenstein*—"Many and long were the conversations between Lord Byron and Shelley to which I was a devout but nearly silent listener" (p. xxiv). Conversations that would lead to speculation—perhaps a corpse could be reanimated.

Until almost the mid-nineteenth century, that is, until well after *Frankenstein* had been written, the scientific community believed that "mechanical energy," such as the energy of a lightning bolt as had been described by Benjamin Franklin, was of the same nature as "animal electricity," or the energy of a nerve cell. From this, it was an easy step to speculate on whether a corpse might be reanimated by touching it with electricity. Experiments were conducted in laboratories as well as on the stages of England and

France, attempting to do just that. But serious speculation came to a halt in 1830 when Faraday demonstrated that "animal" (chemical) energy and "mechanical" (electrical) energy were not one and the same. That distinction, however, was not clear to the scientific community in 1816 and was certainly not clear to Byron nor to Shelley that night at the Villa Diodati when Mary Shelley conceived the idea of *Frankenstein*. Nor was Mary aware of that distinction when she wrote in the Introduction: "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 endued with vital warmth" (p. xxiv). And thus Mary chose to confide where the work's initial creative spark had come from, but chose to misrepresent what had caught fire.

Just after the First World War, Freud (1920) wrote *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. In it he described "a condition that has long been known and described which occurs after severe mechanical concussions, railway disasters and other accidents involving a risk to life; it has been given the name 'traumatic neurosis'" (p. 12).

One of the characteristics that Freud had noted in sufferers of traumatic neuroses was that they were often psychologically forced to repeat "the situation." It puzzled him why an event that brought suffering would be repeated in cognition and especially in dreams, as this violated the "pleasure principle" and the "wish-fulfilling" nature of dreams.

"When I placed my head on my pillow I did not sleep," Mary Shelley (1831) wrote about that night in the Villa Diodati when the idea for the book came to her.

> My imagination, unbidden, possessed and guided me . . . with a vividness far beyond the usual bounds of reverie. I saw with eyes shut, but acute mental vision . . . the pale student of unhallowed arts kneeling beside the thing he had put together. I saw the hideous phantasm of a man stretched out. . . . He sleeps; but he is awakened; he opens his eyes: behold, the horrid thing stands beside his bedside, opening his curtains and looking on him with yellow, watery, but speculative eyes. I opened mine in terror. (pp. xxiv–xxiv).

Mary's description of this dream accords with Freud's (1920) formulation of traumatic neuroses: "Now dreams occurring in

traumatic neuroses have the characteristic of repeatedly bringing the patient back into the situation of this accident, a situation from which he wakes up in another fright" (pp. 12–13).

A little over a year before she began to write *Frankenstein*, Mary was pregnant with the child of Percy Bysshe Shelley, the man whom she had first met when she was fifteen, the man whom she would seduce in the cemetery of St. Pancras church where her mother was buried, the man for whom she would fall "obstinately" in love, the man who would bring her a bottle of laudanum so their impossible love might be sealed with death, the man with whom she would instead run off at the age of sixteen.

"Maie [Mary] is in labour & after very few additional pains she is delivered of a female child—all is well," Percy noted on February 22, 1815, in the journal that he and Mary shared. The child had been born two months premature. Mary writing in that same journal on February 28, "I come down stairs—talk—nurse the baby and read." On March 2, "I and my baby go [out] about 3." "Hogg comes in the evening." (Thomas Jefferson Hogg was a friend of Shelley's from Oxford who lived nearby and visited often. He was enamored of Mary, and although she rebuffed him, he was encouraged by his college friend Percy to pursue this "friendship," perhaps as a way for Percy to justify his own infidelities). On March 4 Mary wrote, "read talk and nurse." But then on March 6: "find my baby dead. Send for Hogg—talk—a miserable day." And in a letter to Hogg,

> My dearest Hogg my baby is dead—will you come to me as soon as you can—I wish to see you—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 . . . for I am no longer a mother now. (M. Shelley, 1987, p. 68)

Over the next few days there were other entries: "Read & talk—still think about my little baby. . . . Stay at home, net [sic] & think of my little dead baby—this is foolish I suppose yet whenever I am left alone to my own thoughts & do not read to divert them they always come back to the same point—that I was a mother & am no longer." Then on Sunday, March 19, "Dream that my

little baby came to life again—that it had only been cold & that we rubbed it by the fire and it lived.—I awake & find no baby—I think about the little thing all day." Monday, March 20, "Dream again about my baby" (pp. 69–70).

"But if a compulsion to repeat does operate in the mind, we should be glad to know something about it, to learn what function it corresponds to, under what conditions it can emerge and what its relation is to the pleasure principle," Freud (1920, p. 23) commented about the mind's reaction to trauma.

Chapter V of *Frankenstein* begins, "It was on a dreary night in November that I beheld the accomplishment of my toil." These were the first words that Mary wrote, as described in the Introduction, when she awoke in terror at Villa Diodati in 1816. "How can I describe my emotions? . . . His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath; his hair was of a lustrous black, and flowing; his teeth of a pearly whiteness; but these luxuriances only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes, that seemed almost of the same colour as the dun white sockets in which they were set, his shriveled complexion and straight black lips" (M. Shelley, 1831, p. 51). Reading this passage in the context of 1816, one year after the death of her first child, one might ask, was Mary describing a "creature of her fancy" or was she seeing through the monster to her dead baby ("from its appearance it evidently died of convulsions—will you come . . . for I am no longer a mother now?") Was she revisiting a trauma?

What is a trauma? "We may tentatively venture to regard the common traumatic neurosis as a consequence of an extensive breach being made in the protective shield against stimuli" (Freud, 1920, p. 31). Freud emphasized two factors as contributory to trauma: fear and lack of preparedness. He argued that a dream that repeated a traumatic event represented an instinctive attempt on the part of the sufferer to master the insult. This was an instinct that went beyond the pleasure principle and demonstrated an "urge inherent in organic life to restore an earlier state of things" (Freud, 1920, p. 36). This urge to restore a prior state served as the basis for Freud's most speculative and controversial idea, the death instinct.

"Everything must have a beginning," Mary Shelley (1831)

wrote, attempting to explain the origins of her "hideous progeny." "Invention does not consist in creating out of void, but out of chaos" (p. xxiv). Mary implied that the "chaos" from which *Frankenstein* emerged were the conversations she overheard between Shelley and Byron. But perhaps that too was not entirely true. Perhaps the deeper beginning, "the earlier state of things," was something else, reflecting the compulsive need to go back to a prior state in order to gain mastery over an event that had been overwhelming.

"What psychoanalysis reveals in the transference phenomena of neurotics can also be observed in the lives of normal people," Freud (1920, pp. 21–22) argued. What he had observed in neurotics as well as in normal people was this "compulsion to return." The death of her baby and the suicide of her half-sister both within the year prior to her beginning *Frankenstein* were certainly traumatic events, but were they the events, the "beginnings," to which Mary, like the Coleridge's Ancient Mariner, was compelled to return?

"Unable to endure the aspect of the being I had created, I rushed out of the room, and continued a long time traversing my bedchamber, unable to compose my mind to sleep," Victor Frankenstein reported shortly after having created his monster.

> I threw myself on the bed in my clothes, endeavoring to seek a few moments of forgetfulness. But it was in vain: I slept, indeed, but I was disturbed by the wildest dreams: I thought I saw Elizabeth, in the bloom of health, walking in the streets of Ingolstadt. Delighted and surprised, I embraced her; but as I imprinted the first kiss on her lips, they became livid with the hue of death; her features appeared to change, and I thought that I held the corpse of my dead mother in my arms; a shroud enveloped her form, and I saw the grave-worms crawling in the folds of the flannel. I startled from my sleep with horror. (M. Shelley, 1831, pp. 51–52)

And thus Victor Frankenstein's dream swept him from the vision of the monster to the vision of his incestuous lover, Elizabeth (in the 1816 edition she was Victor Frankenstein's cousin), then to the vision of his dead mother.

In the novel, Frankenstein's mother ministers to her niece, Elizabeth, who had "caught the scarlet fever. . . . Elizabeth was

saved, but the consequences of this imprudence were fatal to her preserver." And so Victor Frankenstein's mother, like Mary Shelley's would die as a result of bringing life to another. "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" (pp. 38–39). These words echoed the words Mary's father had written about her mother: "In the evening she had a second fit. . . . Every muscle of the body trembled, teeth chattered and the bed shook under her" (Godwin, 1798, p. 181).

Mary Shelley's relationship with her mother was a complex mix of love, guilt, idealization, and loss. But if Mary Wollstonecraft died eleven days after giving birth, could the infant be said to "know" her mother in any meaningful sense? Could such a loss be "remembered" except through stories told by others?

There is considerable evidence to support the conclusion that human infants, indeed all mammals, are born with a selective orientation toward their mothers—a preference that begins *in utero* (DeCasper & Fifer, 1980). Neonates, tested within hours or birth, have been shown to prefer human voices to silence, female voices to male, their native language to another language, their own mother's voice to that of another (Hofer, 2005; Leon, 1992). Infants will both orient toward the maternal breast odor and produce sucking movements in response to it (Russell, 1976). A rat pup just hours after birth will turn toward the scent of its own amniotic fluid rather than toward the scent of another dam's amniotic fluid. A rat pup subjected to the odor of citriol *in utero* will reject its own dam in preference to a dam brushed with tincture of citriol (Hepper, 1987). A mammalian neonate recognizes and attaches to its mother.

There is also evidence that this attachment is not singular but rather is made up of units that develop independently and in parallel—biological units influenced by such factors as the mother's warmth, milk, touch, scent (Polan & Hofer, 1999). Thus if the mother is unavailable the infant may experience "loss" even though the he or she might be fed and kept warm by a substitute, because the smell of the substitute would not be the same as the mother's. Or the warmth of her body would differ. Or the fre-

quency of her touch. Or the taste of her milk. The existence of multiple, independent systems means that the infant's response to maternal loss will depend on which system(s) is/are lost. The experience of loss is not "all or nothing" but rather is registered in the different sensory modalities as these different systems are affected by the loss. To return to the questions: Did Mary Shelley "know" her mother? could she "remember" her loss? Clearly the answers are "yes." To ask a third question: was this loss traumatic, as Freud had defined the term—did it establish a compulsion to repeat?

"And when the wild cries of baby Mary fill the house, threatening to shatter the glass in the windows, I succumb to unreasoning panic." (Neumann, 1979, p. 6) Godwin, frantic to replace not so much a wife but a mother, turned to "a succession of female friends, relatives, and servants" who moved in and out of his home providing care without continuity (Neumann, 1979, p. 21). After several rejected proposals, he married Mary Jane Clairmont, a woman many regarded as a most unworthy choice, whose jealousy of her stepdaughter Mary and of Mary's half-sister Fanny was intense. To escape the woman's wrath, and as she saw it, her father's betrayal, Mary made frequent retreats to be with her "real" mother in the cemetery of St. Pancras, a church some two miles away. It was there where she read to her mother from the books Wollstonecraft had written as well as from Godwin's *Memoirs*—a book that she read "several times." It was there at her mother's grave, not in the Scottish countryside, where "the creatures of my fancy" were formed. It was there, in St. Pancras cemetery, where she strove to re-create who her mother was.

Victor Frankenstein would be obsessed with a not so dissimilar task of bringing the dead back to life: "Darkness had no effect upon my fancy; and a churchyard was to me merely the receptacle of bodies deprived of life . . . I had worked hard for nearly two years, for the sole purpose of infusing life into an inanimate body. For this I had deprived myself of rest and health. I had desired it with an ardor that far exceeded moderation" (M. Shelley, 1831, pp. 46, 51).

In "Mourning and Melancholia" Freud (1917) addressed the issue of grief. "It is a matter of general observation that people

never willingly abandon a libidinal position, not even, indeed, when a substitute is already beckoning to them" (p. 244). One of the ways that Freud felt that people accept loss is by incorporating aspects of the "abandoned object cathexis" into themselves—that is by internalizing and identifying with the lost love. "Thus the shadow of the object fell upon the ego" (p. 249).

The teenage Mary Shelley (1831) gave Victor Frankenstein the task of creating a human being out of the chaos of parts which he, Frankenstein, had found in "vaults and charnel-houses" (p. 46), parts which she had discovered in books and "flights of imagination." They were both "fevered" by an obsession born of loss. "The void presents itself . . . My mother was dead" (M. Shelley, 1831, p. 39). For both, the loss was of a mother, a loss that for Mary had been recounted in near operatic style by Godwin (1798) in his *Memoirs*.

But Godwin did not write just about the death of Wollstonecraft; he also wrote about her life, and in particular about her life as a woman in love. However, the love that Godwin (1798) described was not her love for himself: "It was for Mr. Gilbert Imlay, native of the United States of North America" (p. 104). Mary Wollstonecraft met Imlay in France, lived with him for a time at Neuilly, then Paris, then Havre, where Wollstonecraft tried to establish a home. "Domestic affections constituted the object upon which her heart was fixed" (Godwin, 1798, p. 115). But Imlay was more absent than present, and Wollstonecraft more in pursuit than possession of his love. In 1794 she bore him a daughter, Fanny, and soon thereafter Imlay moved to London, sending Wollstonecraft back to Paris with the promise that he would join her. He did not.

Eventually Imlay called her to London, but when she arrived, Imlay was "cold and embarrassed" (Godwin, 1798, p. 126) and seemed to have little time for her. "Why did she thus obstinately cling to an ill-starred, unhappy passion?" Godwin rhetorically asked. "Because it is of the very essence of affection, to seek to perpetuate itself" (p. 120). And so when one of Imlay's "mercantile adventures" needed personal attention, Wollstonecraft offered to go as his representative in the hope that her good service

might return his affection. "Mary determined to make the voyage" (p. 128)—to Norway. Thus Wollstonecraft journeyed to the northern reaches of Europe, which interestingly is where Mary Shelley's monster would lead Victor Frankenstein. Indeed, Wollstonecraft's pursuit of Imlay across France, back and forth to England, to Germany, and to Norway prefigures the journey made in her daughter's immortal book.

"He had promised to meet her upon her return from Norway, probably at Hamburgh; and they were to pass some time in Switzerland." But when Imlay sent letters rationalizing his absence, Wollstonecraft became suspicious and returned to London. "She made further inquiries, and at length was informed by a servant of the real state of the case" (Godwin, 1798, p. 131).

"Be calm! Have I not suffered enough?" Victor Frankenstein's creature cried out to his maker, wanting only to be loved (M. Shelley, 1831, p. 89). "Perhaps no human creature ever suffered greater misery," William Godwin (1798) wrote of the misery his wife suffered for having so "obstinately" loved (p. 89). And as if to explain such a love, "We not infrequently meet with persons . . . whose minds seem almost of too fine a texture to encounter the vicissitudes of human affairs. . . . This character is finely portrayed by the author of the *Sorrows of Werter*. Mary was in this respect a female Werter" (pp. 111–112). On reading this at her mother's grave in St. Pancras cemetery, Mary would have thus come across the reference to the *Sorrows of Werter*—a book written by Goethe concerning a man who would commit suicide because his true love was betrothed to another.

When hidden in the mountains of France, Victor Frankenstein's monster came across a leather case. In it he found three books; one of them was the *Sorrows of Werter*. Thus both the monster and Mary unexpectedly came across a book that would open their eyes to worlds neither would ever know and to persons they could only imagine. The monster confided, "In the *Sorrows of Werter* . . . so many lights were thrown upon what had hitherto been to me obscure. . . . I thought Werter himself a more divine being than I had ever beheld or imagined. . . . I wept, without precisely understanding" (M. Shelley, 1831, p. 114).

When Wollstonecraft was presented with irrefutable evidence that Imlay was involved with another woman, "she resolved to plunge into the Thames" (Godwin, 1798, p. 133). Here too, she was "a female Werter."

Victor Frankenstein also wrestled with the pull of a watery grave: "I took the boat, and passed many hours upon the water . . . tempted to plunge into the silent lake, that the waters might close over me and my calamities for ever" (M. Shelley, 1831, p. 81).

"She took a boat, and rowed to Putney," Godwin (1798) continued, relating his wife's suicide attempt. "It was night when she arrived, and by that time had begun to rain with great violence. The rain suggested to her the idea of walking up and down the bridge, till her clothes were thoroughly drenched and heavy with the wet. . . . She then leaped from the top of the bridge" (pp. 132–133).

Upon reading the *Sorrows of Werter*, Victor Frankenstein's creature turns to him and demands, "Who was I? What was I? Whence did I come?" (M. Shelley, 1831, p. 115). When no answers come, he confesses, "I am alone, and miserable" (p. 128).

Mary Shelley returned in her book, in her dreams, in her heart, to abandonment. The doomed desire that existed in the monster for his maker Victor Frankenstein, like the doomed desire that existed in Wollstonecraft for Imlay, was the "chaos" of Mary's "beginning." It was the chaos with which she identified and which she repeated, forged as it was out of her own traumatic abandonment. It was the chaos from which a young girl drew as she wrote what would become an immortal novel. "I am alone, and miserable"—the words of the creature were also of course the words of his author.

Scholars have argued that the core conflict in *Frankenstein*—the creature's demands for love and Victor Frankenstein's refusal to grant it—was a stand-in for Mary's conflict with her father William Godwin, who doted on her when she was a girl, and then rejected her as an adolescent because she had become too beautiful and sexual for his comfort (Bloom, 1985; Hill-Miller, 1995). The core conflict, thus argued, was a daughter's loss of a father's love.

The argument has merit. But there was an earlier loss—a loss that Mary had chosen not to reveal.

To return to the question of Mary Shelley's deception, why did she lie? She lied because she was protecting the "beginning"—the traumatic loss of her mother, her identification with her mother, her identification with the way her mother had lived, her identification with the way her mother had loved. From this "chaos" grew "invention." From that invention grew the tale to which Mary Shelley would return and tell, as did the Ancient Mariner in the poem which Mary had first heard from Coleridge's own lips, when she was nine years old,

> Alone, alone, all all alone
> Alone on a wide wide sea!
> And Christ would take no pity on
> My soul in agony. (Coleridge, 1997)

In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud (1920) told the story of a little boy and a game. "This good little boy had a disturbing habit of taking any small objects he could get hold of and throwing them away into a corner, under the bed, and so on." The boy seemed troubled each time one of these objects would disappear. Freud was perplexed. Here was a child creating his own distress. But upon further investigation, Freud discovered that the game had a second part. "Disappearance and return. At the outset he was in a *passive* situation—he was overpowered by the experience; but, by repeating it, unpleasurable though it was, he took on an *active* part. These efforts might be put down to an instinct for mastery independent of whether the memory was pleasurable or not" (pp. 15–16). The boy had thus become the author, albeit also the victim, of his distress.

At the end of her Introduction to *Frankenstein*, Mary Shelley (1831) wrote of a time "when I was not alone, and my companion was one who, in this world, I shall never see more." She was clearly referring to her husband, Percy Bysshe Shelley, who had drowned in a boating accident shortly after *Frankenstein* was published. That loss was widely known. But Mary Shelley was also referencing another, more private loss. And that loss she chose to protect.

"But this is for myself; my readers have nothing to do with these associations" (p. xxvi).

Like Freud's little boy, like Coleridge's Ancient Mariner, Mary Shelley suffered traumatic loss. One way to gain mastery over such an event is to go back to it, "whether the memory was in itself pleasurable or not." And in going back, one repeats, refines, reshapes in order to make the event one's own. Creative action can thus lead to mastery (or near mastery), even if one is forced to internalize the trauma, and then repeat it in its new form. That the teenage Mary Shelley was able to do that, to return to such a terrifying, lonely place, and draw from that experience an iconic work of imagination is a testament to her strength, to her talent, and to the art of loss.

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Columbia University
College of Physicians and Surgeons
285 Central Park West, #1n
New York, NY 10024-3006
E-mail: rb37@columbia.edu

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