Logics of Self-Love

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Imagine imagining a monster, constructed from fragments of the dead, and devising his monstrous career of murder and arson. Imagine, then, feeling into the inner life of this creature, inventing for him a sympathetic autobiography, and demanding response to his psychic pain. It's an extraordinary conjunction of disparate emotional requirements. The disturbing effect of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* derives from just this implausible combination: Gothic evocation of conventional monstrosity and sympathetic comprehension of monstrosity's psychological roots. At the center of the narrative stands the nameless figure through whom Shelley can dramatize the tension informing the story she tells, the tension between self-love and sympathy. The dynamic of these opposed attitudes had preoccupied eighteenth-century philosophers and theologians and stimulated poets and novelists. By the narrative logic of her interlocked trio of fictional autobiographies--the stories of the sea captain and explorer Walton, the ambitious scientist Frankenstein, and the creature Frankenstein manufactures--Shelley explores the instability of any

balance between self-love and sympathy. She also demonstrates the novelist's necessary implication in the dilemma of their balancing.

I want to support these contentions by taking a close look at the language of sympathy and self-love as it figures in *Frankenstein* . I shall try to show how the novel recapitulates issues defined in the philosophic discourse of the previous century, partly by demonstrating that it concerns itself with the same moral problems that preoccupy Shelley's superficially differentnovelistic contemporary, Jane Austen. Finally, I shall suggest that Shelley's novelistic project impels her to enact the tension she represents, as she both sympathizes with and is repelled by Frankenstein and his creation. The reader, compelled to experience the same tension, partakes directly of the moral urgency it implies. To contemplate these matters, I will claim, may help define the ways that Shelley foretells the literary future even as she draws on the past.

Everyone, I assume, knows the story of *Frankenstein* . Various movie versions as well as the original novel have informed the popular imagination. Shelley's telling of the tale begins with letters from Captain Walton to his sister in England. Engaged in Arctic exploration, the captain first yearns for a friend, then finds one, when he rescues Frankenstein from a drifting ice floe. Frankenstein narrates his own life history, reporting his intense involvement in scientific investigation and his infusion of life into an eight-foot-tall being who subsequently murders Frankenstein's little brother, that brother's female caretaker, Frankenstein's best friend, and Frankenstein's bride. The creator's narrative embeds the creature's account of himself, focused on his longing for human sympathy and his experience of rejection from everyone he encounters. Ultimately Frankenstein dies, the monster shows up to mourn over his corpse, and Walton turns back from his projected exploration.

Throughout these intertwined tales, the proper relation of self to other is at issue. This relation constituted for eighteenth-century thinkers--as for Austen and Shelley--primarily a moral rather than a social or psychological question. Its perplexities might be taken to originate in the Biblical injunction to love others as oneself, a directive Christ characterizes as "like unto" the primary commandment to "love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." The precise nature of the asserted likeness and the force of the conjunction in"as thyself" provided abundant substance for speculation.

Bishop Joseph Butler, whose two sermons "Upon the Love of Our Neighbour" explore the subject thoroughly, concluded that "as" requires both "that we have the *same kind* of affection to our fellow creatures, as to ourselves" (142) and "that we love our neighbour in some certain *proportion* or other, *accordingly as* we love ourselves" (143; Butler's italics). In other words, we should love our neighbor both in the same way and to approximately the same degree (although Butler does not sound at all certain about the extent of the approximation) as we love ourselves. Butler does not specify--nor, so far as I have been able to discover, does any of his contemporaries--the exact nature of the self-love that supplies the standard.

Novelists, who could dramatize the operations of self-love, and its consequences, need not traffic in explicit definition. Preoccupation with the dynamic of self and other inheres in the nature of the novel, at least before its postmodern avatars. For Austen, explicitly concerned with the closely-observed intricacies of a social web, this preoccupation takes on vivid moral coloration. Shelley, imagining a fable less implicated in daily matters, implies comparable moral emphasis.

The monster Frankenstein creates yearns for and demands a mate. After Victor Frankenstein reveals his determination not to devise a female "daemon," the creature warns, "remember, I shall be with you on your wedding-night." Frankenstein quickly interprets the threat: "That then was the period fixed for the fulfilment of my destiny. In that hour I should die, and at once satisfy and

extinguish his malice" (163). The speaker proclaims his own fearlessness and mourns in advance his bride's grief. It does not occur to him that his "beloved Elizabeth" might supply a target for the creature's vengeance.

The kind of self-absorption Frankenstein here exemplifies often organized Jane Austen's comedy. It may seem grotesque to suggest such a comparison, so different is Austen's tone from Shelley's, but the very fact that the subject of self-love lent itself to such varied approaches indicates the range of preoccupation with its issues. In **Pride and Prejudice** , for instance, the minor figures of Mr. Collins, Lady Catherine De Bourgh, and Mrs. Bennet in all their comic stability illustrate the moral cost of devotion to self. They have in common, beyond conspicuous self-love, the consequent moral blindness that guarantees their ultimate lack of success--in the narrator's terms, in "public" terms, if not in their own. Concentration on self, Austen conveys, entails inability not only to respond adequately to others but to perceive the world.

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Connect to the Table of Contents of Pride and Prejudice [UVa users only]

So we find Mr. Collins, his proposal of marriage rejected by Elizabeth, hurt only in his pride. Self-love, which protects him from psychic injury and from awareness, makes him ridiculous. Similarly, Lady Catherine, serene in her sense of importance, will never see her daughter accurately or perceive the limits of her own power. And Mrs. Bennet, equally the center of her own universe, cannot, despite her husband's teasing, comprehend that the rest of the world does not share her preoccupation with her daughters' marital fates and her own consequent degree of significance.

To turn from Austen to Shelley entails no radical shift of preoccupation. More overtly than Marlowe, as fully perhaps as Goethe, Shelley employs her version of the Faust-myth to examine in tragic key the relation between self-love and blindness, or moral limitation. She systematically opposes Frankenstein's self-absorption to the principles of sympathy.[1] Sympathy, as described by Adam Smith, derives from imaginative participation with the feelings of others. Smith, delineating an economy of the emotions long before he turned his attention to money,offered the fullest and most dramatic eighteenth-century account of sympathy's importance and of how it works. "How selfish soever man may be supposed," he writes,

there are evidently some principles in his nature, which interest him in the fortune of others, and render their happiness necessary to him, though he derives nothing from it except the pleasure of seeing it. Of this kind is pity or compassion, the emotion which we feel for the misery of others, when we either see it, or are made to conceive it in a very lively manner. (1. 1. i; 9)

Sympathy may lead to action, the action of benevolence, but its importance derives from its existence simply as feeling. Such thinkers as Francis Hutcheson emphasized the vital coexistence with "selfish passion" of what he calls "public passion." Such passion inspires service to others: "If we have selfish Passions for our own Preservation, we have also **public Passions** , which may engage us into vigorous and laborious Services to **Offspring** , **Friends** , **Communities** , **Countries** . **Compassion** will engage us to succour the distressed, even with our private Loss or Danger" (**Essay** 55; Hutcheson's italics). But many thinkers considered the cultivation of sympathetic feelings an end in itself, quite apart from any practical consequences.

Sympathy originates in the imaginative capacity that enables an individual to put him or herself in the place of another. Women were especially urged to foster it in themselves.[2] Wetenhall Wilkes, offering advice to a "young lady" in the middle of the eighteenth century, specifies its operations:

It is a sincere Kindness and Sympathy, that disposes us to love our Neighbours as Ourselves; that is, to forward and rejoice at their Well-doing, with the same Freedom of Heart, as we would at our own; to wish, without the least Reserve, allGood to all Persons, in all their Capacities, in respect of their Souls, their Bodies, their Fortunes, or their Credit...; and to take Pleasure in all Offices of Benignity, even to the lowest of our Fellow-Creatures. (81-82)

Wishing the good of others begins the activity of sympathy, which includes emotional response to the doing of "Offices of Benignity" as well as to recognition of the need for such offices. Above all, sympathy demands imaginative scope, enlarging the radius of vision.

As narrator of his own story, Frankenstein calls attention to "sympathy" as the missing element in his experience. Unlike Captain Walton, provider of the framing narrative, he focuses entirely on his own desire for mastery in pursuing the course of unholy creation. Although Shelley assigns him an unnerving fluidity of identity, dramatized by his fragmentation into monster and man, she has him see himself as stable and unitary. Because he understands Walton as driven by desires comparable to his own, he makes the captain the auditor of his terrible story. But Walton avoids a fate like Frankenstein's by virtue of his different moral nature. Beginning with his first letter to his sister, he has stressed his yearning to achieve an "inestimable benefit which I shall confer on all mankind to the last generation" (14), by discovering a short passage to the North Pole or by elucidating the secrets of the magnet. His desire for personal accomplishment, in other words, merges with a passion to do good for "all mankind." In him, at least by assertion, self-love and social combine into a single passion, the ideal articulated by Alexander Pope, for whom in some utopian future God and Nature would bid "Self-love and Social be the same" (3: 318; 126).

Not even verbally does Victor Frankenstein manage a comparable fusion.[3] For him the relation of self to other remains in practice a murky matter, although he pays lip-service to the

desirability of keeping other people in mind. His story of himself begins by positing his parents'ideal marriage and parenthood, his own idyllic childhood. Then he reports his increasing alienation because of his obsession with forbidden knowledge. As he nears the creation of new life, he acknowledges, "I wished, as it were, to procrastinate all that related to my feelings of affection until the great object, which swallowed up every habit of my nature, should be completed" (54). Although he explains repeatedly how much he loves his relatives, his adopted "cousin" and putative fiancie Elizabeth, and his friend Clerval, he enacts, rather, his sense of alienation, isolation, and specialness.

On occasion Frankenstein claims that he has lost the right to companionship, isolated by no wish of his own. His father wishes him to seek society, but "I abhorred the face of man. Oh, not abhorred! they were my brethren, my fellow beings, and I felt attracted even to the most repulsive among them, as to creatures of an angelic nature and celestial mechanism. But I felt that I had no right to share their intercourse" (179). Declaring his "impatient thirst for sympathy" (180), he claims to have "checked" it because revelation of the truth would have horrified every hearer. But his confession of abhorrence sounds more authentic than his insistence on the angelic nature of his fellow beings, and the impatience of his "thirst for sympathy" suggests his insistence that he be taken on his own terms. The novel's language hints, here as elsewhere, a discrepancy between Frankenstein's rhetoric and his nature that stems either from lack of self-knowledge or from unwillingness (inability?) to acknowledge the paradoxes of personal instability. Frankenstein believes himself different from all others; by definition, therefore, he cannot feel sympathy, which depends on acknowledgement of common ground. An imagination steadfastly focused on the self leaves no room for other people.

A proper relation to the self depends on correct connections with others. Adam Smiththought so; so did Jane Austen. And so, I shall argue, did Mary Shelley. Austen makes the point clearly, once more in her comic mode, through Anne Elliot's relatives in *Persuasion* . Mary Musgrove and Elizabeth Elliot, Anne's sisters, and her father, Sir Walter, cannot grasp reality, not only because they don't understand themselves but also because they don't understand their links to others. Mary's hypochondria, her constant complaint, her sense of never getting her due, her belief that others enjoy greater advantages than she--these characteristics exemplify her uncomfortable sense of herself within a social universe. Never can she achieve alliance for long. Even when Anne devotes herself entirely to Mary's wellbeing, her sister expresses suspicion and misgiving about the degree of her commitment. Elizabeth and Sir Walter duplicate, less blatantly, Mary's stance of mistrust; their constant striving for social status reflects their uneasiness about their standing at any given moment. Sir Walter may comfort himself that he retains his good looks better than any other man his age, but he never can feel quite sure that others see him the same way. When Elizabeth and her father vacillate about whether to provide dinner for the Musgroves, visiting in Bath, their hesitation expresses not only their characteristic selfishness but their equally characteristic apprehensiveness. They "could not bear to have the difference of style, the reduction of servants, which a dinner must betray, witnessed by those who had been always so inferior to the Elliots of Kellynch" (219). Rampant self-love entails such insecurity as its cost. Austen stresses costs in *Persuasion* , calling attention to self-lovers' pain--although making it clear that such pain is deserved.

The pain of Mary Musgrove or Sir Walter Elliot seems negligible in comparison with Victor Frankenstein's guilt and anguish, because the Austen characters suffer in relation to trivial social concerns whereas Shelley's protagonist makes mistakes with mortal consequences. Thedynamics of pain in the two novels, however, resemble one another. In both narratives, inability to achieve social harmony signals moral failure and entails necessary suffering.

The creature Frankenstein constructs embodies in externalized form all the perplexities of self and of other. As a version of Victor's self, it condenses closely-related impulses of self-pity and aggression.[4] Creator and creature alike compare themselves to Satan (97, 132, 204, 212); the identity of allusion declares an identity of nature reiterated in the frequent imagery of parent and child. Both beings share the same acute consciousness of their own consciousness. At one point Frankenstein considers the work of his hands "nearly in the light of my own vampire, my own spirit let loose from the grave, and forced to destroy all that was dear to me" (74). The young scientist, who calls his creation a "daemon," refers to himself as "like an evil spirit" (87) and as "a restless spectre" (169), suggesting the linkage of man and monster as beings of supernatural evil, but their closer bond derives from their shared involvement with the problem of "sympathy," an aspect of consciousness presenting grave problems to both. Like Frankenstein, although perhaps with more accuracy, the "daemon" insists on his yearning for sympathy and the impossibility of his achieving it. Frankenstein describes himself as one whose "heart overflowed with kindness, and the love of virtue. I had begun life," he claims, "with benevolent intentions, and thirsted for the moment when I should put them in practice and make myself useful to my fellow beings" (87). The monster makes comparable claims in a comparable rhetoric: "No sympathy may I ever find. When I first sought it, it was the love of virtue, the feelings of happiness and affection with which my whole being overflowed, that I wished to be participated" (213). Like Frankenstein, he declares himself "miserable beyond all living things" (96). Frankenstein repeatedly asserts that he himself has murdered his brother, his friend Clerval, and the innocent Justine. He means,consciously, that he has constructed the murderer; he implies as well their profound identity of being, their identity in alienation.

From one point of view, then, the creature embodies a splitting off or projection of the creator's

dark side.[5] Yet Frankenstein in his self-love feels free to hate one whose ostensible monstrosity declares him altogether "other."[6] Eight feet tall, proportionately strong, preternaturally ugly, the creature in the perception of every seeing human being who encounters it appears as alien and fearful, definitively nonhuman. If the narrative employs explicit language of identity to delineate the relation between the experimenter and his ambiguous achievement, it seems as deliberately to emphasize the absolute *otherness* of quasi-human but not really human existence.

In the special case of Frankenstein and his monster, the boundaries between "self" and "other" prove difficult to ascertain, and so do the appropriate emotions attached to each. Both creator and created intermittently acknowledge their mutual obligation, painfully demonstrate their mutual dependence, and confess their contradictory feelings. "From you only could I hope for succour," the monster observes, "although towards you I felt no sentiment but that of hatred" (135). Frankenstein reciprocally hates the being he has made, yet knows his obligation toward his creation. When the daemon movingly expounds his efforts to find human fellowship, to express and to receive "sympathy," and the horror of his loneliness, when he claims to have learned benevolence but to have been forced into destructiveness, Frankenstein responds affirmatively though reluctantly (and temporarily) to his plea for a mate, a creature like himself with whom, as he puts it, "I can live in the interchange of those sympathies necessary for my being" (140). The monster is not a human being, but he resembles one most--resembles, in particular, an eighteenth-century human being--in his conviction that life itself depends on the exchange of sympathy.

The mutual obsession of Frankenstein and his creature, their intensifying concentration on one another, ingeniously dramatizes the destructiveness and the ambiguity of self-love, which can convert itself at any moment to a self-hatred bearing identical moral meaning. The rest of the human world vanishes from their consciousness and from their view as they penetrate Arctic wastes, locked in a pursuit in which hunted and hunter oddly and repeatedly shift roles. The monster claims that Frankenstein has deprived him of the possibility of sympathy; Frankenstein demonstrates how he has cut himself off from the same possibility, despite the number of people (most of them eventually murdered) who wish to offer it. But the two of them inevitably sympathize with one another because of their profound identity. Their mutual concentration paradoxically works like self-obsession to separate them from community. The monster's separation, originating in the mode of his creation, provides an objective correlative for Frankenstein's.

The figures in Shelley's narrative who dedicate themselves most fully to "sympathy," on the other hand, guarantee their own victimization. Self-abnegation does not supply an adequate moral alternative to self-love. Austen reveals the same view, suggesting in the character of Fanny Price (*Mansfield Park*) the possibility that self-suppression actually constitutes one of self-love's avatars.

The obvious self-lovers in *Mansfield Park* are Mary Crawford (of whom Fanny accurately observes, "She loves nobody but herself and her brother" [424]--the brother constituting her narcissistic extension) and that brother, Henry, reluctant Fanny's wooer. Both display a serene sense of entitlement, the product, as in Collins and Lady Catherine and Mrs. Bennet, of self-love, and their personalities contrast sharply with Fanny's. Mary can thoughtlessly spend a morning on horseback, depriving Fanny of necessary exercise, and then charmingly proclaim her own selfishness and demand to be forgiven, essentially because of her charm. Fanny, victim of others' selfishness, worries only lest she appear to reproach them. Mary displays her feminine accomplishments; Fanny feels embarrassed by the news that her uncle thinks her pretty. Several people, including the narrator, characterize Fanny as *modest* . If Mary Crawford embodies self-

love, surely Fanny Price represents its opposite.

In many ways, she does. Unlike Mary, who suffers only one recorded moment of hesitation (when Edmund is about to leave her forever), Fanny endures frequent, protracted, and complicated self-doubt. She considers herself to possess no claim to anyone's attention. "I can never be important to anyone," she assures Edmund, shortly after her arrival at Mansfield Park (26), and she holds fast to that conviction long after she has become, at the very least, highly useful to Mrs. Norris and to Lady Bertram and a confidante to Edmund. Indeed, that negative self-description means so much to her that she has trouble responding to her sister Susan's needs in Portsmouth.

Much is at stake for Fanny in not being important. She thinks about herself a lot--like Frankenstein, almost always in terms of self-pity. The insignificance she constantly reaffirms makes her feel sorry for herself, but it lies at the heart of her self-definition. On the evening of the ball that Sir Thomas gives for her, Fanny feels full of fears directed toward the two possibilities of "doing wrong and being looked at" (267)--possibilities that merge in her mind. Insignificance, however painful, constitutes protection. Were Fanny "important," she would have to endure others' gaze, a gaze that would surely imply as well as discover her wrongness.

Despite her unfailing service to others, Fanny focuses her own critical attention on herself. She loves the self she criticizes, though: she does not wish to change it. She doesn't want to beimportant; mere usefulness implies less risk. But like Austen's other heroines, firm in identity but capable of moral alteration, with a consciousness securely rooted, she changes, learning by slow stages to be important. The form of her self-love alters, from an emotion dedicated to preservation of a self felt to be inadequate to pleasure in a self acknowledged by others as significant. She cultivates "delicacy," capacity for fine discrimination, a kind of intelligence but also a moral trait allowing one to enter into the feelings of others. If Fanny's delicacy, frequently demonstrated, causes her to hold back when she should act (as in her reluctance to intervene with Susan), it manifests itself more often through her most attractive characteristic, her ability to feel into another person's emotional condition. When she exercises this gift for sympathy, she thinks less obsessively about herself. Learning to moderate her negative self-concentration, she comes to balance self-love with a sympathy that need not, Austen's narrative insists, imply self-abnegation. On the contrary, it functions most effectively in the context of appropriate self-love.

Shelley allows no such cheerful resolutions. The self-sacrificing characters she imagines typically die young. Frankenstein's mother nurses Elizabeth through scarlet fever at the cost of her own life. Clerval, who tends Frankenstein for many months, consistently relinquishes his own purposes in order to help another; the monster murders him. The creature's destruction of Elizabeth, whose self-sacrifice extends to her willingness to give up Frankenstein, despite her devotion, if he prefers not to marry her, long seems a foregone conclusion, despite Frankenstein's blindness to the possibility. Self-abnegating Justine is another inevitable victim.

All these self-sacrificers will no doubt find happiness in heaven, as Justine and Elizabeth suggest, but their novelistic fates appear to punish their goodness. Shelley's imagining of conscious moral agents implicitly questions the sufficiency of emotion as moral guide. Sympathy,late eighteenth-century commentators agreed, derived from emotional and imaginative capacity, without necessary control of reason. But Elizabeth and Clerval, virtuous out of apparently instinctual feeling, prove finally ineffectual, their "sympathy" achieving no lasting good. An infusion of solid reason might have helped them.

Early in the eighteenth century, certain theorists maintained that reason in fact provides the only dependable basis for moral action. In 1728, for instance, the philosopher John Balguy constructed such an argument. "The primary Dictate of **Right Reason** ," Balguy claims, "is, that every Moral

Agent **intend the Good of the Whole** , or **aim at Universal Good** " (1: 65; Balguy's italics). Little in **Frankenstein** suggests the existence of " **Right Reason** " or the certainty of reason as a moral guide. If feeling dominates the monster's most immediate victims, the pursuit of reason-- although not, certainly, "right reason"--has become a passion for Frankenstein, his own victim. Both Frankenstein's voice and the narrative action condemn this form of self-indulgence. The fundamental desire of human beings, eighteenth-century philosophers agreed, was for happiness. Neither the passion for reason nor the feeling and action of sympathy, in Shelley's novel, generate lasting happiness.

The eighteenth-century resolution to the potential conflict of reason and feeling would have posited a balanced position in which reason controlled feeling but both could flourish. A comparable balance between self-love, agreed to be the most fundamental of human emotions after the desire for life itself, and concern for others would guarantee appropriate behavior. Austen's novels, more obvious outgrowths than Shelley's of eighteenth-century thought, dramatize the achievement of such balance. Elizabeth and Darcy, for instance, in **Pride and Prejudice** , at the outset share with their comic foils characteristic manifestations of the self-love that generates self-deception. Both blind themselves with apparent determination comparable to Lady Catherine's. When Darcy rejects her as a dancing-partner and scorns her family, Elizabeth's self-esteem demands that she develop a view of him as comprehensively unattractive as his apparent view of the Bennets. After she realizes her love for Darcy, she condemns herself as "blind, partial, prejudiced, absurd" (208)--like Lady Catherine herself.

Darcy too has destroyed his capacity for vision by an exaggerated sense of his own importance. He explains his own failures of insight, in the final reconciliation with Elizabeth, quite explicitly in terms of his self-love, for which, characteristically, he blames his parents. But Austen assigns him, like Elizabeth, the crucial capacity, absent in the comic minor figures, to learn by means of sympathy. The happy lovers achieve and earn their happiness by managing to see, at least temporarily, through one another's eyes. Only thus do they develop their capacity to love beyond themselves and their families, metaphoric extensions of self.

The self-love Elizabeth and Darcy share with Mr. Collins and his ilk belongs to human nature. The differences between the self-love of one Austen character and another derive from the ways in which they control and use it. Darcy and Elizabeth alike demand of themselves--in order, partly, to justify their self-love--full awareness: of themselves, of other people, of the world around them. For this reason, they can achieve saving sympathy. Once forced to acknowledge a failure of perception, they will move to remedy it.

Moreover, their self-love--unlike, for instance, Lady Catherine's--rests on a firm foundation of justified self-respect. When Darcy scorns Elizabeth as a potential dancing partner, she knows, really knows, that she does not merit scorn. Darcy can admit his own snobbery, when challenged, partly because he understands his genuine superiority to most of those he meets. If heexercises his force to control his friend Bingley, both he and Bingley understand that his experience and intelligence equip him to interpret actuality more dependably than Bingley can.

The importance of such self-respect emerges in the novel particularly through the counter-example of Jane. Like her sister Elizabeth, the reader will doubtless admire Jane's unfailing generosity of spirit. Yet like Elizabeth too we must recognize that such generosity constitutes, among other things, an evasion of or an incapacity for moral judgment. Unwillingness or inability to evaluate others attends the inability properly to value the self. Jane's under-valuation of herself leads her passively to accept Bingley's apparent rejection and implicitly to blame herself for loving too soon. Darcy and Elizabeth have stronger spirits than Bingley and Jane. Part of their strength consists in their capacity to assess both self and others generously.

The achievement of such balance matters in Austen's world because the novels insist not only that social relations undergird self-acceptance (the point I made earlier) but, conversely, that one's relation to self provides the necessary foundation for any relation to others. In Anne Elliot, the protagonist of *Persuasion* , we find from early in the narrative proper self-love and appropriate balance between regard for self and for others. As plausibly as Fanny Price, Anne might at the outset claim the impossibility of ever being important to anyone. She is "only Anne," taken for granted and overlooked by her elder sister and her father, employed for selfish purposes by her younger sister, assumed by all except her friend Lady Russell to be automatically available for the service of others. Her self-pity does not reach the magnitude of Fanny's, but she too has her periods of melancholy self-indulgence.

In her past, though, Anne was greatly important to someone, and she regains that condition of emotional security. She inhabits a family and a social environment full of conspicuous self-lovers. Unlike them, she does not worry about status. She judges by clear moral standards, although her compassion and generosity express themselves even toward those whom she must judge negatively. Even when she despairs of Wentworth's love she does not lose self-respect. Existing in psychically reduced circumstances, she retains capacity for a rich inner life. Although she has allowed herself to be "persuaded" in the past, she trusts her own judgment--judgment based, as Wentworth comes to realize, on principle rather than whim. Moreover, like Elizabeth Bennet, although less defensively, Anne is capable of laughing at herself. Her self-awareness and self-mockery reveal her maturity, her hard-earned wisdom, her consciousness of herself as implicated in history and in society.

In the final chapters of *Persuasion* , the subject of self recurs insistently. "What wild imaginations one forms," Anne observes to Mrs. Smith, "where dear self is concerned!" (201). Self-love implies delusion, the absence--the impossibility--of clear vision. "Self will intrude," Mrs. Smith says a little later, speaking of Nurse Rooke (208). And we see the intersections of self-absorption as Anne tries in vain to achieve solitude and to transmit a message to Captain Wentworth, impeded by the fact that everyone she addresses fails to understand adequately because focused on immediate self-directed interests and concerns. Even those not especially self-loving, those like Anne herself, care, after all, most about themselves. *Persuasion* accepts that fact almost casually, with comic awareness. Elizabeth Bennet must chasten her self-love in order to achieve wisdom and maturity; Fanny Price must develop healthier forms of self-love in order to assume her place in a grown-up world; Anne Elliot is just right. She loves herself enough to fall into occasional mistakes and temporary delusions, but also enough to love others, despite their flaws. The self-love that may constitute a moral impediment can also amount to a moralachievement. And "good" and "bad" aspects of self-love coexist within the individual personality. The spirit of acceptance that dominates *Persuasion* extends even to that truth.

Thus summarized, the various progresses toward moral equilibrium within characters and between individuals and society that Austen narrates sound both easy and predictable. By her linguistic and narrative intricacies, Austen actually creates more uneasiness and ambiguity for readers and characters than my schematic account can suggest, but her comic universe indeed remains stable, like the personal identities it contains. Its moral assumptions are clear and its outcomes more or less inevitable. Although I have claimed that Shelley shares with Austen a set of moral categories derived from the eighteenth century, *Frankenstein* reveals no comparable sense of stability--and certainly no capacity for Austen's kind of casualness. The figure in the story who, like Anne Elliot, exemplifies an appropriate balance between self-love and social, feeling and reason, also calls attention to the narrative's underlying uncertainties. Captain Walton supplies the novel's narrative framework and its apparent ethical norm. His love for his sister, unlike

Frankenstein's for his father and for Elizabeth, enables him to keep her continuously in mind even as he pursues his high ambitions. Frankenstein, in the ardency of his intellectual investigations, "shunned [his] fellow-creatures as if [he] had been guilty of a crime" (55); Walton fully acknowledges his obligation to his crew even when it conflicts with his desire. He finds it "terrible" to think that he has endangered the lives of others by his expedition; he imagines "the sickening failure of [his sister's] heart-felt expectations" as "more terrible" than his own death (205). Accepting his human commitments although they entail his own bitter disappointment, he turns back from his quest, back toward England and normal life. Yet he continues to want, and to know that he wants, the accomplishment immediately denied him.

In comparison with the series of victims who unfailingly accord precedence to the demands of sympathy, never seeking their own ends; in comparison with Frankenstein as well as with his monstrous avatar, Captain Walton appears a model of sanity and complex coherence. Yet despite the fact that he tells his own story, the novel seems never fully to invest in his sanity.

In his ***Essay Concerning Human Understanding*** , John Locke several times recurs to the concept of "uneasiness," which he apparently feels no need to define:

> The uneasiness a Man finds in himself upon the absence of any thing, whose present enjoyment carries the ***Idea*** of Delight with it, is that we call ***Desire*** , which is greater or less, as that uneasiness is more or less vehement. Where by the bye it may perhaps be of some use to remark, that the chief if not only spur to humane Industry and Action is uneasiness. (230; 2.20.6; Locke's italics)

Later he reiterates the point, insisting that "it seems to me evident, that the will, or power of setting us to one action in preference to all other, is determin'd in us, by ***uneasiness*** : and whether this be not so, I desire every one to observe in himself" (256; 2.21.38; Locke's italics).

The atmosphere of moral uncertainty clinging about Walton may reflect the writer's uneasiness; it certainly generates the reader's. And, I want to argue, to good effect. Despite Walton's consistent embodiment of an appropriate balance between self-love and sympathy (on the novel's first page he declares his desire for a friend, defined as "a man who could sympathise with me" [17], as well as announces his embarcation on his own great "enterprise"), his relation to Frankenstein generates a sense of instability. He admires Frankenstein entirely too much. Immediately after Frankenstein's death, Walton speaks of "the untimely extinction of this glorious spirit" (210). A little earlier, Walton sees in Frankenstein--at this moment engaged in urging thesailors to follow the way of glory because of its dangers and terrors--"an eye...full of lofty design and heroism" (207). Although Walton himself can turn back from an enterprise because it unjustly endangers others, he admires the man incapable of such compromise.

Walton represents social man, as Anne Elliot represents social woman. He embodies an eighteenth-century moral ideal. Frankenstein is man as heroic (unsocial, antisocial) individual: man as Romantic. Frankenstein and his monster, as narrators of their own stories, make verbal claims for the value of sympathy and deplore the excesses of self-love. Walton actualizes the habits of sympathy, makes his self-love productive, and avoids its excesses. Still--he admires Frankenstein. And so, one must surmise, does Mary Shelley, or part of her.

Or should we say that Shelley ***sympathizes*** with the figure she has created, as Frankenstein created his monster? In a sense every imaginative writer plays out some version of a drama involving self-love and sympathy. To conceive a consciousness different from one's own, to feel into it, exercising the "negative capability" that Keats described, to write even a fragment of someone else's autobiography--such enterprises exemplify with special vividness the escape

from the self implicit in all imaginative writing. The kind of imagining involved in telling Walton's story, Frankenstein's, and the monster's corresponds to the acts of imagination Adam Smith describes in delineating the territory of sympathy. Sympathy means sharing feeling: the fundamental act of the writer who constructs a fictional autobiography.

Austen imagines characters dominated by self-love and unable to change without conceiving for them any equivalent of genuine consciousness. We see Mr. Collins and Sir Walter Elliot from outside, not from within, and are invited rather to judge than to sympathize (or, as we would say, empathize). Austen carefully controls her assignments of sympathy in pursuit of hermoral objectives.

Shelley's moral objectives, on the other hand, emerge most clearly by virtue of her wide distribution of sympathy. By allowing three differentiated psyches to register their individual moral, psychological, and emotional positions, she demands of her readers an ever-shifting form of responsiveness. Invited into imaginative participation with opposed consciousnesses, we may find it hard to keep our bearings. I think it significant that the version of Frankenstein's monster that inhabits popular imagination, the one derived mainly from movies, is *only* monstrous: that way he's easier to deal with.[7]

Uneasiness, Locke suggests, produces action. Uneasiness guarantees change. The uneasiness inherent in the moral instability of *Frankenstein* thrusts itself forward in history. Relying heavily on an established moral vocabulary reinforced by the narrative rhetoric of sudden death for the unselfish, inevitable, if more lingering, doom for the self-absorbed, the novel asserts its participation in the moral tradition to which Jane Austen belongs. Yet its study of psychological and moral fragmentation, of a man at once owning and disowning his dark nature, foretells the uncertainties of modernism. At once repudiated and celebrated, Frankenstein defies preexistent categories. Walton, a better man than he, holds far less power over the imagination. A new morality of the imagination struggles to be born out of a newly unsatisfactory--although not yet repudiated--morality of the feelings.

Notes

[1] David Marshall provides a searching account of Shelley's treatment of sympathy, which he understands as largely dependent on Rousseau's theories.

[2] A number of critics have analyzed approximately the same tension that concerns me, that between "self-love" and "sympathy," as a clash between the "masculine" and "feminine." See, e.g., Veeder and Scott.

[3] William Veeder maintains that Walton and Frankenstein alike "balance gender traits admirably. Their "manly" qualities--ambition, daring, scientific intelligence, physical hardihood--are tempered by a sympathetic love of neighbor which manifests itself publicly in concern for human

welfare and privately in affection for Margaret and Elizabeth" (81). Obviously, I disagree.

[4] Many critics by now have investigated the psychic identity between Frankenstein and his creation. See, for example, Kiely and Nelson.

[5] As Small puts it, Frankenstein "requires the Monster to complete him" (122). Small understands the character of Frankenstein to represent, if not Percy Shelley, "a dream of Shelley" (102).

[6] Marshall understands Frankenstein"s moral failure as implicit in his incapacity to comprehend the monster as a "fellow creature." See 198 ff.

[7] Movie versions have on occasion attempted to dramatize the monster"s claims for sympathy, but the nature of the medium works against the creation of sympathy for such a being. "Almost any visualizing of the Monster makes him the focal point and a point that is perforce primarily physical. The book may gradually present us with a fully formed human psyche whose feelings, yearnings, and logic are often more profound than those who reject its outward husk, but the stage and film must fix that outward appearance from the very start" (LaValley 249). See also Nestrick.

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