The Political Science Reviewer • Volume 46, Number 2 • 2022

To Hell with Both of You: the Dantean Roots of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*

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Introduction

Of all the fictional works dissected for political and philosophical salience,[1] Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* is among the most commonly worked over. It is obvious why: Shelley's story of Victor Frankenstein, "the modern Prometheus" who brings a being stitched from dead bodies to life only for his creation to ruin *his* life, is at once a gripping tale and layered with political questions. Some have probed the novel to discover what precisely Shelley is saying about the relationship between humans, science, and nature,[2] and countless scientists or scholars of science frame their discussions of contemporary bioethics in terms of *Frankenstein*.[3] Another account contends that Shelley's work does not evince a preference for one type of science over another, but rather it reveals how *all* science involves a sort of rationality that mediates our discussion of moral matters, a prefiguring of Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer's thesis in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.[4] In addition to being a subject of interest in science, *Frankenstein* is frequently treated within the tradition of critical theory on the subjects of gender,[5] race,[6] and disability.[7] For the most part, these "critical" approaches invert the

* My thanks to Eileen Hunt, Leah Bradshaw, Emily Boss, Torrey Shanks, Stefan Dolgert, Richard Avramenko, and the anonymous reviewers at the *Political Science Reviewer* for their comments and suggestions on various versions of this article.

common conception of who is the novel's true monster. They argue generally that Shelley was "a progressive social critic who believed that misrecognition creates monsters out of those who are negatively labeled as such," rather than the Creature himself being the monstrous one.[8] Drawing inspiration from this critical tradition but making a deontological turn, Eileen Hunt contends that *Frankenstein* contains nested thought experiments from which various "rights of the child" can be derived in light of the Creature's plight.[9] All these philosophic approaches to the ethics of *Frankenstein*, however, subsume the novel's individuals—especially Victor Frankenstein and the Creature—into abstracted matters of rights, nature, and identity.

In this essay, by contrast, I focus on what Shelley's novel indicates about us as *individuals*. I offer a new reading of *Frankenstein* that focuses on its connections with Dante's *Inferno*. Paying close attention to the presence of the cold (i.e., frigid climes) in *Frankenstein* reveals a deliberate intertextual link between the novel and *Inferno*. In *Inferno* the lowest region of Hell is not infernal at all but rather a frozen lake where the most damned of sinners are trapped in ice. The most damned, for Dante, are those who betray their own families. My main argument, then, is that by placing Victor in a frozen Hell of his own, Shelley suggests that our most egregious failures are ones of our own families. Conversely, this means Shelley simultaneously suggests that we can find ethical mooring by caring for those closest to us, especially our children—and that this may be the best place to start if we are to avoid Victor's hellish fate.

This essay has three main parts. I begin by uncovering Shelley's familiarity with Dante and the noncoincidental relationship between the cold in both *Inferno* and *Frankenstein* that reveal how Shelley places Victor in a frozen Dantean Hell. Next, I contrast my interpretation of the cold in *Frankenstein* with existing ones, showing how these efforts emphasize questions of humans and nature but fail to consider other implications of the cold's presence. Finally, I argue that my reading of Shelley's Dantean elements turns our attention in *Frankenstein* to a concept of ethical conduct

that predates Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment concerns with deontological rights and critical categories predominant in other scholarship. This commitment is to the idea that our ethical life begins with our own individual lives—and souls—and that caring for those closest to us, our families, offers a mooring amid the great complications and difficulties that characterize human life. I conclude by suggesting that my interpretation of *Frankenstein*, which focuses on Victor's personal conduct, indicates the novel can be an important pedagogical tool to balance against structure-heavy analyses of political action.

The Cold in *Frankenstein* and *Inferno*

Before beginning a detailed reading of Dante and Shelley on the cold, I want to establish a clear textual connection between *Inferno* and *Frankenstein* so that any broader links drawn between the two works cannot be dismissed as mere coincidence. Shelley wrote her book in 1816 and 1817. A list composed from her diaries has her reading the entire *Divine Comedy* (*Inferno*, *Purgatorio*, *Paradiso*) in both the original Italian and translation in 1817 and 1818 and reading *Inferno* on its own in 1818, 1819, and 1822.[10] In the text there are three explicit references to *Inferno* that make it clear that Shelley was familiar with Dante's work as she wrote.

First, when describing the visage of the Creature shortly after he comes to life, Victor alludes to Dante when searching for words to capture his horror. "A mummy again endued with animation could not be so hideous as that wretch. I had gazed on him while unfinished; he was ugly then; but when those muscles and joints were rendered capable of motion, it became a thing such as even *Dante* could not have conceived."[11] Shelley is evidently directing the reader's mind toward the damned populating *Inferno*—whom Dante generally depicts in a grotesque, horrifying manner. Second, another reference to Dante by name appears in the 1818 edition of the book. After Victor has agreed to make the Creature a companion, he says that this promise weighs on him "like *Dante's* iron cowl on the heads of the hellish hypocrites."[12] This passage alludes to Canto 23 of *Inferno*, where the hypocrites reside, their punishment

to wear garb made of lead so heavy that they can move no quicker than a crawl.

This affinity for Dante was shared by Mary's husband, Percy Bysshe Shelley, the poet, who helped edit her drafts of *Frankenstein*.[13] In one instance, Percy livened up Mary's prose by substituting her phrase for a quote from Dante, the third explicit reference to *Inferno*. In Mary's initial drafts, she has Walton describe a "summer lake." But in his edits, Percy changes this to "southern sea," an expression used by Dante in Canto 26 of *Inferno*.[14] (Percy's enthusiasm here is unsurprising, since he worked on his own translation of Dante.[15]) In the appraisal of the University of Pennsylvania's guide to the novel, "[t]his interpolation, of course, would have had to have been agreed to by Mary Shelley, presumably after some discussion of the appropriateness of the intertextual context the phrase evokes."[16] Mary Shelley's two mentions of Dante by name in the 1818 edition and Percy's addition of a Dantean turn of phrase are sufficient evidence that both were well versed in *Inferno* when *Frankenstein* was written.[17] Indeed, the University of Pennsylvania's guide describes Shelley as making "pointed and highly knowledgeable reference" to *Inferno*.[18] The presence of these allusions alone is not particularly illuminating, but it does offer proof of the possibility that Shelley also makes use of *Inferno* in a subtler way in the book, and it is this possibility with which I am most concerned. Having outlined these textual links, I now move on to looking at the treatment of the cold in *Inferno* and *Frankenstein*. For just like Dante in *Inferno*, Shelley puts Victor Frankenstein in a frozen Hell, indicating that Victor's greatest sins are—like Dante's frozen damned—the ones against his family.

Inferno

Dante's Hell is a cavernous place, and *Inferno* provides a ring-by-ring account of his descent with Virgil from a dark wood to the seat of Satan. Getting to the lowest circle, where we find the lake of ice and the betrayers of kin encased there, takes Dante almost the entirety of the thirty-four-canto poem. In the first seventeen

cantos, Dante and Virgil thrum along past sinners of a more banal variety, ones Robin Kirkpatrick describes as being guilty of crimes of "willful violence"; but deeper, in Canto 18, Dante encounters the first of those guilty of "the sins of deceit—from flattery and seduction to false science and misleading propaganda," ones "which involve the perversion of relationships."[19] *Inferno* very clearly identifies deception as an act of considerable severity; while those who practice deviant sexual practices for their own pleasure are found in Cantos 15 and 16, Dante keeps a place farther down in Canto 18 for a prostitute who fakes orgasms for her clients. Canto 26 outlines the ring where sinners turn into flames, a fate reserved for those who use their intellectual gifts destructively. "Now, more than usual, I must hold mind back, lest brain should speed where virtue does not guide,"[20] writes Dante as he approaches the suffering there. There are obvious Frankensteinian undertones to this canto, as one of the condemned, the Greek hero Odysseus (here given his Latin name, Ulysses), speaks words that could have been Victor's. "You were not made to live as mindless brutes," Ulysses recalls telling his men. "But go in search of virtue and true knowledge."[21] Robin Kirkpatrick's analysis of this canto wrestles with the fact that Ulysses is presented as a hero yet is also in Hell, and it is tempting to stop here and attempt to situate Victor Frankenstein somewhere in Canto 26 as well. Deeming Victor guilty of a misuse of intellect would be consistent with a critique of his actions, given his treatment of nature; he uses his superior scientific mind to subdue the natural world, treading in territory where "virtue does not guide." It is equally tempting to stop at Canto 29, where those guilty of counterfeiting and alchemy—the false or wicked sciences—suffer from truly grotesque diseases that render them unrecognizable. But these are still the hot parts of Hell, and Shelley does not set *Frankenstein* amid volcanoes. Only in Canto 32 does ice appear.

Transported by Hell's resident giants, Dante and Virgil are set down deep in Cocytus, the ninth and final circle of *Inferno*. "I turned . . . and now could see—around and all beneath my feet—a lake of ice that seemed far less like water than clear glass," writes

Dante of Caina, the first region of frozen Hell that is home to those who murder or otherwise betray their kin. "The Danube, even in winter Österreich, never congealed its currents to so thick a veil."[22] The punishment of those found here is to be locked in the ice with only their heads sticking out. "These shadows, fixed in ice lead-blue, to where, in shame, we start to blush, their teeth as rhythmic, bleakly, as chattering storks," says Dante in describing the scene. "And each one kept his face bent down. From mouths the cold, from hearts their miseries force a public testament of suffering."[23] The immobility of these figures encountered by Dante is their punishment, and it is striking that Dante chooses this as the specific penalty for betrayal. As Kirkpatrick writes, the frozen lake is reflective of Dante's general thesis about the nature of sin. "All sin, for Dante, is the extinction of human possibility," and it is the perversion and undermining of all those relationships "that express the participation of human beings in the flow of divine creation . . . [and] in the lowest circles of Hell it is part of the punishment that the sinners suffer that they should have no access even to the emotions that they traduced in their earthly existences: the very tears they weep freeze in their eye sockets."[24]

Dante's attitude toward those he finds in Caina is telling. Throughout the duration of his descent, he has some degree of sympathy for those he meets along the way, if not generously appraising the condemned, then at least not indicting them any further. But this changes in Caina. "Whether by intention, chance or fate (well, I don't know!) pacing among the heads, hard in the face of one, I struck my foot," writes Dante of kicking one locked in the ice.[25] When asked by another of the damned as to why he is further punishing those already suffering, Dante responds harshly, saying, "I'd have you speak no more. You're vile, you traitor. I'll augment your shame, I'll carry in your name a true report."[26] This special—even extraordinary—contempt that Dante has for the inhabitants of the frozen Hell is emphasized by Kirkpatrick. "[Dante] wanders among the frozen heads that protrude from the ice and, far from expressing the pity or curiosity that he showed in earlier sections of the poem, he represents himself as either a random, robotic agent

of pain for the sinners or else as a torturer who could be mistaken for a demon."[27] When one of these frozen heads refuses to respond to Dante's questions, Dante seizes the man by his hair and threatens to yank out tufts of it from his scalp. There is nothing the man can do to resist: all but his head is locked in ice. He betrayed his family in the mortal world, exercising his agency in a manner that perverted and destroyed his deepest relationships. As punishment, in Hell he cannot exercise any agency at all.

The state of these sinners stuck in Caina is one of utter helplessness, and Karl Ove Knausgaard identifies this helplessness as their defining characteristic. "They can't move, even the tears in their eyes are immobile, frozen. The only thing they are still able to move are their mouths. They can use them to hurl curses or express their remorse, but since they can't back up their words with their bodies, the words carry no weight, they mean nothing."[28] Knausgaard, heightening the imagery of those in the ice, compares their helplessness to that of alcoholics, writing that these figures make him "think of drunks shouting at passers-by in the street or confiding in a stranger on a park bench, for while their words may express anger, despair, joy or sincerity, they never have any consequences, they are stuck there, in their life on the streets."[29] Knausgaard makes stark the helpless situation of those who find themselves in Caina after having betrayed their familial obligations.

The objective place in which Dante the poet places this batch of sinners comports with the subjective way Dante the character treats them. The greatest sins humans can commit are ones against the family, and committing such sins is what destines one to suffer in the worst part of Hell. Next, I return to *Frankenstein*, showing how Mary Shelley places Victor in his own frozen Hell strikingly like Dante's Caina and comparing Victor's sins to what we know of those in Caina.

Frankenstein

We do not have to intuit that by *Frankenstein*'s end, Victor is in Hell: he says so himself. "I am chained in an eternal hell. . . .

From my infancy I was imbued with high hopes and a lofty ambition; but oh how I am sunk," he tells Walton just before he dies aboard Walton's ship.[30] While Victor himself does not connect his locale (the Arctic) to his condition (chained in Hell), Shelley leaves this as a subtext for the reader. The first appearance of Victor and the Creature takes place in a polar clime earlier in the novel, in the mountains above Geneva, in an encounter that already borrows from *Inferno* and prepares the reader for the closing scene when Victor's descent into Hell is permanent. Above Geneva, Victor attempts to find refuge after the murder of his brother William, for which he suspects his Creature to be responsible. Montanvert, to where Victor retreats, is truly an isolated place, rivaling the Arctic or Caina in its desolation. While Dante describes Caina as an endless frozen lake with nothing but the tops of heads visible, Shelley writes that Montanvert is a "scene terrifically desolate" and has Victor take two hours to cross a single ice field.[31] When he encounters his creation in Montanvert, Victor is overcome with rage over the murder of his brother and attempts to attack. "Come on, then, that I may extinguish the spark which I so negligently bestowed," he shouts, before jumping after the Creature.[32] But Victor's efforts to catch the Creature are fruitless, as he is simply too physically capable to be caught. Like Dante's sinners frozen in ice, Victor's intense rage is matched only by his helplessness. Among the glaciers he has no hope of doing anything at all.

At this point, Victor and the Creature negotiate a detente to their conflict. The Creature insists that he commits his crimes only for want of happiness and a companion and claims that if Victor were only to create a female like him, then he would live out the rest of his life in peace. Victor is at first persuaded by the Creature's argument, saying that "[f]or the first time, also, I felt what the duties of a creator towards his creature were, and that I ought to render him happy before I complained of his wickedness."[33] Although Victor initially commits himself to creating a companion for his creation, he becomes repulsed by the prospect and tears the half-built female to pieces as the original Creature watches through

the window. In retaliation, the Creature murders Victor's wife on their wedding night, which spurs Victor on a mission to find and kill his creation.

By this time, all the rest of Victor's life has been extinguished—literally, in that most of his family and friends have been murdered, and metaphorically too, since he is entirely consumed by the prospect of killing the Creature. Victor is despondent as he traverses the continent. "My life, as it passed thus, was indeed hateful to me," he recalls in his account to Walton.[34] All the while the Creature flits in and out of the picture, appearing only to egg on his father and to draw him further into the cold. "Follow me; I seek the everlasting ices of the north, where you will feel the misery of cold and frost, to which I am impassive,"[35] he tells Victor. As they travel farther toward the pole, Victor's suffering increases. The Creature's imperviousness to the cold offers a distinct counterpoint to Victor's vulnerability. Having never had a family in the first place, in the sense that no one ever loved or cared for him, the Creature has no family members to betray. The frozen region of Hell is simply unreachable to him. With all waters frozen, Victor has little access to food, though he manages to acquire a team of dogs to continue his chase. Even on dogsled, still unable to catch the Creature, Victor utters words of devotion that are no less fervent. "Oh! With what a burning gush did hope revisit my heart!" Victor says of the possibility of finally reaching the Creature and killing him.[36]

But these words, like those in Dante's Caina, are just that: words. For all of Victor's rage in speech, he cannot back up any of what he says with bodily action. And when he finally does come close to reaching the Creature, on top of the frozen ocean, Shelley has the frigid clime flare up and stop him: "The wind arose; the sea roared; and, as with the mighty shock of an earthquake, it split and cracked with a tremendous and overwhelming sound . . . in a few minutes a tumultuous sea rolled between me and my enemy, and I was left drifting on a scattered piece of ice that was continually lessening."[37] And it is here, upon recognizing his helplessness in light of the frozen world in which he is stuck, that Victor declares he is "chained in an eternal Hell."[38]

At first glance, Victor's use of the term "hell" might appear to be simply metaphorical—Hell as in a profoundly unpleasant place. But given that Shelley makes clear allusions to Dante's *Inferno* elsewhere in *Frankenstein*, the striking similarities between the suffering of sinners in the lowest circle of Hell in *Inferno* and Victor's own position cannot be dismissed as mere coincidence. Victor and the inhabitants of Dante's deep share, of course, the obvious fact that they are stuck in snow and ice. But more importantly, they share a deeper punishment—the complete revocation of their agency. While Dante's sinners are literally immobilized *in* ice, Victor is as good as immobilized *by* ice, since his movement in pursuit of the Creature has no more chance of success than Dante's condemned have of doing anything at all. In both works, the damned are perpetually helpless, capable of thoughts, words, and desires, but never able to act meaningfully.

That Shelley puts Victor in virtually the same situation as those at the bottom of Hell in *Inferno* suggests she believes he belongs there. In *Inferno*, only crimes of deceit and betrayal against one's own family can leave one locked in ice. If I am right that Shelley's use of Dante's lowest part of Hell for Victor indicates that Victor's crimes of deceit and betrayal against his family are his greatest failures and most responsible for how his life ends, then we should expect to see parallels between the fate of Victor and the fate of those in Caina. While we know less about the lives of the damned in Dante's frozen Hell than Victor Frankenstein's life, we know enough to see these parallels. One of those frozen in ice, for instance, is Sassolo Mascheroni, a Florentine man who killed his nephew (or his brother in different accounts) for the sake of an inheritance.[39] Mascheroni's head "so annoyingly" cramps the view of Camiscion de'Pazzi, a man stuck beside him in the ice.[40] While similarly little is known about de'Pazzi's life, we do know that he "treacherously killed his kinsman Ubertino."[41] Others guilty of killing their kin include the brothers Alessandro and Napoleone degli Alberti.[42] Because for Dante the seventh circle of Hell is devoted to violence, and for him is therefore the abode of most murderers, the relevant crime of these figures is that they betrayed their

families, not that they are murderers. Victor betrays his family by abandoning them to work alone in his laboratory, making the Creature. After his Creature comes to life—akin to a son being born—and Victor finds its appearance appalling, and he then betrays his Creature by refusing to love and care for him. His betrayal of the Creature directly leads to the deaths of his brother and wife. And then he betrays the Creature yet again by destroying the promised companion and devoting the rest of his life to finding and killing the Creature. Victor's crimes may not be precisely those of the damned in Dante's Caina, but they are well within the same category.

This section has drawn out how Shelley's use of the cold echo Dante's inner circle of Hell, a usage that indicates Victor's polar presence can be attributed to crimes that warrant damnation in Dante's Caina. The next section shows how scholars have considered the climate in *Frankenstein* only as a phenomenon detached from Victor's personal conduct, a detachment that my Dantean account of the cold challenges.

Abstracting the Cold

There have been two main interpretations of the cold in *Frankenstein*. First, scholars have suggested that Shelley uses the symbolism of conquering polar regions to mirror Victor's efforts to conquer life itself. Second, others have fit the cold into the novel's broader treatment of the climate, particularly considering Shelley wrote the book under the fallout of the volcanic eruption of Indonesia's Mount Tambor. While these interpretations offer insight into the novel, both of them treat the cold in the book through a Romantic lens—that is to say, with a focus on the relationship between humans and the natural world—a question that pervades the work of nineteenth-century Romanticism.[43] But because of this Romantic lens, scholars have not considered whether Shelley's use of the cold indicates ethical implications for Victor's treatment of the Creature, which I outlined in the previous section and to which I will return.

The north and south poles were indeed largely a mystery when Shelley wrote *Frankenstein*, evoking isolation but also wonder and

opportunity, insofar as explorers were traveling to regions previously unexplored (at least by Europeans).[44] The first of the novel's three narrators, Captain Walton, leads one such exploration in the north. Writing to his sister, Walton says that while there may be nothing but "frost and desolation" at the pole, he still envisions it as "the region of beauty and delight."[45] Walton refers to voyages that failed to reach the North Pole and writes of his intense effort to succeed where others have not. "I commenced by enduring my body to hardship. I accompanied the whale-fishers on several expeditions to the North Sea; I voluntarily endured cold, famine, thirst, and want of sleep," he writes, saying that he eschewed luxury in life for the chance at glory.[46] The point of Walton's quest is to achieve something lasting, an ambition for accomplishment and the chance to triumph over the elements. It is his ambition that scholars have focused on, his faith that the North Pole will reveal to him a "country of eternal light,"[47] visions of paradise that Rudolf Beck likens to hopes of discovering a prelapsarian place—a land before the fall. Just as Victor seeks to begin anew with the creation of life, Walton is looking for his own Eden. "Not only does [Walton] resemble Frankenstein in the single-mindedness of his boundless ambition and egotism," writes Beck, "[t]hey are both driven by the same kind of irrational prelapsarian fantasy and by the same absolutist utopian desire: to start afresh from a point in time before the Fall."[48]

While Walton's ambition plays out in the Arctic, Victor's takes place in his lab: in the section he narrates, Victor speaks to his state of mind prior to the Creature's creation. "The world was a secret I desired to divine," [49] he says, speaking admiringly of the scientific geniuses he aims to follow, who "penetrate into the recesses of nature and show how she works in her hiding places."[50] Victor tirelessly pursues scientific understanding until he succeeds "in discovering the cause of generation and life" and becomes capable of bestowing it.[51] In Jessica Richard's view, Walton's fictional aim to arrive at the North Pole and England's real-life goal to discover a Northwest Passage were as much in the pursuit of proving modern science's merits as in enhancing commerce. "With the increasing importance of empirical science, a voyage of exploration could be

warranted as a mission to verify new hypotheses as well as a venture to open new markets," she explains.[52]

The second group of interpretations of the cold in *Frankenstein* places temperature within the broader theme of climate in the novel, an understandable move considering that climate is part of the reason why Shelley wrote the novel in the first place. After arriving for a summer at Lake Geneva, Mary and Percy Shelley, and Lord Byron, were stuck inside after a volcanic eruption in Indonesia spewed ash across the atmosphere, blocking out the sun, leaving the year without a summer, and leading to widespread epidemics of typhus and cholera. The crop failures that followed led to famine in parts of Europe and Asia.[53] Indoors, the group held the ghost story competition out of which *Frankenstein* spawned. Gillen D'Arcy Wood argues that the Creature is a "psychological account of what it meant to be an environmental refugee in that period: full of fear, consumed with rage and despair, racked with hunger, empty with loneliness."[54] In essence, the message is that the unpredictability of the climate produces unpredictable climate refugees.

Whereas Wood does not consider the cold in *Frankenstein* in his climate study, Siobhan Carroll does. In contrast to present concerns about global warming, the worry in the early 1800s was that global cooling posed a threat to human life. In 1791, poet-scientist-philosopher Erasmus Darwin warned that "the increase of ice in the polar regions, by increasing the cold of our climate, adds to the bulk of the Glaciers of Italy and Switzerland,"[55] and he declared that the only "necessary war" is one waged against polar ice.[56] Speaking, like Wood, of the summer-less year of 1816, Carroll writes that contemplating climate change after the events of that annum was "to contemplate a nightmare version of cosmopolitan nature, in which the previously secure form of the domestic could be treated by a mysterious international force that seemed beyond the understanding and control of European science."[57] Carroll argues that with *Frankenstein*, Mary Shelley participated in this climate-based philosophic debate. "Influenced both by [theories of cooling earth] and by poetic visions of crusades against ice,

the most famous literary product of the 'year without a summer' hedges the question of whether humans should attempt to intervene in the global climate, positing instead that Europeans are, as yet, not ready to accept the responsibilities of global management."[58] Carroll concludes that *Frankenstein* suggests scientific interventions may be "the only productive response to global catastrophe," though she speculates that Europeans' "unwillingness to embrace the cosmopolitanism of the ecological crisis" will undermine such a response.[59]

Both approaches to interpreting the cold are sensible. Regarding the analogousness of Walton's and Victor's aims at domination, Victor even explicitly points out the similarities between himself and Walton. "You seek knowledge and wisdom, as I once did," Victor tells Walton, recognizing that reaching the North Pole is for the captain what creating life was for him.[60] Shelley was deeply immersed in travel writings during *Frankenstein*'s gestation, making the connection between scientific and geographic conquest even more persuasive.[61] And the Creature can plausibly be read as a climate refugee, with his extreme insensitivity to the cold part of Shelley's deliberately dehumanizing depiction of him in a manner lampooning the sorts of things said about refugees. This reading is consistent with other critical readings of the Creature through racial or disability lenses.

Yet common to both interpretations of the cold in *Frankenstein* (as another instance of domination of nature or an element of a broader climate concern) is that its meaning is abstracted away from the novel's individuals. In endorsing Christopher Small's claim that it is "no geographic Arctic but an Arctic of the mind,"[62] scholars overlook the fact that in *Frankenstein* the cold is a very real place—a place where Victor Frankenstein suffers and dies. By reading *Frankenstein*'s polar climes alongside Dante's account of Hell, one thinks of the polar climes as very real places, inhospitable to human life and conducive to great suffering. As noted earlier in this essay, I read the cold in *Frankenstein* alongside Dante's *Inferno*, showing how Shelley puts Victor in this frozen Hell to reveal a response to an ethical question: What is Victor's greatest

moral failing? The final section of this essay brings together my Dantean interpretation of the cold in *Frankenstein* with Shelley's treatment of the family, arguing that Shelley's use of a personal (Dantean) Hell for Victor shows how she invites us to begin our ethical considerations with attention to our ethical conduct as individuals.

Shelley's Classical Cold

Until now I have had two main arguments: First, I have shown how Shelley's treatment of the cold in *Frankenstein* mirrors Dante's use of a frozen inner ring of Hell in *Inferno*, and this suggests Victor's greatest crimes are the ones against his family. Second, I have demonstrated that existing scholarship on *Frankenstein* fails to draw any connection between the cold and Victor's treatment of his family. In this final section, I challenge those who emphasize deontology in Shelley's treatment of the family by bringing together my Dantean interpretation of *Frankenstein*'s cold and Shelley's own life, which was replete with figures betraying their own family.

Others have indeed observed how Shelley comments on the role of family—and especially children—without referring to the cold. Hunt most thoroughly derives "distinctive support for some" views on parents' obligations, such as providing love to their children or making arrangements so that other(s) may provide that love in their place, amidst other children's rights that the Creature's predicament illuminates.[63] In her second book concerning Mary Shelley, Hunt treats the Creature as an instance of "artificial" life and considers his rights ones of a genetically modified child.[64] Hunt draws up a table of "Rights and Duties of Artificial Creatures," in which creators (like Victor) are responsible for providing care and love for children, regardless of their circumstances of origin.[65] In this account, Shelley's novel shows us how Victor fails to meet his obligations to fulfill the *rights* of his son. Reading *Frankenstein* in an Enlightenment vein, as Hunt does, emphasizes the rights-based elements of Shelley's philosophic thinking. After all, Shelley was the daughter of Mary Wollstonecraft, the author of *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, and Shelley's schooling in political theories

of rights at the time means that such a reading of *Frankenstein* is valid.[66] Similarly, the Romantic readings of *Frankenstein* discussed in the previous section demonstrate Shelley's preoccupation with the questions of humans and the natural world that also consumed Percy Shelley, Lord Byron, and others at the time.

My account of *Frankenstein* alongside Dante's *Inferno*, however, provides a different ethical commentary. Dante's ethical world is one that predates Enlightenment commitments to abstract rights; figures in Dante's *Inferno* are judged lacking not because they failed to fulfill abstract deontological rights and duties but because they failed as individuals to act ethically, given their own circumstances. So, whereas in both her books Hunt focuses on how Victor fails to fulfill his duties and violates the rights of, and therefore damages, the *Creature*, I focus on what Victor's moral failings say about what he does to *himself*. This is consistent with the Catholic character of *Inferno*—in which individual souls are judged.[67] Where the Romantic reading foregrounds Shelley's take on science and humanity's relationship to nature, and the Enlightenment reading thinks of Shelley's take on rights, these tend to preclude the Dantean elements to *Frankenstein* that reveal the Classical roots of Shelley's work. As Joan Ferrante writes of Dante's ethics, "Individual morality cannot be dissociated from social responsibility" without meaning that one can be derived from the other as deontological ethics would have it.[68] This allows me to include consideration of Victor's treatment of the rest of his family. It would require an extremely capacious view of deontological duties to say that as a fiancé Victor had a moral duty to forgo laboratory work to care for his relationship with Elizabeth. Yet, my argument is that Shelley is still showing us how Victor's neglect of them was of great consequence—for Elizabeth, of course, but also for himself. This Classical account suggests that our ethical responsibility begins with a care for our own soul and that failing to care for it can result in its damnation—as so vividly depicted in *Inferno*. Such damnation is a risk not simply for men or people in positions of power but for anyone who fails to live virtuously. For Dante, Hell is an otherworldly place from which no one escapes. As Guido

da Montefeltro—one suffering in the depths of Hell—says, "If all I hear is true, there's none who ever yet, alive, escaped these deeps."[69] For Shelley, Hell is on the far reaches of this world, with Victor finding glints of it in the glaciers above Geneva and its full depths in the Arctic. For both Shelley and Dante, individuals find themselves in Hell because of their own actions. In demonstrating the suffering we invite upon ourselves by failing to take care of our soul, Shelley and Dante remind us that we do not live our lives abstractly as rights-bearers or as members of racial, gender, or other categories: we live them as individuals with souls that we must not forget.

Of course, as others have shown, Shelley was concerned with the questions of rights and social categories, and my Dantean reading of *Frankenstein* does not eliminate this fact. It does, however, suggest that care for the soul is a point of ethical mooring amid these broader questions. It also means that these other issues can lead us to losing sight of this. This is especially true given the sin for which Victor, like those in Dante's depths, is condemned to his frozen hell—the betrayal of family. Victor's preoccupation with experimental science and abstract reason made him lose sight of his family, and by extension Shelley's suggestion is that such preoccupations seriously endanger one's own. If we live as embodied individuals—not mere bearers of abstract rights—then our closest relations will always be with the parents who bear us, the siblings alongside whom we are raised, and the children whom we bear in turn. While failing to care for these relations may indeed violate certain rights and duties, more importantly these failures damage our very own being and push us toward hell—either in this world or the next. In showing us the relationship between the Creature's mistreatment and his violence, and between Victor's failures and the state of his soul, Shelley shows us the consequences when we do not regard these relationships as sacrosanct. This implies a sort of ontology of the soul—that our soul is inextricably bound in a community with others, and if we do not have the right relationships with others, we condemn ourselves.

While a focus on rights in *Frankenstein* makes sense given Shelley's epoch and lineage, by following Dante in showing how failing our families we can destroy ourselves, Shelley may also have been responding to the many figures in her life who acted with disregard for their families and seemingly felt that such disregard would have no impact upon them. These figures come from both Shelley's life and that of her mother, Mary Wollstonecraft. For example, as Hunt points out, while living in France Wollstonecraft met and fell in love with an American, Gilbert Imlay.[70] Although the two did not formally wed, they did have a child, Fanny Imlay, and lived together as if they were married. But before long Imlay abandoned Wollstonecraft and Fanny. Wollstonecraft was so distraught that she attempted suicide by throwing herself into the Thames.[71] Later, Fanny also attempted suicide; unlike her mother, she succeeded.[72] Mary Shelley never knew Gilbert Imlay, but she was certainly aware of the pain his abandonment caused her mother and half-sister. Imlay's conduct was mirrored by Mary's own husband, Percy. Percy's death in 1822 left Mary heartbroken, as she was clearly deeply in love with him. Even so, she was equally hurt by the disregard he displayed for those closest to him. Before eloping with Mary, Percy was married to—and had children with—Harriet Westbrook. Percy abandoned a pregnant Westbrook for Mary. Westbrook herself committed suicide in 1816, two years before *Frankenstein*'s publication.[73] Throughout most of his marriage to Mary, Percy was chronically unfaithful, including a likely affair with Mary's stepsister, Claire Clairmont.[74] After the death of their first child in 1815, Percy ran from the "specter" of his child, going into town with Clairmont while Mary mourned alone at home.[75] Hunt, for one, describes Shelley's "rage toward Percy's infidelities."[76]

We might accordingly understand the Dantean elements of *Frankenstein* by considering Mary Shelley's personal encounters with individuals failing to act ethically to those closest to them. Mary never met Imlay, but the novel's composition in the early years of her union with Percy may have served as a sort of warning to her husband despite her love for him, as if showing him

Victor Frankenstein's hellish, Dantean fate were telling him, "If you do not begin taking your own soul seriously, you will end up like Victor and the inhabitants of Dante's Caina." Percy was apparently unaffected by this message. In 1821, the year before Percy's death, Shelley wrote in her journal of the pain that her union with Percy had caused her: "We have now lived five years together & if all the events of the five years were blotted out I might be happy."[77] Much of this pain can be attributed to the suffering from her pregnancies and the early deaths of her children, but Percy's failings toward her and his children no doubt contributed to her misery.

Conclusion

I have argued that a Dantean reading of the cold in *Frankenstein* reveals that Mary Shelley condemns Victor Frankenstein to a frozen Hell for the betrayal of his family. Although scholars have written on the cold in the novel, they have not connected it to Victor's soul or his actions toward his family; and though work has been done on the family in *Frankenstein*, this work does not look to the cold or to the state of Victor's soul. By drawing together the insights that *Inferno* provides to *Frankenstein*, as well as bits from Shelley's own life, I have suggested that the novel offers a premodern ethical insight to readers—namely, that deception and betrayal are the greatest of sins and that of these, the betrayal of family is the greatest. By extension, this also means that *not betraying* our families, treating them with love and care, is the best place to start living an ethical life. Given the betrayals of Mary's husband, Percy, I wondered whether Victor's frozen fate was a message to the husband who had caused her so much pain. And while Mary's message to Percy was evidently too little and too late to catalyze a change in Percy's conduct, for us as contemporary readers it is not too late. What can attention to this ethical element of the Dantean strains of the cold in *Frankenstein* offer us in the twenty-first century? Perhaps the biggest one involves the simplicity of the book's ethical message, delineated in this essay, a message I would like to elaborate on with reference to *Frankenstein* as a teaching text.

In his recent survey of political studies of literature, Lee Trepanier identifies seven purposes that such studies can achieve, including the assessment of problems outside the scope of behavioralist research and test cases for theories. The final of Trepanier's points, though, is perhaps the most important and provides the reason why we should care about the other six: that literature can improve political pedagogy for students.[78] In political science classes these days, including political theory classes, political problems are most often presented in structural terms. Concerns over the environment, public health crises, racial injustice, and other social pathologies have understandably unsettled great swaths of us, and scholars tend to diagnose systemic causes for these pathologies, requiring systemic solutions.[79]

However accurate these structural diagnoses may be, they often have the corresponding effect of suggesting to our students that meaningful ethical action must be oriented toward these systemic problems (and their structural solutions). And since one person cannot individually change the systemic problems of climate change, poverty, sexual violence, and more, individual action alone appears insufficient unless it is subordinated to principles of structural change. Psychologists have coined terms for the effects of these concerns of helplessness, such as "climate grief."[80] No wonder the American Psychological Association continues to release reports about Generation Z's sense of helplessness.[81] There are big problems in *Frankenstein*, from the climate to violence against women. But Shelley's ethical signals of the polar climes pushes us away from despairing over the scale of these problems.

Crucially, the message is not one of "self-help." Neither Shelley's nor Dante's work encourages anyone to "take some time to focus on you," as some recent commentators who diagnose a "culture of narcissism" might worry.[82] If anything, the message is the exact opposite of endorsing a narcissistic impulse. I have suggested that Victor's crime is precisely that impulse—of pursuing his own ambition and desires at the expense of his family. In abandoning his fiancée for his laboratory and his Creature because it is ugly, Victor shows is that he is *already* narcissistic. Indeed, the

neglect of familial relations by figures in Shelley's own life, including Gilbert Imlay and Percy Shelley, underlines this fact. As brilliant and charming as Percy no doubt was, Mary's "rage" at him was surely a product of Percy's own narcissism, an attribute long diagnosed in the scholarship.[83] The critical element of *Frankenstein*'s ethical message is not a turn to "self-care" but a "care for the soul." Since Victor's soul is most damaged by his neglect of his family, as argued in this essay, caring for the soul best begins by avoiding this sort of neglect. Caring for those closest to you means rejecting the core claim of a culture of narcissism—that one should stop doing things for others and start doing them for oneself—and committing to the idea that caring for family *is* caring for oneself.

Further, it does not mean a retreat from politics into a sort of solipsism. There are clearly large-scale political questions at play in *Frankenstein* that emphasize how our personal conduct has consequences for the political community. The same is true for Dante's *Inferno*. After all, the treatment of betrayers of familial kin in Caina blends into the treatment of betrayers to the political community. Obviously, Dante writes about a time when political entities were intertwined with familial relations in a way that is no longer the case (at least in the West), but the point about how we treat those with whom we share a community still holds.

Shelley and Dante return our focus to a problem of a more manageable scale: ourselves and those closest to us. In overemphasizing structural problems and solutions, political scientists often forget about this scale, both in our own work and when teaching students. We contribute to feelings of hopelessness or the insignificance of individual action. The result of such hopelessness, for many, is a sort of resigned apathy, a feeling that the actions of no single individual are significant relative to the great scale of these problems, and it is this apathy that seems to affect young people—who are our students—most of all.[84]

Studying *Frankenstein* closely, as I have shown, counsels us away from such hopelessness, and this is yet another reason why we should teach this novel to our students. While it is a novel that should open conversations about those great structural concerns,

this work reveals another message to us: we have power over our own souls, and we have the power to put ourselves in, or keep ourselves from, the frozen Hell where Victor along with Caina's residents end up. We can start by recognizing that our own souls are inextricably bound up with the souls of those closest to us—our families. If this power often appears small to us, particularly in present times, Shelley shows that it should not. For it may be the greatest power we will ever have.

Notes

1. For but a few examples of political theorists studying literature, see the following: Allan Bloom, "Cosmopolitan Man and the Political Community: An Interpretation of Othello," *American Political Science Review* 54, no. 1 (1960): 130–57; Allan Bloom, "Political Science and Poetry," *American Political Science Review* 54, no. 2 (1960): 457–64; Martha Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990); Catherine Zuckert, "On Reading Classic American Novelists as Political Thinkers," *Journal of Politics* 43, no. 3 (1981): 683–706; Catherine Zuckert, *Natural Right and the American Imagination: Political Philosophy in Novel Form* (Savage, MD: Roman & Littlefield, 1990); Alasdair MacIntyre, *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity: An Essay on Desire, Practical Reasoning, and Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Susan McWilliams Barndt, *The American Road Trip and American Political Thought* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2018); Lee Trepanier, "What Can Political Science Learn from Literature?," *The Political Science Reviewer* 44, no. 1 (2020): 1–19.
2. Peter Vernon, "Frankenstein: Science and Electricity," *Études Anglaises* 50, no. 3 (1997): 270–83; Ann Mellor, "Frankenstein: A Feminist Critique of Science," in *One Culture: Essays in Science and Literature*, ed. George Levine and Alan Rauch (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2008), 287–312.
3. To name just a few: Lawrence Leung, "Perfused Human Organs versus Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*," *Journal of Translational Medicine* 7, no. 1 (2009): 9; Steven Doherty, "The 'Medicine' of Shelley and Frankenstein," *Emergency Medicine* 15 (2003): 389–91; Michael Mulkay, "Frankenstein and the Debate over Embryo Research," *Science, Technology, and Human Values* 21, no. 2 (1996): 157–76; Patrick Guinan, "Bioterrorism,

Embryonic Stem Cells, and Frankenstein," *Journal of Religion and Health* 8, no. 2 (2002): 305–9.

4. Sid Simpson, "Frankenstein, the Frankfurt School, and the Domination of Nature," *Philosophy & Literature* 45, no. 2 (2021): 416–34.
5. Matt Lorenz, "'A Thousand Minute Circumstances': *Frankenstein*, *Westworld*, and Feminist Revolution," *European Romantic Review* 32, no. 3 (2021): 355–76; Cynthia Pon, "'Passages' in Mary Shelley's 'Frankenstein': Toward a Feminist Figure of Humanity?," *Modern Language Studies* 30, no. 2 (2000): 33–50; Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, "Horror's Twin: Mary Shelley's Monstrous Eve," in *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1979), 213–47; Ellen Moers, "Female Gothic: The Monster's Mother," in *Literary Women: The Great Writers* (New York: Doubleday, 1976), 90–98.
6. Elizabeth Young, *Black Frankenstein: The Making of an American Metaphor* (New York: NYU Press, 2008).
7. Amber Knight, "Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Disability, and the Injustice of Misrecognition," *Disabilities Studies Quarterly* 40, no. 4 (2020); Martha Stoddard Holmes, "Born This Way: Reading Frankenstein with Disability," *Literature and Medicine* 36, no. 2 (2018): 372–87.
8. Knight, "Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Disability, and the Injustice of Misrecognition."
9. Eileen Hunt Botting, *Mary Shelley and the Rights of the Child: Political Philosophy in "Frankenstein"* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018). Hunt also uses *Frankenstein* as a departure point for her book on the rights of artificial creations. See Eileen Hunt Botting, *Artificial Life after Frankenstein* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2021).
10. "Mary Shelley's Reading: Alphabetical List" (University of Maryland), accessed August 10, 2021, https://www.rc.umd.edu/editions/frankenstein/MShelley/readalph.
11. Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* (London: Signet Classics, 2000), 43. Emphasis mine.
12. Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*, ed. Stuart Curran, Pennsylvania Electronic Edition, Vol II, Chap. IX., accessed August 24, 2022, http://knarf.english.upenn.edu/V3notes/smooth.html. Emphasis mine.
13. Admiration for Dante was universal among the Lake Geneva group. In 1819, the year after Frankenstein appeared, Lord Byron wrote his poem "The Prophecy of Dante." Byron was certainly familiar with Dante long

before the summer spent with Mary and Percy—his earliest mention of Dante is in an 1806 letter, though scholars expect he knew the Italian even earlier. See Beverly Taylor, "Byron's Use of Dante in 'The Prophecy of Dante,'" Keats–Shelley Journal 28 (1979): 102–19.

14. Shelley, *Frankenstein*.
15. Timothy Webb, *The Violet in the Crucible: Shelley and Translation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).
16. Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein, or, The Modern Prometheus*, ed. Stuart Curran, Pennsylvania Electronic Edition, accessed April 28, 2022, http://knarf.english.upenn.edu/V3notes/smooth.html.
17. Shelley's engagement with Dante continued after the completion of *Frankenstein*. In 1819 and 1820, she wrote the novella *Mathilda*, which lay unpublished until 1959 and which also contains clear references to *Inferno*. See William Keach, "The Shelleys and Dante's *Matilda*," in *Dante's Modern Afterlife: Reception and Response from Blake to Heaney*, ed. Nick Havely (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 1998), 60–70.
18. Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*, ed. Stuart Curran, Pennsylvania Electronic Edition, accessed April 28, 2022, http://knarf.english.upenn.edu/People/dante.html.
19. Robin Kirkpatrick, *Inferno: Commentaries and Notes* (New York: Penguin Classics, 2006), 379–82.
20. Dante, *Inferno*, trans. Robin Kirkpatrick (New York: Penguin Classics, 2006), Canto 26, 21–22.
21. Dante, Canto 26, 119–20.
22. Dante, Canto 32, 21–27.
23. Dante, Canto 32, 33–39.
24. Kirkpatrick, *Inferno: Commentaries and Notes*, 438.
25. Dante, *Inferno*, Canto 32, 76–78.
26. Dante, Canto 32, 108–11.
27. Kirkpatrick, *Inferno: Commentaries and Notes*, 439.
28. Karl Ove Knausgaard, *Winter* (London: Random House, 2017), 130.
29. Knausgaard, 130.
30. Shelley, *Frankenstein*, 188.
31. Shelley, 79.
32. Shelley, 81.
33. Shelley, 83.
34. Shelley, 181.
35. Shelley, 182.
36. Shelley, 184.

37. Shelley, 185.
38. Shelley, 188.
39. Paget Jackson Toynbee, *A Dictionary of Proper Names and Notable Matters in the Works of Dante* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 374.
40. Dante, *Inferno*, Canto 32, 63–64.
41. Toynbee, *A Dictionary of Proper Names and Notable Matters in the Works of Dante*, 112.
42. Toynbee, 19.
43. See, for instance, William S. Davis, *Romanticism, Hellenism, and the Philosophy of Nature* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2018).
44. The Antarctic became a symbolic semi-trope in Gothic literature, for similar reasons to the ones Rudolf Beck describes. As William Lenz writes, "The Antarctic, like the Gothic mode itself, is a doorway to the deepest regions of our primitive imagination, a technique and a destination that heighten metaphysical uncertainties and make them immediately available." See William E. Lenz, "Poe's 'Arthur Gordon Pym' and the Narrative Techniques of Antarctic Gothic," CEA Critic 53, no. 3 (1991): 37.
45. Shelley, *Frankenstein*, 1.
46. Shelley, 3.
47. Shelley, 1.
48. Rudolf Beck, "The Region of Beauty and Delight: Walton's Polar Fantasies in 'Frankenstein,'" *Keats–Shelley Journal* 49 (2000): 28.
49. Shelley, *Frankenstein*, 22.
50. Shelley, 33.
51. Shelley, 37.
52. Jessica Richard, "'A Paradise of My Own Creation': Frankenstein and the Improbable Romance of Polar Exploration," *Nineteenth-Century Contexts* 25, no. 4 (2003): 298.
53. Hunt Botting, *Artificial Life after Frankenstein*, 47.
54. Gillen D'Arcy Wood, "Frankenstein, the Baroness, and the Climate Refugees of 1816," *The Wordsworth Circle* 48, no. 1 (2017): 3.
55. Erasmus Darwin, "The Economy of Vegetation," in *The Botanic Garden* (London: J. Johnson, 1791), 70.
56. Siobhan Carroll, "Crusades against Frost: *Frankenstein*, Polar Ice, and Climate Change in 1818," *European Romantic Review* 24, no. 2 (2013): 214.
57. Carroll, 216.
58. Carroll, 220.

59. Carroll, 211.
60. Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*, Webster's Thesaurus Edition (San Diego, CA: Icon Classics, 2006), 18.
61. Richard, "'A Paradise of My Own Creation,'" 296.
62. Christopher Small, *Ariel like a Harpy: Shelley, Mary, and "Frankenstein"* (London: Gollancz, 1972), 43.
63. Hunt Botting, *Mary Shelley and the Rights of the Child*, 15.
64. Hunt Botting, *Artificial Life after Frankenstein*, 103–7. I put "artificial" in quotation marks because, for Hunt, the natural/artificial distinction is not a hard one—in the coda to this book she has a section entitled "We Are All Artificial Creatures" (183).
65. Hunt Botting, 191.
66. Hunt Botting, *Mary Shelley and the Rights of the Child*, 4.
67. It is certainly true that Shelley was often openly hostile to Catholicism, as many members of the English intelligentsia were at the time. But, as Michael Schiefelbein shows, Shelley was both familiar with and took inspiration from Dante's Catholic work. Schiefelbein argues that despite her hostility, Shelley found great value in Catholic art, particularly Dante. He quotes from her Rambles in Italy and Germany, in which she refers to Dante's Paradise as one of the "sublimest achievements of Catholicism." Schiefelbein specifically analyzes Shelley's "tribute" to Catholicism in her novel Valperga. See Michael Schiefelbein, "'The Lessons of True Religion': Mary Shelley's Tribute to Catholicism in 'Valperga,'" Religion and Literature 30, no. 2 (1998): 59–79.
68. Joan Ferrante, *The Political Vision of the "Divine Comedy"* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 136.
69. Dante, *Inferno*, Canto 27, 64–66.
70. In *Artificial Life after Frankenstein*, Hunt draws convincing connections between Shelley's personal life and her fiction, especially her novel *The Last Man*. See Hunt Botting, *Artificial Life after Frankenstein*, 48–51.
71. Eileen Hunt Botting, *Portraits of Wollstonecraft: Literary Depictions and Global Feminisms, 1801–2017*, vol. 2 (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021), 172–74.
72. B. R. Pollin, "Fanny Godwin's Suicide Re-examined," *Études Anglaises* 18, no. 3 (1965): 258–68.
73. James Bieri, *Percy Bysshe Shelley: A Biography* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 360–69.
74. Benita Eisler, *Byron: Child of Passion, Fool of Fame* (New York: Knopf, 1999), 516.
75. Hunt Botting, *Mary Shelley and the Rights of the Child*, 30.

76. Hunt Botting, *Artificial Life after Frankenstein*, 136.
77. Quoted in Hunt Botting, *Artificial Life after Frankenstein*, 45.
78. Trepanier, "What Can Political Science Learn from Literature?," 11.
79. For instance, "Communities in Action: Pathways to Health Equity" (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2017), accessed August 24, 2022, https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK425845/.
80. "Mental Health and Our Changing Climate: Impacts, Implications, and Guidance" (American Psychological Association, 2017), accessed August 24, 2022, https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2017/03/mental-health-climate.pdf.
81. "Stress in America: Generation Z" (American Psychological Association, 2018), accessed August 24, 2022, https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/stress/2018/stress-gen-z.pdf.
82. The seminal book with this assessment is Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1979).
83. For a few sources, see the following: Herbert Read, *The True Voice of Feeling: Studies in English Romantic Poetry* (London: Faber and Faber, 1953), 257–59; Thomas R. Frosch, *Shelley and the Romantic Imagination: A Psychological Study* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2007), 70–76; Anne K. Mellor, "On Romanticism and Feminism," in *Romanticism and Feminism*, ed. Mellor (Bloomington: Indiana University. Press, 1988), 8; Barbara A. Schapiro, *The Romantic Mother: Narcissistic Patterns in Romantic* Poetry (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), 1–32. These citations helpfully come from Alexander Freer, "A Genealogy of Narcissism: Percy Shelley's Self-Love," *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 74, no. 1 (2019): 1–2.
84. Liza Featherstone, "How to Live in a Burning World without Losing Your Mind," *The New Republic*, July 22, 2021, https://newrepublic.com/article/163021/climate-change-grief.