The Ghost of a Self: 
Female Identity in Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein

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“We will each write a ghost story,” said Lord Byron (Shelley ix). And Mary Shelley wrote Frankenstein (1818). But the novel is so apparently about a monster that runs amuck, that it is appropriate to ask exactly what Shelley meant when she insisted that she was writing a ghost story. The subject of ghosts was one Mary Shelley would consider again between the first and second edition of Frankenstein in an 1824 essay appropriately titled “On Ghosts.” Here Mary Shelley bemoans the fact that the age during which she writes has so bound and “weighed and measured” imagination that it has pushed back, if not eliminated the feeling and the glory, the dreams and the mysteries that are best bodied forth in the belief in ghosts. Admitting that “for my own part I never saw a ghost except once in a dream,” she insists on her feelings that “There is something beyond us of which we are ignorant,” and she declares her “belief that influences do exist to watch and guard us, though they be impalpable to the coarser faculties.” Then in an interesting move to validate these feelings and beliefs Mary Shelley recounts two ghost sightings, one by her friend Thomas Jefferson Hogg, the other by an acquaintance Angelo Mengaldo. Apprehensive that her gender may undercut her testimony to that spirituality which has been devalued by the empire of empiricists, Mary Shelley underplays her experience even as she appropriates the men’s stories to substantiate her point about the reality of ghosts: “Such are my two [ghost stories], and I record them the more willingly, since they occurred to men, and to individuals distinguished the one for courage and the other for sagacity” (Shelley Reader 336, 339).

This instance of retiring, if not absenting the self, so that others, especially men, are left upstage to play out the drama of ideas, beliefs, and identities constitutes a species of specterizing that is also predominant in Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein. For in this novel where narcissistic males like Walton and Victor tend to be the scientists, the doers, the literalizers who dominate the story, the selfless, ethereal and

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unscientific women in the novel are practically transparent if not invisible. Like ghosts, the females in the novel are quintessentially ambiguous figures: present but absent, morally animate angels, but physically and politically inanimate mortals. Indeed, *Frankenstein*, I would argue, is a complex ghost story, the specters of which are the female characters whose spiritual and often passive role in the novel is such that the women are suspended in a shadow realm of powerlessness and potential power that ultimately skew their identity.

In what is then one of the earliest nineteenth-century ghost stories by a woman, the inklings of a ghoulish passivity first evinces itself in the author’s introduction to the 1831 edition of the novel where Mary Shelley’s response to the question of “how I, then a young girl, came to think of and to dilate upon so very hideous and idea” (5), reads like an apology or a series of self-effacing comments. Eschewing any accusation of “personal intrusion,” she presents herself as a retiring soul, “very adverse to bringing myself forward in print.” Reared in the country, unexposed to either the worldly or to the “picturesque,” Mary Shelley avows that she “did not make myself the heroine of my tales. Life appeared to me too common-place and affair as regarded myself. I would not figure to myself that romantic woes or wonderful events would ever by my lot.” Her escape from the passivity, inactivity, and “the cares of a family,” of such a life, comes through the fictional creation of other wraith-like identities: “I was not confined to my own identity, and I could people the hours with creations far more interesting to me at that age than my own sensation” (vii, viii). Here Mary Shelley suggests that while such massive identities as those Byron and Percy Shelley can boast are apparently desirable, her socially constructed identity as a young retiring girl to a certainty proves confining, that her ability to get beyond her feminine identity frees her up to create identities and sensations “far more interesting” than those reality affords her. Interestingly enough, by passing out of her own identity into that of imaginary others, Mary Shelley was able to explore safely the implications of what it meant to be essentially silent, the ghost of a self.

The “devout but nearly silent listener” to the “conversations between Lord Byron and [Percy] Shelley” is herself aware of the passive way in which she undertakes the competition between Byron, Shelley, Polidori and herself to write the best ghost story. The men immediately set about their stories, and as “speedily relinquished their uncongenial task” (ix, x), but Mary Shelley apparently found the task of writing a ghost story more congenial. U.C. Knoepflmacher would perhaps argue
that the task was more necessary, since the ghost story “so casually touched upon” by the men “was integral to a private fantasy” Mary Shelley had about her parents. In the introduction to the novel, Shelley explains how she did not straight-away put pen to paper, but “busied myself to think of a story” (ix). Her much more thoughtful approach to the ghost story is suggestive not only of a patience and deliberation attendant upon the life of a young woman accustomed to waiting upon the realities of a husband and children, of a young woman accustomed to being a “devout but nearly silent listener,” but also of a woman who, with a life appearing commonplace when compared to those of the “hyperintelectual men” (Scott 174) in her life, has yearned for and would relish something more “fantastic and agreeable” (Shelley vii) and so directed her energies inward. The ghost story whose “platitudes of Prose” had “annoyed” Byron and Shelley, apparently appealed to Mary Shelley as it combined the tame and prosaic tone of her comparatively humdrum reality with a mysteriously poetic longing of her waking dreams. In any event she set about conjuring a ghost story that would quicken not so much thoughts as pulses, not reason but feeling: “One which would speak to the mysterious fears of our nature and awaken thrilling horror—one to make the reader dread to look around, to curdle the blood, and quicken the beatings of the heart. If I did not accomplish these things, my ghost story would be unworthy of its name” (ix).

After a long period of gestation, during which Mary Shelley is each morning asked, “Have you thought of a story?” Mary Shelley finally “announced that I had thought of a story” (x, xi). In fact, the story had visited her in a waking or what Gilbert and Gubar would call a “Keatsian (or Coleridgean)” dream (222), the terror of which was so strong that she was driven back to the world of realities out of which she often in her creations escaped: “The idea so possessed my mind that a thrill of fear ran through me, and I wished to exchange the ghostly image of my fancy for the realities around.” Having slowly, one may say passively, thought this story into being—she does not reason her way into the story, it comes as part of a dream, as part of her feeling unconscious expressive self—Shelley then recognizes how sympathy is needed to send forth her “hideous progeny”: she must write so as to “frighten my reader as I myself had been frightened that night” (xi, xii).

By “hideous progeny” Mary means most obviously her book. Readers and critics have more specifically identified the hideous progeny capable of inciting such fear in the writer and reader as the energetic and resourceful monster, a Blakean specter of Victor himself.
They have not so readily or easily identified the other horrific children who evoke a more insidious terror in Shelley's novel. I refer to ladies so apparently devoid of impurity, flaw, and will, that they hardly seem important or visible. In Frankenstein, Mary Shelley has assimilated the vision of her mother who in The Wrongs of Women (1798) compares Gothic horrors to the tormented mental life of cloistered women: "spectres and chimeras" are at best metaphors that can express "the wrongs of women." In Shelley's novel, while the monster is a vehicle for such expression, an even more poignant and ghoulish representation and hideous expression of the wrongs of women is the female herself so materially and politically erased in the text that she is invisible, if not nullified: if the monster is physically abhorrent, the women are more psychologically so.

In sending forth her hideous progeny—monster and women—Mary Shelley has, however, by the end of the introduction qualified the passivity she reveals in the opening lines. The story has been an act of creation that has not vanished like a dream but materialized in print. She is no longer the devout but nearly silent listener. Having in Frankenstein worked through and used her own seemingly common and prosaic life and sensations to create and explore in her female characters the wraith-like existence she had experienced, Mary Shelley steps forward in her introduction and identifies herself. Some 13 years after the publication of Frankenstein and nearly nine years after the death of Percy Shelley, in the 1831 introduction to her novel Mary Shelley strongly lays claim to her progeny and to her voice and to her power. She, not her husband, owns the text: "I certainly did not owe the suggestion of one incident, nor scarcely of one train of feeling, to my husband" (xi). As Knoepflmacher remarks, "she stresses her originality with unaccustomed forcefulness (99). She has been the successful creator "of a story to rival those which had excited us to those tasks" (ix), and, as at least one critic has remarked, she has won the competition between herself and three male writers.

Like Mary Shelley, who at least in the opening passages of the introduction, speaks, according to Barbara Johnson, "as an appendage to a text" (147), the female characters in Frankenstein tend to be so meek and withdrawn as to appear superfluous and accessory, if indeed not absent. U.C. Knoepflmacher writes that they are passive unto death (108). This bizarre passivity helps make them the ghosts in what Mary Shelley herself called "my ghost story"; however, as spectral and overshadowed by the men as these women seem, they nevertheless have
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da distinct presence in the novel that belies their apparent insignificance. Just as the introduction to *Frankenstein* presents at the start a Mary Shelley who is a devout, but nearly silent listener, the opening pages of the novel presents in Margaret Saville a silent but devout reader signalling that women in the novel will for the most part be the listeners to and readers of, not the subjects and agents of stories. Physically the most absent, yet textually the most regnant agent is the Artic-bound Robert Walton’s “dear, excellent Margaret” (17), Mrs. Saville. She is the apparition-like figure that presides over “an enterprise” she has “regarded with such evil foreboding” (15). Walton reports on the progress of this voyage, reveals the several stories of his crewmen, argues and pleads his cause (“And now dear Margaret, do I not deserve...[17]; “you cannot contest...[16]), and confesses himself before her benevolence (“You will smile at my allusion [to the Ancient Mariner], but I will disclose a secret” [20]). Saville exists for the reader beyond Walton as some faceless, incorporeal other who serves as a high tribunal. Though she is forever silent in the text and Walton never receives a letter from his “dear sister” (15), the England-bound Margaret has finally a presence as pervasive and substantial as a ghost’s. She lives through Walton who raises her again and again in the letters he indites to her, in the incantation of her name (“dear sister, dear Margaret”). She, moreover, lives in Walton himself who has spent the best years of his solitary youth “under [Margaret’s] gentle and feminine fosterage” which has so refined the groundwork of my character” (19).

Indeed Margaret becomes the keeper, albeit a spectral keeper for whom Robert unwittingly longs when he writes: “It is true that I have thought more and that my daydreams are more extended and magnificent, but they want (as the painters call it) keeping; and I greatly need a friend who would have sense enough not to despise me as a romantic, and affection enough for me to endeavour to regulate my mind” (19). In the painter’s definition of “keeping” is the idea of maintaining a harmony of the proper relations between nearer and more distant parts, thus seeing. This artistic expression humanistically translates into vision and sympathy, into the fostering of harmony and understanding and fairness in one’s self and in one’s relationships to others. Though, as Veeder has rightly recognized, the keeper for whom Robert consciously searches is a man (87-88), the text makes Margaret the silent guardian of Robert’s dreams and aspirations. He shares these with her in his letters, and she in her silence and benevolence has “sense enough” in spite of her “evil forebodings” (15) about his voyage, not to
despise him as a romantic,” but “to smile” at his Romantic notions (20). Margaret also regulates Robert’s mind by indirection. His letters to her afford him the chance to reason through complications of his voyage as in the instance where he must decide whether it is or is not in the best interest of his crew to turn back from the Arctic expedition. Margaret is not only her brother’s keeper, she ultimately keeps the text itself: as the designated recipient of her brother’s writings, she will ultimately hold Robert’s letters which contain Victor’s story which contains the monster’s story which includes the story of the DeLacy’s. Mellor comments that “In a patriarchal culture which assigns linguistic and social authority to men, the act of a woman’s speaking in public is a trespass on male domain” (56). Margaret Saville’s ghostly appropriation of the text subverts that patriarchal authority just as Mary Shelley does when she declares that it is she and not Percy Shelley who owns Frankenstein. Of course, unlike Mary Shelley who finally in 1831 broke her silence about her regulation of the Frankenstein text, Margaret Saville, the unseen presence of the novel can never so stake her claim.

Hovering, then, just outside the text, Saville reigns over the texts of men who are so “omnipresent” that they eclipse the female characters. For, at best, Caroline Beaufort, Justine, and Elizabeth Lavenza are more shadowy figures than Margaret Saville. Beggared and orphaned, Caroline Beaufort, Victor’s mother and Elizabeth Lavenza, Victor’s adopted “more than sister” are worshiped, revered for their virtues, sheltered as fair exotics or garden roses. While Caroline Beaufort acts like a “guardian angel,” Elizabeth with her “saintly soul” and her “living spirit of love to soften and attract” is pictured as a “cherub—a creature who seemed to shed radiance from her looks and whose form and motions were lighter than the chamois of the hills.” The presence of this “apparition,” as Victor calls Elizabeth, seems to shed a blessing on the Franksteins who providentially “afford her...powerful protection when she becomes “the inmate of my parent’s house,” “a pretty present...for Victor,” “a possession of my own” (32, 33, 34, 35, 37). While these beautiful, dignified, and ethereal women float around the Frankenstein household softening and attracting, the men are governing the state, attending the universities, building in the laboratories monsters that end up murdering the innocent and unsuspecting women and children, and destroying the domestic circle. As Judith Weissman puts it, “Men make revolutionary mischief, and women stand guard—pitiful, helpless, and saintly—over the family” (123).
Both in the private space of the home and in the public space of the courtroom, women’s identities are constructed in the same way: devout, but nearly silent listeners, their passivity, their nurturing, their soft and muted tones simultaneously undermine the concreteness of their identities rendering them materially, politically, and socially less potent even as their angelic qualities enhance their potential for domestic and spiritual power. The characterization of Justine Moritz is representative of the condition of the Frankensteinian women. Her position as an innocent, sensitive, beautiful, beloved and loving servant who is unjustly executed for the murder of little William Frankenstein capsulizes and punctuates the condition and fate of Caroline and Elizabeth who nurture and love unto death. Nursing Elizabeth, Caroline contracts scarlet fever and dies; having married Frankenstein, Elizabeth is killed on her wedding night when the monster decides to destroy the thing dearest to Victor. Indeed the women in Victor’s life may all be collapsed into one, so similar and interconnected are they. Thus, Elizabeth’s belief in Justine’s innocence is a belief in her own self: “I rely on her innocence as certainly as I do upon my own” (77). And time and again Justine is depicted as the avatar of Victor’s mother, Caroline Beaufort. Elizabeth writes to Victor, “She [Justine] thought her [Caroline] the model of all excellence and endeavored to imitate her phraseology and manner, so that even now she often reminds me of her” and “She is very clever and gentle and extremely pretty; as I mentioned before, her mien and her expressions continually remind one of my dear aunt” (64). Elizabeth may just as well be describing her own resemblance in “mien and expression” to her mother-aunt. Certainly on at least one notorious occasion Victor dreams and melds the characters of Caroline and Elizabeth. Since the women in the Frankensteinian household are not, to borrow Catherine Belsey’s phrasing, “unique, distinguishable, irreplaceable identities,” they are ghosts, absent in their presence.

Caroline, Justine, and Elizabeth are all ultimately powerless outsiders made more crushingly powerless by their angelicalness. “Cut from the same cloth” and needing “the same protection,” the Frankensteinian women are not merely, as Weissman says of all the women in the novel, “the forerunners of the angels who inhabit the houses of Victorian fiction” (134, 135). They are more tellingly the progenitors of ghosts who will haunt the supernatural tales of later nineteenth-century women writers. In their paleness, suffering, spirituality, their comparative powerlessness and inactivity, these female figures (who seem to shade off into one) acquire a spectral presence
Mary Shelley ultimately treats with some ambivalence. For, as Mary Jacobus remarks of the women in the novel, "At best, women are the bearers of a traditional ideology of love, nurturance, and domesticity; at worst, they are passive victims" (101). Like the spectral Margaret Saville who keeps the text of Frankenstein, Caroline, Elizabeth, and Justine are potentially keepers of the male characters. "Why need [the] dreams [of men like Victor] go bad?" queries Weissman who then responds to her own question, "Mary Shelley's answer is simple: they are men, unguided by women" (128). And indeed, these women are affectionate and unjudgmental nurses and lovers of the men and children who offer patience, union, harmony, control—an "age of promise" (ix).

Unfortunately, the women in Frankenstein's house are failed keepers. Justine literally cannot keep her charge, the boy William, from being strangled to death. Neither the mother who dies early in the novel, nor Elizabeth who dies later in the novel can help Victor keep his domestic and scientific life in relation. The most interesting handicap if not failure of these females, however, is finally language, written or spoken. Men either mute female discourse or control or shape the female stories of innocence and unity so unlike the stories of experience, isolation and separation that characterize Walton's, Victor's and the monster's own histories. For example, Victor's comments about Elizabeth indicate that he does not perceive her thoughts and speeches to be particularly intellectual or substantial but rather soothing and healing, superficial, "aerial." Victor identifies in the "calmer and more concentrated disposition" of Elizabeth a tendency to focus on "the appearance of things, while he himself claims to be "capable of more intense application" (36). Interestingly enough, the one instance Elizabeth takes up her pen to write is possible only when Victor, violently ill, is "forbidden to write—to hold a pen" (62). Yet while his compositional powers are in abeyance, Elizabeth in the course of her letter affirms Victor's "powers of application" in the same letter that she makes mention of her own "trifling occupations" (62-63). Though Elizabeth feels the salutary powers of expression and of words—"I have written myself into better spirits [about Victor's ill health]," she writes—in the end, she again defers to Victor's command of the language suggesting that the outpouring of her own words is but a poor ministration for the distress both Alphonse Frankenstein and she experience, that Victor is the one capable of delivering a powerful autographical benediction: "Write, dearest Victor,—one line—one words will be a blessing to us" (65).
Again it is poor Justine who more strikingly points up the Frankensteinian women’s relation to language in the novel. Accused of murdering the child William Frankenstein, Justine appears in the courtroom to find her expressions of innocence inadequate: “I have no power of explaining it [the incriminating picture found on her person]; and when I have expressed my utter ignorance, I am only left to conjecture....” (80). Even the “simple and powerful” speech Elizabeth makes in Justine’s behalf is ultimately ineffective. So that in the end, the patriarchy in the form of a confessor coerces Justine into denying her own words, into belying and doubting her own identity: “I did confess, but I confessed a lie. I confessed that I might obtain absolution; but now that falsehood lies heavier at my heart than all my other sins. The God of heaven forgive me! Ever since I was condemned, my confessor has besieged me; he threatened and menaced, until I almost began to think that I was the monster her said I was” (83). The priest’s intimidations and Victor’s reticence combine to compromise, if indeed they do not annihilate Justine’s self.

Passive and tame, silent and silenced, without any worldly substance that they can call their own and thereby validate real power in the world, blindly rejected, as Gilbert and Gubar declare of the monster, “by misogynistic/Miltonic patriarchy” (243), in effect, haremized, the Frankensteinian women do not fully realize their roles as keepers, are never acknowledged in time as substantial or significant beings with whom the restless men can identify and thus share their secrets. Against these women Mary Shelley sets the Arabian beauty Safie whose story as the acknowledged keeper of Felix DeLacey and his family is at the center of this novel of “concentric narratives.” Born to a Turkish father and a Christian Arab mother who “spurned the bondage to which she was... reduced” (118), Safie takes from her mother a desire for the “higher powers of intellect and an independence of spirit forbidden to the female followers of Muhammad” (119). This maternal legacy enables Safie to reject her unscrupulous father who not only breaks his word to wed his daughter to Felix Delacey, but who also would immure Safie “within the walls of a harem,” a place of exclusion and restriction, which confirms sexual and economic privilege for men, but denies these same privileges to women who are objects and have no sexual desire that is not determined by the male (119). When Safie takes money and leaves her father’s house, she sets out to find the Delacey who have been exiled and impoverished as a result of Felix’s rescue of Safie’s father. When Safie arrives at the DeLacey cottage, she reverses the pattern of
rescue or failed rescue that has so far typified the novel. For whereas the women have found succor, protection, and what identity they have by remaining under the roofs of the the men, Safie, exile and alien, travels (like the voyaging men in the novel) and arrives not only as her own powerful person, but also as both a spiritual and a financial rescuer. The monster notes how she dispels the gloom of the DeLacey household: “I saw that her presence diffused gladness through the cottage, dispelling their sorrow as the sun dissipates the morning mists” (112). The beautiful Safie also dispels the poverty: “The presence of Safie diffused happiness among its inhabitants, and I also found that a greater degree of plenty reigned there. Felix and Agatha spent more time in amusement and conversation, and were assisted in their labours by servants” (125).

At the very center of the novel, Safie bodies forth in a way that the other women in the novel do not, the requisites for a more active and substantial agency. She rebels against the bondage her paterfamilias would impose, while Caroline, Elizabeth, and Justine evince a dependency which John Stuart Mill would years later identify as “the primitive state of slavery lasting on” (7). That which the Arabian beauty brings to the Delacey household is foreign to the women of Frankenstein: she is spirited, independent, and has what the very perceptive monster sees as that which is required for one who does not wish to be seen as “a vagabond and a slave” and, one may extrapolate, as a gift, a possession, or a ghost: “I [the monster] possessed no money, no friends, no kind of property” (115). This is not to say that Safie bears no relation to the angel in the house. This is to say that her angelic ability to diffuse happiness is reconstituted by sexual passion, an assertive spirit, substantial possessions, and her own language. While Caroline and Elizabeth have birth, beauty, friends, they essentially want the simultaneous possession of these plus money, desire, independence, and voice. Though they have the potential to keep their men, they never acquire the heroic stature of the more spirited than spiritual keeper of the DeLacey, Safie.

Interestingly enough, a major turning point for the monster who identifies with the women in the novel comes about through his (witnessing and) relating of Safie’s history. Initially Frankenstein’s creature is a passive, childish, and helpless as the female figures in the novel. Orphaned himself, he too, is an outsider who wishes to become a member of a domestic circle. His menial services for the DeLacey are conducted with the same cheerfulness exhibited by Elizabeth, when she, too tries to replace an absent mother by serving the Franksteins as
“angel in the house.” More to the point, however, is the monster’s co-
education with the female who does find a place in the DeLacey household while he is denied. Mary Shelley immediately draws a parallel between the monster and Safie in her physical description of each. As one reads the description of Safie—

Her voice was musical...Her hair of a shining raven black, and curiously braided; her eyes were dark, but gentle, although animated; her features of a regular proportion, and her complexion wondrously fair, each cheek tinged with a lovely pink... (111)

one recalls not the musical but the “muttered inarticulate sounds,” not the raven, braided, but the “lustrous black and flowing hair,” not the dark, gentle and animated, but the “dull yellow eye,” not the features of regular proportion, but “limbs...in proportion,” not a complexion wondrously fair, but “the yellow skin [that] scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries” (56) that constitute the newly nascent monster. Victor’s creature is no less aware than we of the contrast between that “countenance of angelic beauty and expression” (111) and his own “figure hideously deformed and loathsome” though his creator had “selected his features as beautiful” (56). While Safie is able to improve the situation of the DeLaceys, the monster’s nocturnal replenishing of the family’s stores, has not mitigated substantially the hardship of the DeLaceys. While Safie’s beauty also recommends her to the DeLacey hearth, his ugliness precludes any such welcome. Yet the monster connects with Safie in a way that clearly alters the course of events.

For Safie’s story is, the monster declares in terms of appropriation, “the more moving part of my story” (111). Both he and Safie are newly and simultaneously recreated in the acquisition of language: they drink, so to speak from the same cup (“the idea instantly occurred to me that I should make use of the same instruction to the same end” [112]). The monster and Safie have things in common the greatest of these (foreignness, selfish fathers, striking physical appearances) being language: “she and I improved rapidly in the knowledge of language” (113). To this extent then the monster identifies with the demonic energy of Safie who has taken control of her life by rejecting her father seeking her lover, rescuing him, and learning his language. The monster too begins to take control of his existence. He ultimately shakes off the passivity of Caroline-Elizabeth-Justine, seeks a mate, rejects his father, and these acts of independence are set in motion by his acquisition of
language. Safie’s knowledge of the language finally binds her more closely to the DeLacey’s, while the monster’s knowledge ultimately pushes him into the alienation of the demonic.

The story of Safie and the DeLacey’s located at the heart of the novel is like Margaret’s and Walton’s, one of the histories in this novel of devastation with a apparently happy ending. Safie the central and heroic player in the DeLacey drama succeeds and thrives unlike the Frankensteinian womenfolk not only because she possesses the ethereal qualities that are substantiated by independence, spirit, money, and desire, but also because she, unlike the other women in the novel, set out with a language but especially a voice distinctly her own, “musical but unlike that of either of my friends,” says the monster (111). Her identity is so distinct so opposite that of the women in Victor’s expiring family that her advent constitutes a transfusion of new life and vitality into ailing home of the DeLacey’s. Still this most unique of female identities in the novel is finally mediated by the Arabian’s acquisition of the cottagers French not the cottagers’ acquisition of Arabic: Safie ends by subordinating, if not rejecting, her language for that of her lover and her new family.

Though the ghostly women in Frankenstein’s household have great worth and potential as keepers and as ministers, such women do not survive, are in fact sacrificed, while the more active and vocal female Safie survives and lives. And yet, it would seem, as Veeder says, that Safie, who arrives as victrix and marries Felix, “flees to what Elizabeth already has, to where Elizabeth already is, not only geographically but also culturally and emotionally,” and I might add, linguistically (189). This shrewd observation is true to the extent that Safie’s upbringing and experiences parallel Elizabeth’s. Otherwise the Arabian woman who arrives in Europe and marries may be expected to fare somewhat differently amongst the DeLacey’s who, as Mellor says, “embody Mary Shelley’s ideal of the egalitarian family” (49). Indeed it is more probable that what Safie will have is a life more akin to that of the ghostly Margaret Saville than of the ghostly Elizabeth Lavenza. However, to the extent that “Safie lives out Elizabeth’s own scenario,” she moves more decidedly into the shadow realm of the women in the novel, a realm wherein the potential or real power of women is not characteristically sustained, recognized, or effective in a world of monster-men, where not only the mothers are typically absent, but the women who are present have only the ghost of a self.
Works Cited


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