

Exploring Educational Philosophy through *Frankenstein*

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Having read Charlotte Gordon's *Romantic Outlaws* as an assigned pre-cursor to studying philosophers of education from the Enlightenment to the present, I found my mind wandering back to Victor Frankenstein and his Creature while studying how our society has approached the task of teaching our children what we think they need to learn as they grow into adulthood.

Written at the height of the Romantic age, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or The Modern Prometheus* reflects many of Rousseau's ideas regarding how children should learn; however, considering the writer's background also reveals how the writer questions the ideas of her time and of those around her, making her truly her mother's daughter in analyzing how her society does or does not live up to what should be its ideals. As a language arts teacher, I also found myself wondering how presenting such background information to students studying *Frankenstein* or any literary work could enhance the teaching of this novel, if at all, especially in the context of how our society currently approaches public education.

Shelley Explores Learning through Literature

As a learner, Victor Frankenstein has a promising beginning. His father "devoted himself to the education of his children" (Shelley, 1818/2012, p. 19), and Victor's "studies were never forced" (Shelley, 1818/2012, p. 21). He remembers fondly of his childhood studies:

...so far from study being made odious to us through punishment, we loved application, and our amusements would have been the labors of other children. Perhaps we did not read so many books, or learn languages so quickly, as those who are disciplined according to the ordinary methods; but what we learned was impressed the more deeply on our memories. (Shelley, 1818/2012, p. 21)

Still, despite his happy early education, in recounting his tale to Robert Walton, Victor blames his father for his own pursuit down a path of study in his later education that would eventually lead to his demise. An older Victor reflecting back refers to the “many opportunities instructors possess of directing the attention of their pupils to useful knowledge, which they utterly neglect” (Shelley, 1818/2012 p. 22); he further explains that had his father explained why he should not study the works of Cornelius Agrippa rather than just dismissed it as “sad trash” (Shelley, 1818/2012, p. 22), he never would have gone down the path of study that resulted in his Creature, which he blames for ruining his life.

Still, while actually engaged in these studies, Victor is passionate, “read[ing] with the greatest avidity” (Shelley, 1818/2012, p. 22), “ardently desir[ing] the acquisition of knowledge” (Shelley, 1818/2012, p. 27), “animated by an almost supernatural enthusiasm” (Shelley, 1818/2012, p. 31). Such diction is merely a sample of Shelley’s fervent descriptions of Victor as he seeks to learn from “whence...the principle of life proceed[ed]” (Shelley, 1818/2012, p. 31). As the structure of the story has Victor telling this portion of his tale as a flashback to Walton, he has the benefit of reflection after having been beset with the consequences of his rash acts:

A human being in perfection ought always to preserve a calm and peaceful mind, and never to allow passion or a transitory desire to disturb his tranquility. I do not think that the pursuit of knowledge is an exception to this rule.” (Shelley, 1818/2012, p. 34)

He certainly regrets, in retrospect, his dedicating himself to his work at the expense of his personal relationships and, arguably, of his sanity.

Contrary to his creator, the Creature learns without external supports of family and schooling, rather through direct experiences. He learns what he can eat and drink when his body demands it, he learns how to find shelter against inclement weather, and he learns that men do

not react well to him, so he hides in a hovel, where he observes the DeLacys; “the gentle manners and beauty of the cottagers greatly endeared them to me: when they were unhappy, I felt depressed; when they rejoiced, I sympathized in their joys” (Shelley, 1818/2012, p. 77). Having only seen humans overcome by terror in encountering him, the Creature relishes in witnessing a brother and sister care for their aging father in a modest cottage in the woods.

When Safie, the son Felix’s Arabian love interest whom he helped save from injustice, joins the DeLacy home, the Creature’s learning quickly expands to include history and language as he follows along with Felix’s lessons to Safie, teaching her English with Volney’s *Ruins of Empires* (Shelley, 1818/2012, p. 82). The Creature continues to further his education when he finds and takes some books left in the woods: Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, Plutarch’s *Lives*, and Goethe’s *Sorrows of Werther* (Shelley, 1818/2012, p.89). He begins to relate to some of the characters about whom he reads and find himself desiring the acceptance of his unofficial adoptive family. As the DeLacy father is blind, the Creature attempts to communicate with him first while Felix, his sister, and Safie are out. When the Creature identifies himself to the father as “an outcast in the world forever” (Shelley, 1818/2012, p. 93), the father warmly and reassuringly responds that “to be friendless is indeed to be unfortunate; but the hearts of men, when unprejudiced by any obvious self-interest, are full of brotherly love and charity” (Shelley, 1818/2012, p. 93); unfortunately, his statement quickly proves false. When the others return to the cottage and find the Creature, they cast him out, horrified by his appearance, then eventually leave the cottage permanently. In anger, the Creature burns the cottage and seeks vengeance on his creator, about whom he had learned once he could read the papers that were in the pockets of the clothes he had taken from Victor’s laboratory before leaving it on the night of his creation, after Victor had abandoned him in horror. Thus, as a learner, the Creature was self-motivated

and self-directed in his learning, which he accumulated through experience, observation, and limited reading.

Romanticism and Rousseau

Shelley's novella, published in 1818, belongs to the period of Romanticism in literature, which has been broadly identified as beginning in the late 1700s as a reaction to the reason championed by the Enlightenment and continued until about the middle 1800s when realism began to take a stronger hold. A dictionary of literary terms states:

Imagination, emotion, and freedom are certainly the focal points of romanticism. Any list of particular characteristics of the literature of romanticism includes subjectivity and an emphasis on individualism; spontaneity; freedom from rules; solitary life rather than life in society; the beliefs that imagination is superior to reason and devotion to beauty; love of and worship of nature; and fascination with the past, especially the myths and mysticism of the middle ages (Morner & Rausch, 1997).

Victor as a character is portrayed as a passionate learner focused on his work; he does not let the perceived rules of his discipline limit his quest for knowledge and seeks refuge in nature when he needs to reflect. Victor's Creature personifies freedom in that he has no obligations or responsibilities to society; he relishes in the beauty of nature and draws lessons from the past in the form of books. Such protagonists can certainly be said to embody the tenets of the Romantic age. Charlotte Gordon (2015) further characterizes the Romantic writer:

Inspiration comes from inside the self, not outside, from emotions, not logic; that the wanderer can see truths in Nature that the city dweller misses; that in solitary contemplation the artist combines emotion and thought, recollection and observation, to

create a new universe, new creatures, a new vision for humankind – these are the principal tenets of Romanticism (p. 343).

Mary Shelley writes in her preface to the 1831 publication of her novel that the idea for her horror tale came to her in a dream while she was on vacation in the middle of nature in Geneva. While the veracity of this tale is questionable, the author's stated history of the composition of her tale also places it squarely in the Romantic movement.

Often referred to as the father of Romanticism, Jean Jacques Rousseau was certainly influential in Mary Shelley's life. Not only did she study his works with her husband Percy, her parents – William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft – also subscribed to many of his beliefs and approaches to life. Originally published in 1996, an analysis included in the Norton edition of *Frankenstein* states:

One source stands out, for its impact on Mary Shelley's sense of the age in which she lived as well as on her writing. My witnesses to its importance include not only Shelley herself but her father, mother, and husband. The work is Rousseau's *Emile* ... She loves Rousseau's spirit and considers him the authority on education. [From her journal:] 'he shows the true end of education; and he first explained how children ought to be treated like younger men, not as slaves or automata' or monsters, one might add (Lipking, 1996/2012, p. 424).

In Book 1 of his *Treatise of Education*, Rousseau (1773/2017) begins that "all things are good as they come out of the hands of their Creator, but every thing degenerates in the hands of man;" so do Victor and his creature. Victor was good as a child; then, due to hubris and a desire for glory among men, Victor corrupts his goodness to stake his claim on his society. Similarly, even the Creature, though not of God, comes out of Victor's hands innocent; it is only after society

ostracizes him that he turns to evil out of what he feels is just punishment for their prejudice. Percy Bysshe Shelley underscores this point in a review of his wife's novel that was published posthumously to coincide with Mary Shelley's revised edition, published in 1831: "his original goodness was gradually turned into inextinguishable misanthropy and revenge" (Bysshe Shelley, 1832/2012, p. 214).

Rousseau (1773/2017) further acknowledges:

we are born weak, we have need of help; we are born destitute of every thing, we stand in need of assistance; we are born stupid, we have need of understanding. All...which we require...is bestowed on us by education. This education we receive from nature, from men, or from circumstances.

He claims the only source of education over which we have any control is the education from men and goes on to discuss the importance of the tutor in guiding a child's education. Such education should not be for the purpose of turning the child into "a lawyer, a soldier, nor a divine. Let him first be a man" (Rousseau, 1773/2017). Such a tutor would allow and encourage the child to pursue the learning he fancies while ensuring no harm comes to the child during such learning; this, Victor claims, is where his father failed him – in preventing him as a young learner from straying into dangerous territory. Ironically, this is also where he fails his own 'son,' the Creature, by abandoning him, leaving him helpless and without guidance.

Rousseau also proposes educating children in nature, away from society, for as long as possible. His faith is one of "natural religion, a belief that the Bible and church authority were not the sole source of knowledge about God, whose goodness could be amply deduced from the visible universe" (Damrosch, 2007/2017, p. 343). Thus, the child being born with goodness from God should learn through his experiences in nature, which further exemplifies the goodness of

God; the Creature's experiences in Nature are mostly positive ones. Even when he burns himself with fire, it is a positive experience because he learns to respect and use it. It is only when he starts interacting with the world of man that his learning begins to lead him to eventual evil. Rousseau claims children will naturally tend toward friendship and compassion as they come to "know that there are beings like himself who are capable of feeling the same pain which he has already experienced" (Rousseau, 1773/2017), thus the Creature's compassion for the DeLacys and desire for befriending them. It is only man's rejection of him that leads him to evil.

The Role of "Other" In/Around *Frankenstein*

While Shelley certainly seems to espouse Rousseau's Romantic ideas about education, as a woman, she also has reason to question his theories. While she often studied Rousseau, she also often studied her mother's works, which criticized Rousseau's conception of woman as created merely for man's pleasure. Especially considering the characters Elizabeth and Justine, "certainly, the women in the novel do not fare well, becoming victims of rage and tools of revenge" (Hitchcock, 2007, p. 64). In her own precarious role as an unwed mother in her society, Shelley would have been very much aware of how she was and would be judged by standards different from those that governed men. Perhaps it is such compassion for those in the role of "other" that led her to portray the Creature as arguably the most sympathetic character. "Mary Godwin's strong identification with her mother's memory taught her to question the category of the 'monstrous' and to sympathize with moral outcasts; as an unmarried mother herself...she needed little reminding" (Baldick, 1987/2012, p. 178).

When the Creature is telling Victor of his experiences, Victor becomes the monstrous figure who abandoned his child in the world. Having been abandoned by her own father when she ran away with Percy, Shelley knew all too well the pain the Creature must have felt. "The

young scientist pushes [the Creature] away, just as Godwin had pushed Mary away” (Gordon, 2015, p. 194). Once she became a mother herself, “she could not imagine cutting herself off from a child. Fathers, though, seemed able to reject their children without even a backward glance” (Gordon, 2015, p. 213). Not only had her own father willingly abandoned her, but her mother’s father essentially abandoned his family to alcoholism, and her half-sister Fanny had been abandoned by her own father when he refused to marry their mother. When Wollstonecraft died, Godwin continued to raise Fanny; yet the social and psychological stigma she must have suffered resulted in her suicide: “I have long determined that the best thing I could do was to put an end to the existence of a being whose birth was unfortunate” (Hitchcock, 2007, p. 60). Her suicide note brings to mind the quote Shelley includes on the title page of her novel from Milton’s *Paradise Lost*: “Did I request thee, Maker, from my clay / To mould me man? Did I solicit thee / From darkness to promote me?” (Shelley, 1818/2012, p. 3). Adults bring children into this world; it is their responsibilities to care for them, Shelley seems to be saying.

“Unmarried mothers and illegitimate children were hated by society, just like Frankenstein’s creature” (Gordon, 2015, p. 217), which is perhaps why Shelley makes him the victim despite his acts of vengeance, because she understands the motivations behind his evil acts. As an unwed mother herself when she begins writing her tale as well as part of a group of intellectuals rejected by society, she personally would have understood the emotional impact of exclusion.

Frankenstein as a Conversation in a Marriage

A concept that her husband seemed not to comprehend as well. As he helped her edit her novel, she sometimes found herself disagreeing with some of his suggestions. “Percy Shelley misunderstood his wife’s intentions. He tended to see the Creature as more monstrous and less human than Mary did, and he frequently underestimated the flaws in Victor Frankenstein’s

personality” (Mellor, 1988/2012, p. 206). Gordon (2015) proposes *Frankenstein* as Mary’s side of a conversation with Percy about such issues as gender roles, the importance of work, the importance of relationships, and parenting:

Pessimism versus optimism; despair versus hope; Mary versus Shelly. They stood on opposite sides of tragedy, their conflict filtering through all aspects of their marriage, shaping not only how they coped with their losses but how they approached each other and their work. If one were unaware of the couple’s philosophical fault line, it would be possible to view their books as unrelated rather than as part of a marital debate. Shelley’s poem celebrates the powers of human inventions; Mary’s novel warns against the consequences of unchecked ambition (p. 323).

The Shelleys experienced many hardships that would have tested their marriage, not the least of which was the loss of their precious son, William or Wilmouse. Mary and Percy handled their griefs differently, perhaps in part due to their differing philosophies. While each poured themselves into their work, Mary wished Percy would join her in her grief while Percy wished Mary would come back to him from her depression and isolation. Although this occurred after the writing and publication of *Frankenstein*, the novel, which was written after they had lost their first born child and while Mary was pregnant with her third, could still be said to illustrate their ideological differences.

Furthermore, while Percy was fascinated by the prospect of man creating artificial life through modern science, Mary

...found the principle ‘supremely frightful,’ confessing that she worried about ‘the effect of any human endeavor to mock the stupendous mechanism of Creator of the world.’

Mary’s doubts stemmed from her deep reservations about the ability of human beings to

improve themselves or the world. Evil, she felt, was lodged too deeply inside the human heart.” (Gordon, 2015, p. 187)

If evil is too firmly in man’s heart, whether because it is innate or because society put it there, then man’s inventions and interests are not to be trusted or pursued. Thus, Victor’s ambitions in the novel should not be championed as man championed Prometheus for bringing them fire from the gods; instead, his ambitions needed to be tempered: “Frankenstein is doomed because he seals himself off from others – his family and friends as well as his creature” (Gordon, 2015, p. 217). Had Victor not obsessively locked himself away from his family and friends while desperately trying to create his Creature, perhaps interacting with them might have caused him pause in thinking that he maybe he should not pursue such scientific explorations. “What Frankenstein’s ambition costs him is the family connection which makes life humanly possible ... The family is an aspect of the self and the self cannot survive bereft of its family” (Levine, 1973/2012, p. 315); not only did Victor sacrifice his family while creating his monster, the monster eventually killed everybody Victor ever cared about. Victor’s ambition literally destroyed his family; “Mary had made her point, a point that had been made by her mother before her: when men are guided by ambition, not love, and by fame, not family, then women and children pay the price” (Gordon, 2015, p. 358). Maybe not just women and children but innocents in general, as Victor’s father and best friend Henry are also killed by the Creature.

It might be said that Mary is proposing “Reason and sentiment. Passion and logic. The two had to be combined” (Gordon, 2015, p. 149). Given that she was reading the works of John Locke while she wrote *Frankenstein*, this proposition is viable. While Locke did value learning, he valued character and morality above all else, which he saw as coming from God.

In a sense, Mary Godwin's novel was an experiment in itself, exploring the psychology of the abandoned newborn giant and borrowing principles from John Locke, the eighteenth century epistemologist whose *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* she was reading as she wrote *Frankenstein*. Locke argued that the human mind begins as a *tabula rasa*, a blank slate. Knowledge of the outside world forms as sensory impressions bombard the mind and accumulate ideas and opinions. Starting from this premise, Mary Godwin composed a life story in the voice of Frankenstein's creature. (Hitchcock, 2007, p. 47-48).

While Locke believed in the blank slate, Rousseau believed in the noble savage, the idea that man's natural instincts are good. Given the consequences of Victor's unchecked exploration of his natural interests, however, Mary is perhaps questioning the Romantic ideology that man's natural inclinations are to always be celebrated.

More in keeping with eighteenth century moralists than with either William Godwin or Percy Shelley, Mary Shelley characterizes innate desire not as neutral or benevolent but as quintessentially egotistical...She sees imagination as an appetite that can and must be regulated – specifically, by the give-and-take of domestic relationships. If it is aroused but is not controlled by human society, it will project itself into the natural world, becoming voracious in its search for objects to conquer and consume (Poovey, 1984/2012, p. 346).

Mary has been characterized as “terrified that she was going to become a ‘deserted thing no one cares for’” (Gordon, 2015, p. 134). Percy was often absorbed by his work; and, with her father having abandoned her, it is understandable that she would have been worried that Percy's

imaginations might lead to careless actions that would ultimately affect her and her children, just as Victor's actions had affected his family.

Although Shelley was likely unaware of Catherine Beecher (1835/2017), she poses a question that seemed to be on Mary's mind: "Are liberty and intelligence, without the restraints of a moral and religious education, a blessing, or a curse" (p. 71)? Locke would say they are a curse as he believed in the importance of morality as the primary goal of education. *Frankenstein* has been read "as a commentary on the split between reason and feeling, in both philosophical thought and educational theory" (Moers, 1976/2012, p. 326); this split might be re-fashioned as Locke versus Rousseau, with Percy being firmly in Rousseau's camp and Mary considering whether she leaned more toward Locke's. To her, "what matters most...is not the quest, not the search for knowledge or justice, but the relationships we have with those we love" (Gordon, 2015, p. 212); while championing relationships could also be termed "feeling" and thus more in line with Rousseau's ideas, as a woman in her time, Mary needed her relationships to survive – she would be lost in a cold and unfeeling world without them; so it is more than feeling and even logical that she should want to desperately protect them.

Teach a Text in Isolation or in Context?

These ideas presented here are merely the tip of the iceberg when considering how Mary Shelley's biographical information may have informed her writing. Each of the details discussed thus far have been but cursorily presented, and we have not even begun to consider Victor's father, Victor's foil characters – Henry Clerval and Robert Walton, nor the various allusions Shelley makes in her novel. Still, while delving into the author's life is certainly interesting from a psychological standpoint, how relevant is it to the teaching and comprehension of a literary work?

E.D. Hirsch (1988/2017) asserts that "to grasp the words on a page we have to know a lot of information that isn't set down on the page ... we must understand more than the surface meaning of words; we have to understand the context as well" (p. 3). While it certainly is possible to read and comprehend Shelley's work without knowing the context in which it was written, consider how having such information can deepen and enrich such understanding. "Any reader who doesn't possess the knowledge assumed in a piece he or she reads will in fact be illiterate with respect to that particular piece of writing" (Hirsch, 1988/2017, p. 13). As part of his campaign to equip students with the cultural literacy required to read the world around them, Hirsch created a list of over 5000 entries of concepts Americans should be expected to at least recognize as part of American culture. The original list includes Romanticism, Rousseau, the Enlightenment, Locke, Frankenstein's monster, and Percy Shelley (Hirsch, 1988/2017, p. 151-215); as the list is purportedly updated regularly to reflect changing American culture, it is not inconceivable that Wollstonecraft and perhaps Mary Shelley herself might eventually appear on this list, further justifying the presentation of such background information as part of a *Frankenstein* unit in a high school English classroom.

Arguably Hirsch's opposite, Howard Gardner rejects the notion of learning many facts in favor of learning fewer concepts in greater depth. Doing so makes students more likely to truly understand disciplines; "not only are chances of acquiring understanding enhanced if multiple entry points are recognized and utilized, but in addition, the way in which we conceptualize understanding is broadened" (Gardner, 1995/2017, p. 13). Based on this, he would approve of such an in-depth study of the story surrounding the conception and publication of a literary work. Furthermore, even though they are supposedly on the opposing ends of curriculum breadth and depth, Gardner (1995/2017) agrees that "Hirsch's general analysis of what it takes to be able to

read a text in a culturally literate way seems on the mark" (p. 188). So in addition to such background information deepening student understanding, providing such cultural knowledge empowers students to better understand their culture at large.

On the other hand, there is an argument that students should learn to grapple with the text itself without supplementary information provided in class; "...the purpose of reading is to interpret the text based on the information on the page rather than from the pre-reading activity initiated by the teacher" (Shanahan, 2013, p. 8-9). This approach to reading stemmed from New Criticism literary theory; "the New Critics believed meaning resided not in the context or author's intentions that produced it, but in the words the author used to give expression" (Shanahan, 2013, p. 7). Indeed, standardized tests in education, from those based on Common Core standards to those administered by the College Board, view texts "...as complete unto themselves, without need for additional information about the author or opinions from other people or texts (Shanahan, 2013, p. 7). As tests often drive instruction in our high-stakes educational environment, if background information is not tested, teachers, especially those in schools most concerned with student test scores, are not going to address it.

In addition to the consideration of testing, there is the idea of "Are teachers really going to follow kids through college and career – or even into their accountability exams – preparing them for each text they are to read?" (Shanahan, 2013, p. 8). Of course they are not; and certainly, students need to "read and comprehend literature...at the high end of the grade's...text complexity band independently and proficiently (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.10)" (National Governors Association, 2010); but if we are also helping students learn how to read not just for a test but also as a life-long skill, might exposing students

to the concept that a text reflects the context in which it was written help students further enjoy reading and thus be more inclined to continue to practice it as adults?

Furthermore, in terms of truly understanding complex text, ...cognitive psychology has defined reading comprehension in terms of a reader's ability to integrate text information with prior knowledge to form a mental representation or memory. Thus, 'close reading' of a text for which one lacks the necessary background information required to understand it may not be a very productive process for some learners. (Shanahan, 2013, p. 7)

Without background information related to *Frankenstein*, it becomes just a novel about the perils of science, which it certainly is, but it is also potentially so much more. Beyond the intellectual interest that exploring "...the universe created by that text" (Shanahan, 2013, p. 10) can stimulate for readers, certain Common Core ELA Standards might be better taught by exploring that universe, including those centered on theme, character complexity, how craft and structure set a work in a particular time and place, how to analyze a text from outside the United States, and how an author treats a source text. The full standards are listed below:

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.2: Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.3: Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone).
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.6: Analyze a particular point of view or cultural experience reflected in a work of literature from outside the United States, drawing on a wide reading of world literature.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.9: Analyze how an author draws on and transforms source material in a specific work (e.g., how Shakespeare treats a theme or topic from Ovid or the Bible or how a later author draws on a play by Shakespeare). (National Governors Association, 2010)

Theme and character complexity, the first two listed standards, could be enhanced by learning about the context in which a text was written. To address the third listed standard, to consider “how language evokes a sense of time and place” (National Governors Association, 2010), it would be helpful to know something about that time and place. Part of the reasoning behind including a standard about world literature, the fourth listed standard above, would be to consider how literature is reflective of its context. In a work like *Frankenstein*, although Shelley didn’t use Rousseau’s *Emile* or Milton’s *Paradise Lost* as source texts, students could consider how she “transforms [such] source material” (National Governors Association, 2010) in her novel, the last standard listed above, if they spend some time with or at least learning about those source texts.

Conclusion

As with the pragmatists of educational philosophy, my experience has shown me that balance is key in so many aspects of teaching, including when considering whether a student

should study a text in isolation or in the context of background information. Contextual information of when and how a text was written can enhance study of a literary work but should not supplant the student's own independent comprehensions. To help achieve this, such contextual information could be supplementary and happen after reading instead of before, once students have had a chance to make their own conclusions and can then refine those given the extra information. Having studied Shelley's *Frankenstein* in the context of an educational philosophy course has enhanced my own understanding of a work I have read multiple times; how would I not attempt to share some of this with my students, without overwhelming them, of course? "The monster is a sort of New Critical art object, leading an apparently independent organic life of its own and yet irremediably and subtly tied to its creator, re-enacting in mildly disguised ways, his creator's feelings and experiences" (Levine, 1973/2012, p. 312). Not analyzing the monster's tie to his creator – Victor but also Mary Shelley – would be to accept a superficial understanding of this culturally relevant literary work. How much supplementary information should be included is a judgment call the teacher must make, one society must trust him/her to make, which points to needing teachers in the profession who are both experts in their fields as well as in the art of teaching.

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