Anarchic alchemists: dissident androgyny in Anglo-American gothic fiction from Godwin to Melville

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CHAPTER 5

MAD SCIENCE AND MONSTROUS ANDROGYNY IN *FRANKENSTEIN*, "THE BIRTH-MARK," "RAPPACCINI'S DAUGHTER" AND "THE BELL-TOWER"

After Godwin and Brown's pioneering efforts in the alchemical magico-political tale, the notoriety and ultimate long-lasting popularity of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus* (1818) ensured that the cultural schema of alchemy would remain a powerful gothic trope with dissident potential. Chris Baldick has shown the extent to which Mary Shelley's novel has become the foundation text of a modern myth, which finds its most resonant echoes today in popular horror and science fiction culture.[1] Apart from providing the basis for visual monstrosity, the myth also works as a powerful intellectual metaphor. It has been put to use within various strands of thought addressing issues such as the ethics of science, the alienation of labour and women's rights. But while the many *Frankenstein* movies produced since the 1930s have ensured the iconic status of Mary Shelley's gothic tale (or, rather, its protagonist's creation), the proliferation of the Frankenstein myth is not purely a twentieth-century phenomenon. *Frankenstein* was an instant success. It spawned many imitations from the outset, notably in the theatre, but also in the popular magazine culture of the day, flooded with gothic tales about artificial creations and their seemingly mad creators.

Baldick writes that, after *Frankenstein,* "stories of doomed experiments and obsessive chemists were favourites with early nineteenth-century readers." He argues that "Frankensteinian themes" initially found a "familiar home" in "the European and American short-story tradition." This short story tradition is in many ways a gothic tradition, exemplified by the tales in the early issues of *Blackwood's Magazine*, a British periodical with great influence on the American literary scene.[2] From the outset, magazine culture was reliant on a large reading public. Therefore, the magazines always sought stories based on popular recognisable themes, easily identifiable through their shared use of imagery, characterisation, plotting and setting. The gothic was a popular novelistic genre with easily recognisable thematic and structural building blocks. With its emphasis on the telling of the tale, its roots in folklore, oral culture and its quality of providing entertainment and thrills, it was a genre perfectly adaptable to the magazine tale format.

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[1] See Chris Baldick's study *In Frankenstein's Shadow: Myth, Monstrosity, and Nineteenth-Century Writing* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987).

[2] In *Poe and the British Magazine Tradition* (New York: Oxford UP, 1969), Michael R. Allen shows how significant an influence *Blackwood's* was on Poe's stories and ideas about magazine publication. Poe was so much aware of the specific style of *Blackwood's* gothic tales that he parodied it in "The Psyche Zenobia" (1838) and mocked its formulaic character in "How to Write a Blackwood Article" (1838).

When authors in Britain and America turned to writing short fiction, the tale of the Frankensteinian mad scientist was a useful way to ensure interest from magazine editors.

Frankenstein is a gothic product of the Romantic age. At the time of its initial publication the novel added another voice to the debate about the links between radical philosophy and revolutionary aesthetics, scientific progress and residual magical lore. It is peopled by stock gothic figures such as the stern family patriarch, the self-deceived rebel and the magically monstrous presence. These characters act-out their melodramatic scenes amongst sublime gothic settings such sublime Swiss mountains and polar ice plains. The portrait of the outcast genius Victor Frankenstein, as many critics have shown, is indebted to Godwin's tumultuous life and radical work as well as the consciously constructed dissident personality of Mary's husband Percy Bysshe Shelley. Baldick points out, however, that in the course of the nineteenth century, the portrait of the Frankensteinian mad scientist altered from that of romantic outcast and rebel to that of social misfit. While he explains that, like Victor, "the kind of creator-figure we find in these stories is a peculiar mixture of artist, philosopher, craftsman, and chemical experimenter" – in other words, a gothic alchemist – in the mid-nineteenth-century context, "these figures are…chemical petty-bourgeois producers whose special knowledge and skill have allowed them to become their own masters, answerable to nobody and often feared by their fellow burghers." Baldick argues that "in these tales of transgression…the secret skill which makes the protagonist independent and severs his social ties becomes an obsessional end in itself and masters the master" (Baldick 63-5). Baldick's interpretation of the post-Frankenstein mad scientist, while pointing out the significance of his independence of the hegemonic socio-economic forces that make up the world of the tale, his engagement with production and his abject status as an object of fear and projection, also stresses the scientist's loss of control over his experiment and the disastrous consequences of this loss of control: a detachment from society, moral blindness and eventual slide into a harmful madness. This stress on the negative consequences of the "mad" scientist's experimental failures endows Baldick's reading of the post-Frankenstein tales with the conventional moral: the isolated genius who suffers from intellectual and or scientific hubris is detrimental to become a menace to and at worst a destroyer of society. But what happens when the socio-political status quo that the novel gives shape is presented as detrimental to the integrity of the individuals that people it?

In this chapter I move away from the dominant interpretation of the mad scientist as a self-deceived overreacher whose failed experiment and the dire consequence it has are a warning against scientific hubris. The focus in this chapter lies instead on how the presence of the cultural schema of alchemy in the texts analysed makes it possible to read the mad scientist as an anarchic alchemist, whose product, monstrous in the eyes of those who wish to uphold the status quo, harbours dissident potential. Taking the anarchic alchemist's perspective, it is possible to show that the dominant social order in the novel isolates the alchemist and as such brings about the alchemist's descent into madness. In *Frankenstein*, rather than stressing the outcome of Victor's experiment, the focus will lie on analysing the social position of the mad scientist in the story and the ideological point of view from which Victor and his creation are presented. A focus on the ideological point of

view from which the mad scientist and his creation is presented is crucial in all tales about monsters, because, as Noël Carroll explains, "the humans regard the monsters they meet as abnormal, disturbances of the natural order."[3] Monsters, therefore, whether disfigured humans, literal or metaphorical aliens, or artificial creations, through their very transgression of physical as well as social boundaries, always work to highlight the fact that the "natural order" is only natural from a specific ideological point of view, form inside the boundaries that for the viewer define the scope of the normal. Such boundaries need to be continually policed in order to ensure the illusion of a "natural order."

Like the anarchic alchemists in Godwin, Brown and Poe, the abject social position and unorthodox scientific theory and practice of the mad scientist in tales such as *Frankenstein*, Nathaniel Hawthorne's "The Birth-Mark" and "Rappaccini's Daughter," as well as Herman Melville's "The Bell-Tower" unveil a major faultline in what the dominant androcentric lens of the stories presents as the "natural order" of things. The monstrous beings that Victor, Aylmer, Rappaccini and Bannadonna create work to reveal that the very order that condemns these artificially constructed beings as monstrous, is itself an artificial construct capable of monstrous acts of repression, since it needs to abject everything that does not conform to its own prescribed standards of normality – standards that hide its own latent monstrosity. As in the alchemical gothic tales by Godwin, Brown and Poe, the cultural schema of alchemy's penchant for dissolving, fusing, and altering existing binary categories, especially those linked to gender, highlights how an ideology of gender polarization buttresses broader socio-cultural binaries that structure the social framework such as science/ magic, master/ servant, home/ work, truth and fantasy. What is contested in the plot of *Frankenstein* is the monstrous status of either an ideology founded on metaphors of fusion, change, and immortality, or an ideology founded on metaphors, polarization, birth, progress and death. Because of their engagement with processes of production, *Frankenstein* and the alchemical gothic stories by Hawthorne and Melville discussed in this chapter draw some attention to the interrelatedness of gender, class and racial ideologies, even though they never fully interrogate this interdependency.

Mary Shelley's Frankenstein: *Chemical Madness and Anatomic Monstrosities*

In his recent biography of Mary Shelley, John Williams argues that the daughter of William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft "was born into a culture of exclusivity where the reactionary mores of an unreformed, unjust society were to be given no credence," and that "Shelley's arrival and his subsequent treatment of her will have reaffirmed this belief."[4] Mary Shelley's upbringing was indeed unorthodox, and her early education Godwinian, even though her radical father – notorious for unconventional ideas about relationships and his attacks on marriage – did denounce her eventual elopement with the aristocratic rebel-poet Percy Bysshe Shelley. Significantly, in writing about the context that created *Frankenstein*, Williams argues that, on top of her immersion in a culture of radical reform and romantic literary aspiration, "her father's straightened circumstances were evidence of

[3] Noël Carroll, *A Philosophy of Horror* (London: Routledge, 1990) 16.
[4] John Williams, *Mary Shelley: A Literary Life* (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 2000) 42.

the fate of a visionary reformer marginalised by hostile political establishment" (Williams 42). In the 1790s, Godwin openly rebelled against the dissenting culture that had raised him by proclaiming himself atheist and becoming the founder of anarchist philosophy. By becoming Godwin's disciple, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Mary's husband-to-be, rebelled against the aristocratic milieu into which he was born. Mary Shelley was never as openly engaged with radical political and social reform as her parents and her husband; but Williams explains that whatever her personal political views or social theories, she "ended up living a life surrounded by the paraphernalia that accompanied Shelleyan radicalism: his belief in the commune as a social unit, his penchant for cloak-and-dagger secrecy, and his fascination for magic and the occult" (Williams 51). Her family context, then, peopled with anti-authoritarian rebels, penniless radicals, dabblers in the occult and writers of magico-political tales, gave her the right cultural schemata for starting a career as a writer of fantastic fiction and gave her both the cultural schema of alchemy as well as political radicalism that was deeply concerned with the eradication of social inequality and institutionalised coercion and which included a focus on how an ideology of gender polarization worked to sustain inequality. In *Frankenstein*, therefore, the cultural status quo, as represented through the Frankenstein family, does not have to be read as a domestic ideal from which Victor deviates, causing its tragic downfall.

The revisions that Shelley made to the 1831 Bentley Standard Novels edition of *Frankenstein* show that she later wished to emphasise her more conventional outlook on the role of the family, marriage and gender relations. But, as is the case with Charles Brockden Brown, the first edition of *Frankenstein*, her early work, reflects more of the radical culture in which she was immersed, despite of her own misgivings about the nature of radicalism.. The 1818 text of *Frankenstein* engages with many of the socio-political concerns voiced by the radical culture in which she was raised. One of these concerns, as shown in chapter four, was the coercive nature of an ideology of gender polarization that buttressed an emerging bourgeois and male-dominated capitalism. In the following analysis of *Frankenstein*, gender dissidence takes the form of a monstrous androgyny, which is not created by Victor Frankenstein, the mad scientist, but by a process of cultural abjection. It is useful to first outline in more detail the significant cultural schemata that informed the creation of *Frankenstein*: the immediate intellectual context in which Mary Shelley was born and her husband's own obsession with Godwinian anarchism and the magical science of alchemy and his appropriation of these cultural schemata as vehicles for articulating dissidence.

In his psycho-biographical study of Mary Shelley's engagement with the schema of Romantic androgyny, William Veeder emphasises Shelley's self-professed "excessive and romantic attachment to [her] father," despite the fact that, as Anne K. Mellor points out, Godwin often expressed dispassionate and sometimes cruel behaviour towards his daughter.[5] Apart from being passionately attached to her father, Mary Shelley also inherited an intellectual legacy from both her parents which was impossible for her to ignore. Clemit argues that Mary Shelley "was saturated in her parents' writings from an early age, and

[5] William Veeder, *Mary Shelley & Frankenstein: The Fate of Androgyny* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1986) 126; and Ann K. Mellor, *Mary Shelley: Her Life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters* (London: Routledge, 1988) chapter 10.

reread them throughout her life" to the extent that "her parents' ideas permeate her fiction" (Clemit 142). Hoeveler seconds Clemit by writing: "the real heroes of Mary's life were always her parents, who recur obsessively in various mutated forms in virtually everything she wrote."[6] Unsurprisingly, there has been much critical debate about whether Mary Shelley followed in her parents' footsteps as a radical intellectual, or denied her heritage and embraced a more conventional or even conservative proto-Victorian ideological viewpoint.

Mellor argues that "Shelley was by temperament a conservative who endorsed a cultural and social tradition based on a model of monarchical democracy, class stability, and organic evolutionary growth." As proof of this ideological point of view, Mellor quotes from a journal entry made in 1838, in which Mary Shelley openly states that she is not a radical in the way that her parents and her husband were, even though she can respect their ideas. After distancing herself from her parents' radicalism, however, in the same entry, Shelley goes on to echo certain tenets of Godwinian philosophy. She writes, "I am not for violent extremes, which only bring on an injurious reaction," and "I believe we are sent here to educate ourselves, and that self-denial, and disappointment, and self-control, are part of our education" (quoted in Mellor 211-2). The presence of violent extremes in society was exactly what Godwin's and Wollstonecraft's philosophies, in different ways, attack so fervently. Mary also writes that "I have no wish to ally myself to the Radicals" because "they are full of repulsion to me – violent without any sense of Justice – selfish in the extreme – talking without knowledge – rude, envious and insolent – I wish to have nothing to do with them."[7] Mary Shelley does not so much denounce radicalism, as a cause, as the nature of radicalism at the outset of the Victorian era. Her emphasis on the lack of justice, benevolence and intellect, suggests that she still admires at least some of the tenets of her parents' and her husband's radical idealism. It is this horror of violent extremes that partly explains the presence in their thought and fiction of an androgynous ideal. Mary Shelley's stress on self-education, self-control, and self-denial are also ingredients of the Godwinian mindset: it is Reginald de St Leon's failure to educate himself, to control himself and to deny himself the luxuries of his privileged position that are unveiled by the intrusion of the alchemist as his fatal flaws, flaws shared by the dominant order of the world in which he lives. Mary Shelley may not have had the penchant for visionary utopianism that characterises Godwin's and Wollstonecraft's work, but her very words here do show that she shared some of the ideas that characterised her parents' thought.

Like Mellor, Clemit argues that Shelley's work critiques her father's thought, expanding "Godwin's characteristic blend of philosophy and fiction to present an uncompromising critique of optimistic myths of revolutionary change (Clemit 140-1, 155). However, Godwin himself had always been sceptical of the positive outcome of immediate and forcefully rendered revolutionary change. None of his novels present an optimistic myth of revolutionary change and his philosophy calls for a form of gradual individual illumination leading over a long period of time towards an entire revolution of the human mind, rather than politically instigated revolutionary change. Therefore, if Shelley's writing

[6] Diane Long Hoeveler, *Gothic Feminism* (Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 1998) 158.
[7] Mary Shelley, *Journal*, ed. Frederick L. Jones (Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1947) 205.

critiques such radical optimism, she is not so far away from her father's brand of radicalism as it may seem at first.

Even though Shelley does not believe in the anarchist utopia her father had envisioned in *Political Justice* and eventually dropped the name Godwin and adopted the name Wollstonecraft to become Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, Baldick stresses that she does hold a debt to Godwinism. He argues that *Frankenstein* is dedicated to Godwin probably "because Godwin was in so many ways the novel's intellectual begetter" (Baldick 29). As Williams argues, Godwin's plight as a radical philosopher provided part of the portrait of Victor Frankenstein and his novel *St Leon* provided Mary with a fictional model for Frankenstein, while his behaviour towards herself provided her with a model for the relationship between her hero and his beloved. Like Frankenstein, Godwin himself rebelled against the cultural milieu in which he was raised, and so would Shelley. Horst Meller draws attention to the pervasive cultural presence in the era of what he calls "'paracidal romanticism': the revolt whose object it was to bring about the deposition of the father."[8] Godwin's gothic novels all engage with this theme, from Caleb's revolt against Falkland, to dissolution of patriarchal authority in St Leon, to Charles Mandeville's lunatic attempt to rescue his sister from patriarchal imprisonment in *Mandeville* (1817). Williams draws attention to a thematic connection between Godwin's popular anti-paternal gothic novel *Caleb Williams* and *Frankenstein*. According to Williams, *Frankenstein* follows *Caleb Williams* "in its unsettling of stable identities and values" (Baldick 27). This destabilisation of cultural dominants overtly includes patriarchal authority as the discussion of Victor's education below will show.

Muriel Spark suggests that Godwin's influence reached beyond the genesis of *Frankenstein*. She draws attention to the indirect influence of Godwinian philosophy on Shelley's second novel, *The Last Man* (1826), a gothic novel about the downfall of a future British Republic during a devastating world-wide plague.[9] Spark argues that, unlike Godwin, "her concept of human nature embodies no conviction in its perfectibility." She argues, however, that "the mere fact that she introduced a republic as the sociological landscape of her work divulges that sphere of influence, the tendency of thought, on which she was nurtured." Spark points out that "so far as Mary attempts to interpret *Political Justice*, the changes in government she represents are brought about by peaceful means in accordance with Godwin's theoretical revolution, but not altogether through the rational processes of example and education which he advocated" (Spark 184). Shelley's engagement with her parents' work seems better characterised as an act of incorporation and transmogrification, rather than critique and rejection.

In analysing the way in which Godwin and Shelley present what he calls "mental anatomies," William D. Brewer draws attention to the influences they share from outside the family circle. He points out that both Godwin and Shelley owe a debt to Jean Jacques Rousseau in recognizing "the power of environmental conditioning." All three, he argues, "believe that in order to understand an individual one must take into account his or her

[8] Horst Meller, "The Paracidal Imagination: Schiller, Blake, Fuseli and the Romantic Revolt Against the Father," in *The Romantic Imagination: Literature and Art in England and Germany*, eds. Frederick Burwick and Jürgen Klein (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996) 76.
[9] Muriel Spark, *Mary Shelley, A Biography* (New York: New American Library, 1987) 184.

upbringing and subsequent experience."[10] Both Shelley's and Godwin's gothic fictions, he argues, "resemble confessions in their tendency to focus on feelings and mental states rather than events" (Brewer 39). The confessors narrate, as in *St Leon*, how their upbringing and social circumstances made them what they are.

Brewer's analysis of Godwin's and Shelley's fictions focuses on the unhinged mental state of the narrators – the extent to which their minds do not conform to what is deemed normal according to the establishment. He argues that Godwin and Shelley differ in their accounts of madness. According to Brewer, despite his fascination with madness, "Godwin's novels, with the one possible exception, reflect the horror of lunacy felt by many eighteenth-century rationalists," who like Locke believed that "madness is reason mislead by imagination" (Brewer, 130). Mary Shelley, according to Brewer, holds "a more positive view of madness, linking it to the poetic imagination," a creative world that exists beyond the boundaries of mundane reality, potentially liberatory, if dangerously so (Brewer 130). While Godwin indeed saw madness as "the arch enemy of reason," he also saw government and institutional coercion as a form of madness, making it hard to read into Godwin's representations of madness a conventional moral (Brewer 137).

Brewer argues that whatever their approach to madness father and daughter engaged with the moral limits of Godwin's most prized virtue: sincerity. Their novels show that the limits of sincerity are not created within the mind of the individual, but by the social circumstances of their lot (the Rousseauesque connection). Brewer, apparently disregarding Godwin's emphasis on nurture over nature, reads St Leon's failure to disclose his alchemical secrets as a flaw in his confession that shows he is not entirely sincere and therefore cannot be trusted. What is important, however, is the reason Godwin implicitly gives his alchemist for refusing to fully reveal his knowledge. As the novel progresses into a narrative of continual flight and pursuit, it becomes clear that St Leon cannot openly talk about his knowledge because it would lead to his imprisonment and destruction of his person, nullifying his alchemical powers' potential for positive good – a repression much like that experienced by British radicals during the 1790s, or what Victor Frankenstein would experience during the trial of Justine. In the third edition of *Political Justice*, Godwin, in fact, argued that an act of insincerity performed in the spirit of ensuring a better future is preferable to an act of complete sincerity that leads to greater injustice. Godwin asks rhetorically, "are we to practice an unreserved and uniform sincerity, while the world about us acts upon so different a plan?" (*PJ* 321). *St Leon* was not published until Godwin had revised *Political Justice* for the second time. Reginald de St Leon's secrecy about the nature of his magical powers can be read in the light of this Godwinian acknowledgement of the potential benefits of practical insincerity, rather than in the context of Rousseau's confessional mode, just as Frankenstein's secrecy is brought about by his father's and his professors' initial refusal to acknowledge alchemy as a significant source of knowledge and their condemnation of his interest in it.

Brewer defines Reginald de St Leon as a mad-scientist, who, following Baldick's definition, becomes obsessed with a single passion that masters him (Brewer 98). He finds

[10] William D. Brewer, *The Mental Anatomies of William Godwin and Mary Shelley* (London: Associated UPs, 2001) 37.

in Shelley's work the same idea that "ruling passions are often regarded as pernicious" (Brewer 110). However, rather than placing the cause of these passions within the individual minds of the figures, the novels' actually show how ideological forces bring about and foster such passions by rejecting them as unsound. The fictions of Godwin and Shelley, in the case of stressing the importance of ideological point of view in validating or rejecting forms of knowledge, being and identity, are remarkably similar. It is this similarity that justifies a reading of *Frankenstein* as a novel about an anarchic alchemist, rebellion against patriarchal authority leads to an abject social status, infusing the outcast with an overriding passion to prove those he rebels against wrong, leading eventually to the creation of an androgynous being whose monstrous identity, in the eyes of the paternal figures in the novel, challenges the status quo by revealing its own monstrous need to abject whatever does not conform the prescribed ideal.

From the moment of its publications, reviewers in fact have recognised the close relationship between *Frankenstein* and Godwin's fiction. In his review of *Frankenstein,* Percy Shelley emphasises how Mary's novel could be made to speak for Godwinian philosophy by writing:

> the crimes and malevolence of the single Being [the monster] flow irresistibly from certain causes fully adequate to their production. They are the children as it were, of Necessity and Human Nature…[T]reat a person ill, and he will become wicked (*F* 311).

Shelley' draws a literary parallel between *Frankenstein* and the work of Godwin by writing:

> the encounter and argument between Frankenstein and the Being on the sea of ice, almost approaches, in effect, to the expostulation of Caleb Williams with Falkland. It reminds us, indeed, somewhat of the style and character of that admirable writer, to whom the author has dedicated his work, and whose productions [s]he seems to have studied (*F* 312).

As in Godwin's novel, in which Falkland and Caleb can be read as allegorical figures representing the old feudal aristocracy and the empowered common man bursting with curiosity for power, respectively (much like Brown's Carwin), Victor and the Monster can be read metaphorically as figures embodying ideas, rather than fully rounded human characters with mental flaws that lead to tragic ends. As a youthful alchemical enthusiast, the figure of Victor articulates the positive powers of the untrammelled imagination. Once he enters into the grown-up world of the university, at Ingolstadt, due to his father's wishes, Victor, under the influence of his professors, articulates an androcentric scientific rationalist perspective on the world. The monster he creates articulated all that Victor has had to deny in order to function properly as the disciple of professor Waldman.

Marie Roberts gives a detailed intertextual account of the historical origins of the figure of Victor Frankenstein. In Germany, "Castle Frankenstein" was "the home supposedly of Johann Konrad Dippel, a brother of the Rosy Cross." This man "Dippel

even used to sign his name Frankenstein" and "one of his sports was to plunder graves for the purposes of furthering experiments in the artificial creation of life" (M. Roberts 99). Apart from this historical alchemist, another obvious source for *Frankenstein* is of course Godwin's *St Leon*. Mary Shelley had read *Caleb Williams* in 1814 and *St Leon* in 1815, so her father's fiction was quite fresh in her memory when she started on her story.[11] Walter Scott has drawn attention to the intertextual link between Shelley and Godwin's work when he spoke of the "more refined use of the supernatural," used "not for the purpose of pampering the imagination with wonders, but in order to shew the probable effect which the supposed miracles would produce on those who witnessed them" (*F* 301). *Frankenstein* is indeed related to the magico-political tales that precede it because it uses the supernatural, in this case the cultural schema of alchemy, for a serious, didactic and philosophical purpose. Scott wrote, "*Frankenstein* is a novel on the same plan with saint Leon" (*F* 303). He was drawn to make this link, of course, because both books use the cultural schema of alchemy as their most overt gothic trope. According to Scott, by "assuming the possibility of the transmutations of metals and of the elixir vitae, the author [Godwin] had deduced, in the course of his narrative, the probable consequences of the possession of such secrets upon the fortunes and mind of him who might enjoy them" (*F* 303). Scott recognizes the analogies present in the alchemical tropes and schemes that lay at the heart of Godwin's novel and by the laws of genre projects them onto a novel clearly constructed using a similar fantastic literary repertoire. Significantly, Scott addresses the unknown author of *Frankenstein* as "he," which, together with his reference to *St Leon*, suggests that he suspects Godwin, or probably Percy Shelley to be its author, linking the tale even closer to the overtly radical content of the writing of these two well-known literary figures.

Apart from reading her father's writings, Mary Shelley met, fell in love and eventually eloped with Percy Bysshe Shelley, himself a one-time author of Rosicrucian gothic fiction and an amateur alchemist. Next to Godwin's magico-political tale, Percy Shelley is another important source for Mary's engagement with the cultural schema of alchemy. E.J. Clery explains that "Shelley had spent his adolescence in a fever of novel-reading and experiments with alchemy," which resulted in the publication of his two gothic novels, *Zastrozzi* (1810) and *St Irvyne, or The Rosicrucian* (1811), the latter of which was highly influenced by Godwin's *St Leon*.[12] Roberts suggests that Percy's "leanings towards magic and science granted him an immediate affinity with the Rosicrucian outlook" (M. Roberts 57). Clery argues, in turn, that "it seemed to be by this route that he came to *Political Justice*, and began to abandon Gothic fantasy for more serious political and philosophical pursuits under Godwin's guidance" (Clery, *Women's* 122). While Clery argues that eventually, St Leon and Godwinianism, helped Percy to move beyond gothicism and the occult, magic and political radicalism once again combine here to form a means of constructing a publicly dissident identity.

St Leon could well have shown Shelley how radical philosophy could be channelled in fiction through the schema of alchemy, fusing his two main interests, youthful interests,

[11] Frederick L. Jones, ed., *Mary Shelley's Journal* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1947) 221.
[12] E.J. Clery, *Women's Gothic from Clara Reeve to Mary Shelley* (Tavistok: Northcote House, 2000) 121.

radical political reform and occult science. Like Victor Frankenstein, Shelley had no shame in confessing to Godwin in a letter that he "'pored over the reveries of Albertus Magnus and Paracelsus' with an enthusiasm which almost amounted to belief"' (quoted in M. Roberts 57). James Rieger has written that "Shelley talked of science as if its end were politics." He points out that "the Godwinian anarchism which he was about to swallow whole, with its dream of the abolition of class and the revocation of the curse of work, is at bottom nostalgic, not futuristic."[13] While Rieger's argument about the nostalgic nature of Godwinian radicalism seems a hasty generalisation, his insight into the link between earlier forms of radical idealism and that of the radicals of the early nineteenth century, goes some way in explaining why Godwin and Shelley held an interest in the cultural schema of alchemy. Rather than a nostalgic look backward to a bygone golden age, Godwin's vision of utopia is best characterized by a vision an ever-upward spiralling motion towards a higher state of individual intellect and social equality. This philosophical concept of a spiralling motion towards perfection, M.H. Abrams shows, is a Romantic philosophy that has its roots in alchemical and hermetic writings.[14] By the early nineteenth century, this way of looking at development formed an alternative model of intellectual progress to the positivistic ideas of linear progress through rational scientific practice and utilitarian social philosophy. It is likely that both Godwin and Shelley found the scientific analogue to their political ideal in the spiral movement towards perfection in the schema of alchemy, with its dominant symbol of the *uroboros*, the tail-eating serpent. Crosbie Smith notes that, in Mary Shelley's time, "the laws of nature themselves, such as Newton's Law of Universal Gravitation, stood as the exemplars of reason. Any further attempts to probe the causes behind the law were then assigned to an ancient metaphysics (such as that of natural magic) and thus to *forbidden* territory" (Smith 41). Godwin's, his daughter's, as well as Percy Shelley's interest in the cultural schema of alchemy may well have lain in the alchemists' historical social and intellectual marginality and dissidence towards mainstream scientific ideology. According to Mellor, "Mary Shelley was one of the first to comprehend and illustrate the dangers inherent in the use of…gendered metaphors in the seventeenth-century scientific revolution" (which I discussed in chapter three). In this scheme, Mellor distinguishes between "good" science, "the detailed and reverent description of the workings of nature," and "bad" science, "the hubristic manipulation of the elemental forces of nature to serve man's private ends" (Mellor 89). Alchemy, significantly, in its penchant for fusing dominant cultural binaries, is not necessarily a bad science and is potentially a good science. Ellis explains that the marginality of alchemy in the early nineteenth century is due to the fact that "the magical and alchemical will not conform to the rule of scientific reason in that it has recourse to a supernatural world of spirits and essences" (Ellis 142). Although a rational thinker, Godwin was not a rational scientist, and his interests in science were always visionary and unorthodox. Like the utopian science fiction authors that would follow him, he wished to conjecture how scientific developments could work to enhance the quality of life on earth for humans and the planet itself. From this position, Godwin allowed scientific practice to move beyond the reasonable expectations of human progress

[13] James Rieger, *The Mutiny Within: The Heresies of Percy Bysshe Shelley* (New York: George Braziller, 1967) 58-9.
[14] M.H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism* (1971; New York: Norton, 1972) 154-164.

held by the accepted notions of science of his day and into the realm of magic – magic defined as science as yet unaccepted – as he conjectured on the eradication of sleep and illness, the limiting of labour and expansion of leisure time and so on.

Marie Roberts argues that apart from his personal alchemical experiments, Percy Shelley's attraction to the myth of Rosicrucianism lay in the fact that he "was attracted to the popular image of the secret societies subversively gnawing at the fabric of Western civilization," expressed in his early fiction *The Assassins*, and in his belief that "'it has been for want of societies of this nature that corruption has attained the height at which we now behold it'" (M. Roberts 59-60). In the foreword to a modern edition of Percy Shelley's gothic novels, A.J. Hartley writes that "the Rosicrucian, like his creator, and in conformity with the aims of the Rosicrucian Society, is concerned with reform."[15] Hartley also stresses the presence in Shelley's *St Irvyne* of "themes of marriage and female emancipation" and Shelley's concern in this novel about how coercion stimulates revolt (*ZI* vii). This notion is articulated also in *Frankenstein*, which stresses the differences in point of view on alchemy between the young Victor, his father and his professors. In *St Irvyne*, the cultural schema of alchemy is used to give shape to a theme of defiance against a wider androcentric patriarchy that dominates the socio-political landscape of Britain in the early nineteenth-century. In *St Irvyne*, the Rosicrucian wanderer is portrayed as an "indefinable…being" who, as Frederick S. Frank explains, stands "outside all systems, beneath all codes, and beyond all moral imperatives," and "is the archetypal outcast of the universe" (*ZI* xv). The immortal wanderer unmasks to his initiate, not unlike the alchemist in *St Leon*, the coervice nature of "a false system of education" on men and women and teaches the initiate to conceive of marriage as "a chain, which, although it keeps the body bound, still leaves the soul unfettered" (*ZI*, 149, 157, 217). Frank sees in Shelley's Rosicrucian fiction what he calls "the gothic ethic whereby evil becomes the good principle because it is the only means left to man to assert his identity and to combat the absurdity of existence" (*ZI* xvii).

William Veeder draws attention to the similarities between the individual identity of Percy Shelley and Victor Frankenstein and the significance of this link to Mary Shelley's interest in androgyny (see Veeder 41-46, 227). It is useful, therefore, to look more closely at the young poet's identity. Shelley was born into an aristocratic British family and Williams explains that for the disgruntled Shelley, as for his mentor Godwin and Godwin's American disciple Brown (or even the fictional figure Victor Frankenstein), "rebellion at home led to rebellion against the political and religious establishment" (Williams 42). Such ideological rebellion against his aristocratic heritage, significantly, is also a rebellion against ideologies and institutions that help to construct individual identity, since Shelley, like Godwin and Wollstonecraft, realised that individual identity is socially constructed and needs to be continually performed to ensure its stability. Michael Henry Scrivener argues that in Percy Shelley's own gothic fiction

> the question of identity resolves itself in social terms. One is a landlord, husband, father, peasant, king, or merchant. Identity derives from familial

[15] A.J. Hartley, foreword, *Zastrozzi, a Romance; and St Irvyne: or, the Rosicrucian: a Romance* (1810 and 1811; New York: Arno Press, 1977) vi.

> and social role. If, however, one's socially sanctioned identity no longer corresponds with one's own subjective concept of self, then there is identity crisis, and one must discover identity by exploration.[16]

Identity, then, becomes a robe, to be donned or discarded. In his search for a fitting identity, Scrivener adds that in William Godwin, Percy Shelley found a real-life embodiment of the link between an ideological struggle and a struggle for individual identity:

> Godwin presents us with two kinds of identity, the person of rational and disinterested benevolence who has transcended all familial and social determinations, and the obsessive rebel, whose pursuit of knowledge entails extreme experiences that take place beyond the boundaries of what is socially acceptable (Scrivener 37).

The dissenter turned anarchist philosopher explored the potential for radical individualist development through visionary schemes of uncoerced education, a self-induced moral integrity, universal sincerity and benevolence. According to Scrivener, "it is this latter concept of self that Shelley's gothic is capable of exploring" (Scrivener 37). In *St Irvyne*, Shelley, like Godwin before him, turned to the trope of the occult outcast, the anarchic alchemist, to explore how a radical visionary individualism can influence the transformation of the social order. Writing about solitary wandering alchemists and performing alchemical experiments at university was for Shelley not just a dissident literary and scientific practice that the establishment happened to scorn. Ellis explains that "alchemy was more generally a fugitive discipline in the opening decades of the nineteenth century," "the alchemist was by 1810 only a short step from the showman conjurer, spinning wonders at the fair, perpetrating artifice and imposture on a gullible public" (Ellis 144). The cultural schema of alchemy, for Percy Shelley, worked also as a source for a dissident identity performance, allowing him to develop through an androgynous persona an anti-aristocratic, anti-patriarchal, and therefore, anti-androcentric point of view, on the margins of British society, which was powerful in its potential to challenge the establishment he wished to undermine. Shelley's friend Thomas Jefferson Hogg describes how he openly performed this dissident identity at university. He pictures Shelley as an alchemist and describes his digs as "his laboratory" (quoted in Williams 43).

Because for Shelley, the cultural schema of alchemy was a source for expressing dissidence, both on the level of intellectual knowledge as on the level of identity, it is not surprising that in his review of *Frankenstein* he focused on the novel's links with Godwinian radicalism: "treat a person ill, and he will become wicked" (*F* 311). It is not surprising that he does not interpret Victor as an evil transgressor, but recognises in Victor his own performative use of the cultural schema of alchemy as a means by which to distance himself from what he believed to be the oppressive nature of a male-only aristocratic heritage. Like his mentor Godwin – who rebelled against an equally male-dominated

[16] Michael Henry Scrivener, *Radical Shelley* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1982) 37.

Calvinist upbringing and expected occupation as a minister by openly calling for the euthanasia of government, the end to all religion, and professing his faith in the power of the individual mind to perfect itself if guided by sincerity, benevolence and an uncoerced education – Percy Shelley recognized in Victor Frankenstein an individual subject rejected by the establishment because he believes in the power of alchemical magic and tries to articulate this belief in a society in which the dominant order needs to continually abject such alternative scientific and philosophical systems in order to ensure its hegemonic status.

In *Frankenstein*, the cultural schema of alchemy functions, initially, as a contrastive ideology, that highlights the coercive power of dominant familial, intellectual and scientific forces on Victor's young developing mind. As Ellis puts it, the important question to ask in analysing *Frankenstein* is "to what purpose Shelley establishes this debate between science and magic" (Ellis 142). Marie Roberts argues that, like her husband, "the Rosicrucian tradition may have attracted Mary Shelley as an ideological alternative to this bifurcation of magic and science and binary opposition between male and female" (M. Roberts 104). The ideological gendering of science and magic into male and female is blurred in the figure of Victor who embraces both magic and science simultaneously in his ambition to cure all ills and to bring the dead to life.[17] The plot represents Victor's struggle with the coercive forces that work to incorporate him into the dominant fold. Significantly, his magical science eventually produces a creature that in its very singular being whose identity lies beyond the valid gender categories that inform individual identity in Victor's world. The creature is "about eight feet in height, and proportionally large" (*F* 81). His individual parts are taken from "charnel houses," "the dissecting room" and "the slaughter house," suggesting that it is not one-hundred-percent human (*F* 82). Victor calls it initially, "the creature" and refers to his experiment as "infusing life to an inanimate body," remaining unspecific about its gender. After enthusing it with life, Victor calls it "the being," still refraining to name it either man or woman, male or female (*F* 85). He then calls it "the miserable monster," reinforcing the uncategorisable nature of the creature's identity. The creature is a monster, in part because he fails to conform to the anatomical standards prescribed by science to men and women. Noël Carroll explains that beings become monsters when in the eyes of the beholder they are "interstitial," when they "cross the boundaries of the deep categories of a culture's conceptual scheme" (Carroll 31-2). The monster's anatomic impurity, turns him into an indefinite being, a dissident androgyny because his identity does not fuse traditionally bifurcated male and female characteristics, but lies beyond the validated categories of male and female.

Crucially, while most figures in *Frankenstein* are fixed within a specific class and gender role, both Victor and his creation are shown to embody fluid identities. This suggests that their antagonistic relationship in the novel in fact hides many similarities, that when highlighted expresses a philosophical androgynous ideal. Read as doubles, Victor and his creature can be interpreted not as the monstrous human being and the human monster,

[17] Mary Daly's and Jane Caputi's *Webster's First New Intergalactic Wickedary of the English Language* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987) is a good example of how strong in western culture magic has become associated with women. Daly's and Caputi's book celebrates this connection by conjuring up a witch's brew of radical feminist politics and magical lore.

but as metaphorical vehicles whose antagonism articulates the struggle for dominance between a male-dominated scientific and social practice (embodied in the figure of Victor once he has become the prodigy of his professors at the university) and a dissident androgynous alternative, monstrous when viewed through an androcentric lens, but potentially utopian when approached from the perspective of the abject, signifying the fusion of binaries that have been pulled apart by ideological pressures to conform.

Fred Botting highlights that it is plausible to read Victor Frankenstein as an alchemist. Most general readers, influenced by the privileged interpretation of Victor as misogynist overreacher, are unacquainted with this tradition. For the readers who do not acknowledge the initial alchemical basis of Victor's experiment, Botting argues, "representing science as a 'new alchemy,' the novel constitutes a critique of scientific enterprises."[18] In this, now privileged reading of the novel, the modern scientist is the new Faustus, who loses control of his powers and becomes "destructive, irresponsible and anti-social" because "cold reason and inhuman rationality threaten the warmth of human social relations" (Botting, *Making* 166). Clemit's reading belongs to this critical tradition. She argues that "in *Frankenstein*, as in *St Leon*, occult practices lead to moral isolation and the destruction of the family" (Clemit 144). Similarly, Mellor argues that Mary "Shelley's ideological commitment to a mutually supportive, gender-free family, in the novel, functions as the ethical touchstone by which the behaviour of Victor Frankenstein is found wanting" (Mellor 44). Mellor shows, however, that whatever Mary Shelley's intentions were in *Frankenstein*, it is her readers who ultimately decide on the cultural work the novel performs. Like Veeder, Mellor points out that Percy Shelley "consistently read Victor Frankenstein sympathetically" but she qualifies this sympathy by arguing that he could do so because he "sometimes as blind as Frankenstein himself, softened or eliminated his errors" (Mellor 63). Another explanation for Percy Shelley's sympathy with Victor, however, is that he read the literary figure as the victim of a repressive ideology that pushed the young alchemical enthusiast into the margins of society, from which he could only return by rejecting his interest in alchemy and embracing the dominant science creed. Baldick points out that *Frankenstein* invites multiple, if not conflicting, interpretations. With regard to the trope of radicalism that informs the text, for instance, Baldick writes:

> read from the Burkean position, as it usually is, the novel seems to warn against the recklessness of the radical *philosophe* who tries to construct a new body politic. But read from the position of Paine, Wollstonecraft, or Godwin, it seems to suggest that the violence of the oppressed springs from frustration with the neglect and injustice of their social "parent" (Baldick 55).

Depending on the critical viewpoint of the reader, then, both Mellor's and Percy Shelley's interpretations of *Frankenstein* maybe equally legitimate. At the time of publication, when the Godwinian dust had not yet fully settled over intellectual Britain, Percy Shelley's belief in the subversive power of the supernatural and his interest in Godwinian anarchism led

[18] Fred Botting, *Making Monstrous: Frankenstein, Criticism, Theory* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1991) 165.

him to identify with Victor as an outcast rebel, whose magically informed scientific experiments have radical potential but fail as he is cajoled into adopting the dominant viewpoint, which is intent on consolidating the status quo by silencing opposition.

Significantly, narrative perspective of the novel is not that of the author, her husband, or her parents, or even that of the protagonist Victor Frankenstein. The dominant ideological viewpoint is that of the primary narrator: the sea captain and explorer Robert Walton. It is Walton who records the story of Victor, who in turn listens to and then recounts the story of the monster, who tells him the story of the DeLaceys. Walton's letters to his sister and his reaction to the appearance of Frankenstein on the ice plains that have imprisoned his ship, identify him as a figure that represents the dominant ideology.[19] Walton views Victor and his tale through an androcentric lens that supports a continuing drive, during the early nineteenth-century, for the exploration and control of nature to suit the growth of trade, industry and empire. Not surprisingly, Walton's arctic world is literally and figuratively a cold world, peopled by ambitious men seeking glory in the name of science and trade and for the honour of their country. Walton's first words in the novel stress the daring nature of his "enterprise" and his "increasing confidence in the success of [his] undertaking," despite his sister's apparent "evil forebodings."[20] The adventurer Walton presents himself as a typical optimist. Judging from his language, he believes that his sister, back at home, suffers from irrational fears due to her lack of knowledge.

Walton is a sturdy traveller for whom "a cold northern breeze" is a source of "delight." Forever an optimist, the North for Walton is "a region of beauty and delight" not "frost and desolation." His adoption of the manly, rational-scientific and optimistic outlook of the day is shown by the fact that he rejoices that at the polar region to which he is travelling, "the sun is forever visible." In Walton's eyes, "we may be wafted to a land surpassing in wonders and beauty every region hitherto discovered on the habitable globe" (*F* 49). Walton has fully joined the competition of empire, in wishing to discover Eden on earth, "a country of eternal light." That his search is not only for the sake of finding utopia becomes evident from the fact that he conjectures that he "may there discover the wondrous power which attracts the needle; and may regulate a thousand celestial observations, that require only this voyage to render their seeming eccentricities consistent for ever." These last words are important in showing Walton's belief in the powers of modern science to reveal the ultimate truth about nature. That his voyage is not purely scientific is shown by Walton's reassuring words that, even if the scientific enterprise is a failure,

> you cannot contest the inestimable benefit which I shall confer on all mankind to the last generation, by discovering a passage near the pole to those countries, to reach which at present so many months are requisite; or,

[19] Roszak draws attention to the significant fact that Walton's letters have been collected by Walton's sister, whose initials are MWS, the initials of Mary Shelley. According to Roszak, this is significant in implying the feminist grounding of the tale. He argues that even though the story is a male-dominated narration, Mary Shelley's "mind is the enveloping matrix within which the tale unfolds" (Roszak, *Atom* 16).

[20] Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*, 2nd ed., D.L. Macdonald and Kathleen Scherf, eds. (1818; Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2001) 49.

> by ascertaining the secret of the magnet, which, if at all possible, can only be effected by an undertaking such as mine (*F* 50).

Walton has the sense that this one voyage will revolutionize the sciences of magnetism and astronomy and commercial sea-faring trade for the benefit of all future generations.

Walton gained an enthusiasm for explorations as a youth, reading books about voyages of discovery in his uncle's library, but his father's "dying injunction had forbidden" him to go to sea (*F* 50). Significantly, it is a family inheritance, "the fortune of my cousin," that allows Walton eventually to undertake his voyage, for which he prepared by "inuring his body to hardship" by "voluntarily" enduring "cold, famine, thirst, and want of sleep" and by studying "mathematics, the theory of medicine, and those branches of physical science from which a naval adventurer might derive the greatest practical knowledge" (*F* 51). Walton's inheritance, his utilitarian approach to learning, and his thirst for "glory" and wish "to accomplish some great purpose" all show that Walton's outlook is as conventionally androcentric as it can be. He represents all that the dominant ideology would expect of a young man of fortune and learning.

The Memoirs of Elizabeth Frankenstein (1995) is Theodore Roszak's imaginative addition to the Frankenstein myth. Roszak's story is an original novel, a rewrite and an insightful critique of Mary Shelley's tale, told from the perspective of Elizabeth. In the author's note, Roszak explains that "in placing an alchemical romance at the center of the novel, Mary Shelley was delving deeper into the psychological foundations of Western science than she may consciously have realized."[21] He argues that "her intuitive insight into what alchemy reveals about the sexual politics of science has proven to be astonishingly correct" (Roszak, *Memoirs* x). In his novel Elizabeth's memoirs tell the story of how she and the young Victor are introduced by Lady Caroline, against the wishes of Baron Frankenstein, into a secret all-female alchemical order. Significantly, Roszak has made Walton the editor of these memoirs. Roszak's novel gives extra weight to the reading of Walton as a rational scientist whose androcentric perspective twists the presentation of alchemy in the tale. Like Mary Shelley, Roszak makes Walton the editor of the memoirs. Through his editorial notes, Walton expresses his growing disgust with and fear of the alchemical cult. Where Lady Caroline, the young Elizabeth and Victor find great stores of knowledge in the teachings and erotic rituals of the mystic female alchemist Seraphina, Walton, from his rationalist androcentric perspective finds the material "frankly obscene" and thanks the Vatican Library for functioning as a guarded storehouse of the kind of erotic texts that should be kept from the public (*MEF* 161). The more Walton learns from Elizabeth's memoirs, the more he comes to fear that this female alchemical cult "hoped to bring about *the unmanning of European science*" by evading "the scientific workplace with forms of erotic dalliance that would undermine its essentially, and necessarily, masculine rigour" (*MEF* 207).

Walton's second letter in the original *Frankenstein* shows the drawbacks inherent in conforming to this masculine role of daring enterprise in the name of science and trade. Walton writes, "I have no friend," Walton laments, "there will be none to participate my joy." Instead of returning home and embracing a less adventurous but emotionally more

[21] Theodore Roszak, *The Memoirs of Elizabeth Frankenstein* (New York: Random House, 1995) ix.

fulfilling life, Walton conjectures: "I desire the company of a man who could sympathize with me." In Walton's homosocial world there is no room for women, not even as private consolers of public failure. Even though he writes these letters to his sister, he already states that paper "is a poor medium for the communication of feeling" and confesses, ironically, that he needs a fellow man who can "regulate my mind" (*F* 53).

Frankenstein is in many ways, the story of how Walton's androcentric outlook is regulated and checked by both Victor's and the monster's story of rebellion against patriarchal authority and social abjection by the very culture Walton represents. Walton initially thinks that in Victor he has found a companion a fellow scientist whose great ambition has led him prophetically to the same desolate, fog-filled frozen northern ocean. This "interesting creature," with his "expression of wildness and even madness," turns out to be a man "so gentle, yet so wise" with a "cultivated" mind, a man whose "words are culled with the choicest art, yet they flow with a rapidity and unparalleled eloquence" (*F* 58-60). In this sense, Victor is much like the alchemist of *St Leon*, or Carwin in *Wieland*. According to Walton, Victor "instinctively takes" an interest "in the welfare of those who surround him" and "no one can feel more deeply than he does the beauties of nature"(*F* 60-1). Walton, calls Victor "a divine wanderer," and tells his sister, in a moment of dramatic irony to those familiar with the story, that "such a man has a double existence: he may suffer misery, and be overwhelmed by disappointments; yet when he has retired into himself, he will be like a celestial spirit, that has a halo around him, within whose circle no grief or folly ventures" (*F* 61). Walton here expresses the utopian potential of Victor's knowledge just as he stresses the difficulty the alchemist, or utopian philosopher has to get his message across. Victor's double existence, the alchemical secrets he needed to reject, is of course embodied in his creation.

At the outset of the novel, which is the finale of the plot, Victor is clearly presented to Walton in the same light as the alchemist in *St Leon*, or Carwin in *Wieland*. He is a mysterious stranger, with apparently great powers and a story of misery to tell, whose presence and words will change the outlook of the listener (Walton). In a way, in his relationship to Walton, Victor plays the role that Agrippa played in his own life, or the role that the alchemist played in St Leon's. Victor tells Walton "listen to my history, and you will perceive how irrevocably it is determined" (*F* 62). The language is ambiguous here. Is Victor's fate determined by his over-ambitious actions, by his education, or by his family background? While the androcentric lens through which Walton records Victor's story emphasises Victor's transgressions of patriarchal custom, scientific rules and masculine obligations, Victor's tale, told "as nearly as possible in his own words," is not made up of his own words but Walton's.

It is in Walton's account of Victor's story that, as Smith argues, "Frankenstein would slip imperceptibly from his place in 'rational society' into a state of enthusiasm, radicalism and even madness, a state that threatened the social order itself" (Smith 49). Victor ensures his listener (Walton), however, that he was "not recording the vision of a mad man" (*F* 80). It should be taken into account, then, from which ideological perspective his apparent madness is defined: from his own perspective, as a onetime enthusiast of alchemy who is pressured into rejecting this knowledge in favour of modern scientific practice, or the

androcentric lens of Captain Walton, who himself seeks immortal fame by controlling the powers of magnetism, revolutionising the science of astronomy and discovering a trading route to the East via the North. What is approved and denounced in the course of the novel is what the figure Walton chooses to approve or denounce, not the author, the protagonist, or his creation.

Just like the novels discussed in chapter four, Victor's confession to Walton opens with an exposition of the social order that would be challenged by the intrusion of alchemical philosophy and science in the course of the narrative. It is in Victor's apparently happy and stable family home that the first clash between the dominant patriarchal order and the cultural schema of alchemy takes place. Walton recounts how Victor told him that his Genevese family was considered "one of the most distinguished of that republic." His ancestors had been "counsellors and Syndics" and his father "had filled several public situations with honour and reputation" (*F* 63). Victor reveals that his family has been a powerful and respected family within the community and that, like that of Falkland, Reginald de St Leon and Theodore Wieland, his father's identity was founded on his belief in traditionally masculine concepts such as honour, public service and family reputation. Like St Leon's father, Victor's father expects his offspring to "carry his virtues and his name down to prosperity" (*F* 63). Importantly, Hoeveler argues that fathers in Mary Shelley's fictions "are not simply demigods of the family hearth, they are representatives of a larger oppressive patriarchal system. They inherit and bequeath wealth because they represent and embody that lucre themselves in their persons" (Hoeveler 1998, 159). Roszak's version of *Frankenstein* gives extra weight to this reading of the role of the father in Mary Shelley's novel. In *The Memoirs of Elizabeth Frankenstein*, Baron Frankenstein is portrayed as the head of a world-wide merchant company, who strongly believes in the superiority of reason and Newtonian empirical scientific practice over the imaginative faculty and its penchant for the occult.

Not dissimilar to Falkland (who on his way home, one evening, stops at a town to rescue a young maiden from a burning house), Victor's father shows the valiant behaviour expected of a true gentleman when he "came like a protecting spirit" to a distressed maiden, Caroline Beaufort, and married her. Frankenstein's mother is not the social equal of her husband, however, but, as Mellor explains, she "incarnates a patriarchal ideal of female devotion and self-sacrifice," much like Marguerite in *St Leon* (Mellor 116). Like Reginald de St Leon, who idealises his wife as a paragon of domestic virtue, Alphonse Frankenstein orders a portrait to be painted of his wife "in agony of despair kneeling by the coffin of her dead father…her garb rustic and check pale" with "an air of dignity and beauty, that hardly permitted the sentiment of pity" (*F* 104), illustrating that his notion of True Womanhood embodies above all an unqualified devotion to the family patriarch. Hoeveler argues that Shelley's "heroines are always defined and self-identified as daughters first, wives second, mothers only briefly" (Hoeveler, *Gothic* 160).

As a father, Alphonse extracts himself from the public sphere only late in his life to become the educator of his children. This turn to domestic duties, idealised in Walton's account of Victor's story, only thinly disguises that it serves a public patriarchal project. Because Alphonse's age prevents him from fully participating in the public sphere, he

needs to ensure that Victor will follow the right path in order to take over his expected duties to the family, the community and the country. Alphonse is worried about is family's status and power. This becomes evident when, Victor confesses that, despite his father's belief in free education, he was to be "the destined successor of all his labours and utility," leaving the young Victor little freedom to chose a profession of his own liking (*F* 64). Significant here is the central role that work and public usefulness have in Victor's prescribed career as heir to the house of Frankenstein. This is different to *St Leon*, where patriarchal masculinity, within the sixteenth-century aristocratic setting, was identified with military valour, the public show of material splendour and the privilege of aristocratic lineage. Even though "the voice of command was never heard," like St Leon, Victor is simply expected to perform his role as family patriarch and is covertly pressured by his father's "attention to public business" into being a similarly useful and productive member of society (*F* 63).

In a more liberal, yet residually aristocratic spirit, Alphonse Frankenstein also becomes the guardian of his sister's daughter, Elizabeth – Victor's cousin – who, having inherited her parents' wealth, is a useful family member as the bride-to-be for Victor. Their union would strengthen the house of Frankenstein by combining family fortunes. From the outset Elizabeth's status as half sister fix her in a quasi- incestuous family bond with Victor (*F* 65). In promising to marry Elizabeth, Victor is acting more out of social custom and on his society's traditional expectations of eldest sons than he is acting from the heart. His failure to eventually fulfil this familial and simultaneously social obligation does not have to be read as Victor's failure to do what is right. As will be shown, it can also be read as the inescapable consequence of the coercive pressures put on Victor by his father's adherence to patriarchal traditions and his androcentric point of view which views women as wives rather than individuals.

According to Roszak, "Mary recognised that alchemy was a deeply feminine approach to nature" (Roszak, *Atom* 112). Rather than calling it a feminine approach, chapter three has shown, alchemy can be described as a cultural schema that encourages an androgynous worldview. Speaking about the gender symbolism of alchemy, in which Victor initially interests himself, Marie Roberts explains that

> the androgyny of this system of symbolism grounded in the iconography of alchemy may be suspect to present day thinking, since androgynous compromises invariably end up by privileging the male and as such do not offer a satisfactory alternative to the gendering of male science and female nature (M. Roberts 105).

This concept of androgynous compromises, or the complementarity of ideologically prescribed gender roles for men and women, plays a large part in Victor's upbringing, but not in his interests in alchemy. About his domestic relationship with Elizabeth, Victor states, early on in the novel:

> we were strangers to any species of disunion and dispute; for although there was a great dissimilitude in our characters, there was an harmony in that very dissimilitude. I was more calm and philosophical than my companion; yet my temper was not so yielding. My application was of longer endurance; but it was not so severe whilst endured. I delighted in investigating the facts relative to the actual world; she busied herself in following the aerial creations of the poets. The world was to me a secret, which I desired to discover; to her it was a vacancy, which she sought to people with imaginations of her own (*F* 66).

From the outset, the nobleman's son Victor views his relationship with his wife-to-be much like the aristocratic Reginald de St Leon perceived his relationship with Marguerite. According to Veeder, "Elizabeth thus constitutes Victor's complement in an ideal androgyny" (Veeder 107). While Victor's words in the quoted passage stress harmony in complementarity, his subsequent actions, as in the case of St Leon, show that this domestic androgynous ideal is a fraud. In the course of the novel, the monster will increasingly come to embody a form of dissident androgyny, monstrous when seen through the androcentric lens of Walton, and his fellow scientists, but potentially utopian when viewed from his own perspective.

As in *St Leon* and *Wieland* it is after the establishment of a dominant androcentric order that the schema of alchemy is introduced into the novel to challenge its "natural" hegemony. In *Frankenstein* it is not a strange wanderer holding secret magical powers who enters Victor's enlightened world. Victor does not come into contact with alchemical knowledge by isolating himself from society, by entering into a solitary cell in a monastery, a castle tower, or a forgotten library. Instead, seeking shelter from the rain, Victor enters an inn at the Spa town of Thonon.[22] Here he discovers the writings of Cornelius Agrippa on a book shelf apparently designed to offer guests casual reading. Just as the ice flows of the North imprisoned Walton in order to allow him to change his mind about his enterprise, the rain pushes young Victor indoors, allowing him to become acquainted with Agrippa, an author who would lead him to visionary notions of how to improve society for the better. This coincidental encounter with what was in Shelley's time considered occult mumbo jumbo suggests that dissident alchemical and magical knowledge can be repressed but not eradicated from society altogether. In a world dominated by enlightened empirical scientific investigations into the workings of nature, alchemists are no longer visually present within society. Their ideas and practices, however, live on in the writings and legends they have left behind, lingering in a forgotten corner to be picked up and used by those who venture from the beaten track. Like Godwin's philosophy, which was available not only in the expensive official three-volume editions of *Political Justice*, but also in pirate editions and pamphlet form that circulated among the poorer classes, alchemical knowledge takes on a potentially dissident character by being available on the reading shelves of an inn, while it is rejected as legitimate knowledge by the university.

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[22] In Roszak's *Memoirs of Elizabeth Frankenstein*, Victor is taken to Thonon by his mother, so she can initiate him into alchemical studies, free from the interference of the Baron.

Ellis emphasises that, like Carwin's hermetic knowledge in Brown's *Wieland*, "Victor's tuition in alchemical thought is autodidact" (Ellis 134). As with Carwin, the fact that the protagonist's learning is autodidact is not merely a coincidence, but actually necessary to the plot. The abject status of alchemical knowledge in Victor's world, as the reactions to it by authoritative figures in the novel make clear, keeps it off university curricula, and, in the end, works to condemn both Victor and his creation as monsters. Here Victor differs greatly from Walton. Walton tells his sister that he is seeking Eden on earth, while he simultaneously reveals that he seeks recognition by the dominant androcentric culture, in the shape of everlasting fame through what Alphonse calls "real and practical" science (*F* 68). Walton and Alphonse share this androcentric belief in the unquestionable reality and positive practicality of rational scientific ideology.

Unlike Walton, the young Victor studies the alchemists because their visionary philosophy and magical science offer him visions of how to "banish disease from the human frame, and render man invulnerable to any but a violent death!" Like Walton, Victor claims that "wealth was an inferior object" and that he looks forward to the "glory" that "would attend the discovery" (*F* 69). The difference in the nature of this glory is that Walton, while professing not to care about the material benefits, is actually participating in project that would benefit mercantile trade and therefore has material gain as one of its core aims. Victor's aims, informed at the time by alchemy, are more overtly utopian in their very visionary nature. Just as Clara Wieland, having come into contact with Carwin's androgynous presence and anarchic voice, speculates on the levelling power of progressive knowledge, so "a new light seemed to dawn upon [Victor's] mind" after he reads the work of the alchemists (*F* 68). As was the case with the New Alchemists, studying the ancient knowledge of the alchemists leads an otherwise rational and enlightened Victor to challenge the apparently natural authority of the established scientific and social doctrines of his day. While Victor does not realise the effect his alchemical interests have on his surroundings, the plot of the novel shows the reader that his acquisition of alchemical knowledge is disturbing to those who represent the dominant order, his father, his professors and Walton. Rather than making irrelevant the function of women in society, Victor's enthusiasm for alchemy seems to trouble those who occupy paternal roles. In his rewrite of the story, Roszak also stresses that presence of the alchemy has an anti-patriarchal function.

Baldick explains that in *Frankenstein* "knowledge is shown to be double-edged, its benefits and hazards depending upon the circumstances, and the spirit, in which it is pursued" (Baldick 45). Victor initially studies alchemy in an optimistic spirit and in the name of utopian pursuits. As in *St Leon*, *Wieland* and Poe's tales discussed in chapter four, the established authorial figures in *Frankenstein* react to Victor's acquisition of alchemical knowledge with repressive tactics that lead to Victor's ruin.

Like Mellor, Veeder refutes Percy Shelley's reading of Victor as the victim in the novel. He responds to Shelley's Godwinian explanation of Victor's deeds – "treat a person ill, and he will become wicked" – with the critical questions, "who treated him [Victor] ill" and "what about his victims?" (Veeder 228). Veeder himself, curiously, argues that "Victor flies the coop of domesticity in order to reach males," suggesting that it is his innate

androcentrism that leads to the neglect of his family and their eventual destruction (Veeder 190). Victor makes very clear, however, that he never wished to go to Ingolstadt and that his father managed to make him believe that there he could get a proper education that would rid him of his misguided interest in alchemy. It needs to be stressed that it is only from Alphonse's point of view that alchemy is misguided and that Victor adopts this point of view under pressure to conform, not from his own learning. Victor, the alchemist, suffers ridicule at the hands of his father: "Ah Agrippa! My dear Victor, do not waste your time upon this; it is sad trash" (*F* 68). Victor's father here expresses not only his adherence to the dominant rational scientific outlook, but also reveals his masculine panic about whether his son may not be eligible to step into his public shoes once he has "become a man." Alphonse may well ridicule Victor's interest in Agrippa because he fears that an interest in hermetic science and philosophy (which he considers branches of the arts) may turn his son into a non-productive and useless member of society.[23] Should Victor don this androgynous social identity as unproductive male with interests in fantastic myths, magic, and a belief in an irrational science, he could not act out his prescribed role as heir to the house of Frankenstein, leading to its demise. Ironically, it is his father's patriarchal anxiety, leading to the coercive measures that will force Victor into taking the proper ideological point of view and donning the prescribed gender identity that destroys his family.

Johanna M. Smith argues that "the most significant element of Shelley's critique is her analysis of the 'alignment' between scientific discourse and gender discourse."[24] In the novel, rational enlightenment science is overly linked to an androcentric outlook and patriarchal ideology. Victor, by identifying with the alchemists early on in the novel, is effeminised in the eyes of his father. He refuses to explain to Victor why he believes alchemical philosophy and occult theories are not worth studying, and simply condemns Victor for his continuing interest, making him only more determined to study alchemy and widening his reading to include the works of Albertus Magnus and Paracelsus. This shows that Victor's enthusiasm for alchemy is fuelled by his father's ridicule and condemnation, not by innate scientific hubris, making him a rebel to patriarchal authority.

While Victor is actually eager to communicate to others in his community what he has learnt from the alchemists, his voice is kept silent by his father's "indefinite censure" of alchemy. "Under a promise of strict secrecy," Victor discloses his findings to Elizabeth, who, performing the prescribed feminine role of wife-to-be, complies with Alphonse's censure in remaining uninterested in his studies (*F* 68). Ellis explains that within enlightenment ideology "knowledge that is not shared is not science" (Ellis 150-1). By making sure Victor does not publicly espouse the thoughts of the ancient alchemists, Alphonse is able to brand it as useless pseudoscience, stale old knowledge from a bygone age.[25] It is merely the interest of a wayward adolescent, who needs to be brought into line

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[23] In Roszak's *The Memoirs of Elizabeth Frankenstein*, Victor's father is also portrayed as all too eager to have Victor educated in the Newtonian scientific tradition, calling the alchemists "intellectual refuse" (*MEF* 263). The fact that in Roszak's book alchemy is a feminine secret lore, strengthens the idea that underneath the Baron's apparent concern for his child's education, lies a fear that if Victor dabbles too long in alchemy, he will become effeminised.

[24] Johanna M. Smith, *Mary Shelley* (New York: Twayne, 1996) 43.

[25] In *The Memoirs of Elizabeth Frankenstein*, alchemy is a folkloric knowledge, passed on, in this case, from women to women, through secret initiation and esoteric emblems, not by published written language.

with the accepted scientific knowledge. While Victor tells Walton that his education was "never forced," his confession reveals this to be a misjudgement. As soon his father's liberal attitude to education leads Victor to an enthusiasm for alchemy, and therefore away from the prescribed masculine pursuit, his father expresses "a wish that [he] should attend a course of lectures upon natural philosophy, to which [Victor] cheerfully consented" (*F* 70). Contrary to Veeder, who saw Victor fleeing the nest to be with other men, Victor's concession to the demands of his father to conform to the expected course of education for sons of noble families is the first step towards his ruin. His "parents resolved that [Victor] should become a student at the university of Ingolstadt." Walton emphasises that it was his "father" who "thought it necessary, for the completion of [his] education, that [he] should be made acquainted with other custom than those of [his] native country" (*F* 71). Alchemy in itself could not have led to ruin, as its success would lead to wonderful reforms of society, while its failure would simply leave Victor toiling away at home forever and in vain, doing nobody harm but his father's sense of patriarchal duty.

The all-male scientific community of the university town is analogous to the male-dominated patriarchal family in which Victor is raised. While Roszak emphasises that it is here that "he abandons alchemy," I would say that it is here that Victor struggles initially to unify the alchemy and science, leading to the creation of the monster (Roszak, *Atom* 113). Once at Ingolstadt University, the authority of Victor's father is replaced by the equally androcentric authority of his professors. Just as his enthusiasm for alchemy caused his father to send him away to be properly educated in hope of turning Victor into a productive and useful family heir, his refusal to give up alchemy altogether at university leads to friction within the scientific community. At university, the doors of which are open only to sons of wealthy merchants noblemen and aristocrats, Victor is "suddenly forced to acknowledge the ignorance of [alchemists]," to use Mellor's words, and to adapt his scientific studies to that of the academic establishment (Mellor 90). Ellis explains that "as Victor comprehends and rejects alchemical metaphysics as a species of superstition, the history of the scientific revolution, and enlightenment, is played out in miniature" (Ellis 142). The development of the figure of Victor Frankenstein, as narrated by Walton, is analogous to the cultural transformation process by which alchemy became an abject form of knowledge. As the young Victor moves from his domestic abode where his interests in alchemy were already ridiculed in private, his hesitant entrance into the pubic and exclusively masculine world of the university and the knowledge this institution validates not only saves him from becoming an unproductive and effeminate occultist, but transforms him into the role of Baconian scientist intent on dominating nature for the material benefit of mankind.

In answer to Veeder's question about who treated Victor ill: Alphonse, Krempe and Waldman treat Victor ill by ridiculing his interest in alchemy. They make Victor wicked – in their own eyes – when they pressure Victor into conforming to their own androcentric ideals and what Roszak calls "Macho" scientific practice.[26] So what about his victims? The

[26] Significantly, in chapter 6 of *The Gendered Atom*, Roszak explains how Macho Science is not a product of the scientific laboratory, but an effect on the professional sciences of familial and educational conditioning. Roszak tells an anecdote of how as a child he and his fellow male class-mates were dared by the science teacher to kill and dissect a frog. Roszak explains that "mainstream psychology, which takes autonomous

victims of the monster's anger are not the victims of Victor per se. They can also be read as the victims of a dominant order that cannot acknowledge as valid, Victor's belief in alchemy, since such acknowledgement would endanger its dominant status. As Hoeveler argues, "every one in Mary's corpus is a victim, but her female characters are the victims of victims, and thus doubly pathetic and weak" (Hoeveler, *Gothic* 159). Elizabeth's death, caused by the androcentric establishment's marginalisation of Victor due to his interests in alchemy, makes her the most tragic victim, but clearly not the only one. In true Godwinian fashion, all figures in the novel are victims of ideological coercion, even Alphonse and the professors. Because the dominant ideology places them in the most powerful positions, these men do not realise that they are victims.

Even though Walton's account stresses Victor's willing entrance into the dominant androcentric scientific community – an account understandable when Walton's own ideological position is taken into account – Victor's confession also reveals that he never fully rejects alchemy in favour of the knowledge expounded by his professors Krempe and Waldman.[27] The linear history of the march of rational enlightenment science, which Ellis sees portrayed through Victor's education, is actually characterized by a continual struggle between the residual more mystical theories of alchemy and those he is expected to adopt by the established institutions. It is in the course of his experiment that rational scientific practice gets the upper hand, leading Victor to shift his ideological point of view from alchemically dissident to scientifically dominant and thoroughly androcentric.

Despite stating that all Shelley's characters are victims, Hoeveler gives Victor the status of gothic villain when she says that Mary Shelley "reveals that the sensitive male hero has always been a mad egoist intent on usurping feminine values and destroying all forms of life in his insane quest for phallic mastery" (Hoeveler, *Gothic* 159). Mellor also argues that Mary Shelley "presents Victor Frankenstein as the embodiment of [typically masculine] hubris, of that Satanic or Faustian presumption which blasphemously attempts to tear asunder the sacred mysteries of nature" (Mellor 94). Both critics seem to ignore the way in which Walton's androcentric perspective on Victor's story makes it seem as if his slide into madness is brought about by his struggle to conform to the dominant ideology. Victor's wayward youth and the pressure his father exerts on him to conform to his patriarchal expectations show that Victor was not a mad male egoist intent on usurping feminine values from the outset. Victor's specific type of hubris can be interpreted as founded on a form of cultural dissidence, rebellion against patriarchal authority, an attempt to prove his paternalistically condescending professors Krempe and Waldman that there are alternatives to the established belief in the ultimate truth of enlightenment scientific practice. Rather than creating a living being to usurp the female role in the creative process, Victor can be said to undermine the masculine, scientific sense that the most significant ingredient in the

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masculinity as its model, sees the boy's rejection of femininity as progress towards normality" (Roszak, *Atom* 89). As such, boys, like the fictional Victor Frankenstein, are taught from an early age to objectify the feminine as inherently other.

[27] In *The Memoirs of Elizabeth Frankenstein*, Roszak has Walton explain that he has not only edited but also altered Elizabeth's memoirs by cutting sections he deems inappropriate. By making Walton not just a re-teller of Elizabeth's story, but an active re-shaper, Roszak indirectly questions the captain's role as re-teller of Victor's story.

creation of a human being is the male seed. The way in which Victor sets out to make his living being in fact does away with both the female and male roles, because it bypasses the sexual act entirely.

Like his father, Victor's professors from their authoritative position, call on him to renounce alchemy as "exploded systems" and its authors as "useless names." M. Krempe reacts to Victor's interest in alchemy by saying: "Good God! In what desert land have you lived, where no one was kind enough to inform you that these fancies, which you have so greedily imbibed, are a thousand years old, and as musty as they are ancient?"(*F* 74-5). Krempe prescribes him the accepted course of scientific study and tells him, "my dear Sir, you must begin your studies entirely anew," emphasising that he believes knowledge of alchemy is synonymous with ignorance. One wonders if Krempe is here speaking out of a genuine concern for Victor's education, or from an unconscious masculine panic at having his authoritative and paternalistic position usurped by an individual professing to possess magical powers.

While Walton's account of Victor's story stresses the professor's condemnation of alchemy and shows that even Victor at one point said that he had "long considered those authors useless," it does not hide Victor's expression of "contempt for the uses of modern natural philosophy." While Walton's account of his professors' condemnation of alchemy makes it clear that it is no longer a valid form of knowledge in a world dominated by scientific rationalism, Victor is unconvinced. Unlike Walton, who believes in the power of modern science as the road to glory, Victor expresses the idea that modern science concerned itself merely with "the annihilation of those visions on which my interest in science was chiefly founded," and that at the university he is "required to exchange chimeras of boundless grandeur for realities of little worth" (*F* 75). What Victor suggests here, even if Walton's account of his education draws attention away from it, is that he has to give up on the utopian imagination that sparked his interest in alchemy if he wishes to be a useful member of the scientific community. Victor cannot comply with his professors' request to adopt the dominant scientific point of view. But in the course of his university career, he is increasingly pressured to conform to the rules of the scientific game called "natural philosophy." It is this alteration in the nature of his interests from alchemy to natural philosophy that alters the aims of his experimental science from utopian to egoistic.

Victor despondently states: "Natural philosophy is the genius that has regulated my fate." The term "Natural Philosophy" was the common term for "natural science" in Shelley's time, a catch-all phrase denoting scientific enterprise, which no longer included the by then discredited magical science and hermetic philosophy of alchemy (*F* 67). What Victor laments, it can be argued, is his turn to natural philosophy and the appropriation of an androcentric lens that led to the rejection of his family life and the death of his wife. In pinpointing a cause for his downfall, Victor is in fact alluding also to his father's decision to send him to Ingolstadt to study natural philosophy instead of staying at home with the alchemists. If natural philosophy is to blame for Victor's ruin, Agrippa, Paracelsus, or Magnus go free, and the modern scientist Krempe, who is referred to as "professor of natural philosophy," is incriminated (*F* 74). It is he who ridicules Victor's enthusiasm for Agrippa and Paracelsus, taking over the function as ideological boundary policeman, a role

Victor's father had performed in the early parts of the novel. It is in the context of such ridicule by powerful men that Victor acknowledges his "contempt for the uses of modern natural philosophy" when he sets out to prove its practitioners wrong (*F* 75).

The choice of Ingolstadt as the city where Victor attempts this feat is significant because, as Ellis explains, "Ingolstadt, founded in 1472, was purportedly the *alma mater* of Faustus, a wanderer and vagabond who practiced necromancy and alchemy in the early sixteenth century in association with Agrippa" as well as the founding place of the Bavarian Illuminati, who were linked to radical reform (Ellis 147). Like the radical secret orders, Victor sets out to use his secret knowledge for benevolent causes: "what glory would attend the discovery, if I could banish disease from the human frame, and render man invulnerable to any but a violent death" (*F* 69). His utopian schemes are restricted, however, by the very fact that his methods are not acknowledged by the university staff as legitimate scientific methods and by his family as legitimate pursuits for an heir to the family estate. He cannot legitimately communicate his magico-scientific learning, which turns him into an outcast, a mad scientist, even if his intentions are benevolent. Walton, whose ambitions resemble those of the scientists of his day, in his account of Victor's story represses Victor's continual engagement with alchemy, making it seem as if he has become a scientist in the modern sense, but in fact Victor's experiment shows how he set out to follow alchemical principles and how the pressures to conform to the dominant scientific outlook pushed these principles into the margins.

Clemit argues that "the novel's competing narratives invite us to construe Frankenstein's activity as both rebellion and tyranny" (Clemit 158). In fact, as long as he struggles against the established figures of authority in the novel, and his experiment is founded on alchemy, his act is an act of rebellion. By initially becoming the pupil of the benevolent Waldman, who "smiled at the names of Cornelius Agrippa, and Paracelsus, but without the contempt that M. Krempe had exhibited," Victor sees in modern science a route to utopia. But his identity as Waldman's pupil represents a transitory moment in Victor's eventual adoption of the androcentric lens and a scientific rationalism validated as proper knowledge. Waldman, despite his benevolence and sympathy for alchemists, represents the dominant androcentric viewpoint when he tells Victor, probably to Walton's delight: "if you wish to become a man of science, and not merely a petty experimentalist, I should advise you to apply to every branch of natural philosophy, including mathematics." Walton, a scientist of the modern kind himself, never condemns the scientific outlook of the two Ingolstadt professors as the cause of Victor's miseries. Victor, however, clearly states that "natural philosophy," the scientific point of view to which Walton, Krempe and Waldman are aligned, "decided my future destiny" (*F* 77).

After he has finished his experiment and rejected its results, Victor confesses how "Waldman inflicted torture when he praised, with kindness and warmth, the astonishing progress I had made in the sciences" (*F* 95). Krempe's ironic eulogy of Victor as a student who "believed Agrippa as firmly as the gospel," and "has now set himself at the head of the university," shows how much Victor blames natural philosophy for leading him into such scientific passions that he has created something he fears and rejects (*F* 96). Having reached the height of his culture's expectations, as the intellectual "head of the university,"

Victor's negative reaction to being in this position shows how much he realises that being identified as representing the pinnacle of androcentric science is a horrible identity. In the professor's eyes, Victor is a hero of scientific progress. Victor knows that by embracing "natural philosophy" he has done a horrible deed and has created a monster, himself, and let loose a being onto which the dominant order will project a monstrous identity, because it represents everything that it needs to hide.

It is only after the creation of the monster, brought about by Victor's drive to prove his professors wrong about alchemy that his object in using scientific knowledge turns to tyranny. Significantly, what Victor did not realise is that by making a creature, he has become a father. The moment the creature comes alive, Victor takes up a paternal position, a social identity from which he initially rebelled. The development of Victor's experiment represents this transformation in Victor from anarchic alchemist to natural philosopher. While his enthusiasm for alchemy led him to seek for the powers of restoring dead matter to life, as a true alchemist Frankenstein would not have "spent days and nights in vaults and charnel houses," or turned to grave robbing and the anatomical dismembering of dead bodies, to conduct his experiments (*F* 79). These actions become a parody of empirical scientific investigations, not of alchemy. As he proceeds with his experiment, Victor explains that "contrary to [his] first intention," and because "the minuteness of the parts formed a great hindrance to my speed," he decided to "make the being of a gigantic stature" (*F* 81). Victor, obsessed in proving his professors wrong, becomes like them and Walton by simply wishing to get quick results, so he can show off his superior knowledge to his professors, and enjoy fame as the most knowledgeable man in Ingolstadt, or the entire scientific community. Such an endeavour would have been impossible had he kept within the teachings of alchemy, which stress the harmonious balance of nature and picture the artificial being, the homunculus, as a microcosm of all mankind rather than a macro-version of a single person.

The moment Victor sets out to build a larger-than-life person, he brings about not the alchemical wedding – the goal of his initial studies also in Roszak's version of the tale – but a chemical divorce. Victor leaves the realm of alchemy behind and enters the androcentric world of science. Like Walton, Victor confesses that he "pursued nature to her hiding places," and by making his creature stronger, faster, and larger than humans improves superficially on his natural model. He is now working according to the Baconian scientific method that views Nature as an unruly feminine force to be subdued and mastered by the more wise and powerful male scientist (*F* 82). With this shift in scientific practice necessarily comes a shift in ideological point of view, from alchemically dissident, expressing an androgynous individuality (as an alchemist Victor was male, yet tried to share his knowledge with Elizabeth was interested in science, yet used his imagination to dream of the utopian purposes to which such knowledge could be put) to embodying the androcentric will to power.

Just as Percy Shelley used the figure of the Rosicrucian wanderer in *St Irvyne* as fantastic trope through which to express rebellion against tyrannical patriarchal authority, the cultural schema of alchemy in *Frankenstein,* through its very rejection by figures representing androcentric culture and scientific practice, can be read as having the potential

to perform similar cultural work by expressing dissidence towards the dominant status of an androcentric worldview, represented textually by Walton's voice and thematically by Victor's transformation at university. In this context of dissidence, the monster, the rejected residue left behind after Victor has adopted a scientific rationalist and androcentric worldview, embodies Victor's one- time androgynous identity and utopian schemes that have split away from him in the course of his transformation into a scientist. It is not a coincidence that de Quincy referred to Godwin as a Frankenstein's monster and that Marshall described Godwin as having an androgynous identity. Both the monster and Godwin were individuals whose worldviews and philosophical interests set them apart from the male dominated mainstream. Both suffered from the fact that the dominant order projected onto their persons an identity that embodied everything they needed to abject to ensure the stability of the status quo. While both Godwin and the monster viewed themselves as benevolent individuals with good intentions, their culture branded them as monsters.

Marie Roberts significantly stresses that "Mary's monster is more a child of the alchemists than of the scientists" (Roberts 96). His monstrous status in the society of the novel is brought about exactly by his alchemical genesis, a genesis which is not recognised as legitimate by an androcentric culture, founded on patriarchal customs in which the family unit and women's role within this unity ensures the continual generation of new patriarchs, scientists and explorers. Because he creates life, by recycling dead matter, Victor Frankenstein is not participating in the patriarchal scientific economy. The privileged interpretation of Victor's act of creation defines it as a misogynist act of male appropriation of the female role in human reproduction. Roberts argues, for instance, that "Mary Shelley debunks the masculine myth that woman was born of man by portraying the offspring of a male mother as a monster" (Roberts 104). Mellor devotes two chapters to this theme in her book *Mary Shelley, Her Life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters*. Frankenstein can also be condemned from the patriarchal point of view. As an alchemist, his powers undermine the very institutions that ensure male dominance by prescribing to women a role as reproducers. Even if Victor does not realise this himself, the novel suggests, through its narrative of the repression and erasure of alchemy, that if alchemical science were to become normal science, the patriarchal social structure will crumble.

Once his creation stands on its own two feet and enters society, its presence is construed as monstrous by a male-dominated society, not because it is the monstrous offspring of a monstrous creative act, but because it is a dissident androgynous presence, due to its genesis and existence outside of the patriarchal laws, institutions and customs that inform the androcentric culture and its rational scientific outlook, an outlook now also adopted by Victor, the father. Victor does not identify with the creature he has made, turning away from it in "breathless horror," because it does not correspond to his new identity as male scientist (it is not a representation of his inflated ego) but symbolises instead the alchemical knowledge and identity he rejected when he chose to make a creature larger than human by means of grave-robbing, and by using anatomical surgery techniques to create an artificially large person (*F* 85).

Like Reginald de St Leon, Victor has turned away from the alchemical ideals and used his knowledge for selfish purposes: to come out on top in an egotistical competition for intellectual superiority with his professors and fellow students. His once beautiful and idealistic dreams of curing all ills, fostered by his early interest in the old alchemy, after his father's ridicule and under the influence of Krempe and Waldman, have slowly turned into nightmares. After finishing his experiment he dreams:

> I thought I saw Elizabeth, in the bloom of health, walking in the streets if Ingolstadt. Delighted and surprised, I embraced her; but as I imprinted the first kiss on her lips, they became livid with the hue of death; her features appeared to change, and I thought that I beheld the corpse of my dead mother in my arms; a shroud enveloped her form, and I saw the grave-worms crawling in the folds of the flannel. I started from my sleep with horror; a cold dew covered my forehead, my teeth chattered, and every limb became convulsed; when, by the dim and yellow light of the moon, as it forced its way through the window-shutters, I beheld the wretch – the miserable monster whom I had created (*F* 86).

According to Veeder this nightmare signifies that "the male desire to get beyond woman is satisfied by her death," which in his biographical reading, "relates both to [Percy] Shelley's art and to his life" (Veeder 112). Mellor argues that "by stealing the female's control over reproduction, Frankenstein has eliminated the female's primary biological function and source of cultural power" (Mellor 115). It can be contested whether this ideologically prescribed female role actually gives women any form of cultural power, since this biological function serves a male-dominated society, giving women merely the illusion of cultural power, so that they will not challenge the dominant status of androcentric culture. Before Victor creates his being, his mother, having fulfilled her role as wife and mother, dies while nursing Elizabeth back to health. This suggests that Elizabeth now occupies her position as the future begetter of a Frankensteinian heir. From the androcentric perspective that the novel privileges through the figure of Walton, this seems to be Elizabeth's natural destiny, but in fact her presence in the Frankenstein household is brought about by Alphonse's decision to bring her there and to unify her with Victor, making her a Frankenstein. Elizabeth's only moment of true independence, ironically, is in Victor's dream, where she walks freely through the city of Ingolstadt, the university of which she is not allowed to enter. Victor's nightmare, in this sense, echoes the transformation of Victor's point of view, as her freedom of movement and her right to independence is transformed once Victor embraces and kisses her, acts which confine her once again to her identity as wife of Victor and mother-to-be of the son of Frankenstein. Elizabeth's transformation into Victor's mother's corpse identifies marriage and motherhood with death, as Victor adopts an androcentric point of view and acts on his patriarchal prerogative in turning away from the monster and embracing his role as family heir. From here on, Frankenstein and Walton share the same ideological lens, a union

which makes their close identification possible once they meet and allows the story to be told.

As Frankenstein's double, the creature, as a child of alchemy, embodies the alchemical knowledge and the utopian potential Victor no longer recognises as legitimate. As a fantastic singular being, he performs neither the social function of men or women and he embodies a dissident androgynous identity, an un-gendered, asexual, classless and raceless existence which turns him into a monster. Unlike the alchemists of old, Victor does not accept the results of his experiment once he has adopted the point of view of his father and his professors. Not Victor Frankenstein the alchemist, but Victor Frankenstein the scientist and heir to the family estate dubs his creature "a monster" (*F* 88).

As soon as the creature comes alive, the struggle between Victor and his creation represents the struggle for existence between a residual culture of magical alchemical knowledge with utopian ideals and the dominant androcentric modern scientific outlook buttressed by a patriarchal social structure. For Victor, whose vision is now in line with that of father and his professors, his creation is his "enemy" (*F* 89). The monster is a solitary, wandering, extremely powerful, yet socially uncategorisable creature. The repression this creature's presence evokes wherever he goes reveals how much the establishment needs to police its boundaries to ensure its dominant status.

Importantly, Williams draws attention to the similarity between the monstrous depiction of Carwin in *Wieland* and the monster in *Frankenstein* (Williams 57). In *Wieland*, a novel well-known to the Godwinian circle, Carwin's "cheeks were pallid and lank, his eyes sunken, his forehead overshadowed by coarse strangling hair, his teeth large and irregular, though sound and brilliantly white…his skin was of coarse grain, and sallow hue" (*W* 49). The monster is described as follows: "his yellow skin scarcely covered the work of his muscles and arteries beneath; his hair was of a lustrous black, his teeth of a pearly whiteness…" (*F* 85). Their physical likeness, however, does not automatically give these figures the same function in the narrative, but it does heighten the possibility of a close interfigural relationship. As in *Wieland*, it is only through an androcentric lens that the ideological clash between alchemy and scientific rationalism is perceived as monstrous. As with the anarchic everyman Carwin, the monster's self-taught radical vocal powers allow him eventually to resurface in society, to confront those who reject his being and to articulate dissidence towards the dominant ideology.

The creature's narrative stands at the heart of the novel. This narrative embodies a critique of the very patriarchal society in which Victor himself struggled to find his individuality. It was this society that pressured Victor into rejecting alchemy and adopting the prescribed masculine role of rational scientist and family heir. The monster is Victor's double and his narrative mirrors Victor's early rebellion against patriarchal authority and the masculine role it prescribed to him. Before Victor is confronted with the creature, however, the creature's plight is foreshadowed in the false condemnation of Justine. She tells Elizabeth that "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 that he said I was" (*F* 114). Justine's voice shows the power of the dominant ideology to assert its prerogative and to police its boundaries by abjecting as monstrous who- or whatever

threatens its stability. In the eyes of the authorities Justine's gender, class, and role within the family makes her the most likely suspect. It is Alphonse, the representative of patriarchal authority and custom, who condemns Justine, just as it was Alphonse who sent Victor to Ingolstadt to rid him of his alchemical notions. It is at Ingolstadt that Victor adopts the dominant scientific point of view, from which he needs to reject his alchemical creation, and it is his rejection of his creation that leads to the murder of William, for which Justine is sentenced. In this particular narrative strand, the novel precisely engages with Godwin's concerns about the coercive nature of unquestioned authority and government and the laws created by and for the benefit of those who govern. From this point of view, it is Alphonse who causes the destruction of his family.

Just as the scientist Walton is the confessor of Victor, Victor is the confessor of his own creature. During their meeting the creature tells Victor his story of abjection and auto-didacticism, which is so much like Victor's own youth. While Walton recognises in Victor a fellow scientist, Victor reveals to Walton to what extent he has adopted the dominant ideology by refusing his creature any sympathy. He calls it a "Devil!" (*F* 125) The marginalised creature is able to raise a dissident voice by ordering Victor to comply with the following demand, "hear my tale," an exclamation Victor is to echo when speaking to Walton (*F* 127). This tale of the unfortunate DeLacy family, victims of a scheming merchant and a legalised system of injustice, Mellor argues, "underlines the mutual deprivation inherent in a family and social structure based on rigid and hierarchical gender-divisions" because in their outcast state and enforced communal living they portray "an alternative social organisation" (Mellor 117). Rejected by society, the creature identifies the DeLaceys as his "protectors" (*F* 143). It is from their reading in classical history that he learns that mankind "appeared at one time a mere scion of the evil principle, and at another as all that can be conceived of noble and godlike." The creature learns from the De Laceys about "the division of property, of immense wealth and squalid poverty; of rank, descent, and noble blood," all cultural factors that would determine Victor's rejection of his creation. The creature learns that wealth and riches determine a man's status and that lack of such cultural and monetary assets turns a man into "a vagabond and a slave, doomed to waste his powers for the profit of the chosen view" (*F* 145). The monster is here clearly educated into adopting a Godwinian outlook, which will challenge Victor's recently adopted androcentrism.

In realising that he is stronger, faster and fitter than human beings, and is deformed according to human physical standards, the creature becomes like the outcast alchemist himself, a wandering superhuman figure, whose presence challenges the illusion of a natural social order. Like St Leon after his transformation into an alchemist, the creature asks himself, "was I then a monster?" (*F* 145) While he learns about the idealism latent in humankind, and wishes to participate in a world ruled by "benevolence and generosity," the monster continually experiences rejection (*F* 152). The blind grandfather listens to the monster's tale. Felix, however, as prejudiced against the monster's physical appearance as Victor's father was prejudiced against alchemy, violently throws the monster to the ground and beats it with a stick, forcing the monster to flee the community (*F* 160). Once the creature has lost faith in the positive potential of humanity, he accepts the identity the

dominant order has projected onto him, that of evil monster, and performs it perfectly, showing that Shelley's recognition of the presence of a Godwinian explanation for Victor's evils was not entirely a self-projection, since Victor and the monster are clearly doubles in their upbringing, experiences and fate.

Significantly, the monster searches Victor out in a spot remarkably similar to the place where Victor will meet Walton: a desolate icy plain, the secluded nature of which allows the outcast figure to tell his tale of societal abjection. Both tales, so similar in their content, stress the disastrous results of a cultural tradition that has privileged one gender over another by means of an ideology of gender polarization that has equated shared knowledge, scientific truth and political power with masculinity and secrecy and the fantastic illusions of a private imagination with femininity.

Victor's tale told to Walton shows how patriarchal laws and customs, in the shape of Alphonse, force individuals, both male and female, to adopt preconceived social roles, the refusal of which can lead to coercive measures that lead not to the sustaining of the "natural order," but in fact eventually work counterproductive and destroy the very constructed androcentric social order they were meant to protect. The creature, then, because he performs none of the accepted social roles prescribed to either men or women in society, embodies that society's rejected ideal of individual identity uninformed by the dominant ideological markers of gender, class and race. In the world of *Frankenstein,* an individual who does not fit any of the prescribed identity categories, as seen through the dominant androcentric lens of Walton, is perceived as a monster that cannot function properly in this world and needs to be destroyed.

The story of Victor and his rejection of alchemy in favour of an androcentric scientific rationalism that seeks to dominate nature and with it the feminine does not show that the androgynous symbolism of alchemy privileges the male, as critics of alchemical gender symbolism claims. It shows that the rejection of the schema of alchemy is grounded in the defence of an ideology of gender polarization in which the feminine principle is deemed naturally subordinate. The Romantic androgyny Hoeveler criticises as a cannibalisation of the feminine is embodied not in the monster's uncategorisable identity, but in the figure of Henry Clerval, whose identity represents the union of Victor and Elizabeth in one figure: he is an intelligent, independent, benevolent, nurturing and artistic individual, whose androgynous identity does not threaten the androcentric culture since it does not challenge the dominant status of masculinity. While Clery argues that "Henry appears to represent a utopian androgyny that transcends normal distinctions of gender," he is in fact the representative of the false androgyny represented by the fusion of complementary opposites, as in the case of the bourgeois patriarchal family ideology espoused by St Leon. Clerval reminds Victor of "my father, Elizabeth, and all those scenes of home so dear to my recollection," the patriarchal bourgeois family (*F* 87). In fact, Clerval embodies this family ideology since his function in the novel is to be the family messenger. Speaking about his family, Henry Clerval even makes it clear that he intends "to lecture [Victor] on their account" (*F* 88). His not so coincidental appearance at Ingolstadt leads Victor to say that "his presence brought back to my thoughts my father, Elizabeth, and all those scenes of home so dear to my recollection" (Clery, *Women's* 131). Clerval is

Alphonse's right-hand man and fulfils a controlling function by nursing Victor back to health, which in the context of the novel means nursing him back into adopting the dominant point of view and accepting his patriarchal duties as Alphonse's eldest son. Victor confesses: "I grasped his hand, and in a moment forgot my horror and misfortune; I felt suddenly, and for the first time during many months, calm and serene joy" (*F* 87). This is the joy of social and mental stability that the presence of a family member brings to his chaotic world. That Clerval, like his professors, is a paternal substitute becomes more clear when, after Clerval's death, it is his father who takes over the role of ensuring Victor's restoration "to health and peace of mind" – meaning his continuing alliance to his father's wishes (*F* 208).

While Walton's account of Victor's story stresses the positive function of the paternal care Victor receives, Victor reveals that his "health" is in fact sustained by laudanum, the dose of which he increases (*F* 207). This suggests that his family deem him mad and wish to ensure his docility. On his return home, his father suggests that he should immediately marry Elizabeth. While he stresses the emotional support they can give each other in marriage, Alphonse also says that "when time shall have softened your despair, new and dear objects of care will be born to replace those of whom we have been cruelly deprived." Alphonse shows how he views life in a purely linear movement, where grief for the lost will be surpassed by love for the next generation. He still views this marriage as bringing about the consummation of his own plans (*F* 213). Victor unwittingly reveals his alignment to his father's plans by using rhetoric to speak about his marriage that is similar to the rhetoric Godwin had used to condemn its status as an economic exchange of property between men: "in my Elizabeth I possessed a treasure; alas!" (*F* 211) Victor confesses that Elizabeth "looked forward to our union with placid contentment, not unmingled with a little fear, which past misfortunes had impressed" and that "preparations were made for the event; congratulatory visits were received; and all wore a smiling appearance." The language used here suggests a marriage of convenience, more than a marriage of love. Elizabeth's fearful yet placid contentment shows that she is far from enthusiastic, and the fact that the joyfulness was an appearance rather than a reality, shows that the festivities are a put-on, rather than a genuine celebration. Victor already knows that "the plans of my father…might only serve as the decorations of my tragedy" (*F* 214). This phrase is a key, if unconscious, acknowledgement by Victor that his father's plans, educational (sending him to Ingolstadt), social (marrying Elizabeth) and professional (taking over his public duties), have all participated to bring about the tragedy, of which his father is as yet unconscious. Victor in fact acknowledges that form his early "high hopes and lofty ambition" he has "sunk," and tells Walton that "if you had known me in as I once was, you would not recognize me in this state of degradation" (F, 233). Once, Victor had been an enthusiastic scholar of alchemical philosophy and science, who had the ambition to save the world, now he is a dejected scientist, trying to kill the result of the experiment he abandoned out of fear. The fact that Victor's story is told through the androcentric lens of Captain Walton, whose own masculine hubris is eventually checked by Victor's tragic story, suggests that the state of degradation Victor is referring to, is caused by his adoption of the androcentric lens and rational scientific practice.

Roberts argues that "the marrying of the male and female principles celebrated in the Hermetic allegory [of] the Chemical Wedding…may well have appealed to Mary Shelley as preferable to the denial of the feminine, as in the case of Victor's experiments," experiments better described as bringing about a chemical divorce, since they are conducted within the male-dominated university culture which his father had wished he would embrace (M. Roberts 105). In Roszak's version of the tale, the alchemical wedding is also presented as the ideal towards which the young Victor was striving together with Elizabeth, guided by an ancient female alchemist. In Roszak's novel, as in Mary Shelley's the alchemical marriage fails to come about, because of the pressures on young Victor to conform to the expected masculine stereotype – independent, rational, empirical in scientific outlook and active in social as well as sexual relations – are to great. As in *St Leon*, the presence of alchemy as a dissident form of knowledge in the margins of the narrative and the protagonist's failure to achieve the chemical wedding actually reinforce what Mellor calls "Mary Shelley's political attack on a society founded on patriarchy and the unequal distribution of power and possessions" (Mellor 117).

The dominant voice of the story – Walton's voice – privileges the androcentric point of view and its patriarchal domestic ideal, as Franco Moretti has argued.[28] The presence of the monster's narrative of self-education, self-reliance, and his futile search for acceptance in a community based on equality, however, remains a dissident voice within a narrative that like the alchemical knowledge Victor initially embraces can be repressed but not silenced. Despite its rejection by Walton and Victor himself, the monster's plight makes it possible for the reader to question the very nature of monstrosity. If there is a monster that kills William and Elizabeth it is this very dominance of androcentric culture that has abjected this alternative viewpoint, pushing it underground, and that willing to sacrifice innocent others – William, Justine and Elizabeth – to ensure its own stability. By rejecting the legitimacy of the cultural presence of this socially androgynous creature, and by refusing to build a female companion for it, Victor proves that he is now the representative of the dominant order a male scientist, who cannot acknowledge the feminine principle as an individual identity with a right to equal social status and independence. The creature does not murder Elizabeth out of spite, but as Victor's double murders Elizabeth because Victor has adopted the masculine scientific creed and has rejected the equal status and right to independence of female identity, making his marriage to Elizabeth not the equal un-gendered union of two individuals, but a falsely androgynous union based on the complementary of fixed opposites in which the male is privileged over the female.

As in *St Leon*, the stress on how young men are pressured into adopting an androcentric point of view that naturalises the dominance of a patriarchal order in *Frankenstein* and the presence of an alternative viewpoint embodied in the outcast alchemical figure call attention to the fact that there is no natural order. Transgressions are always transgressions of ideologically configured boundaries. In Victor's case, his interest in

[28] For Franco Moretti's reading of *Frankenstein* as a conservative text that abjects the ideological threat see his essay, "Dialectic of Fear," in *Signs Taken for Wonders*, trans. Susan Fischer, David Forgacs and David Miller (London: Verso, 1983) 85-90.

alchemy goes against the dominant scientific outlook, which, as the novel shows, works to buttress an ideology of gender polarization that creates the illusion that masculine domination of the feminine is the natural order. In the Frankensteinian magazine tales that Hawthorne and Melville would publish in the middle of the nineteenth century, the cultural schema of alchemy can be shown to perform similar cultural work, in highlighting how scientific ideology and the form of masculinity that supported it work together to ensure the upkeep of androcentric cultural dominance.

Hawthorne's "The Birth-Mark" and "Rappaccini's Daughter": Competitive Madness and Cosmetic Monstrosities

Nathaniel Hawthorne's interest in pseudo-science does not limit itself to such nineteenth-century fads as phrenology, spiritualism and mesmerism. In his notebooks, Hawthorne writes about his interest in the legend of an old Salem house onto which a stone tower was built, in which an alchemist – one of several others in the town, he notes – was said to have conducted his experiments.[29] In January 1839, he jots down ideas for writing stories using alchemical imagery: "to make a story of all strange and impossible things, as the Salamander, The Phoenix" (*AN* 184). Both the Salamander and the Phoenix serve as symbols that represent the philosopher's stone, the illusive substance that can turn lead into gold (see Abrahams 152, 176). While novels such as *The Blithedale Romance* mark his interest in mesmerism, Hawthorne's *American Notebooks* are full of evidence that he continually thought about the cultural schema of alchemy as a source for fantastic fiction. Unsurprisingly, it is a pervasive motif in his work, making its first appearance in the fantastic but comic plot of his early tale "Dr. Heidegger's Experiment" (1837). Subsequently, alchemy informs many of his major short stories, most notably the much anthologised "The Birth-Mark" (1843) and "Rappaccini's Daughter" (1844), which will be the subject of analysis here. Alchemy also features in the background of his major romances *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) and *The Marble Faun* (1860) and becomes the central concern of his final and uncompleted work, the novel fragments known as *The Elixir of Life Manuscripts*. Analysing these manuscripts, Charles Swann argues that "rather than gesturing vaguely towards alchemy, Hawthorne had a very precise idea of what was involved – and also that this was more than mere antiquarianism."[30] This idea also holds true for his earlier alchemical stories. As with Godwin, Brown, Shelley and Poe, Hawthorne turned to the cultural schema of alchemy not merely to give his tales a mysterious gothic atmosphere, but also used it as a structural device. As in *Frankenstein*, by incorporating alchemy into his tales of science, "The Birth-Mark" and "Rappaccini's Daughter," Hawthorne is able to contrast the established scientific practice with an older and apparently magical form of knowledge, which challenges the orthodoxy from the margins by resisting its rejection. What becomes clear in Hawthorne's tales is that he gendered the scientific orthodoxy as masculine and identified its marginal counterpart as an androgynous natural force.

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[29] Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The American Notebooks* (Columbus: Ohio State UP, 1972) 181.
[30] Charles Swann, "Alchemy and Hawthorne's *Elixir of Life Manuscripts*," *Journal of American Studies* 22/ 3 (1988): 372.

In a bibliographical essay on Hawthorne criticism, Leyland S. Person draws attention to the fact that several critics over the past decades have paid attention to the way in which Hawthorne's texts engage critically with the hegemonic antebellum gender ideology that projected onto men and women a fixed social role and status. Person acknowledges that some feminist critiques have identified Hawthorne's work as complicit with the public antebellum separate spheres ideology. Person writes, however, that as early as the mid 1970s, "in *The Shape of Hawthorne's Career* (1976), Nina Baym posited a romantic rather than Puritan or Christian Hawthorne, a man who secretly identified with his powerful and passionate female characters as they rebelled against patriarchal authority." [31] In the Oxford *Historical Guide to Nathaniel Hawthorne*, Person reviews his own book, *Aesthetic Headaches* (1988) and writes that in it he "focuses on female characters (including Hester) who refuse to be controlled by men – creating a paradigm of female empowerment and influence that can be observed in tales such as 'Rappaccini's Daughter' and in each of the four major romances" (L.J. Reynolds 197-98). In this book itself Person points out how the man who "often blurred conventional gender boundaries in his characters" was described by his friend and fellow author Margaret Fuller as an androgynous individual, "fusing both traditional male and female characteristics" into his persona.[32] Person writes that, in *Encoding the Letter "A"* (1990), Monika Elbert "measures Hawthorne's representations of male and female characters against an androgynous ideal, and she concludes that Hawthorne anticipates many of the ideas of modern feminists." Person also draws attention to Joel Pfister's argument in *The Production of Personal Life* (1991), that "Hawthorne critiques the sentimental construction of 'masculine' and 'feminine' roles upon which the economic and cultural ascendancy of his class relied."[33] He comes to the conclusion that Pfister's and Elbert's analyses, along with his work, "credit Hawthorne with recognizing women's power and the constructedness of male and female gender roles" (L.J. Reynolds 198). The fact that various critics have found an unorthodox and sometimes even progressive attitude towards gender identity in the work of an author who has been considered a staunch conservative can be explained by pointing out that Hawthorne, as Brian Way argues, has the "tendency to attack and undermine what, on the surface, he appears to admire most."[34] It is the purpose of the following analysis of "The Birth-Mark" and "Rappaccini's Daughter" to show that it is Hawthorne's use of the cultural schema of alchemy that allows him to articulate a dissident androgyny, which stands against the dominant gender ideology. As in the other texts, this dissident androgynous identity is not a complementary union of masculine and feminine traits but an individual identity that elides incorporation into the traditional categories of masculine and feminine and through this elision is able to escape being stamped with a fixed social role and status.

Jane Lundblad has documented the presence of European gothic tropes in Hawthorne's fiction. While she does not pay specific attention to alchemy as a gothic trope,

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[31] Leyland S. Person, "Biographical Essay," in *A Historical Guide to Nathaniel Hawthorne,* ed. Larry J. Reynolds (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001) 197.
[32] Leyland S. Person, *Aesthetic Headaches* (Athens: U of Georgia P, 1988) 94.
[33] Joel Pfister, *The Production of Personal Life* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1991) 8.
[34] Brian Way, "Art and the Spirit of Anarchy: A Reading of Hawthorne's Short Stories," in *Nathaniel Hawthorne: New Critical Essay* (London: Vision Press, 1982) 11.

Lundblad explains that the teenage Hawthorne was acquainted with much British gothic fiction, amongst which were Godwin's *Caleb Williams*, which he liked especially, as well as *St Leon* and *Mandeville*. In a letter to his sister (21 October, 1820), Hawthorne writes, "I admire Godwin's novels, and intend to read them all." [35] Later he would also read Charles Robert Maturin's *Melmoth, the Wanderer,* a magico-political tale engaged with what its author saw as the tyranny of the Catholic Faith. Hawthorne used the name Melmoth for a character in his first novel *Fanshawe*. According to James R. Mellow, Hawthorne also read Radcliffe's gothic romances, Walpole's *Otranto* and the novels of Brown, who would go on to play a cameo role in "The Hall of Fantasy."[36] By the time Hawthorne started to seriously consider a career in fiction, he was familiar with the standard gothic romance as well as the genre of the magico-political tale, which at least at one point in his life he seemed to admire.

While Lundblad, anticipating Ringe's theory of American gothic, argues that in Hawthorne's hands the gothic is raised to a higher cultural plain, Jane Tompkins questions "the essential greatness of his novels and stories," drawing attention to the significance of "the influence of his friends and associates" amongst other non-literary qualities in making him the classic American author.[37] An investigation into his youthful interests shows that Hawthorne was anything but a born intellectual, aloof from the popular culture of his day and can help to show that his work can be read as continuing to a large extent the popular gothic tradition in literature Hawthorne had admired as a youthful reader. Mellow shows, that as a teenager, Hawthorne "became a connoisseur of popular events – Fourth of July celebrations, military musters, country fairs, and travelling raree shows " (Mellow 10). He explains that the young man had "a 'natural repugnance for schooling'" (Mellow 19). Hawthorne managed to get through college without attracting attention, "graduating with the masses" (Mellow 34). He also "developed a taste for the casual gossip of local taverns, preferring it to the polite parlor discourse" and "had a marked preference for democratic, rather than aristocratic, occasions" (Mellow 10). Twice-told tales such as "Mr. Higginbotham's Catastrophe" and "The Great Carbuncle: A Mystery of the White Mountains" reveal this proto-Twainian taste for the popular, non-scholarly approach to writing, steeped in local legend, folklore, and superstition, rather than historical fact and heady philosophy. While living in an intellectual milieu, Hawthorne's youthful interests lay with the popular culture of his day.

Hawthorne's *American Notebooks* provide first-hand evidence of his anti-intellectualist tendencies and broader interests in the popular fantastic. They reveal, for instance, that Hawthorne only half-heartedly attempts to learn German – the philosophical language of the day – after Sophia prompts him to do so. He subsequently invokes the help of his more able wife in translating a story by Tieck. He even complains of almost choking on a large German word and needs to be rescued by his wife once again (*AN* 370,372,378). Here Hawthorne seems already to perform an unusual role with regard to the gender conventions of his day, by positioning himself willingly as his wife's inferior with regard to

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[35] Jane Lundblad, *Nathaniel Hawthorne and the European Literary Tradition* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1947) 35.
[36] James R. Mellow, *Nathaniel Hawthorne in his Times* (1980; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1998) 41.
[37] See Tompkins, *Sensational Designs*, 4.

foreign language skills. As he struggles with the German language – a revered language of the philosophers in his day – at the Old Manse, Hawthorne describes the "ancient volumes" of religious writing that he finds in the library as "trash." Uncharacteristic for his day, Hawthorne perceives these ancient tomes as merely "a lumpish mass of learning, which might give the intellectual stomach an indigestion even to think of" (*AN* 339). At this point in the notebook Hawthorne gives some insight into the way his own imagination works by describing these books as having "much such an aspect as I should attribute to books of magic" (*AN* 338). Hawthorne's imagination here turns what is at first an unappealing object into a mysterious fantastic artefact. There seems to be something of a Catherine Moorland hiding in Hawthorne.

David S. Reynolds adds to this picture of Hawthorne the connoisseur of popular culture by writing that the young author not only consumed earlier British popular fictions but also "discovered prototypes for literary themes and devices in his contemporary popular culture." He explains that "Hawthorne was a close reader of popular newspapers" during his early period of literary development (Reynolds, *Beneath* 117). Hawthorne went on, of course, to edit a popular paper, the *American Magazine of Useful and Entertaining Knowledge*. In the popular reform literature of his day, Reynolds argues, Hawthorne found ways of "bringing together the Conventional [sentimental romance] and Subversive [dark reform fiction] in a symbolic, morally resonant centre" (Reynolds, *Beneath* 115). Reynolds' description of Hawthorne's use of his popular sources echoes Lundblad, Chase and Ringe by stressing what Hawthorne does differently with the same materials to make it better literature. Reynolds argues that by seeking to fuse the building blocks of popular genres Hawthorne improves on his popular models: "'Young Goodman Brown' might be called his improvement on the dark-reform style," while a story such as "The Rill from the Town Pump," inspired by popular temperance literature, "shows Hawthorne using popular devices to move toward literariness." According to Reynolds, Hawthorne utilizes temperance writing not so much to tackle social concerns surrounding the consumption of alcohol, but "as a means of perfecting symbolic style, reaching towards thematic universality, and discovering a detached authorial voice" (Reynolds, *Beneath* 116). What Reynolds seems to identify as the mark of lesser literary status is an overt engagement with social issues and an engaged narrative voice. At the time when Hawthorne set out to write stories for magazines and novels for publishers, a major part of his immediate cultural repertoire was popular fantastic fiction, often tinged with gothic overtones and aimed at social reform, not at aesthetic perfection. Because Hawthorne had an early enthusiasm for such literature and preferred popular spectacle and folklore over intellectual culture, it is likely that this popular sensationalist, gothic writing, with its commercial as well as popular appeal had a great influence on Hawthorne's early development as a professional author. Anne French Dalke argues that Hawthorne is "full of disdain for the artistic qualities of popular fiction," but that like his friend Melville, he "shared with the best-selling writers of [his] day the codes in which certain social concerns were expressed."[38] It is also possible, then, to investigate the similarities between Hawthorne's writing and his popular sources.

[38] Anne French Dalke, "The Sensational Fiction of Hawthorne and Melville," *Studies in American Fiction* 16:2 (Autumn 1988): 195.

In fact, Hawthorne's own theory about the role of the fantastic in fiction suggests that he was genuinely interested in the power of the fantastic imagination: its tendency to overstep the boundaries of verisimilitude and wander into the realm of the supernatural fantastic when the sensational plot demanded such a move.

According to Hawthorne, the genre of "the Novel," with which he means mimetic fiction, "is presumed to aim at a very minute fidelity, not merely to the possible, but to the probable and ordinary course of man's experience." The genre of "the Romance," however, with which he means his own writings, works differently. Hawthorne explains:

> while as a work of art, it must rigidly subject itself to laws, and while it sins unpardonably so far as it may swerve aside from the truth of the human heart – [Romance] has fairly a right to present that truth under circumstances, to a great extent, of the writer's own choosing and creation. If he thinks it fit, also, he may so manage his atmospherical medium as to bring out or mellow the lights and deepen and enrich the shadows of the picture. He will be wise, no doubt, to make a very moderate use of the privileges here stated, and, especially, to mingle the Marvellous rather as a slight, delicate, and evanescent flavour than as any portion of the actual substance of the dish offered to the public.[39]

Hawthorne concludes his theory of romance with the words that the author "can hardly be said, however, to commit a literary crime even if he disregard this caution" – the caution of using the marvellous sparingly, as a flavouring rather than a core ingredient. Hawthorne's theory of romance, by acknowledging the positive presence of the marvellous, in fact, shows many parallels to the Godwinian variety of magico-political gothic, in which the marvellous, while it is used sparingly, is not merely a flavouring but a core ingredient that highlights or shades specific elements of the world that is presented by the author and the personalities of the figures that occupy this fictional world. In this genre, the marvellous has the didactic intent to articulate to its readers a specific social concern, and to highlight the possibility of reform.

In "The Custom-House" sketch that introduces *The Scarlet Letter*, Hawthorne expresses the idea that in writing romance he surrounded himself with "a neutral territory, somewhere between the real world and fairy-land, where the Actual and the Imaginary may meet, and each imbue itself with the nature of the other. Ghosts might enter here, without affrighting us."[40] Romance territory, as Hawthorne perceives, it is not merely an imaginative space into which the reader can escape. It is an imaginative space in which the status of objects as they appear in reality is reversed. If frightening ghosts can become benevolent friends, other supernatural schemata can also be endowed with a positive function. If the actual and imaginary may meet in this territory, this could also be true in an ideological sense, where the dominant ideology meets an as yet unrealised, or rejected,

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[39] Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Preface" to *The House of the Seven Gables* (New York: Signet Classic, 1961) vii.
[40] Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, ed. Sculley Bradley, Richmond Croom Beatty and E. Hudson Long (New York: Norton, 1962) 31.

utopian ideal, as in Brown's *Alcuin*. Way has drawn attention to the potential in Hawthorne's work to articulate ideological critique. According to Way "the underlying spirit of [Hawthorne's] best tales is almost invariably subversive, mocking, even anarchic" (Way 11). Hawthorne's engagement with the marvellous, and especially with the cultural schema of alchemy, as will be shown, plays a significant part in infusing his tales with this anarchic quality.

Richard H. Millington also identifies in Hawthorne's work an "anti-authoritarian narrative practice."[41] Grounded in this neutral territory defined by the possibilities of the individual imagination and above the restrictions of conventional reality, Hawthorne's fiction becomes, according to Millington,

> a place of mixing, of mediation[;] opposites intermingle, comfortably modifying one another…conventions of order and measurement are suspended, and boundaries of all kinds – between light and dark, spiritual and material, strangeness and familiarity 'Actual' and 'Imaginary' – are elided (Millington 52).

In line with Hawthorne's interests, Millington argues that this type of (what he calls) analytic romance "is not an irretrievable marginal or intellectual form" (Millington 145). He follows Reynolds in arguing that

> it originates in the kind of resistance to the authoritarian that animates the popular voice; it shares with popular tradition strategies of expression disguised to penetrate authority's official representations; and it is thus capable of alliance with that voice in the reclamation of communal authority (Millington 145).

Millington's interpretation of the Hawthornian romance as an imaginative fiction that deconstructs "authority's official representations" suggests further that it is useful to compare Hawthorne's work with the genre of the magico-political tale pioneered by the Godwin in Britain and by Brown in the United States. Millington argues that the "counter-authority Hawthorne sets out to create in his work" is achieved by "diagnosing, subverting, or recasting authoritative cultural values or cherished habits of feeling" (Millington 6-7). Godwin had used the figure of the alchemist to present such a counter-authority to the aristocratic Reginald de St Leon. Brown had used the hermetic figure Carwin as a counter-authority to the patriarchal Wieland family. In both cases the anarchic alchemical figure's identity is characterised by a fusion of what those who perceive him deem natural male and female characteristics. When Hawthorne's open evocation of the positive powers of the marvellous is linked to Millington's identification of the anti-authoritarian narrative practice inherent in Hawthorne's theory of romance, it is possible to recast his mad scientists as anarchic alchemists who serve as vehicles for a form of dissident androgyny that is

[41] Richard H. Millington, *Practicing Romance* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1992) 15.

presented as monstrous by the androcentric viewpoint from which the story is told, exactly because it offers an alternative to the dominant antebellum ideology of gender polarization.

In his chapter on Hawthorne's use of alchemical imagery, Clack stresses that "as a student of Puritan and Colonial history, Hawthorne was undoubtedly familiar with some of the stories surrounding the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century New England alchemists," the Hermes Christianus John Winthrop, the Yale president and alchemical enthusiast Ezra Stiles, the one-time Massachusetts chief justice and alchemist Samuel Danforth and the poet Edward Taylor, who "throughout his Meditations…adapted the tropes and metaphors of alchemy to illustrate the redeeming grace of God upon the fallen soul" (Clack 8).[42] Clack juxtaposes this Puritan spiritual alchemy to Hawthorne's tales of alchemy and alchemists, and comes to the conclusion that Hawthorne's alchemical stories are successful only when they use the cultural schema as a metaphorical vehicle, the tenor of which is love. According to Clack, in Hawthorne's successful alchemical tales "love, like the philosopher's stone, can bring heaven and earth into conjunction, transmuting a mundane existence and allowing us to live" – and here he quotes the narrator of "The Birth-Mark" – "'once for all in Eternity, to find the perfect Future in the present'" (Clack 88). Curiously, Clack quotes the moral of "The Birth-Mark" as the type of moral Hawthorne was aiming at in his alchemical tales. While he considers tales and sketches such as "The May-Pole of Merry Mount," "The Great Carbuncle" and "The Artist of the Beautiful" as illustrative of "the marvellous effects of love's alchemy," he concludes about Hawthorne's tales involving practicing alchemical scientists that "the one trait that all these characters have in common is that they are failures." For Clack there is a difference between the alchemist as mad scientist, Aylmer and Rappaccini, and alchemy as a metaphorical vehicle for love. Clack's negative assessment of Hawthorne's mad alchemical scientists is based on his observation that "not one of Hawthorne's alchemists succeeds in attaining either the philosopher's stone or the elixir vitae" (Clack 84). He argues that tales such as "The Birth-Mark" and "Rappaccini's Daughter" are not part of Hawthorne's positive alchemical tales about love's regenerative powers, since their tragic end illustrates "the consequences of rejecting the transmutative qualities of love," (Clack 88).

Clack paints a picture of Hawthorne as "a literary alchemist" who affirms that "love, like the philosopher's stone, can transmute our base existence into a golden conjunction of male and female reflecting the alchemical marriage of the sun and the moon" (Clack 90). In several tales, he argues, "Hawthorne uses the female figure as a vessel for the essence of love and its transmuting (and salvic) qualities." He argues that "from Hawthorne's point of view, the female is exalted in these tales, for she carries the promise of transmutation in the alchemical allegory of the heart" (Clack 102). In this alchemy of love, the human heart corresponds to the *prima materia*, which can transform the base matter of the material man into spiritual gold. While arguing for the complementarity of male and female, however, this tradition of alchemy reinforces the essential duality of male and female genders, and in light of the Puritan appropriation of alchemical symbolism, turns the experiment into a masculine idealist endeavour in which a woman's body

[42] For a discussion of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century alchemists mentioned see Leventhal, *In the Shadow of the Enlightenment*, chapter 4.

functions only as a material means to a spiritual end. The successful alchemy of love that Clack identifies in Hawthorne's work is a secularised version of an otherwise androcentric Christian alchemy that echoes not only the seventeenth-century Puritan use of alchemy, but also the mid-nineteenth-century ideology of domesticity in which the woman is idealised out of material existence and functions as a material means towards men's spiritual perfection.

Clack's interpretation of Hawthorne's use of alchemy adds weight to the privileged reading of Hawthorne's literary persona and work as affirmative of the cultural status quo. In his reading Hawthorne's tales are successful when they praise a universal spiritual ideal and show the inadequacy and immorality of practical magic. In his analysis of Hawthorne's mad scientists, Baldick takes a similar perspective to Clack, further adding weight to the reading of Hawthorne's practicing alchemical scientists as failures. According to Baldick "Hawthorne's stock figure in these allegorical sketches is an isolated man whose mentality and special pursuits tear him from the warmth of (usually female) society until he hardens into a frozen or petrified monster." Placing Hawthorne's tales of alchemical scientists in a contextual paradigm of the contrast between "the human warmth of domesticity" and "the self-defeating coldness and abstraction of egotistical endeavour," Baldick argues that "in Hawthorne's works clinical detachment of this kind…is always a symptom of moral disease" (Baldick 68-69). What these critics ignore when they interpret Hawthorne's isolated mad scientists as archetypal Faustian overreachers is the ideological narrative perspective from which they are viewed in the stories. While the narrators of tales such as "The Birth-Mark" and "Rappaccini's Daughter" may condemn the figures in the stories that adhere to alchemical beliefs and practices, their voices, as in *St Leon*, *Frankenstein* or *Wieland*, while dominating the narrative are not the only voices audible.

Significantly, Hawthorne's *American Notebooks* reveal that Hawthorne set out to write his final alchemical romance after discussing an alchemical legend with his friend Henry David Thoreau, a character in antebellum American culture not known for his interest in Puritan spiritual symbolism, but for his material naturalism. In fact, Hawthorne's personal notes about Thoreau reveal that he was a silent worshipper of the eccentric naturalist. In his discussion of Hawthorne's engagement with alchemy in *The Elixir of Life Manuscripts*, Swann quotes the following passage from the notebook as the epigraph to his essay:

> Thoreau first told me about this predecessor of mine [a former occupant of his House in Concord]…this man who was resolved never to die…It gave me a stronger interest in this spot; and according to my custom, I mused and meditated, and thought within myself, and tried to make out what manner of man this might be, that deemed it within his power to subvert the usual conditions of humanity…Had he discovered…the great secret which philosophers used to seek for? (Swann 371).

This cultural connection between Hawthorne, Thoreau, alchemy and the subversion of the usual conditions of humanity needs to be investigated further before Hawthorne's two gothic tales of alchemists and radical reform are analysed as potential magico-political tales.

Before Millington theorised Hawthorne's anti-authoritarian narrative practice, Darrel Abel showed that Hawthorne held an interest in anarchic figures by pointing out that "Hawthorne admired Thoreau above all other men with whom he became acquainted because Thoreau had succeeded in maintaining a true relation with nature and resist[ed] the bondage of convention."[43] A close and respectful relationship to nature and a resistance to the bondage of convention are two character traits that eco-philosophers have found inherent in the identity and thought of several of the alchemists of yesteryear. In Hawthorne's life, anti-authoritarian practice, in the shape of Thoreau, was also closely linked to an eco-philosophy. Thoreau had cultivated Hawthorne's garden at the Manse and, as Abel argued, was perceived by Hawthorne as the embodiment of an identity unfettered to the hegemonic ideologies and closely associated with a vital, powerful nature.

Vernon Louis Parrington has argued that Henry David Thoreau was the "arch-rebel of his group, the most individual amongst the 'lunatic fringe' of the transcendental movement." Parrington points out that Thoreau called himself "a poet, a mystic and a transcendentalist," and after his imprisonment, "turned philosophical anarchist" as well.[44] He argues that "very likely Thoreau had never read Godwin, yet his political philosophy was implicit in *Political Justice*" (Parrington 409). Taking a different philosophical path to Godwin, Parrington explains, "Thoreau came to identical conclusions" about the present coercive relationship between the individual and government, the need to simplify the nature of labour and the necessity for each individual to pursue an uncoerced road to greater wisdom, as the only foundation for wider social progress. Whether Thoreau is rightly classed as an American Godwinian is not a matter of importance; what is significant, however, is that Thoreau embodied and articulated cultural values in antebellum American society which clearly echoed Godwin's proto-anarchist philosophy of the 1790s. His position as an outcast amongst intellectual peers was similar to Godwin's, and interestingly, he too held an interest in the cultural schema of alchemy, passing his knowledge of local legends on to Hawthorne. After Thoreau's death, Hawthorne intended to preface his novel based on this legend with a sketch on Thoreau, showing that he identified the Concord eccentric with the theme of alchemy (Mellow 559). It seems fruitful, therefore, to approach Hawthorne's use of alchemy in light of his interest in the personality and thought of his friend Thoreau, a character Parrington early identified as a type of Godwinian radical.

Hawthorne's interest in the figure and thought of Thoreau is concentrated in the way he engages with the concept of nature in his *American Notebooks*. In his notebooks, Hawthorne idealises his rural childhood in Maine, when he lived free from the pressures to conform to social standards of manhood. In 1837, he returned to Maine, during a visit to his friend Horatio Bridge. Here, free from the social coercion of New England town life, he met the young French mesmerist Schaeffer, whose last name Miriam would inherit in *The Marble Faun*. This Frenchman would also provide Hawthorne with the pseudonym for

[43] Darel Abel, *The Moral Picturesque: Studies in Hawthorne's Fiction* (West Lafayette: Purdue UP, 1988) 12.
[44] Vernon Louis Parrington, *Main Currents in American Thought* (New York: Harcourt, 1930) 401 and 409.

his alchemical story "Rappaccini's Daughter" by translating his own name into French: M. de L'Aubepine. Mellow writes that, while "Bridge claimed he was 'an infidel' and a philosopher[,] Hawthorne found him well informed and intelligent" (Mellow, 88). Hawthorne even writes in his notebook "he impresses me very strongly…so lonely as he is here, struggling against the world" and decides that "he is about the sincerest fellow I ever knew" (*AN* 33, 52). This sympathetic portrait of a lonely struggler against the world characterises many of Godwin's protagonists and fits the portrait of Carwin or the young Victor Frankenstein, as painted above. The mesmerist Schaeffer, as an antebellum pseudo-scientist, can be said to function as a real-life counterpart to the fictional "mad scientists" that would people Hawthorne's entire oeuvre, struggling against rather than trying to dominate the world in which they live.

Hawthorne writes of his time in Maine with Bridge and Schaeffer: "I should soon become strongly attached to our way of life – so independent, and untroubled by the forms and restrictions of society" (*AN* 34). In Maine, Hawthorne rejoices in his freedom and expresses his doubts about the positive effect of encroaching organised society as he worries about the way in which Bridge has the power to evict the poor working-class families from their houses by law. This vision of a life free from social restrictions, in which the individual's independence allows him to develop along his own chosen path, is not evidence that Hawthorne studied anarchist philosophy and incorporated into his fiction similar overtly political concerns as Godwin, or Brown. However, it does go some way in explaining why the American author was so enthusiastic about Godwin's novels as a youth, since these gothic fictions articulated Godwin's philosophies through sensational plots. It also explains why a seemingly conservative middle-aged Hawthorne was still infatuated with an eccentric radical naturalist like Thoreau and listened to his legends of alchemists so attentively that they became the source for fiction.

Before meeting Thoreau, Hawthorne already played around with ideas of anarchic individualism during his journey through Massachusetts in 1838. Hawthorne was mysterious about this trip, telling his friend David Roberts: "do not tell anybody you have heard from me…or that you know anything of my whereabouts. You will see me again (God willing) in the course of six months" (Mellow 149). Mellow explains that "there was something about the life of rural taverns and barrooms that appealed to him[;]…the tavern was a place for studying mankind, a place where human nature seemed fixed in a kind of amber light" (Mellow 150). In these scenes Hawthorne meets with life unmasked, as it were, free from the social conventions and habitual restrictions of elite Salem society. Like Brown and Poe, Hawthorne would never publicly speak out on the slavery issue, and confesses at one point to being "rather more of an abolitionist in feeling than principle" (*AN* 117). In these rural classless scenes, however, Hawthorne recognises that "the Negro was really so human – and to talk of owning a thousand like him" (*AN* 151). Amongst "ordinary people" to whom he is stranger, Hawthorne seems to become a different person too, which corroborates his Brownian concern with the necessity of wearing social masks and the constructedness and contextual dependency of individual identity. That Hawthorne still preferred the striking individual, the wanderer and the eccentric to the orthodox man of society after his youth had passed away becomes clear when he says later on in his career

to "have a liking for vagrants of all sorts." That this preference for social outcasts is tied to a philosophy of benevolence is clear when Hawthorne writes that "there is so much want and wretchedness in the world, that we may safely take the word of any mortal, when they say that they need our assistance." In a romantic flurry Hawthorne adds to this remark that "beggars are seeds of passage scattering seeds of tenderness and charity" (*AN* 353).

It is not surprising to find the man who is ecstatic about a life unfettered to the codes of conventional society to be concerned about the pressure his culture exerts on the individual to conform to ideologically constructed and socially prescribed identities. Like Brown, Hawthorne shows that he is aware of the constructed nature of individual identity by noting down the intention to write about "instances of people who wear masks in all classes of society, and never take them off, even in the most familiar moments, though sometimes they make chance to slip aside" (*AN* 23). He dons Brown's rhapsodist persona when he conjectures: "to allegorise life with a masquerade, and represent mankind generally as maskers. Here and there a natural face may appear" (*AN* 240). This idea of "the natural face" as the outcast identity, because it sticks out amongst a dominant crowd of maskers, becomes a dominant theme in Hawthorne's oeuvre. Taking this theory of characterisation to Hawthorne's tales can help to re-evaluate the status of these mysterious outsider figures whose singular appearance sets them apart from the crowd. Significantly, outsider figures such as Aminidab in "The Birth-Mark," the mysterious herbalist's daughter Beatrice Rappaccini and alchemical herbalist Chillingworth in *The Scarlet Letter* all hold specific links to the cultural schema of alchemy and are identified by what can be described as their Thoreau-like relationship to nature.

The American Notebooks are full of evidence that during his Old Manse period, Hawthorne adopted a Thoreauesque outlook on nature. Once "Mr. Thorow" enters his life, Hawthorne admires the young upstart and identifies him as "a singular character – a young man with much of wild original nature still retaining in him" (*AN* 353). To Hawthorne, Thoreau is not so much an eccentric, but "a healthy and wholesome man to know," and "a keen and delicate observer of nature – a genuine observer," which he suspects is "almost as rare a character as even an original poet." About Thoreau, Hawthorne conjectures that "Nature, in return for his love, seems to adopt him as her especial child, and shows him secrets which few others are allowed to witness" (*AN* 354). Eventually, Hawthorne is sorry to see Thoreau leave for Staten Island, as he deems his replacement, Ellery Channing, "but a poor substitute for Mr. Thoreau," whose musical box, left to Hawthorne for safe keeping, he cherishes (*AN* 369). His portrait of Thoreau is characterised by an anti-androcentric vision. Only the initiate who does not aspire to gain control over nature, but makes it a prerogative to live harmoniously with nature, on equal and respectful terms, like the alchemist ideals of old, will find wisdom. Hawthorne admires Thoreau because he refuses to wear the social mask that is the prescribed masculine identity, and lives on equal terms with rather than consumes Nature: "he is familiar with beast, fish, fowl and reptile, and has strange stories to tell of adventures, and friendly passages with these lower brethren of mortality. Herb and flower, likewise, whether they grow in garden or wild wood, are his familiar friends" (*AN* 354). Hawthorne envies Thoreau's skill at canoeing and eventually buys the vessel from his friend, so as to imitate

Thoreau's trips up and down the Concord River, once he has left the neighbourhood. After one of his trips in the canoe, he even wishes to be in Thoreau's position "Oh that I could run wild! – that is that I could put myself into a true relation with nature, and be on friendly terms with all congenial elements" (*AN* 358). Before his departure, Thoreau visits Hawthorne to make a last trip down the river, which shows how much the two men valued their time together in the midst of the Nature they so admired. Significantly, there is never a mention of the river serving as a trade waterway or economic resource, but only as a natural habitat. Later Hawthorne would take Margaret Fuller on such a trip.

Unlike Emerson, who Hawthorne at the time believed was "that everlasting rejecter of all that is, and seeker for he knows not what," it seems Hawthorne admires Thoreau for his natural materialism (*AN* 357). During his Old Manse episode, Hawthorne becomes deeply aware of the endless cycle of death and rebirth played out by nature through the seasons, and comes to echo many of Thoreau's ideas on nature: "I would watch every inch and hair's breath of the progress of the season; and not a leaf should put itself forth, in the vicinity of our old mansion, without my noting it" (*AN* 379). He also echoes Thoreau on economy: "I was content to earn only so much gold as might suffice for our immediate wants" (*AN* 367). In contrast, Hawthorne explains that he uses Emerson's *The Dial* as "a soporific" (*AN* 371). Emerson's brand of transcendentalism, steeped in neo-Platonism, German idealism and non-western spiritual philosophies, apparently, for Hawthorne, was literally too immaterial. Before his marriage, Hawthorne had been lured towards a hands-on approach to idealism and had made an attempt at a utopian communal life of manual labour at Brook Farm.[45] Whatever led to his disillusion with this particular utopian project, Hawthorne held onto his sympathetic stance towards such idealism. At one point he asked his one-time Brook Farm fellow George Bradford to move in with him. Bradford had been "cultivating vegetables at Plymouth…and selling them in the market" and according to Hawthorne he led "a singular mode of life for a man of education and refinement." Hawthorne believes that "few men, without some eccentricity of character, had the moral strength to do this; and it is very striking to find such strength combined with the utmost gentleness and an uncommon regularity of nature." Hawthorne concludes: "he is rare man, a perfect original" (*AN* 347). This type of man, as well as the broader concept of the perfect original, would come to haunt his fiction.

Significantly, apart from showing his interest in an anarchic individualism, tied to a Thoreauesque relationship to a vital and powerful nature, Hawthorne's also reveals that he is aware of the way in which dominant institutions in his culture, capitalist economics, the law and religion help to validate and naturalise an ideology of gender polarization in which men gain authority over women and as a consequence are able to determine the nature of femininity so as to make it work to uphold their own positions of authority. In what would now be considered feminist rhetoric, Hawthorne observes how

> a Dead Man controls the disposition of wealth; a Dead Man sits on the judgement-seat, and the living Judges do but repeat his decisions; Dead Men's opinions in all things control the living truth, we believe in Dead

[45] The significance to his writing of this episode of his life will be discussed in detail in chapter six.

> Men's religion; we laugh at Dead Men's jokes; we cry at Dead Men's pathos; everywhere and in all manners, Dead Men tyrannize inexorably over us (*AN* 252).

Even though Hawthorne does not specifically refer to the gender politics inherent in his idea of a world ruled by dead men, the rhetoric of repetition, suggests that he is uneasy with this masculine tyranny from beyond grave. Hawthorne would later dramatise this exact idea in *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851), as well as in his final unfinished romances to which he already hints in the early notebooks: "a young girl inherits a family grave-yard – that being all that remains of rich hereditary possessions" (*AN* 239). Next to acknowledging his culture's intrinsic androcentrism, Hawthorne also shows his awareness of the way in which the dominant domestic ideology projects onto women the artificial role of angel of the house. He conjectured on writing a story in which the male idealisation of female identity is reversed. He would "represent the process by which sober truth gradually strips off all the beautiful draperies with which imagination has enveloped a beloved object, till from an angel she turns out to be a merely ordinary woman" (*AN* 11). Later he addresses the dangerous results of androcentric idealisation of the feminine: "those who are very difficult in choosing wives seem as if they would take none of Nature's ready-made works, but want a woman manufactured particularly to their order" (*AN* 20).

The following entry in the *American Notebooks* is a good example of Hawthorne's tendency to wish to surpass such artificial identity constructions. Hawthorne describes an idea for a story in which

> some common quality or circumstance…should bring together people the most unlike in all respects, and make a brotherhood and sisterhood of them – the rich and the proud finding themselves in the same category with the mean and the despised (*AN* 15).

What is striking about Hawthorne's idea here is that it shows how his brand of egalitarian reformism is different from that of his contemporary George Lippard. Lippard, in the writings on his Rosicrucian-style *Brotherhood of the Union*, speaks of the fact that "every man who lives hath a right to a Home – to a place where he may toil – and to the full harvest of his toil. *The Man who seeks to deprive his Brother of this Right commits the Unpardonable Sin*."[46] From a thoroughly patriarchal Christian perspective, Lippard writes in a manual for the chief of the Brotherhood (the Supreme Washington, which he was himself): "Great Patriarch, we look to thee, O, hear our humble prayer."[47] The ode to the Union opens with the following verse: "Behold how good it is to see / A band of Brothers meet, / In holy Love and Unity / And hold communion sweet" (*B.C.G.* 31). Lippard, seeing Christ, the carpenter's son, as the first labour activist, is passionate about creating a workers union, but fails ever to address the fact that a significant portion of the workers of America in the 1840s and 1850s were women. He speaks only of brotherhood when he addresses the way

[46] George Lippard, *Brotherhood of the Union, Annual Report* (Philadelphia, 1850) 26.
[47] George Lippard, *B.G.C.* (Philadelphia, 1850/ 1) 30.

in which his organisation will work to level class differences and overcome coercion from the capitalist elite. The androcentrism of Lippard's radical reform vision is partly due to the fact that he sees his Rosicrucian-style labour organisation as the only rightful descendent from "a Great Order of Brotherhood, which at one time extended its mysterious Circle over the entire Globe."[48] Underscoring the patriarchal orthodoxy, Lippard structured his organisation on a strictly hierarchical system of grades, in which individual ranks were named after the great men of the American Revolution. While he calls himself "The "Supreme Washington" and donned "the patriarchal robe" another high rank was that of "Thomas Jefferson, the High Priest of Freedom."[49] In his novels, subsequently, women are the property over which tyrannical and idealistic men fight and have no independent identity. Hawthorne, while not one to embrace political activism as publicly and polemically as Lippard, literally speaks of brotherhood and sisterhood, recognising the need for a positive bond between men as well as recognising the need for an independent bond between women.

Hawthorne seems to recognise the need for women's cultural independence from outmoded androcentric institutions. In Hawthorne's eyes, Lippard was probably one of those individuals whose extreme radicalism turned their utopian idealism into nothing more than another form of social tyranny, rather than an egalitarian ideal. His is the type of macho radical reform fiction that celebrated a traditional patriarchal form of masculinity Hawthorne would satirize, even though he borrowed from it many of its gothic fantastic qualities. While both authors use alchemy to write tales harbouring reformist messages, their use of this cultural schema differs greatly. Lippard uses the myths of the Rosicrucians and Knights Templar to link his own secret labour reform society to a patriarchal lineage going all the way back to the earliest followers of Christ. Hawthorne, however, seems to use alchemy as a cultural schema that allows him to express his engagement with a Thoreauesque outlook on nature and his concept of the perfect original.

In his notebooks, Hawthorne continually personifies nature as female. Hawthorne suggests that "the idea of an infinite generosity and exhaustless bounty in our Mother Nature is well worth attaining," and with a family to feed is glad to find proof of it as "the sole inheritor of the old clergyman's wealth of fruits" in the garden Thoreau would cultivate (*AN* 346). Nature as a vital and productive female force is not yet free from the dangers of androcentric appropriation. Hawthorne, however, does not describe nature as a passive matter to be moulded by the scientist in any shape he wishes for any purpose deemed beneficial to mankind. When writing about nature, Hawthorne's language is more in line with the contemporary Gaia hypothesis in ecological theory, in which a female nature is "a potentially powerful force for change" and which presents "the planet as a living organism."[50] In an anti-Baconian flurry, Hawthorne deems it "naturally impossible" for man "to make a conquest over nature" (*AN* 165). He sees any such attempt as futile and believes that "the reason of the minute superiority of nature's work over man's" is the

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[48] George Lippard, H.*F. Constitution and By-Laws of Progress Circle, No. 9, of the Brotherhood of the Union* (Philadelphia: Jos. Severns & Co., 1850) 1.
[49] George Lippard, *Notebook on the Brotherhood* (manuscript available at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia) 67.
[50] Carolyn Merchant, *Earthcare: Women and the Environment* (New York: Routledge, 1995) xvi.

fact "that the former works from the innermost germ, while the latter works merely superficially" (*AN* 158). Instead of subordinate, nature is superior to and independent of human culture. Human scientific endeavour can only try to alter nature's surface. Significantly, human culture's obsession with altering surfaces becomes the subject of his gothic tale "The Birth-Mark." His belief that mankind could never decipher the mysterious inner workings of nature would become the key theme of "Rappaccini's Daughter." In both tales, a figure with a monstrously androgynous identity personifies Nature. In both tales this figure is shown to be resistant to the attempts of masculine scientists to alter their surface identity to fit their prescribed ideal of womanhood. In both tales, the masculine scientist's experiment to turn a monstrous androgyne into a beautiful woman ends in failure, making it possible to read Nature's resistance to the scientists endeavour as the central concern of the tale.

Like the 1790s radicals, who feared violent revolution and extremism that led only to new tyranny, Hawthorne sought for ways to build society anew, from scratch. Early on in his notebooks, Hawthorne brainstorms about "a new classification of society," which suggests that he believed in a complete re-construction of the social order, rather than reform (*AN* 23). In another entry Hawthorne echoes the radicalism style of Brown's *Alcuin*, when he ruminates on the possibility of overturning all existing social conventions:

> would it not be wiser for people to rejoice at all that they now sorrow for, and vice versa? To put on bridal garments at funerals and mourning at weddings? For their friends to console with them when they attained riches and honor, as only so much care added? (*AN* 24).

At one point, Hawthorne confesses to having had a dream in which "the world had become dissatisfied with the inaccurate manner in which facts are reported, and had employed me, with a salary of a thousand dollars, to relate things of public importance exactly as they happen" (*AN* 244). In this dream, Hawthorne has become the Godwinian harbinger of "things as they are." Hawthorne eventually confesses that his "respect for clerical people, and such, and [his] faith in the utility of their office, decreases daily" and he believes that "we certainly need a new revelation – a new system – for there seems to be no life in the old one" (*AN* 352). While Lippard's writings show that he tried to breathe new life into ancient patriarchal institutions, religion and secret orders, Hawthorne's ideas engage with the ongoing struggle between emerging, dominant and residual systems of social organisation.

That Hawthorne's tales are often read as allegories is no surprise. The figures that people his tales often represent old and new systems that structure the world. The figures of Judge Pyncheon and Holgrave in *The House of the Seven Gables* are prime examples of this. In "The Birth-Mark" and Rappaccini's Daughter," this struggle between opposing systems takes shape as the struggle between the dominant mode of scientific practice and the positions this practice allots to individual men and women within the world of the tales, and an alternative scientific practice whose dissident presence in the tales challenges the dominant status of the hegemonic system. Just as Hawthorne recognised that the dominant

social structure imprisoned ordinary women in angelical ideological identities that served men, these tales show how the alternative scientific practices also harbour alternative gender ideologies, deemed monstrous by the establishment which, in turn, presents the unorthodox scientists as "mad." But, as in the case of the mesmerist Schaeffer, or Thoreau, whom Hawthorne so admired, these figures can be read positively as belonging to the gothic family of anarchic alchemists, monsters from an androcentric point of view, but also carriers of the abjected androgynous idealism latent in the schema of alchemy.

Like *Frankenstein*, "The Birth-Mark" is a tale about a young scientist who manages to kill his wife by means of his scientific experiments. The tale is similarly set in Europe at the end of the eighteenth-century, emphasising not only its intertextual connection to Mary Shelley's popular novel, but also the historical context in which the scientist and his science should be read. The third-person narrator explains that Aylmer, the protagonist of the story, is "a man of science – an eminent proficient in every branch of natural philosophy."[51] To the reader familiar with *Frankenstein*, the opening paragraph of the story presents Aylmer as a disciple of Krempe and Waldman. As is the case with Victor, however, there is something different about Aylmer. Monika Elbert argues that "Aylmer is a combination of" the alchemist, "who assumed their was harmony in the universe," and "the modern scientist [who] felt that patterns in nature could only be observed and experiments could be performed, from which hypotheses about universal order could arise (Elbert 79-80). I would argue, however, that Aylmer does not fuse these two identities, but that, like Victor, Aylmer starts out in the mystical regions of alchemy only to move beyond it into the world of natural philosophy. Like Victor, he had "studied the wonders of the human frame, and had attempted to fathom the very process by which Nature assimilates all her precious influences from earth and air, and from the spiritual world, to create and foster Man, her masterpiece." The narrator comments on the nature of Aylmer's science by echoing Hawthorne's view of nature's ways in his musings on Thoreau. According to the narrator, Aylmer's science is characterised by an "unwilling recognition of the truth, against which all seekers sooner or later stumble, that our great creative Mother, while she amuses us with apparently working in the broadest sunshine, is yet severely careful to keep her own secrets, and in spite of her pretended openness, shows us nothing but results" (*MM* 42). Significant here is the narrator's use of the phrase "unwilling recognition." Aylmer is presented as a scientist who sees himself in competition with natural forces, the supremacy of which he does not willingly acknowledge. Initially, the narrator makes it seem as if Aylmer has bowed to nature's superior powers. According to the narrator, Aylmer speaks to his wife of "the long dynasty of the Alchemists" and "added, a philosopher who should go deep enough to acquire the power [of alchemy] would attain too lofty a wisdom to stoop to the exercise of it" (*MM* 46). A true alchemist, it seems, is one who, knowledgeable of nature's ways, is content not to meddle with them but to let them run their course. The narrator explains however, that while professing to hold such alchemically informed insight into the workings of nature, he "appeared to believe, that, by the plainest scientific logic, it was altogether within the limits of possibility to discover this long-sought medium" - "the

[51] Nathaniel Hawthorne, "The Birth-Mark," in *Mosses from an Old Manse* (1846; Columbus: Ohio State UP, 1974) 36.

universal solvent, by which the Golden Principle might be elicited from all things vile and base" (*MM* 46). After unwillingly acknowledging nature's superior ways, Aylmer now employs in logic a traditionally masculine human power with which he can reproduce nature's mysterious ways. In acting on his alchemical knowledge and working through logical scientific practice "to concoct a liquid that should prolong life for years – perhaps interminably," Aylmer is no alchemist. Barbara Eckstein explains that even though he professes to search for the philosopher's stone and elixir vitae, "Aylmer's goals and his metaphors are consistent with Bacon's."[52] Mary E. Rucker also identifies Aylmer as a Baconian scientist rather than an alchemist because "he pits his intellect against nature and tries to subvert it."[53] He is intent on mimicking and ultimately controlling nature by using his masculine human powers of logic and reasoning.

Aylmer shows that he is aware of the politically dissident potential inherent in attaining alchemical powers. He says to his wife, "no king, on his guarded throne, could keep his life, if I, in my private station, should deem that the welfare of millions justified me in depriving him of it" (*MM* 47). The irony of this remark lies in the fact that the course of the tale, Aylmer does not use alchemical powers to unseat ignoble royals, but uses his logical scientific practice to ensure his own dominant position at the cost of killing the woman he loves and dehumanising his laboratory assistant Aminidab, a minor figure, who plays a significant role in a reading of "The Birth-Mark" in light of Hawthorne's engagement with anarchic alchemical figures and a Thoreauesque naturalist agenda.

The exact nature of Aylmer's science and the narrator's attitude towards it is significant because, at the outset of the story, the narrator explains that "not long before our story opens" Aylmer "had made experience of a spiritual affinity, more attractive than any chemical one" (*MM* 36). Aylmer is shown to have fully embraced what gender theorists have dubbed the androcentrism inherent in the adoption of a Baconian scientific worldview, because he has adopted a worldview in which science and logic are deemed the natural domain of men and in which the irrational, magical and mystical are confined to the feminine sphere. Eckstein rightly points out that "Aylmer's obsession with science makes him unfit for human companionship" (Eckstein 512). In order to enter into a relationship with a woman he needs to leave behind his laboratory for a domestic sphere, as the plot illustrates: Aylmer "left his laboratory to the care of an assistant, cleared his fine countenance from the furnace-smoke, washed the stain of acids from his fingers, and persuaded a beautiful woman to become his wife." From the ideological perspective that Aylmer has adopted, it is impossible to combine his identity as a scientist, probing the nature's mysteries, with his domestic role as husband to a wife who is his equal in love.

The narrator explains that "it was not unusual for the love of science to rival the love of woman" in Aylmer's day. The two ideologically separated spheres of scientific workplace and domestic home are presented as antagonistic, rather than complementary (*MM* 36). By drawing attention to the antagonism between home and work, in contrast with the public rhetoric of male-female complementarity, the narrator is highlighting a

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[52] Barbara Eckstein, "Hawthorne's 'The Birth-Mark': Science and Romance as Belief," *Studies in Short Fiction* 26:4 (Fall 1989): 513.

[53] Mary E. Rucker, "Science and Art in Hawthorne's 'The Birth-Mark'," *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 41:4 (March 1987): 455.

faultline in the ideology of domesticity. Expected to be a learned, rational and public figure, the man of the house was also expected to be the head of his own household. Aylmer's androcentrism has pushed him into paradoxical position. In danger of challenging the integrity of his masculine identity, should he fully embrace a new domestic life, Aylmer needs to try to incorporate his scientific practice into his new status as husband. The problem with Aylmer is that, according to the narrator, he "devoted himself…too unreservedly to scientific studies, ever to be weaned from them by any second passion." Consequently, Aylmer does not bring his science into the home, but decides to bring his wife and the domestic home with which he identifies her into his laboratory, all because she exhibits an aesthetic flaw in her otherwise perfect beauty in the guise of a hand-shaped birthmark on her cheek. According to Elbert "the image of the hand is crucial because of its associations with science, power, and creation" (Elbert 80). She argues that "the hand is the scientist's instrument of power; through experiments with his hand – tactile and sensual means – he can observe the laws of nature" (Elbert, 80). The presence of Aminidab shows, however, that Aylmer works very little with his hands. Rather than allowing him to get close to nature, Aylmer's scientific practice has removed him further away, making it harder for him to actually observe nature. In light of Hawthorne's admiration for the Thoreauesque hands-on approach to natural observation – living amongst nature rather than observing it from within the scientific laboratory – the hand on Georgiana's cheek can also be shown to symbolise the hand of nature that, as Elbert also argues, Aylmer "interprets…as an imprint of nature, which…is a force that needs to be contented with, from the empirical scientist's perspective" (Elbert, 81). As a true alchemist, Aylmer would have shaken hands with the Birthmark, as an empirical scientist Aylmer enters into a fist fight.

Aylmer belongs to the group of men who "seem as if they would take none of Nature's ready-made works, but want a woman manufactured particularly to their order," to quote Hawthorne once again. By taking his wife out of her prescribed domestic space and subjecting her to his experiments in idealistic beautification, Aylmer is in some ways unifying science and love. According to the narrator, this union "was attended with truly remarkable consequences and a deeply impressive moral" (*MM* 37). If the narrator's words are taken at face value, "The Birth-Mark" is a story about a scientist who kills his wife in an attempt fuse his love for her with his love of science, symbolised in his experiment to perfect her beauty. As such it is a gothic tale affirmative of a typically Victorian gender ideology. It warns its reader about the dangers inherent in the masculine tampering with a sacred domestic femininity and the attempt at fusing the otherwise complementary but naturally separate spheres of home and work, love and science, male and female into a single whole. Hawthorne has long been known to quarrel with the pseudo-sciences that sought to transcend the orthodox boundaries between imagination and reason, empirical proof and subjective belief. Hawthorne's notebooks show that, typical of the men of his time, he painted idealised portraits of his wife Sophia Peabody. It is possible, therefore, to take the narrator's implied moral as the intended moral of the tale.

Romance territory, however, as Hawthorne himself explained later on in his career, is the territory in which cultural binaries can fuse and transmogrify, where the author is free

to add the supernatural in order to bring about events that are impossible in a purely mimetic fictional work. According to both Way and Millington, Hawthorne's texts as far as they adhere to his romance theories are able to express dissidence toward authoritative cultural values and beliefs. The reader, then, takes a risk in taking the narrator's implied moral as the moral of the tale. The narrator's ironic exposition of Aylmer's beliefs in and about his scientific powers suggests that the moral that the narrator hints at could be the very object under scrutiny, satirized even, in the tale.

Hawthorne had a long-standing interest in the idea of "the perfect original," the singular person in touch with a sacred nature, who defies the artificially prescribed traditions, customs and laws of is society. Hawthorne articulated his belief in the superiority of nature over human intellectual powers and was concerned with the artificiality of male and female identities in his own time. In this context, both the figure of Georgiana, with her mysterious birthmark, and the figure of Aminidab, the grotesque laboratory assistant whose presence is almost invisible (but who at crucial moments in the tale comes into view), embody forms of cultural dissidence that can be described in gender terms as forms of androgyny, one feminine the other masculine, but equally monstrous when viewed through the androcentric lens adopted by Aylmer.

The story foregrounds its theme of masculine scientific control over feminine identity in the story because the incident that sets the entire plot in motion is the fact that "one day very soon after their marriage, Aylmer sat gazing at his wife, with a trouble in his countenance that grew stronger, until he spoke." He says: "Georgiana…has it never occurred to you that that mark upon your cheek might be removed" (*MM* 37). Aylmer here reveals that he adheres to the stereotypical antebellum masculine identity type, confident in the domestic sphere of his superior intellect and power to control those with whom he shares his domestic abode. This confidence in the innate superiority of his powers extends into his workplace. Aylmer appears unconcerned with the fortunes of his scientific endeavours because he can leave them in the hands of Aminidab, who Aylmer believes is no more than a "human machine," an ignorant and servile performer of any task he sets him (*MM* 51).

This moment of Aylmer's recognition of the birthmark as an unwanted presence on his wife's visage reveals another faultline in a domestic ideology that equates women with the spiritual and the home and men with science and the workplace. Just as Aylmer's retreat from the workplace reveals the ultimate non-complementarity of work and home in a separate spheres ideology, Aylmer's realisation that he needs to perfect his wife's beauty shows that he views his position as head of the household as unstable. He seeks to alter his wife's physique in order to make her conform to the androcentric aesthetic ideal of womanhood. As the embodiment of pure beauty, Georgiana would become a symbol for a domesticated femininity, nullifying any dissident potential suggested by the physical imperfection that symbolises her material presence and links her to the nature, Aylmer is attempting to subdue.

Georgiana does not deem the birthmark a physical imperfection, but "a charm." Aylmer, however, holding onto his impersonal scientific viewpoint, ensures Georgiana that

> "upon another face, perhaps it might [be a charm]…But never on yours! No, dearest Georgiana, you came so nearly perfect from the hand of Nature, that this slightest possible defect - which we hesitate whether to term a defect or a beauty – shocks me, as being the visible mark of earthly imperfection" (*MM* 37).

Georgiana can be read as an allegorical figure embodying Hawthorne's thoughts about nature, in danger of becoming the subject of Aylmer's Baconian scientific pursuits. As Rucker explains, Aylmer "deliberately places himself in an adversary relation to nature" and in attempting to rid Georgiana of her birthmark, "he works not with but rather against the creative force" (Rucker 454). Nancy Bunge echoes Rucker in writing that Aylmer sees the birthmark "as a symptom of frailty he must conquer."[54] That Georgiana is not the passive feminine ideal Aylmer wishes her to be becomes apparent from the fact that her answer to Aylmer's remarks about her physical imperfection is: "you cannot love what shocks you" (*MM* 37). Georgiana, with her viewpoint of the birthmark as a charm, a magical enchantment, shows more insight into their relationship than Aylmer, revealing for Aylmer the achievement of perfect beauty is analogous to the achievement of masculine control over feminine identity.

In the context of the power relationships in the tale, Aylmer not only seeks to buttress his sense of innate masculine superiority by using his science to idealise his wife's physique, he also makes sure to push his assistant Aminidab into an inferior social position by denying him knowledge and freedom of movement. While Elbert reads Aminidab as an anagram for "bad anima," Aylmer's bad soul, and Georgiana as the feminine principle he needs to recognise as en essential part of himself, two submissive figures, Georgiana and Aminidab can be read as doubles. With respect to their allegorical function in the tale, both figures represent different facets of a Baconian definition of nature. Georgiana is deemed by Aylmer as passive and submissive, beautiful yet imperfect because he has not yet intervened scientifically to perfect her. "The indescribable earthiness that incrusted" Aminidab makes him the embodiment of nature's ugly, soulless, dead material state. Aminidab is Aylmer's "under-worker." He is "a man of low stature, but bulky frame, with shaggy hair hanging about his visage, which was grimed with the vapors of the furnace." He is "incapable of comprehending a single principle," yet "executed all the practical details of his master's experiments" (*MM* 43). Aminidab is closer to the material basis of nature because his subservient social status forces him to work with the raw materials and makes it impossible for him to hold idealist principles. Like Georgiana's birthmark, Aminidab is perceived as an inhuman monster from Aylmer's idealist androcentric perspective, but not without a dissident potential of his own. According to Way,

> diabolical little faces…seem to peep out of the odd corners of Hawthorne's best stories with…subversive intentions: they hint at the existence of a universe which is wider, more incalculable, more anarchic than that contained in the architectonic

[54] Nancy Bunge, *Nathaniel Hawthorne: A Study of the Short Fiction* (New York: Twayne, 1993) 28.

> simplifications of art, philosophy or religion; and they imply a notion of art in which the grotesque is quite as important as the sublime or the inspiring (Way 12).

Aminidab's is such a diabolical little face suggesting that the anarchic forces of nature and the grotesque natural shapes it engenders are more vital than androcentric idealism. In the course of the narrative, from his marginal position as Aylmer's servant, Aminidab increasingly challenges Aylmer's dominant scientific practice and the ideology of gender polarisation it underscores, showing that what the dominant culture defines as unnaturally monstrous – both Georgiana's unfeminine birthmark, and his own deformed unmasculine physique is in fact a more vital and natural form of identity, unfettered to ideologically polarized male and female identities that work to validate only a male-dominated culture.

That the birthmark has the potential to express dissidence becomes evident from the fact that in the eyes of the women who people the society of the tale, and who share Aylmer's androcentric lens, the birthmark becomes "the Bloody Hand" that they believe "quite destroyed the effect of Georgiana's beauty, and rendered her countenance even hideous." Through the eyes of the social establishment, in which beauty is a core marker of femininity, the birthmark becomes a sign of unnatural difference. It is an ingredient in Georgiana's physical being that makes her less feminine, and therefore an object of cultural abjection. In fact, not only women but the whole of society is uneasy with physical irregularities that undermine the prescribed feminine and masculine ideals. Men also fear the presence of the birthmark. If unable to admire it they "contented themselves with wishing it away, that the world might possess one living specimen of ideal loveliness, without the semblance of a flaw" (*MM* 38). Unlike the alchemists of old, who celebrated the grotesque identity of nature, by representing its vital force as a hermaphrodite, or androgyne, that fused all cultural binaries into one from their perspective ideal, but from the dominant perspective monstrous image, Aylmer obviously belongs to the latter group of men and thus represents the ideological status quo, viewing his own wife as monstrously unfeminine and therefore a natural grotesque in need of scientific perfecting. This being married to a less than perfect woman, the story reveals, actually undermines Aylmer's masculinity, because, as long as the surface blemish remains visible, the masculine scientist is not in full control of his subject.

According to Judith Fetterley, the story is "a success story," it is "the demonstration of how to murder your wife and get away with it."[55] However, the narrator explains that it was Aylmer's "sombre imagination" that "was not long in rendering the birth-mark a frightful object, causing him more trouble and horror than even Georgiana's beauty, whether of soul or sense, had given him delight" (*MM* 39). By stressing that it is not reason but imagination that turns the birthmark into an object of horror for Aylmer, the narrator reveals that Aylmer's apparent rational scientific argument for perfecting his wife's physique is in fact informed by a masculine panic about his failure to control her feminine identity to insure the integrity of his own masculinity, founded on science, rationality and an autonomous workplace. Even though Georgiana dies due to Aylmer's experiments at perfecting her superficial beauty, she is "perfect and dead" from Aylmer's

[55] Judith Fetterley, *The Resisting Reader* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1978) 22.

androcentric perspective, which is the dominant, but not the only perspective in the tale (Fetterley 23).

The discussion of Hawthorne's engagement with nature in the *American Notebooks* showed that he followed Thoreau on the point of assigning to the workings of nature a power superior to any man-made science. The very impossibility to artificially categorise nature as feminine, a gender label that serves Aylmer's androcentric ends, feeds his anxiety-driven nightmares about the birthmark. It shows his fear of being unable to subdue nature in this instance, which would mean having to acknowledge nature's superior powers. As the birthmark becomes a dissident presence itself, it comes to symbolise, like Aminidab, a vital androgynous nature, a nature neither feminine nor masculine, but fusing both into one new identity. The Birthmark, in contrast to what Aylmer expects from a sign of feminine imperfection, remains ungraspable by the scientist. Georgiana appears impossible for Aylmer to control by idealising her into the image of true womanhood or reducing the birthmark into the image of dead matter willingly pliant to his scientific tools. Through the double act of the resistant birthmark on Georgiana's cheek and the diabolical servant Aminidab, Nature becomes the dissident androgynous protagonist of the story, impossible to categorise into ideologically prescribed identities from which it can be controlled. As its vitality and power confront an increasingly hysterical Aylmer, the scientist becomes the foil to nature's role of heroic defiance.

That Aylmer plays his own foil becomes apparent from the accumulating ironic set pieces with which the narrator presents the reader. At one point Aylmer is said to no longer worry about but rejoice in the presence of the birthmark. He rejoices, the narrator explains, because it gives him work as a scientist, buttressing his own identity: "it will be such rapture to remove it." This surgical job of removing the birthmark is such rapture to Aylmer, not only because it gives him a job, but because the job will give him the chance to prove that his science has given him superior skills over nature. From Aylmer's perspective, it is as if nature has colonised his ideal image of Georgiana and he is fighting nature to regain control of his wife's identity, which he considers his "natural" possession. As Fetterley explains, "Hawthorne is writing a story about the sickness of men, not about the flawed and imperfect nature of women" (Fetterley 27). Aylmer's illness is his androcentrism, which the alternative identities of both Georgiana and Aminidab – superficially flawed but morally innocent – show up to be truly monstrous, since it is monstrous at the core.

Another ironic moment in the tale that reveals Aylmer's misguided assuredness in his scientific abilities and innate masculine superiority is the narrator's explanation that he "was confident about his science, and felt he could draw a magic circle round her, within which no evil might intrude" (*MM* 44). The irony of this phrase is telling. It is Aylmer's scientific obsession to perfect Georgiana's superficial beauty, and to simultaneously prove his conquest of nature, which is the very "evil" in the tale from which Georgiana needs to be protected. By adopting a rationalist scientific creed Aylmer has rejected magic altogether and so Georgiana cannot be protected from his obsessive and oppressive behaviour. Thus, the magic circle Aylmer thinks he is drawing is in fact a noose. Aylmer is shown once again

to be deluded in his unquestioned belief in the powers and infallibility of his scientific practice.

The narrator explains that the experiments with which Aylmer tries to distract his wife are also "illusions…almost perfect enough to warrant the belief that [Georgiana's] husband possessed sway over the spiritual world" (*MM* 45). The significant phrase here is "almost perfect enough," since it reveals that they are ultimately unsuccessful in achieving their aim. The narrator takes Georgiana's point of view, for the moment, and unveils not only the illusory nature of scientific knowledge, but also its persuasive power. The narrator, in a Thoreauesque spirit, reveals that nature "permits us indeed, to mar, but seldom to mend, and, like a jealous patentee, on no account to make." Aylmer, to the contrary, ignores nature's patent and therefore becomes a counterfeiter. Aylmer the scientist is a fake. He is in fact obsessed only with outward appearances, polished surfaces and sweet perfumes. Much of his science, it is revealed, concerns itself with cosmetics. He becomes the representative of a society in which everyone is forced to wear artificial masks, a state of social interaction that both Hawthorne and his predecessor in the American romance, Brown, identified as undesirable.

A significant detail that shows Aylmer's inability to use his knowledge to convince Georgiana of his powers is the fact that Aylmer perceives the need to split up his laboratory into an ethereal boudoir and a scientific workplace once he sets out to conduct his experiment. Unlike the legends of alchemists working together with female assistants or, in the case of Flamel, his wife, Aylmer bars Georgiana from his laboratory and transforms part of it into "a series of beautiful apartments, not unfit to be the secluded abode of a lovely woman." In order to retain Georgiana within the parameters of domestic femininity, Aylmer, like Poe's male narrators, needs to enclose her always in a domestic space that is so completely free form outside influences that "for aught Georgiana knew, it might be a pavilion among the clouds." Significantly everything in this newly created domestic space is artificial. Even sunlight is excluded and replaced by "perfumed lamps," in a similar vein to Poe's tales, in which paranoid husbands attempt to domesticate their powerful wives through hermetic domestication (*MM* 44). In keeping with separate spheres ideology, Aylmer can move freely between the laboratory and the richly fashioned boudoir. This very freedom of movement gives him his status as the man of the house and chief scientist of the laboratory, because while he is master in both spheres, Georgiana is strictly refused entrance into the laboratory and Aminidab is never seen in the boudoir. Their identity, as wife and assistant, is tied to the social spaces they occupy. The restriction on their movement implies their inferior status.

There is, however, another figure in the tale, so to speak, that can move between these two separate spheres. By employing an omniscient narrator, the story reveals not only Aylmer's motivations for adhering to an ideology of gender polarization that identifies scientific knowledge and space with a masculine identity and magic knowledge and aesthetic domestic spaces with the feminine. The narrator is also able to take Georgiana's point of view and can describe how she reacts to her confinement and Aylmer's minute interrogations about her sensations:

> Georgiana began to conjecture that she was already subjected to certain physical influences, either breathed in with the fragrant air, or taken with her food. She fancied, likewise, but it might be altogether fancy – that there was a stirring up of her system, - a strange indefinite sensation creeping through her veins, and tingling half painfully, half pleasurably, at her heart (*MM* 48).

Georgiana is slowly awakening to the fact that Aylmer is tinkering with her very nature, rather than using "a powerful cosmetic" to treat a blemish on her visage. The birthmark is no longer a superficial imperfection, but becomes a symbol for her individuality, and she realises the import of Aylmer's words that her "case demands a remedy that shall go deeper" (*MM* 47). Suspecting Aylmer of secret intentions and looking at the birthmark in the mirror "not even Aylmer now hated it so much as she" (*MM* 48). Her hatred of the birthmark suggests that Georgiana has herself adopted Aylmer's androcentric perspective, in which there is no room for imperfect women, making the birthmark a black spot, the mark of death.

Significantly, a third space operates in the story that functions similarly to the Inn in *Frankenstein*, in making possible the transmission of knowledge: Aylmer's library. The library holds all of Aylmer's learning, unlike his laboratory, which is the space in which this learning is put into practice. Georgiana, while officially barred from this room, is able to enter it, since it forms part of the domestic suites that are separated from the laboratory. The library as a domestic space of masculine learning represents another faultline in domestic ideology. It is the space, as the story proves, in which women can educate themselves about the very nature of their husband's work. But should Georgiana gain intellectual equality, Aylmer would become powerless in his attempt to confine her to her the domestic sphere. Significantly, it is "to dispel the tedium of the hours" that Georgiana "turned over the volumes of his scientific library," showing that domestic confinement itself breeds curiosity and a wish to learn (*MM* 48).

Georgiana reads first "many dark old tomes" in which she finds "romance and poetry." These works, the narrator explains, are the works of the alchemists Agrippa, Paracelsus and Magnus and Roger Bacon. Following the progress of science she comes across the "hardly less curious and imaginative…Transactions of the Royal Society." Finally, she enters Aylmer's scientific domain as she reads his own scientific journals. The narrator explains that at first she "reverenced Aylmer, and loved him more profoundly than ever," but ultimately sat down and "burst into tears" (*MM* 48-9). Significant in this passage is that the narrator explains that in the course of her reading Georgiana gains "a less entire dependence on his judgement." In other words, she able to adopt her own perspective on his work and consequently sees it in her own light. The narrator explains that Aylmer "handled physical details, as if there were nothing beyond them; yet spiritualised them all, and redeemed himself from materialism, by his strong and eager aspiration towards the infinite." Aylmer has mistakenly fused science and religion and Georgiana finds out that he perceives himself as the high priest of matter while his journals are in fact "the sad confession, and continual exemplification, of the short-comings of the composite man –

the spirit burthened with clay and working in matter – and of the despair that assails the higher nature, at finding itself so miserably thwarted by the earthly part" (*MM* 49). While the narrator remarks that "perhaps every man of genius, in whatever sphere, might recognize the image of his own experience in Aylmer's journal" this statement does not have to be taken as a genuine appeal to sympathy, but as an ironic judgement on men who consider themselves geniuses, high priests of matter. Only men like Aylmer will sympathise with his plight, the narrator is telling the reader, who is not expected to be of that type. While these men may despair with Aylmer at being thwarted by nature, the story itself can be read as a celebration of nature's successful resistance over such masculinist attempts at control.

Entering his library and finding Georgiana engrossed in his journals, Aylmer warns her that "it is dangerous to read in sorcerer's books." By identifying his own work as magic Aylmer is attempting to keep it from Georgiana's intellectual grasp, as something she would not understand. Ironically, the irrational supernatural and mystical is precisely the domain of knowledge she is allowed to explore as a woman. At this point Georgiana's insight into her situation becomes greater than Aylmer's insight into his own experiment. Aylmer asks Georgiana to "wait for this one success…then worship me if you will," asks her, "sing to me," tells her that "her seclusion would endure but a little longer" and leaves her in the confidence that "the result was already certain" (*MM* 50). Georgiana, however, is no longer content to play the passive victim to his deluded experiments. The narrator shows how she literally experiences his magic domestic circle as a noose and is in physical discomfort. It is "a sensation in the fatal birthmark" that leads her to literally cross the gender boundaries that have confined her to her boudoir. Georgiana moves form acquiescence to dissidence through the literal imprisonment and physical discomfort Aylmer has put her through. Her body, as much as her mind, is telling her to resist Aylmer's experiments to control her identity even as she is slowly being transformed into his ideal. It is this spatial gender-boundary transgression from boudoir to laboratory – after the acquisition of the knowledge Aylmer holds himself – that leads Aylmer to throw off his benevolent mask and to reveal his misogynist motivations in a moment of panic. Seizing "her arm with the gripe that left the print of his fingers upon it" (much like the hand-shaped birthmark) he rhetorically asks "have you no trust in your husband" and orders her away: "Go, prying woman, go!" (*MM* 51). His zeal for science, it is revealed, is fostered by what Fetterley terms his "jealousy, hostility, and frustration toward a specifically female force" (Fetterley 27). His gripe is the malicious, repressive masculine counterpart to the benevolent life-giving hand of nature on Georgiana's cheek. As in the scientific world of *Frankenstein*, there is no room for women in Aylmer's laboratory, since their very presence would unmask the male scientific enterprise as serving an androcentric culture to the detriment of nature and women. Georgiana, recognising her plight is able to offer a counter-voice, however, tells Aylmer: "I shall quaff whatever draught you bring me; but it will be on the same principle that would induce me to take a dose of poison, if offered by your hand" (*MM* 51). Her eventual submission to his experiment, in the knowledge of its likely failure, not only "shows the power of both science and arrogance," as Bunge suggests, but also becomes a means of protest against Aylmer's attempt at erasing her

individual identity (Bunge 30). This moment of dissidence, however, is soon overshadowed by Aylmer's resolute dismissal of Georgiana to her otherworldly domestic boudoir where she is forced to submit to his experiment once again, showing that defiance is not always successfully subversive.

Aylmer ironically remarks, "unless all my science has deceived me, it cannot fail" (*MM* 53). The narrator has already made clear that Aylmer's entire career is founded in self-deception. As Hawthorne stated in his notebooks, in a contest with nature, the scientist cannot win. The birthmark is nature's stamp of originality and kiss of life. Removing it from Georgiana would mean removing her individual identity, which means killing her off as a woman. Rather than seeing it as the symbol for the individual material life it represents, Aylmer, as Bunge also argues, reads it merely as a sign of nature's imperfection, a sign of nature's weakness and a chance for him to test his masculine controlling powers (Bunge 30). However, as the narrator reveals, Aylmer's science is at its root only concerned with surfaces, it can never penetrate the inner forces of nature. Georgiana apparently realises this when she says:

> Life is but a sad possession to those who have attained precisely the degree of moral advancement at which I stand. Were I weaker and blinder, it might be happiness. Were I stronger, it might be endured hopefully. But, being what I find myself, methinks I am of all mortals the most fit to die (*MM* 53).

When she finds herself merely the dehumanised object of Aylmer's experiment, which tests the limits of his power to control nature, Georgiana, like Poe's Morella, embraces death, as Aylmer busily writes down all that happens in his journal. "My Poor Aylmer," Georgiana exclaims, realising how much Aylmer is deceived; "Nay richest! Happiest! Most Favored" Aylmer, the scientist answers ironically (*MM* 55).

Significantly, as Aylmer rejoices in his "Success! Success!," "at the same time he heard a gross, hoarse chuckle, which he had long known as his servant Aminidab's expression of delight" (*MM* 55). Almost invisible throughout the tale, Aylmer's laboratory assistant Aminidab serves an important function in "The Birth-Mark." In earlier criticism, Aminidab has been identified with the Old Testament priest of the same name, and in this capacity as the allegorical representation of a religion rejected by Aylmer.[56] According to the narrator, Aminidab does not represent a rejected spiritualism but "seemed to represent man's physical nature; while Aylmer's slender figure, and pale, intellectual face, were no less apt to represent a type of the spiritual element." As the nature of Aylmer's journal's show, he perceives himself as a scientific priest. From his apparently subservient status and invisible presence, Aminidab, like Carwin, or Victor Frankenstein's monster, comes to embody the dissident potential of an alternative scientific outlook, closer engaged with and more respectful of the processes of nature, just as he represents the "earthly, physical, erotic self" Aylmer rejected, to use Fetterley's words. By physically conducting all the

[56] See W.R. Thompson, "Aminidab in Hawthorne's 'The Birthmark," *Modern Language Notes* 70:6 (June 1955): 413-415.

scientific experiments that Aylmer's intellectual brain can conjure, Aminidab is more knowledgeable of the actual workings of matter and of the limits to mankind's ability to investigate and control the powers of nature.

Hawthorne preferred the more respectful hands-on approach to nature of Thoreau and George Bradford, to the naturalist metaphysics of Emerson. Aminidab, by getting his hands dirty, is closer to nature and seems to understand the nature of the birthmark more thoroughly than Aylmer. He mutters behind Aylmer's back that "if she were my wife, I'd never part with that birth-mark" (*MM* 43). Like Thoreau, or the alchemists of old, Aminidab finds in nature's imperfection her very vital character.[57] This "hoarse, chuckling laugh was heard again" at the moment when Georgiana dies (*MM* 56). When Aminidab's laughter rises up behind Aylmer's back for a second time, it gives a fuller ironical inflection to the scientist's exclamations of triumph. Aminidab had respected Georgiana's individuality by expressing his disapproval of Aylmer's cosmetic experiment. For Aminidab, the symbol of a powerful material nature, the birthmark was a sign for what Hawthorne called "true originality," a stamp of nature to be cherished and not cosmetically erased in order to conform to an ideologically prescribed female identity. The figure of Aminidab embodies the underlying subversive, mocking, even anarchic quality that Way attributes to Hawthorne's best work. The monstrous presences in the tale, the birthmark and the figure of Aminidab, symbolising what Aylmer has rejected, seem to work together, in secret, to articulate dissidence towards the dominant androcentric culture including its ideology of gender polarization. Aminidab's chuckling does not represent his joy in the death of Aylmer's wife, but his joy in Aylmer's failure to control nature by conforming Georgiana's original identity to his own standards of femininity. Like *Frankenstein*, "The Birth-Mark" identifies as mad science not the magical lore of alchemy, with its concepts of a close correspondence between man and nature, science and spirituality, in which genders are merely vital natural principles not fixed markers for human identity, but androcentric scientific rationalism, with is gendered rhetoric of the masculine scientist who masters and alters female nature to suite mankind's needs. I agree to a certain extent with Elbert, who concludes that "in the end, the 'Fatal Hand' of nature is victorious over Aylmer's [scientific] hand; Mother Nature has won" (Elbert, 95). By using the register of competition, Elbert retains this sense of competition and gender bifurcation, *man*kind versus a feminine nature in a struggle to the death. I would argue that, rather than struggle and gendered opposition, and especially because Aminidab's anarchic laughter is the final voice in the tale, the birthmark, as the dominant symbol in the tale, celebrates the uncontrollability of nature, its vital, fluid character, more powerful than Aylmer's masculine hand, that cannot be confined into artificially constructed gender categories such as male and female and thus remains dissident androgynous.

Just as "Ligeia" can be read as Poe's improved version of "Morella," Hawthorne's "Rappaccini's Daughter" is an extended and more direct dramatisation of the same themes addressed in "The Birth-Mark." Elbert argues that "Rappaccini, the corrupt alchemist, like

[57] The following excerpt from *Walden* can be seen as exemplary of Thoreau's vision of the beauty of nature's roughness: "You may melt your metals and cast them into the most beautiful moulds you can; they will never excite me like the forms which this molten earth flows out into." Henry David Thoreau, *Walden and Resistance to Civil Government*, 2nd ed., ed. William Rossi (New York: Norton, 206), 1992.

Aylmer, tampers with nature and attempts to control natural forces to discover the secrets of creativity and to misuse these powers for his own purposes, for his own subjective vision of order and perfection" (Elbert 97). Unlike the true alchemist, "he is not exploiting nature for benign purposes but rather for personal power" (Elbert 101). Even though she touches upon the potential positive nature of Rappaccini's schemes, Elbert ultimately defines Rappaccini as a mad scientist, in the orthodox negative sense of the term. Significantly, however, like "The Birth-Mark," Bunge explains that the tale is "another clash in perspective." Bunge, like Clack, identifies this clash as the more conventional clash between "the detached intellectual knowledge of the scientist and the emotional knowledge love produces" (Bunge 67). M.D. Uroff argues that the story is not in essence a tale about cold mechanical science versus warm human love, but that the "allopathic [orthodox medical] approach of Baglioni and the homeopathic approach of Rappaccini" are pitted against each other in a struggle for dominance.[58] According to Uroff, there is a historical reason for reading the story in this way. The juxtaposition of alchemical/ homeopathic and orthodox/ allopathic scientific theories in the tale, he explains, is "an accurate portrayal of a dispute which divided the medical profession in the 1840s in Massachusetts" (Uroff 63). He explains that "although homeopathic doctors were not quacks, their theories were soundly condemned by the medical profession" (Uroff 64). The key concept here is professional rivalry. As in *Frankenstein*, new-fangled scientific theories clash with ancient, more mystical science. As they compete over the right to define the very identity of the subject they investigate, nature, their rivalry alienates them from this subject, allowing it to express dissidence toward categorisation and exploitation.

The story can be read, then, as a story in which the alchemical herbalist Rappaccini is pitted against a modern physician Baglioni, in a battle over the control of the identity of nature, embodied in the figure of Beatrice. On the one hand, Baglioni, from his androcentric perspective, seeks to force a dangerous, monstrously androgynous woman to alter her identity so that its fits his own ideal of womanhood, ensuring the integrity of his own masculinity. On the other hand, Rappaccini in trying stave off Baglioni's aggressive strategies, has surpassed his original intentions and has turned his daughter literally into a poisonous monster. As in *Frankenstein*, rivalry turns both alchemy and orthodox science into antagonists, draining both systems of thought from their positive potential.

Stoehr explains that Hawthorne had close contact with the world of antebellum herbal medicine, since he married into a family of homoeopathists. Stoehr explains that his father-in-law, Dr. Nathaniel Peabody, was an enthusiast for homeopathy and that his brother-in-law was a homeopathic druggist. He recounts that "in her adult life Sophia was a steadfast believer in the infinitesimal doses of the homoeopathists" (Stoehr 108). Significantly, Marshall explains that, while homeopathy is not identical to alchemical medicine, Samuel Hahnemann, its inventor, did follow Paracelsus. Paracelsus wrote, "'the purpose of alchemy is not, as it is said, to make gold and silver, but in this instance to make *arcana* and direct them against disease; as this is the outcome, so is also the basis'" (quoted in Marshall, *Stone* 352). Stoehr sums up the "primary rules of homeopathic pharmacology: drugs were to be derived from pure ingredients, animal, vegetable, and mineral – often

[58] M.D. Uroff, "The Doctors in 'Rappaccini's Daughter," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 27:1 (June 1972): 63.

from substances regarded as poison in ordinary quantities…[and] the average dose was infinitesimally smaller than an allopathic pill." Poison, then, from homeopathic viewpoint is not a negative force.[59] Interestingly, Hawthorne himself practiced this medical art on a small scale when he gave his son Julian Belladonna for a headache (*AN* 479). While Stoehr finds in Hawthorne's tales involving the schema of alchemy a "continuing condemnation of the mad scientist," in "Rappaccini's Daughter," more clearly even than in "The Birth-Mark," the important question to be asked is not whether the protagonist is mad, but which scientific ideology is perceived as a form of madness, an irrational tendency at controlling an uncontrollable and vital nature.

The preface to the tale, as published in *Mosses from an Old Manse*, sheds light on the significant role that narrative point of view plays in the tale. In this preface, Hawthorne adopts the point of view of editor of his own work by pretending that it is the work of M. de l'Aubépine, the French version of his name, given him by the mesmerist M. Schaeffer years earlier. From behind the veil of editor/ translator, Hawthorne defines l'Aubépine's technique as "too remote, too shadowy and unsubstantial in his modes of development" to suit the taste of the mass reading public, while his work is "too popular" for the Transcendentalists.[60] He believes it would appeal only to "here and there an individual, or possibly an isolated clique" (*MM* 91). By describing himself as a cult author of what can be termed philosophical romance, Hawthorne is suggesting that his work needs to be approached from "precisely the proper point of view" in order for it to be less than mere "nonsense" (*MM* 92). Significantly, by translating the title of his story into French, Hawthorne also changes the point of view. The supposedly original French title of "Rappaccini's Daughter" is "Beatrice, ou La Belle Empoisonneuse" (*MM* 93). In the French title, the emphasis of Rappaccini's paternal status is exchanged for an emphasis on the identity and function of Beatrice. The story, then, is no longer about the tragic existence of herbalist's daughter, but about a beautiful poisonous young woman, foregrounding a concern with gender identity. Similarly, *The Democratic Review*, in which the story appears, becomes *La Revue Anti-Aristocratique* in Hawthorne's preface. By using a polemical definition of democracy, and explaining that this magazine "led the defence of liberal principles and popular rights, with a faithfulness and ability worthy of all praise," Hawthorne foregrounds the presence of an oppositional politics in his story. Hawthorne's strategy of altering the point of view through the translations in the preface creates the opportunity for this story to be read as part of a tradition in fiction in which the overt moral of the story may have to be approached from another angle and judged from a different point of view as once again the reader enters the fluid, transmogrifying sphere of Hawthornian romance.

Like "the Birth-Mark," "Rappaccini's Daughter" is clearly indebted to *Frankenstein* for its portrayal of the clash between a fantastic and a rationalist scientific theory and

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[59] Interestingly, Hawthorne suggests that he is of the same mind in not pre-judging nature's products when he writes in his notebooks: "perhaps, if we could penetrate Nature's secrets, we should find that what we call weeds are more essential to the well-being of the world than the most precious fruit or grains" (*AN* 388). Hawthorne significantly extends this idea to ethics, suggesting that if weeds could turn out to be of great use, there may just be equal good in "the sinful propensities which have overrun the moral world" (*AN* 389).
[60] Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Rappaccini's Daughter" in *Mosses from an Old Manse*, 91.

practice. Hawthorne's tale takes much from *Frankenstein* in the way it opposes enlightenment science and alchemical pseudo-science. Giovanni, like the young Victor, is the young student travelling north to a famous university with letters of introduction to professor Baglioni – the enlightened medical man – from whom he hopes to learn, but whose works remain less interesting than the powers offered by the apparently magical lore of the herbalist Rappaccini. The representation of Rappaccini is like that of the alchemist in *St Leon*. Giovanni is first introduced to Giacomo Rappaccini at work in his botanical garden while looking at the garden from the high vantage point of his tower window:

> no common labourer, but a tall, emaciated, sallow, and sickly-looking man, dressed in a scholar's garb of black…beyond the middle term of life, with grey hair, a thin grey beard, and a face singularly marked with intellect and cultivation, but which could never, even in his more youthful days, have expressed much warmth of heart (*MM* 95).

Rappaccini is no ordinary physician but an alchemical herbalist distilling poisonous plants into medicines, "as potent as a charm" (*MM* 94). From his appearance and the description of his work it is clear that Rappaccini conforms to the alchemist stereotype. As a "scientific gardener" he seems to be the emblem of the alchemical fusion of nature and science, intellect and imagination, nurture and experiment, working closely with nature to nurture his creations into herbal medicines.

Rappaccini, however, does not entirely conform to the stereotype of the alchemist. As with Aylmer, and Victor Frankenstein, something intrudes into his alchemical garden. Contrary to Hawthorne's experience with naturalist originals such as Thoreau, who Hawthorne believed could actually converse with nature, in the figure of Rappaccini "there was no approach to intimacy between himself and his vegetable existences." While founding his experiments in alchemy, Rappaccini "was looking into their inmost nature, making observations in regard to their creative essence" while he "defended his hands with a pair of thick gloves" and "placed a kind of mask over his mouth and nostrils, as if all this beauty did but conceal a more deadlier malice" (*MM* 96). The imagery of the gloves and the mask are significant in showing that Rappaccini, while in some ways more in touch with nature than his counterpart Baglioni, has also literally lost this intimacy. The fact that he wears a mask is significant in the light of Hawthorne's social concerns, as expressed in the notebooks. It shows that he no longer presents a genuine face in his relationship to his surroundings, but conforms to the identity of a scientist as prescribed by his culture.

Pietro Baglioni, the orthodox rational scientist, explains to the bewildered Giovanni that "the cold and purely intellectual" Rappaccini has become isolated because he "cares infinitely more for science than for mankind" (*MM* 99). According to Baglioni, Rappaccini is the type of scientist praised by M. Krempe in *Frankenstein*: the man whose face "coldly illuminates…as he bends over a bird, a mouse, or a butterfly, which, in pursuance of some experiment, he has killed by the perfume of some flower; a look as deep as Nature itself, but without Nature's warmth of love" (*MM* 107). Baglioni is also a professor of medicine. He is initially presented in a very different light to that in which Rappaccini is presented. As

"an elderly personage, apparently of genial nature" and of "habits that might almost be called jovial," Baglioni is presented by the narrator as a version of M. Waldman, the benevolent chemist who takes Victor Frankenstein as a pupil (*MM* 99). As in *Frankenstein*, however, the young scholar while seemingly presented with a choice of teachers, is unwittingly confronted with, and becomes a mere pawn used by two male scientists, battling to establish themselves as the dominant force in the field of medicine. The omniscient narrator's ability to look both into Rappaccini's and Baglioni's mind reveals that Baglioni's portrait of Rappaccini cannot be trusted because "there was a professional warfare of long continuance between him and Doctor Rappaccini, in which the latter was generally thought to have gained the advantage." Baglioni's envy of Rappaccini's apparently dominant position is made clear by the way in which he describes a homeopathic garden as a poison factory. While Baglioni concedes that "now and then, it must be owned, he has effected – or seemed to effect – a marvellous cure," he tells Giovanni that according to him "he should receive little credit for such instances of success – they being probably the work of chance." Unsurprisingly, his jealousy leads Baglioni to stress that Rappaccini: "should be held strictly accountable for his failures," which unlike his successes "may justly be considered his own work" (*MM* 100). This detailed description of the rivalry between the two professors and their opposing views on science, like Hawthorne's apparently whimsical but slyly subversive preface, stresses the importance of taking into account from which point of view the story is being told at any given moment. The perspective adopted towards the main object of the tale, Beatrice Rappaccini, greatly influences the representation of her figure and the actions of the scientists and Giovanni, as valiant heroes, mad scientists and/ or anarchic alchemists.

What becomes clear is that Beatrice Rappaccini represents different things to the three men in the story. Baglioni believes that Rappaccini has "instructed her deeply in his science" and that "young and beautiful as fame reports her, she is already qualified to fill a professor's chair." Characteristic of the androcentric masculine type he represents, Baglioni fears that "perchance her father destines her for mine" (*MM* 101). From Baglioni's perspective Rappaccini's experiment is deemed mad science because his rival has instructed his daughter in what he considers scientific knowledge that should be limited to men. For Baglioni, Beatrice becomes a monstrously androgynous being because she fuses in her identity what he considers natural and fixed male and female characteristics: beauty and knowledge. The very fact that Baglioni fears that Beatrice can push him out of his professorial chair makes it clear that Baglioni looks at the world through an androcentric lens and equates scientific knowledge with manhood. His fear of Beatrice is a fear of losing his privileged status as professor. The omniscient narrator shows, however, that, as with Aylmer, this fear is grounded not in fact, but in Baglioni's own paranoid fantasies. Baglioni has already confessed to Giovanni, "I know little of the Signora Beatrice" (*MM* 101). Once Baglioni's motivations for "curing" the poisonous girl are unveiled, it is difficult for the reader to sympathise with Baglioni. In turn, Baglioni is revealed to be a long-time friend of Giovanni's father. As in *Frankenstein*, the scientist's interest in Giovanni is paternalistic. He feels burdened with the task of ensuring that Giovanni does not become a pupil of the herbalist Rappaccini and his androgynous daughter.

Baglioni fears Beatrice in a professional capacity, as a young woman in possession of an intellect superior to his own. Therefore, it is not surprising to find that he uses Giovanni's interest in the mysterious girl to get close to her and to counter the imaginary threat she poses to him. Baglioni tries to convince the unwitting Giovanni of his rival's malignant intentions. At this very moment Rappaccini passes the paranoid Baglioni and the ignorant Giovanni in the street, and becomes a disturbing physical presence:

> stooping and moving feebly, like a person in inferior health[,]…his face was all overspread with a most sickly and sallow hue, but yet so pervaded with an expression of piercing and active intellect, that an observer might easily have overlooked the merely physical attributes, and have seen only this wonderful energy (*MM* 106).

From Baglioni's androcentric perspective, Rappaccini is not just another rival scientist but gains the identity of an anarchic alchemist. His very mysterious and inexplicable identity and scientific practice are a disturbing, irrational and seemingly supernatural force whose "wonderful energy" threatens to overpower his own rationalist scientific outlook. Immediately after this confrontation, Baglioni exclaims to Giovanni "he has seen you… you are the subject of one of his experiments" (*MM* 107). Baglioni's scaremongering, however, is a ploy to disguise his own plan to employ Giovanni in his a plot to kill Beatrice, whom he hardly knows, but whose androgynous identity threatens the integrity of his own identity, fixed by an ideology of gender polarization in which science is a masculine endeavour not to be taken up by women.

The irrational character of Baglioni's point of view is heightened by the fact that the omniscient narrator can allow Beatrice to speak for herself, revealing to what extent she is the monstrous androgyne Baglioni makes her out to be:

> "do people say that I am skilled in my father's science of plants? What a jest is there! No; though I have grown up among these flowers, I know no more of them than their hues and perfume; and sometimes, methinks I would fain rid myself of even that small knowledge. There are many flowers here, and those not the least brilliant, that shock and offend me, when they meet my eye" (*MM* 111).

Beatrice implores Giovanni, "pray, Signor, do not believe these stories about my science. Believe nothing of me save what you see with your eyes" (*MM* 111). This remark is significant because in the course of their conversation Giovanni "seemed to gaze through the beautiful girl's eyes into her transparent soul, and felt no more doubt or fear" (*MM* 112). Having been cajoled by Baglioni to doubt the nature of Rappaccini's science and to fear Beatrice as a powerful scientific woman, Giovanni, by adopting her point of view, if only momentarily, learns about her original nature. He learns that Baglioni's tale about her is just that: a fiction. Ironically, Baglioni tries to convince Giovanni of the truth of his portrait of Beatrice's identity by referring to the existence of an eastern fable about an

Indian princess written by "an old classic author," who also turned out to have a poisonous breath (*MM* 117). His knowledge is literally a fable.

Unlike Baglioni, who wishes to destroy a woman he sees as a professional threat, Giovanni, by actually entering her domain and seeking an interview with Beatrice, learns that her "experience of life had been confined within the limits of that garden." The questions she puts to Giovanni show "such seclusion and such lack of familiarity with modes and forms that Giovanni responded as if to an infant." Giovanni learns that the girl he had responded to "in such hues of terror," while under the influence of Baglioni's androcentric rhetoric, was in fact "so human and so maiden-like," a girl to whom he felt, in conversation, "like a brother." By taking the time to enter into the world and mind of Beatrice, Giovanni is able to sympathise with her plight, even though he still does not understand her mysterious poisonous powers. More significantly even, in the secluded herbal garden, Giovanni and Beatrice are described as having "free intercourse," meaning intercourse free from the pressures of Baglioni's or Rappaccini's controlling influence (*MM* 112-3).

As in *Frankenstein*, the individual defined as monstrous by the establishment, once on neutral territory, can raise a sympathetic voice against his/ her own abject status. The protagonist is given the choice to respond to this plea positively through recognition of the figure's or creature's individuality, or negatively, by reinforcing his/ her abject status and casting it off. Aylmer refuses to listen to Aminidab, because, from his perspective, the assistant represents only an inferior being. Victor Frankenstein, once he has bowed to paternal pressures to conform to the prescribed standards of masculinity, sided with the dominant culture's perspective of his own creature, views it as an unnatural monstrous presence and hunts it down. Giovanni, however, having had the opportunity to adopt Beatrice's point of view, takes a different step. Instead of consolidating Beatrice's abject status by rejecting her as monstrous, he concedes that "she was a human: her nature was endowed with all gentle and feminine qualities; she was worthiest to be worshipped; she was capable, surely, on her part, of the height and heroism of love." The narrator explains that now by either simply forgetting, or "by the subtle sophistry of passion" Beatrice was "the more admirable, by so much as she was the more unique" (*MM* 114).

Elbert explains that "Beatrice changes depending on the perspective of the beholder" (Elbert 119). As in "The Birth-Mark," an androgynous identity is presented as monstrous only by a figure who adopts an androcentric lens, but is defined as a natural identity in the eyes of a marginal figure, Aminidab in "The Birth-Mark," in this case Giovanni before he sides with Baglioni in his experiment to "cure" her of her ills. In the course of the story, however, Giovanni undergoes several reversals of point of view.[61] The fantastic territory of the alchemical herb-garden allows Giovanni not only to take Beatrice's point of view on her plight, it also allows him to alter his point of view entirely. He had

[61] In her reading of "Rappaccini's Daughter," Elbert argues that Beatrice "has combined both feminine and masculine modes of perception to become the perfect androgynous mind" (Elbert 119). Since Beatrice herself denies having knowledge of her father's science, I would argue that it is only in the eyes of various observers, who believe her to hold magico-scientific powers and who are threatened by this mixture of ideal feminine beauty and secret powerful knowledge and skills, that she is a dissident androgyne. Androgyny here is not so much a Jungian mental fusion of complementary opposites as an identity performance.

started from the viewpoint of the windowsill, high above the garden, which underscored Baglioni's story of Beatrice as an androgynous monster. Viewing the situation from within the shadowy world of his private imagination, the narrator explains, "what ever had looked ugly, was now beautiful; or, if incapable of such a change, it stole away and hid itself among those shapeless half-ideas, which throng the dim region beyond the daylight of our perfect consciousness" (*MM* 114). Giovanni's unconscious irrational visions of Beatrice as a unique human individual stand in marked contrast to his rational rejection of her identity as dangerously monstrous.

Significantly, through his contact with Beatrice Giovanni has begotten "a purple print, like that of four small fingers," on his hand, "and the likeness of a slender thumb upon his wrist" (*MM* 115). When he awakes from his fantastic dreams, he finds out that, he has been touched by a hand, which as the result of his acquaintance with the flower-girl Beatrice, can be interpreted, as in Georginia's case, as the hand of nature. From this moment on, Giovanni and Beatrice are inseparable. Their union in sympathy represents the possibility of Giovanni's escape from Baglioni's paranoid androcentric point of view. Being more and more in Beatrice's company, "he had scarcely thought of [Baglioni] for whole weeks and would willingly have forgotten [him] still longer" (*MM* 116). At this point in the tale, there exists a possibility of a sincere and benevolent coming together of both Giovanni and Beatrice's identities in a relationship founded on sympathy, sincerity and benevolence, unfettered to traditional male and female gender roles and the unequal statuses such roles allot to men and women.

In the homeopathic tradition of medicine it is believed that "like cures like." Therefore, illness should be treated with illness. Consequently, medicine takes the paradoxical form of poison as it cures. While Baglioni and initially also Giovanni see only a danger in Beatrice's poisonous nature, from Rappaccini's homeopathic point of view Beatrice has the power to heal Giovanni by poisoning him. Uroff explains that "if like cures like, these two [Beatrice and Giovanni] should be able to cure each other by bodily contact. And that," he argues, "is exactly what Rappaccini has in mind" (Uroff 66). As in the alchemical tradition, the coming together of apparent opposites in a mystical union leads to a higher state of being. But if this is what is supposed to happen in the story, what then has gone wrong in Rappaccini's experiment that the tale is unequivocally read as a tragedy, ending in the death of Beatrice?

The narrator explains that this proposed union cannot take place because "so marked was the physical barrier between" Giovanni and Beatrice that even "her garment…had never been waved against him by a breeze." The lack of any physical consummation ensures that their potential utopian union remains only a possibility, not a reality in the world of the story. As in *St Leon*, the plot is a story about ideological oppression stifling utopian potential even as this potential remains apparent. The narrator explains that "on the few occasions when Giovanni had seemed tempted to overstep the limit, Beatrice grew so sad, so stern, and withal wore such a look of desolate separation, shuddering at itself, that not a spoken word was requisite to repel him." Like Aminidab, accepting her for who and how she is, Giovanni is prepared to cross the boundary that separates them and to be fully unified with Beatrice whatever the cost. Only her own

horrified reactions to his attempts bring back "the horrible suspicions that rose, monster-like, out of the caverns of his heart" (*MM* 116). If Beatrice is nature personified there is an inherent resistance in nature to accept the advances of man no matter how idealistic. Here the role of her father is most significant. As the portrait of Rappaccini at the outset of the tale makes clear, he is a herbalist who has lost touch with nature. His experiment fails because he has accepted the challenge of competing with Baglioni for the title of the most powerful scientist in their culture. In choosing public glory above benevolent science, he has lost sympathy with the very matter that forms the core of his experiment, nature, and has created in his daughter an image of nature that cannot sympathise with humanity.

Uroff explains that "Rappaccini has gone outside the bounds of homeopathy's purported method of following nature's own laws in the curative process by making his daughter unnatural" (Uroff 68). He is revealed finally to be just like Victor Frankenstein, an alchemical scholar who has rejected the older philosophies and embraced the Baconian scientific practice in competing for dominance with Baglioni. In doing so, Rappaccini, like Victor, has turned his potentially utopian experiments into poisons that can no longer cure. This suggests that, as in *Frankenstein*, a lack of sympathy, of understanding and compassion for nature, transforms nature against its own will into a monstrous and destructive presence intent on destroying its creator.

Both Beatrice and Frankenstein's monster are the unnatural by-products of male scientists in competition with each other over superficial matters such as intellectual prestige and the power such status allots the individual. Just as "The Birth-Mark," through its focus on cosmetics and the skin, draws attention to Aylmer's obsession with perfect surfaces that represent ideological illusions, "Rappaccini's Daughter" draws attention to how promises of worldly power and status have lured Rappaccini into what the narrator calls "warfare" with Baglioni, drawing both scientists away from any useful or even utopian scientific project. In the context of the story, science has become a weapon of choice, and is no longer a potentially learned means towards a benevolent end. Like Krempe, Baglioni attempts to win Giovanni to his side by forcing him to acknowledge what he believes is "the truth in respect to the poisoner Rappaccini, and his poisonous daughter." Giovanni, however, is the only man to have looked at the world through both Baglioni's and Beatrice's eyes and defends her identity by striving to respond to Baglioni's paternalistic remonstrance with "a true lover's perfect faith," but Baglioni's rhetoric is revealed to have too powerful a grip over Giovanni's mind (*MM* 118). Baglioni eventually ensures Giovanni's compliance to his schemes by telling him that "it is not yet too late for the rescue…possibly, we may even succeed in bringing back this miserable child within the limits of ordinary nature, from which her father's madness has estranged her" (*MM* 119). Bringing her back to what he perceives is "ordinary nature," as in "The Birth-Mark," ironically means making sure that she conforms to the ideologically prescribed feminine gender role: a marriageable girl who can complement Giovanni's scientific mind.

Significantly, Uroff explains that, contrary to what Elbert argues, Rappaccini's science has not functioned purely to feed his own ego and give him power. In fact, Rappaccini "has tried to use his scientific experimentation toward the human end of safeguarding his daughter" (Uroff 68). By making her poisonous he has saved her from

imprisonment in an ideologically prescribed passive and subservient feminine gender role. The extent to which androcentric culture will go to ensure its hegemony is illustrated by Baglioni's final attempt at breaking Rappaccini's protective spell. Instead of playing the doctor, the role his education has allowed him to play, Baglioni plays the role of poisoner and presents the phial of "antidote" to Giovanni in a vase "wrought by the hands of the renowned Benvenuto Cellini" (*MM* 119). Again the imagery suggests the theme of beautiful surfaces hiding dark and deadly motivations. Slowly Baglioni becomes Aylmer's counterpart in trying to "cure" an original female identity, symbolic of a vital nature that does not conform to his standards and threatens his sense of self as university professor.

For Giovanni, who thinks of Beatrice as "a simple, natural, most affectionate and guileless creature," Baglioni's schemes seem as horrific as Beatrice's identity seems monstrous to Baglioni. He believes that Beatrice's poisonous nature, as described by Baglioni, is based on "mistaken fantasies" (*MM* 120). The tragedy in the story arises from Baglioni's success in convincing Giovanni that Beatrice's identity needs to be corrected to suit his own androcentric standards of womanhood. Because of his combined faith in the benevolence of Beatrice's nature and the equally benevolent motivations of Baglioni's scientific plans, Giovanni becomes the perfect tool with which Baglioni can put into practice his malign intentions. Having initially experienced his union with the androgynous Beatrice as bliss, he returns to her under the guidance of Baglioni with the scientist's orders to give her the potion that will cure her. That Giovanni is finally complicit in Baglioni's plot becomes clear when on his return his view of her has returned to his earlier view, complicit with Baglioni's. He tells Beatrice: "thou hast severed me, likewise, from all the warmth of life, and enticed me into thy region of unspeakable horror!" Presenting once again a monstrous presence, Beatrice challenges "ordinary nature" as perceived by Baglioni and Giovanni, bringing about a "fiendish scorn" where at one time there had been mutual sympathy and understanding (*MM* 124).

Giovanni's conformation to Baglioni's androcentric perspective is highlighted when he acknowledges that despite "the intimate and peculiar relationship between Beatrice and himself," he hopes to return her "within the limits of ordinary nature, and [lead] Beatrice – the redeemed Beatrice – by the hand" (*MM* 125). Here the narrator shows greater insight than any of the figures and takes once again Beatrice's perspective in explaining that Giovanni's hopes are "weak, and selfish," since he has already "bitterly wronged…Beatrice's love…by…blighting words" (*MM* 126). Deceived in his own intentions to control Beatrice's identity, he unwittingly offers to kill her and himself by suggesting they take the antidote. Like Georgiana, who tells Aylmer that in her position death is a release, Uroff explains that Beatrice too "willingly accepts" her fate (Uroff 69). Like Frankenstein's monster, who also chooses death over a life as an eternal outcast, Beatrice is caught between a life of imprisonment or of perpetual flight and pursuit. Realising that she cannot win, she says: "Give it me!" At the moment when she drinks, Rappaccini, like Aylmer, reveals his misguided "triumphant expression" in acknowledgement of "his success" (*MM* 126). At the moment of their union in death, Rappaccini reveals that Giovanni "now stands apart from common men, as thou dost, daughter of my pride and triumph, from ordinary women." He has created a most

monstrous androgynous couple, "most dear to one another, and dreadful to all besides!" He shows his initial good intentions by rhetorically asking Beatrice, "wouldst thou, then, have preferred the condition of a weak woman, exposed to all evil, and capable of none?" However radical Rappaccini's intentions had been in creating a woman who could not be forced to conform to the prescribed feminine gender role, Beatrice's reaction to this revelation shows that her fantastic powers, as in the case of Frankenstein's monster, will lead only to further cultural abjection. Recognising Giovanni's true motivation – his wish to transform her natural identity, into that representing orthodox femininity – she asks him rhetorically, "was there not, from the first, more poison in thy nature than in mine?"

The destructive effects of the blind aspiration in which both Rappaccini and Baglioni undertake their scientific competition is foregrounded by Baglioni's final worlds spoken from the safe distance of the tower widow through which Giovanni had first caught a glimpse of Beatrice: "Rappaccini! Rappaccini! And is this the upshot of your experiment?" (*MM* 127) Since the reader knows that it was Rappaccini's initial, if misguided, intention to protect his daughter from a dangerous male-dominated society by making her poisonous, and that it was always Baglioni's masculine panic-fuelled intention to kill Beatrice to safeguard his own authoritative position as doctor of medicine, the irony of these words are crystal clear. Like Aylmer, Baglioni, calling from the position Giovanni had occupied at the outset of the tale, represents the dominant androcentric culture. He ensures the hegemony of his androcentric viewpoint and the polarized male and female identities such a viewpoint validates by veiling the irrational foundation of his own motivation – professional jealousy – and by ensuring that alternative forms of knowledge and the alternative identities that are linked to this knowledge are presented as monstrous deviations of the natural laws that his own scientific practice has discovered and offered up as the only possible truth of nature.

Melville's "The Bell-Tower:" Legislative Madness and Artistic Monstrosities

In 1949, Newton Arvin wrote that "Brockden Brown, our earliest novelist of any true genius, was a Gothic writer in the strictest sense, and the work of Poe and Hawthorne, of course, abounds in Gothic feeling and Gothic detail."[62] My investigation into the intertextual connections between the Godwinian gothic tradition and the shared use of the stock gothic trope of alchemy by Godwin, Brown, Shelley, Poe, Hawthorne and even Lippard, adds extra weight to Arvin's observations. According to Arvin, this presence of the gothic "is far less true of Melville, for many reasons, one of which is simply that he was enough younger than any of them to have passed beyond the immediate reach of the Gothic magnetism" (Arvin 47). Arvin's word choice here shows that he considered the gothic something to avoid. While he points out Melville's various allusions to the work of Ann Radcliffe and the influence of Radcliffe on his descriptions of natural scenery, Arvin creates a clear barrier between his subject and the mistress of the gothic by arguing that "Melville would not be the first writer of great power to owe a certain debt to one of his small predecessors" (Arvin 33). Arvin cannot ignore that on a trip to London in 1849

[62] Newton Arvin, "Melville and the Gothic Novel" *New England Quarterly*, 22:1/ 4 (1949): 47.

Melville acquired copies of *The Castle of Otranto*, *Caleb Williams*, *Vathek*, and *Frankenstein*.[63] Neither can he ignore that Melville was familiar with Schiller's *The Ghost-Seer*.[64]Arvin's uneasiness with the presence of Radcliffe in Melville's work becomes more apparent even when he discusses Melville's reference to Radcliffe's novels while on a trip to the Middle-East. Arvin writes that "in some curious way, the imagery of Mrs. Radcliffe's books must have got itself intermingled with Melville's somber impressions of Palestine" (Arvin 35). By suggesting that it is Radcliffe's imagery that inexplicably gets caught up in Melville's mind, just as the gothic had used its magnetic attraction to lure great writers into its sphere of influence, Arvin is saying less about Melville's interests in the gothic and more about his own reluctance to count Melville as yet another American gothicist. That Melville knew Radcliffe's work well can be deduced from the fact that in *Clarel* he alludes to a minor character in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, "the half-comic, half-heroic manservant at the Castle of Udolpho" (Arvin 35). Arvin does not mention that Melville's acquaintance Mrs. J.R. Morewood gave him a copy of Bulwer's *Zanoni* and that Melville himself gave a copy of Poe's works to his wife on New Year's Day 1861.[65] Arvin manages to sidestep the clear influence of *Frankenstein* on "The Bell-Tower" by dismissing the tale in a short phrase as "a feeble Hawthornian tale" (Arvin 39). While Arvin concludes that "there can be no doubt of his familiarity with the writers of the Tale of Terror," he argues that the gothic in Melville's fiction should be approached as a mere unconscious residue from youthful reading, an inescapable if lamentable cultural influence. The following reading of "The Bell-Tower" will show, however, that Melville was much more directly and consciously engaged with the gothic genre, its major themes and tropes, and the narrative perspectives it utilizes, and that *Frankenstein* especially stood as a model for his own story about an anarchic alchemist.

After the failure of *Moby Dick*, Melville turned away from the genre that had given him his initial success as an author, the sea adventure story, and towards the other popular genres of the sentimental and gothic romance in *Pierre*. Melville shows his awareness of the commercial potential of penning a sentimental-gothic romance by writing to his publisher that *Pierre* was "very much more calculated for popularity than anything you have yet published of mine."[66] Ultimately, *Pierre* was a flop. Ann Radcliffe was an adept at mixing sentiment and horror in her historical romances. Melville's *Pierre*, however, suffers from the gothic trope of a split personality. It moves from sentimental romance to sensational urban gothic thriller in such contrasting colours that the whole work seems to be a parody of both genres, rather than a serious novel with metaphysical overtones. According to the New York *Herald*, Melville turned to "some of the ancient and most repulsive inventions of the George Walker and Anne Radcliffe sort" and had "written himself out."[67] The critic of the *American Whig Review* likened it to the mass-market gothic productions of the Minerva Press (Higgins and Parker 443). The Boston *Post* called it "the craziest fiction extant" and

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[63] Herman Melville, *Journal of a visit to London, 1849-1850*, ed., Eleanor Melville Metcalf (London: Cohen and West, 1949) 76.
[64] Herman Melville, *Journals 1856-7* (Evanston: Northwestern-Newberry Press, 1989) 64 and 89.
[65] Merton M. Sealts Jr., *Melville's Reading*, revised and enlarged (University of South Carolina Press, 1988).
[66] Merrell R. Davis and William H. Gilman, *The Letters of Herman Melville* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1960) 226.
[67] Herman Melville, *The Contemporary Reviews*, eds. Brian Higgins and Hershel Parker (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995) 419.

deemed "the amount of utter trash in the volume…almost infinite" (Higgins and Parker 419-20). Bad news travels fast and in October 1852 *Graham's Magazine* opened its review with the sentence: "this work is generally considered a failure" (Higgins and Parker 440). After *Pierre* had failed to rekindle Melville's popularity as a novelist, Melville turned to the genre in which his contemporaries Poe and Hawthorne had found some success and popularity: the magazine tale. In line with the popular demand, some of Melville's tales unsurprisingly exhibit the mystically gothic tones of Poe, the allegorical fantasy of Hawthorne, and the symbolic social realism of Dickens, even flirting with the morbid horrors of *Blackwood's Magazine*. In 1856 Melville selected five of his magazine pieces for a volume which was to carry the title T*he Piazza Tales*, and which would be prefaced by a new story "The Piazza." Four of the previously published stories in the volume belong to Melville's slight but strong gothic canon. The fact that he chose these stories shows that Melville still had some faith in the genre as a type of fiction with popular appeal.

Despite the dark and unsettling tone of much of these stories, several reviewers believed Melville's stories showed a return to form. The reviewer for the Philadelphia *Evening Bulletin* believed that *The Piazza Tales* "will doubtless have an extensive sale as a summer book" (Higgins and Parker 474). Part of *The Piazza Tales* potential for popular success was the reviewer's and reader's ability to place Melville's stories within existing generic categories of popular fiction. It was the combination of original design and an instantly recognisable similarity to other successful fictions of the day that made it possible for the reviewer to calculate its success as a summer book. Thomas Powell's review, in the New York *News*, is exemplary of this: while he claims that all stories were "entirely unlike anything else we ever read," he mentions that "The Lightning-Rod Man" and "The Bell-Tower," are stories that "remind [him] of Poe in his strangest mood" (Higgins and Parker 471). The New York *Dispatch* argues that Melville "has struck out an entirely new path for himself." But the reviewer finds in the opening tale "a mysticism which reminds us of Edgar Poe's prose tales" and he is reminded of *Robinson Crusoe* in "The Encantadas" (Higgins and Parker 477). The Boston *Evening Traveller* likens "Bartleby" to Dickens' work (Higgins and Parker 473). The New Bedford *Mercury* identifies the influence of "Charles Brockden Brown," and calls Melville "a kind of wizard" because "he writes strange and mysterious things that belong to other worlds beyond this tame and everyday place we live in" (Higgins and Parker 474). The New York *Tribune* gives "The Lightening-Rod Man" and "The Bell-Tower" the title of "ingenious rhapsodies" suggesting a link between Melville's authorial persona and Brown's rhapsodist stance (Higgins and Parker 479). The *Berkshire County Eagle* calls "The Bell-Tower" an arabesque tale, linking it directly to Poe. The *United States Magazine and Democratic Review* also identifies Poe as Melville's most overt influence (Higgins and Parker 482). The *Worcester National Aegis* recognizes in *The Piazza Tales* Melville's turn towards the American short story tradition of Poe and Hawthorne, discussing the similarities and differences between Melville and the aforementioned authors.

The reviewers' tendency to link *The Piazza Tales* to authors such as Brown, Poe, Hawthorne and Dickens suggests that Melville was much more consciously engaged with the gothic than Arvin would have liked to acknowledge. According to Nalini V. Shetty,

"Herman Melville was himself by no means unresponsive to the Gothic genre." She argues that "he incorporated many of its techniques to convey his vision and version of the world."[68] Shetty's article on Melville and the gothic tradition differs from Arvin's significantly because it argues that Melville utilizes the gothic consciously and for a purpose. In line with much early scholarship on the American gothic, Shetty believes that Melville improves on his sources when he turns to the gothic, arguing that, "while Melville made free use of the Gothic devices and techniques in his fiction, what distinguishes him from the run-of-the-mill Gothic writer is that he uses the devices merely to titillate the reader, but subordinates them to the technical requirements of his story." Shetty also turned to *The Piazza Tales*, and writes that "in 'Benito Cereno,' Melville goes beyond his European counterparts in that he uses the situation of an innocent man faced with evil, to give added dimension to the problem of evil in the world" (Shetty 149). She could here be describing the basic premise of *Caleb Williams*, or Hogg's *Confessions of a Justified Sinner*. Like Caleb, or Robert Wringham, the rebellious slave Babo has to become as cruel as his master in order to attempt to overcome him. Like his real-life counterpart Natty Bumpo, or figures like Caleb, Wringham, or even Frankenstein's monster, Babo is simultaneously a hero and a villain, a victim and a perpetrator of a criminal act, depending on which ideological viewpoint is foregrounded as the dominant and or legitimate viewpoint in the story. When Melville joined the popular magazine fiction trade, in which the gothic fantastic was a popular genre, he borrowed from this genre some of its stock features, one of which is this tendency to blur the boundaries between good and evil.

Melville owned a copy of Poe's tales, and might have recognised the author's frequent use of the cultural schema of alchemy. Melville's friend Hawthorne had also found in the cultural schema of alchemy a gothic trope to which he would turn again and again in his stories and longer romances. Even the most popular author of the day, George Lippard, had published gothic novels riddled with alchemists and alchemical symbolism that even if Melville had not read them would probably not have escaped his notice. Several British gothic novels such as *St Leon*, *Frankenstein*, and especially Bulwer's *Zanoni* were still popular in the United States in the mid-nineteenth century. Thus, when Melville turned to magazine fiction and was looking for literary subjects with popular appeal, the cultural schema of alchemy was not merely a possibility, but an obvious choice. "The Bell-Tower," a tale of a mad scientist who builds an iron man to ring the hours in the belfry of a high tower in a fictional Italian renaissance town, but who is eventually murdered by his own creation, sees Melville clearly engaging with *Frankenstein* and more generally with the cultural schema of alchemy.

In alchemical gothic novels and stories discussed so far, the cultural schema of alchemy, with its emphasis on the irrational, magical, and cyclical, and its tendency to dissolve artificial cultural binaries, works to set up a counter-viewpoint that highlights how much the dominant order in the stories relies for its hegemony on the illusion that the world is naturally ordered into binary categories, in which polarized male and female identities work to structure many of the subsequent cultural binaries of public and private,

[68] Nalini V. Shetty, "Melville's use of the Gothic Tradition," in *Studies in American Literature: Essays in Honour of William Mulder*, eds. Jagdish Chander and Narindar S. Pradhan (Delhi: Oxford UP, 1976) 144.

work and home, master and slave. In this context, the alchemical figure becomes an anarchic force, since his identity and knowledge fits neither of these ideologically defined binary categories, making it impossible for the alchemist to be caught in the male or female gender role and the work, status, social customs and traditions it prescribes as natural to the individual. Consequently, the irrepressible physical presence and powerful magical powers of these alchemical figures allow them to embody a dissident androgynous ideal, a powerful identity that is unfettered to an ideology of gender polarization. In "The Bell-Tower," Melville's engages with the cultural schema of alchemy to similar effect. Bannadonna's art, created out of an alternative alchemical vision, challenges the dominant authority in the story, the magistrates who order him to build the tower, because it too dissolves the binary categories that have empowered the magistrates and on which they have structured their society. The dominant image in Melville's tale is the Frankensteinian motif of the artificial creation that rebels against and becomes more powerful than his maker. As such Melville's tale is suggestive of the anxiety about the possibility that the machine will come to rule mankind. Taking this shape, the Frankenstein myth significantly retains its critical engagement with an ideology of gender polarization. As Thoreau wrote in *Walden*, a man who performs the expected male role as labourer, genteel or otherwise, and who joins the chaos of the increasingly industrialised economic sphere, whether in office or on the factory floor, "has no time to be anything but a machine" (*Wn* 3). From this point of view, it is not the extreme individualist, the artist or the professional non-conformist, but the bourgeois male machine of the antebellum market place who becomes a gothic monster – a machine of flesh and blood, a zombie.

Brian Roberts writes that in America, "before the 1830s, home and work were not geographically separate; the 'family' was likely to contain several laborers, their spiritual, social, and economic well-being dependent on the patriarchal head of the household."[69] During the advent of rapid industrialisation "fathers increasingly worked outside of the home and mothers took over responsibilities for child-raising, as former apprentices and household members moved away to become seldom-seen laborers from another side of town" (B. Roberts 13). Before this change, however, the home was a place where a "diverse household slept, ate, talked, and lived together as a type of extended family" (B. Roberts 25). In the pre-industrial home, much like the antebellum utopian communities, community and family, home and work, are interchangeable concepts not yet (or no longer in the case of the utopians) differentiated into a private family unit, and a public business community necessarily constituted by autonomous individuals. As at the New Alchemy institute (see introduction), in such a self-sufficient communal environment, gender roles were not yet (or no longer) dominant in creating individual identity, as the work performed by women and men was performed in the same location, and thus the possibility of interchange between domestic and commercial tasks was always a possibility both within the family set- up and in the larger community.

Donald E. Cole explains that during the Jacksonian era significant economic developments took place: "Jackson's election in 1828 coincided with the most revolutionary transportation change of all, the coming of the railroad," a technological

[69] Brian Roberts, *American Alchemy* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 2000) 25.

development on a massive scale that rang in the industrial age in both the United States and Britain.[70] According to Cole, "the transportation revolution was part of a larger market revolution," increasing not only the speed by which people could travel, but with it also the speed of communication and the distribution of goods. Cole explains that during this era, "the old self-sufficiency," of which Roberts writes, "disappeared as farmers produced surplus crops for markets in the rising cities and towns of America and the ports of Europe." Such developments, in turn, "brought on an increased demand for money to finance the new enterprises," resulting in a proliferation of banks, paper money, and a financial market based on monetary exchange. Because of these economic developments, Cole argues, "the production of goods began to move out of the home and into the factory," changing not only the economic landscape but also "the lives of American workers," something Thoreau was concerned about (Cole 8). Consequently, commercial and domestic labour were geographically separated. This worked to segregate the family from the larger community, and reconstitute it within a newly isolated sphere called "the home." Cole explains that not only men's lives changed because of these developments, but that also "women's lives were reshaped as the new manufacturing system took sons and husbands away during the day or longer, leaving women in charge of the home" (Cole 9). By the 1840s the idea of family had come to denote solely blood relations, whose private dwelling was "fully cut off from the scene of production" which left it, ideologically, "virtually outside of the market forces" (B. Roberts 25). The geographical distance between commerce and family home created an increasing ideological gulf between the private family and the public business community because the possibility of performing simultaneously domestic and commercial work became increasingly difficult (as Hawthorne's "The Birth-Mark" illustrates), since being at home meant being at a distance from the economic hub. According to Cole, these developments led to "a new concept of separate spheres, according to which men should go out into the business world and women should stay at home" (Cole 9). This publicly espoused ideology of male and female spheres of action in antebellum America was of course not a new concept. As historians of gender have shown, this ideology of naturally separated male and female spheres of actions in which women are confined to the home and men are expected to enter the public domain of business and politics is a gender ideology that has enjoyed hegemony throughout much of western history, even though in reality these spheres and boundaries have proven all but natural, stable and timeless. This is also true for antebellum American industrial revolution. Carroll Pursell writes, "one signal accompaniment of the mechanisation of industry was the introduction of large numbers of women into the factory workforce."[71] Work and home were only separated for those families in which the woman could afford to stay at home. Pursell explains, however, that even thought the line between workplace and domestic home was at best a perforated boundary, "the workplace remained heavily gendered, with men's tasks and women's tasks strictly defined and enforced, and with a patriarchal hierarchy that often found men cooperating across class lines to maintain their masculine advantage in the face of technological change" (Pursell

[70] Donald B. Cole, *The Presidency of Andrew Jackson* (Lawrence: UP of Kansas, 1993) 7.
[71] Carroll Pursell, *The Machine in America: A Social History of Technology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1995) 97.

97). His portrayal of a cold gender war on the work floor shows how powerful the public rhetoric about naturally separated gender spheres was in constructing individual and group identity.

In a highly competitive marketplace in which men competed with men for the better jobs, while men as a group sought to ensure their livelihoods against the encroaching female workforce, Roberts argues that the gold rush of the late 1840s offered many families and individuals a way out of the industrial capitalist system and the class and gender inequality it increased. For this reason Roberts gives his book the title *American Alchemy*. As with the original alchemical project, for Roberts, the gold rush has egalitarian implications. He discusses how prospectors viewed their project as utopian. On an economic level, the abundance of wealth would do away with class inequality. On a social level, a common purpose would create a newly-found sense of community untrammelled by the ideological divide of home and workplace. Consequently, on a domestic level, the absence of the traditional concept of home or work, a gendered division of labour and space, would liberate individual identities from the pressures to conform to ideologically prescribed gender roles.

Roberts argues that the ideology of separate spheres became a self-contradictory social ideology. Rather than a stable sphere of action in which men could feel like and function as men, for some East Coast men the economic marketplace had become "a place of chaos and disorder" (B. Roberts 47). Significantly, as men came to dominate the commercial arena, identifying the public community as a masculine space, Roberts argues that "certainly, the home, increasingly dominated by women, increasingly separate from the market, was not a very good place for young men to learn the battle strategies of the marketplace" (B. Roberts 48). By the late 1840s, Roberts explains "this tension between home and the outside world of business was everywhere apparent in mid-nineteenth-century American bourgeois culture" (B. Roberts 49). As an example Roberts recounts how one middle-class man – a young lawyer in New York – felt that "far from preparing him for the world of the market, home and mother had done the opposite, leaving him a 'sensitive boy' faced with a 'battle of life,' surrounded only by 'selfish and unfriendly faces'" (B. Roberts 48). For this particular young man of the 1840s, the marketplace he was expected to enter seemed chaotic and inhuman, turning those who entered this sphere into competitive individualists incapable of feelings of benevolence and social understanding. The home, by contrast, did not prepare the man for this world, and could therefore only function as a shelter, an escape from this hostile environment, without providing mutual shelter from and support to this environment, a function which in the ideology of domesticity, the home was said to perform. The West presented a potentially idyllic space, where work and home where as yet undifferentiated, allowing both to work to buttress individual integrity.

While the bourgeois man was faced with an uncompromisingly competitive and unfriendly marketplace, the working-class man, the factory worker, Pursell explains, faced an even more stark erasure of traditional human values of sympathy, benevolence and community. He explains that in general "the tools and processes we use are part of our lives, not simply instruments of our purpose" (Pursell xii). Tools, whether sword, pen, or

factory machine, play an important part in the creation of individual identity. In "Bartleby," Melville wrote a story that in some ways illustrates the fears expressed by the young Lawyer in Roberts' study. The young man, entering into the law profession as a copyist, finds little sympathy, benevolence or community. In antebellum society, Pursell argues, not only the pen was used to make copies. While "under the older system, manufactured items such as muskets or locks were made one at a time by skilled crafts people who, perhaps with t he help of an apprentice, saw the entire process through to its end," Pursell explains, "the essential idea of the American system of manufactures, or armory practice as it was also called, was to achieve uniformity of product by the transfer of skills from workers to machines" (Pursell 87). Pursell explains that Thomas Blanchard invented "the copying lathe," an industrial device that "allowed an operator to copy a pattern and thereby produce an exact imitation" (Pursell 87). Pursell's argument that the tools we use are intricate parts of our lives, can explain how Thoreau came to compare the antebellum working man to a machine. Industrial manufacturing, characterised by the goal of exact duplication of parts or commodities turned its workers into equally uniform individuals.

In "The Tartarus of Maids," Melville had openly engaged with the dehumanising forces of industry on women, describing the factory system as a type of hell. "The Bell-Tower," draws even greater attention to the dehumanising forces of industrial labour, in its tendency to deny the individuality of its workers. In the imaginary Renaissance world of the story, the alchemical mechanic and artist Bannadonna refuses to identify himself with either the public masculine community ruled by reason, commerce and machines, or the isolated feminised home, the private retreat in which men could find solace and rest. In fact, the tower he is commissioned to build by the rulers of his community is not just the public monument to androcentric culture that its phallic symbolism suggests. It is also the home and workplace of the "unblessed foundling" Bannadonna. Just as the tower he builds is simultaneously home and workplace, the art with which he adorns his structure, is simultaneously beautiful and functional, human and artificial, flawed and unique. In his life and work Bannadonna, while appearing to serve the public needs of the state, is working to perfect his own artistic ideals. As such he is fusing the gendered binary categories that structure the society in which he lives. These qualities turn Bannadonna into an anarchic alchemist rather than a mad scientist and his art into the expression of a dissident androgynous ideal, instead of masculine scientific hubris.

According to Jay MacPherson "The Bell-Tower" was "written somewhat under the influence of *Frankenstein*."[72] In his essay on the manifold biblical, mythological as well as literary influences on Melville's short tale, he concludes that, with regard to *Frankenstein,* the tale is yet another warning against the dangers of scientific hubris: "creators like Frankenstein and Bannadonna can be seen as narcissistically elaborating aggrandized self-images meant to rise beyond the trammels of 'nature,' or man's ordinary limitations." He adds that "usually their achievement is ironic: Frankenstein produces in the Being an image less of his aspirations than of his own real but neglected humanity, and Bannadonna, who as he falls spills his oil-can across the iron track (on which his mechanical man slides back

[72] Jay MacPherson, "Waiting for Shiloh: Transgression and Fall in Melville's 'The Bell-Tower,'" in *Gothic Fictions: Prohibition/Transgression*, ed. Kenneth W. Graham (New York: AMS Press, 1989) 245.

and forth), produces an embodiment of force and of ineluctable mechanical law" (MacPherson 258).

In what MacPherson calls "the best discussion" of "The Bell-Tower," H. Bruce Franklin takes a similar view of the story as typical Victorian horror tale of the dangers of over-zealous scientific enterprise (MacPherson 253). He describes Bannadonna as the typical mad scientist: "the creator as a being cut off from normal organic creation."[73] He describes his creation as the emblem of science run amok: "the automaton as destroyer." He describes "society as a possible beneficiary, possible victim of the automaton," and indirectly, therefore, the victim of, or the object of benevolence for, the scientist who created it (Franklin 145). Franklin suggests that this scepticism about scientific enterprise represented Melville's own point of view. Describing the author as "a scientific observer," Franklin argues that Melville "was apparently too troubled by the observable effects of actual technology to feel much compulsion toward inventing additional scientific marvels" (Franklin 144). He argues that for Melville, as for many commentators of *Frankenstein*, "the creation of an automaton [is] a narcissistic act unconsciously intended to bypass the normal means of procreation." For him the tower Bannadonna makes becomes "a symbolic expression of what is involved between an automaton and a man who desires it" (Franklin 146).

Bruce R. Bickley Jr comes to the same conclusion: "Bannadonna's overweening pride in his almost impious creation ultimately brings about his death."[74] Bickley, however, suggests that the tale is more than just another mad scientist story warning the reader of the dangers of scientific experimentation. Although he never addresses the presence of elements from the cultural schema of alchemy in the text, Bickley points out the story's potential as a tale concerned with ideological issues surrounding the metaphorical representation of nature. According to Bickley, "the triumph of the organic over the inorganic suggests the inevitability of death in the natural cycle of things and reinforces ironically the impermanence and ineffectuality of man's most ambitious creations" (Bickley 97-8). According to Bickley, who does not take into account the ideological point of view form which the story is told, "proud Bannadonna had tried not only to rival nature but to 'rule her'" (Bickley 100).

Baldick explains that in "The Bell-Tower," Melville "most concisely reproduces the themes of Frankenstein" (Baldick 74). In the world of the story, however, Bannadonna is not the self-deceived, isolated, mad scientist that MacPherson, Franklin and Bickley make him out to be. From the outset of the story it is clear that his project is not his own, but a commission from the rulers of state Bannadonna serves. Bannadonna's radicalism lies in the way in which he seems to be doing exactly what he has been commissioned to do, but is simultaneously working on his own act of dissidence through what can be best termed his own individualistic theory of art, in which what Hawthorne termed "the perfect original" becomes a dissident presence because it incorporates all the gendered cultural binaries into a potentially utopian androgynous ideal, even though through the story's dominant narrative perspective this ideal is presented to the reader as monstrous.

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[73] H. Bruce Franklin, *Future Perfect*, rev. ed. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1978) 145.
[74] Bruce R. Bickley Jr., *The Method of Melville's Short Fiction* (Durham: Duke UP, 1975) 97.

The privileged reading of "The Bell-Tower," as the discussion of its major critics showed, is identical to the privileged reading of *Frankenstein*. As with Mary Shelley's novel, however, it is possible to highlight the dissident potential of Melville's tale by foregrounding the fact that the dominant ideological point of view that is taken in describing the mad scientist and his fantastic production is an androcentric point of view. In "The Bell-Tower," the magistrates of a Renaissance state order Bannadonna to build a monument that symbolises the achievements of the state. William B. Dillingham explains that the leaders of the community ordered the tower to be built "as a reminder of their own enlightened progress as a community"; "it is to be the Empire State Building of Renaissance Italy, a symbol of wealth acquired through diligence and enterprise, a monument to materialistic progress."[75] Significantly, these apparently, enlightened magistrates fail to confine Bannadonna within the boundaries of what is revealed as a thoroughly androcentric and materialist society, allowing him to undermine their authority through an act of defiance from within the very centre of power. Because the dominant order is shown to be thoroughly androcentric and reliant on an ideology of gender polarization to ensure its hegemony, Bannadonna's resistant persona and art have the potential to express a dissident androgynous ideal, monstrous when perceived through the androcentric lens of the dominant order in the tale, but potentially utopian when perceived from the outcast point of view of the alchemical artist-scientist.

Significantly, G.M. Sweeney argues that "Bannadonna is…specifically linked to alchemy and its practitioners."[76] While the narrator professes that for Bannadonna the alchemical philosophies of Albertus Magnus and Cornelius Agrippa were but "the vain and inglorious irrationalities of his time," Sweeney argues that "the disavowals are ironic" (*PT* 148; Sweeney 152). Sweeney highlights the discrepancy between what the narrator tells the reader and the actions that the fictional character Bannadonna performs. In doing to, the tale, like *Frankenstein*, draws on the tension between dominant scientific authority and residual pseudo-scientific, magical, and, importantly, outlawed forms of knowledge. Victor is also initially portrayed as denouncing alchemy through the authority of his father. However, the creation of his patchwork living giant is made possible only by his continual adherence to important facets of the old, magical science, even if, by joining the competitive spirit of modern scientific practice, he now uses it for the wrong reasons. As in *Frankenstein*, "The Birth-Mark" and "Rappaccini's Daughter," the cultural schema of alchemy is significantly present in its marginality and outlawed status. When visiting Bannadonna, the magistrate and his assistant come across not only "a cup to test the condition of metals in fusion," but also find "many artistic wonders…wonders heretofore beheld but in their unfinished state; because, since hoisting the bells, none but the caster had entered within the belfry" (*PT* 177). Clearly Bannadonna is in possession of knowledge and skills the magistrates cannot explain.

Importantly, Sweeney is not alone in recognising the discrepancy between the narrative and the action of Melville's tale. Dillingham seconds Sweeney's notion of narrative duplicity at work in "The Bell-Tower." He argues, "although the story is told

[75] William B. Dillingham, *Melville's Short Fiction, 1853-1856* (Athens: U of Georgia P, 1977) 213.
[76] G.M. Sweeney, *Melville's Use of Classical Mythology* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1975) 152.

throughout in the third person, it is absolutely essential to realise that in some important places, this view reflects only the opinion of the community, not that of Melville or the protagonist, Bannadonna" (Dillingham 221). As Dillingham points out, the narrator claims that "the proposed means to be employed were alleged to have been confined within the sober forms of sober reason," but he has already told the reader that Bannadonna's "seclusion failed not to invest his work with more or less that sort of mystery pertaining to the forbidden" (*PT* 184, 176). The narrator alludes to Bannadonna's "secret design," while simultaneously taking the point of view of the magistrates in the matter of the iron man, Talus (*PT* 177). The narrator often takes the perspective of the magistrates when he is recounting the tale and thus his narrative is most often complicit with the dominant ideological point of view and expresses a biased and ideologically coloured representation of Bannadonna and his scientific art. As in Hawthorne's tales, the third-person narrative technique makes it possible to deviate from the dominant point of view in order to reveal the magistrates' secret fear of Bannadonna.

On a visit to the tower, the representatives of authority are disturbed by a mysterious sound coming from the mysteriously hidden giant figure. The narrator describes how the magistrates dismiss it as the wind but is able to add "unwilling, perhaps, to let the foundling see how easily it lay within his plebeian art to stir the placid dignity of nobles" (*PT* 178). Within the patriarchal Renaissance community of the story these nobles represent the law and the established customs, traditions and scientific ideologies. Their attempt to explain Bannadonna's architectural labour and the mysterious workings of the automaton in a rational scientific manner is undermined, however, by their simultaneous fear that Bannadonna is more powerful then they are because he holds knowledge that they do not understand. The fears of the magistrates are given voice through the presence of an unofficial story, a folktale that becomes "the popular solution of the foundling's fate" and "involved more or less of supernatural agency" (*PT* 183). The unofficial story of Bannadonna as an alchemist in possession of supernatural powers haunts the dominant picture of Bannadonna as an orphan and mechanician, working on commission of the state. As such, by the inclusion of the cultural schema of alchemy in the margins of the plot, "The Bell-Tower" tells two distinct stories: a popular one, the story that will be handed down through telling, and an official one, the facts deduced from the evidence at hand and registered by the magistrates. Each of these stories tells an opposite tale. The first tale is one of domination, of an empowered masculine elite intent on controlling its environment, pigeonholing its subjects in ideologically prescribed gender and class roles. The second tale is one of the resilient presence of a dissident androgynous ideal, embodied in the art of an anarchic alchemist, which symbolises the necessity of erasing the existing ideological boundaries between machine and nature, work and home, labour and pleasure, man and woman.

In the first story, told through the androcentric lens of the magistrates, Bannadonna is a mere architect, "a mechanician," whose skills are utilised by those in power to celebrate the material achievements of a male-dominated world of intellectual learning and commercial business. However, Dillingham argues that

> through the tower, the bell, and Talus, Bannadonna's artistry has become the tool of rebellion. To him the tower represents a far different thing from what it means to others…[C]ommissioned to construct a monument to man, his own purpose is to rise above those who have marked him forever as "the foundling" and "the mechanician" (Dillingham 215).

As an "unblessed foundling" Bannadonna has always lived on the margins of the community (*PT* 174). Because he lives and works on the margins of that community his "art," the creation of the monumental tower, is mistaken for mere mechanical "labour."

In the alternative story, Bannadonna is not building a monument but a home, an individual place that in its architecture and aesthetics reflects his own sense of self as an original being isolated form society by being officially cast as an orphan and mechanician, a labourer with no other identity but his occupation that stands in service of the state. Dillingham illustrates how Bannadonna's rebellion against the community's representation of him as a mechanician takes shape:

> His defiance is made clear through his ignoring laws of every kind. He defies both civil and moral laws by murdering a workman who because of his fear threatens the successful casting of the bell. Through the height of the tower and the weight of the bell, he defies the physical laws of the universe (Dillingham 217).

The community's reaction to Bannadonna's transgression of civil laws and the laws of physics shows how much they have dehumanised Bannadonna's identity in order to ensure that he serves state interests.[77] The magistrates do not punish Bannadonna for his murderous act because imprisoning him would mean that the tower would remain unfinished, becoming a symbol for the flaws of the state, instead of its achievements. It shows also that the magistrates perceive the worker who was killed by Bannadonna not as an equal citizen but as an expendable and easily replaceable force. They do not ask questions about Bannadonna's obvious disregard for physical laws, because the measurements of the tower and the weight of the bell symbolise not Bannadonna's hubris but that of the magistrates. Once he has completed the tower, once his skill and tools have served the state, Bannadonna, his architectural skills and art, as well as his crimes, can be simply forgotten. His timely death is a release to the community as it frees it from being implicated in the murder he committed, while the tower he built remains a monument to their achievements. Bannadonna's disregard for existing criminal and physical laws works to highlight the community's obsessions with symbols of power and status, which another detail in the story concerning the nature of Bannadonna's art shows to be thoroughly androcentric.

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[77] Interestingly, Marshall writes that Roger Bacon, the medieval alchemist, argued that human ingredients were the best ingredients for making an elixir that could purify metals (see Marshall, *Stone* 280-1). Bannadonna's "murder" of the workman, by throwing him into the molten metal, from an alchemical perspective could be part of his design. Sometimes the alchemical legend of a medieval talking android head is attributed to Roger Bacon, sometimes to Albertus Magnus.

The magistrates, through a conviction of innate authority over the mechanician and a will to fully control Bannadonna's project, order Bannadonna to "tell us of your law; and at large" (*PT* 179). As in *Frankenstein*, those in power, whether scientist or magistrate, need to be in control of all available knowledge. Like Victor Frankenstein, Bannadonna refuses to give away his secret knowledge. Defying the magistrates' sense of innate superiority and recasting his own identity from that of mechanician to artist, Bannadonna replies: "there is a law in art that bars the possibility of duplicates" (*PT* 179). Bannadonna, then, does work according to a law, but it is not the law prescribed by the magistrates, a law that has made nameless expendable drones of all those working on the tower, and which has cast Bannadonna into an outcast position as a homeless mechanician. Significantly, in contrast to Pursell's account of the way in which technological developments in the United States during the antebellum period, worked to create a production system in which anonymous labourers tending machines turned out exact duplicates of pre-designed commodities, Bannadonna's theory of production stands as its counterpart. As such this Renaissance fantasy is an allegory of the dehumanising effects of contemporary technological developments and the dominant order's interests in pursuing such developments at great human cost. Significantly, Bannadonna's theory of the value of originality in artistic production is embodied not merely in the single tower he is building, but in the artistic design that adorns its bell. It is in this design, a row of dancing girls, that his theory of art addresses simultaneously the importance of originality and a concern with the nature of female identity in the Renaissance state.

The faces of the dancing girls are identical but one, suggesting initially that Bannadonna takes pretty much the same view of female identity as the androcentric magistrates, for whom femininity is linked universally to frivolous aesthetic concerns. The presence of the one deviant face, however, which the magistrates see as proof of Bannadonna's flawed technique, is actually a necessity, according to Bannadonna's artistic theory, which bars the production of exact duplicates in his universe. Initially, Bannadonna is not intent on changing the deviant face to fit the others. He says: "I like the law forbidding duplicates. It evokes fine personalities." The magistrates, through their androcentric lens, are only happy with an image of female identity that stresses conformity to their expectations and order Bannadonna to alter the deviant face so as to make it conform to the others. But Bannadonna says that "that strange, and – to you – uncertain smile, and those fore-looking eyes of Una, suit Bannadonna very well" (*PT* 180). Una, the number one, signifying unity, Bannadonna's words tell the reader, is a symbol for Bannadonna's own dissident identity. Her visage suits him well. Bannadonna, is also one. He is alone, an orphan and a unique being in a world of sameness. As in the Birthmark, what to the authoritative figure seems a superficial blot on an otherwise perfect surface is in fact a symbol for an original identity, which works like a charm to ensure the life of the individual whose identity it represents, in this case Bannadonna. It is the figure of Una whose eyes, the chief magistrate believes, pick out Bannadonna's instead of his or his assistant. Bannadonna explains that this fantastical occurrence is due to Una's "finer apprehension" (*PT* 180). While Bannadonna seems to offer the magistrates a rational explanation for this seemingly supernatural occurrence, the reader, by being able to

perceive through the third person narration how Bannadonna is toying with the magistrates, is led to conclude that Bannadonna is hiding his secret knowledge and powers from those who would use them for their own selfish ends.

Significantly, while this scene of magisterial authority and alchemically inspired artistic dissidence is taking place, sounds are heard from above, where the Talus had been standing. Bannadonna again tricks the magistrates into accepting an apparently rational explanation, telling them that it is merely mortar falling on the floor, ironically flattering the magistrates' sense of authority by telling them that "in your presence, it better knew its place" (*PT* 180). Bannadonna's language is full of ironic mocking, since the reader now knows that the iron man is indeed alive and walking round: to the magistrates' question that "surely we left no soul above," Bannadonna replies, "Eccellenza; rest assured, no *soul*," but an iron man nonetheless (*PT* 180).[78]

As the magistrates exit the tower after their inspection, the "milder magistrate" expresses concern that Bannadonna is not what and who he seems, but the chief magistrate, not concerned that the mechanician has "barred" them from re-entering the tower, announces the completion of the public project to the community, which is received "with cheers." While the magistrates in the story expect Bannadonna to be hard at work correcting the deviant face of the dancing girl, this is impossible for the reader who cannot interpret the "half suppressed screams and plainings, such as might have issued from some ghostly engine, overplied," as Bannadonna putting the finishing touches of the bell, since Una and Bannadonna have been shown to identify with each other, together forming one complete identity, the erasure of the one will leading to the erasure of the other (*PT* 181).

Bannadonna has in fact already demonstrated openly to the magistrates how his art defies state authority. He openly distances himself from the State by referring to it as "your republic," and not "our" republic, while in conversation with the magistrates (*PT* 179). Bannadonna reveals his anarchic artistic intentions when he tells the magistrates that on the template of the republic's seal he had been ordered to make – a seal sporting the image of a revered past ruler – not one face is alike. As with the female figures on the bell, Bannadonna refuses to merely reproduce pre-designed images. Once Bannadonna reveals to the magistrates that each seal portrays a different head, none of which represent the revered former head-of-state, even though the citizens would never notice this discrepancy, the seal loses its value as a symbol of power. It no longer denotes the head-of-state's authority, but shows that this authority is founded on artificially upheld ideologies.

By refusing to play the mechanician and to reproduce an aestheticised female image of culture or a public masculine image of authority, Bannadonna shows, like Aminidab in Hawthorne's tale, that he is more respectful of nature's originality. His refusal to divulge his secret and to merely reproduce what he has designed, shows that through his work – mechanical in the eyes of the magistrates, but art in his own eyes – Bannadonna is offering an alternative model for human society, one that stresses the positive nature of originality above an enforced conformity to ideologically prescribed male and female identities.

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[78] Marshall writes that the medieval alchemist Albertus Magnus, "celebrated as a great forebear by Renaissance alchemists," "owned a talking head of brass, recalling the Egyptian belief in living statues" (Marshall, *Stone* 282-3). There is also a myth that Albertus Magnus made an animated iron man.

Dillingham concludes that "Bannadonna's psychological severance from humanity" and his project leading to "titanic self-glorification" ultimately undermine Bannadonna's rebellion, like Rappaccini's, because he suffers from a "decrease in his concern for humanity" (Dillingham 216, 215, 222). But in his defiance of the androcentric magistrates with their assumptions of innate superiority, Bannadonna is showing more concern for humanity than the community itself, which celebrates not Bannadonna's art, but merely the tower's completion and its symbolical value as a sign of the community's achievements. What Dillingham fails to hold onto, is the insight that it is only by looking through the androcentric lens of the younger magistrate that the narrator describes Bannadonna as "a cynic solitaire" (*PT* 179). In a Thoreauesque image, the narrator shows how "feverish men" like machines stood with "watches held in hand," in anticipation of the striking of the bell. Unlike Bannadonna, the men of this world are ruled by time. The bell fails to strike in accordance with their watches, and "the multitude became tumultuous" (*PT* 181). This failure of the chief magistrate to fulfil his grand scheme of glorification leads him to storm the tower, making sure to defend it from "the now surging mob." The chief and his associate find Bannadonna lying dead "at the feet of the hour of Una; his head coinciding, in a vertical line, with her left hand, clasped by the hour Dua" (*PT* 182). The symbolism of this tableau is clear to the reader who acknowledges the dissident practice of Bannadonna's art. Two have become one, the alchemist has fused with his art as his identity has fused with Una, while the living iron man looks down upon his corpse.

That Bannadonna's end is supernatural can be deduced from the fact that the narrator explains that "uncertainty falls on what now followed." The chief magistrate and his associate never disclose what really happened. The narrator's language in what follows, an apparent explanation of the events, suggests that "the supernatural agency" which became "the popular solution" was in fact the right one. The narrator explains that "some few less unscientific minds pretended to find little difficulty in otherwise accounting for it," suggesting that the learned men of the community merely pretended to know what happened, while actually being as much in the dark as anyone else. He explains that "it was opined" that Bannadonna wished to have made it look as if a human being would be perpetually on top of the tower, but never states that this was his intention. He writes further of the community's "conjectures" and intimations as to what had really happened, but never acknowledges that one of the community's rational explanations is correct (*PT* 182). The community had merely "alleged" that "the proposed means to be employed" in creating the tower were "confined within the sober forms of sober reason" (*PT* 184). According to them, he had "stooped to conquer" nature and not attempted to "procure someone else to bind her [nature] to his hand" (*PT* 184). However, the action of the story shows that this is exactly where Bannadonna ends up. Instead of his automated iron man connecting to the hour of one, it is Bannadonna who by the blow from his creature dies hand-in-hand with the unique female figure he has created. Alchemical emblems often present the androgynous union of male and female principles as a union in death, united in a coffin or immersed in the waters of dissolution.

Bannadonna's iron man, a monster to the magistrates whom they shoot and bury at sea, is the mechanical version of the alchemist's homunculus "little creatures in the image

of man" that symbolised the philosopher's stone, the substance that can transform base matter into gold and "turn the earthly man into an illumined philosopher" by re-uniting those human principles that are artificially divided into male and female principles in human society (Abrahams 102, 145). If Talus is Bannadonna's homunculus, the alchemist has achieved his goal. As in the medieval alchemical myth, he has created an iron man who has helped him unify his actual self, the mechanician of the Italian Renaissance society, with his philosophical ideal. While the narrator explains that the community believes that in the spirit of a true artist Bannadonna had become obsessed with perfecting the deviant face, the reader knows that Bannadonna, according to his professed adherence to the law of art that bans the creation of duplicates, could never have engaged in such a practice (*PT* 185). Bannadonna's end can be read as an act of defiance against the power of an androcentric state in which there is no room for individual identity, male or female. In "The Bell-Tower," the identity of the men of the Renaissance state is dependent on the tools that define their trade or public stations: Bannadonna is perceived a mere mechanic because he uses the tools of a builder, while the magistrates are in power since they control the representation of state authority, the public seal. All are machines, governed by clockwork, individually (their obsession with their watches) as well as communally (their obsession with hearing the striking of the tower bell). In this world, women are only visible as aesthetic adornments on productions signifying masculine achievements; with no public occupations or roles they bear no relation to the clockwork that governs public life, and have no public identity.

Bannadonna cannot survive in such a society because there is no place for the identity which he seeks to embrace through the unifying powers of his knowledge which combines art with science, public with private, nature with human industry. The community and above all the androcentric magistrates manage to consolidate their position of power by killing the iron man that has worked to physically fuse Bannadonna and Una, after Bannadonna has already given her an identity that corresponded to his own ideal. The magistrates feel the need to shoot it, which suggests that it was indeed alive and was clearly deemed threatening. The bell breaks when rung at Bannadonna's funeral and an earthquake destroys the entire tower when the community celebrates "the first anniversary of the tower's completion," which suggests that the anarchic alchemist, having realised his artistic dissident androgynous ideal, has got his gothic revenge from beyond the grave (*PT* 187).