Consuming Men: Promethean Masculinity from *Frankenstein* to the Twenty-First Century

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Abstract

This thesis proposes that Promethean masculinity, a specific form of hegemonic masculinity characterised by egotistical technoscientific enquiry coupled with the exploitation of women, animals and nature, emerges at certain periods of tension between masculinity and both women's and animal rights. Further, it proposes that this emergence has been reflected in contemporaneous literary narratives. The thesis examines how and why Promethean masculinity manifests in three specific science fiction texts: Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), H. G. Wells' *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896) and Brian Aldiss' *Moreau's Other Island* (1980). Written at key periods during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, each of the latter texts represent self-aware responses to the former. The three texts have a distinct literary relationship, and this thesis traces, through this relationship, common threads that have previously been overlooked. By linking them to the Prometheus myth, the thesis offers novel analysis of the anxieties in masculinity that each text depicts.

While fictional treatments of masculinity, women's rights and animal rights have all been analysed in the past, this thesis suggests that Promethean masculinity as a specific form, and its confluence with debates about technoscientific attitudes to women and animals, have previously been neglected. It therefore seeks to address the absence of focused work in this area. Drawing on a theoretical framework of scholarship in ecofeminism, animal studies, masculinity studies and mythology, it suggests that the myth of Prometheus offers a useful lens through which to analyse a specifically technoscientifically-inflected form of hegemonic masculinity. It further demonstrates that literary Prometheus figures reveal salient details about the technoscientific landscapes, and the juxtapositions of masculinity, femininity and animality, of the times in which they were written and published. It also indicates some of the forms that resistance to Prometheanism has taken at these junctures, including vegetarianism, feminist movements and anti-vivisection.

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This thesis is dedicated to Fliss, my intransigent writing partner, who is deeply missed.

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Introduction

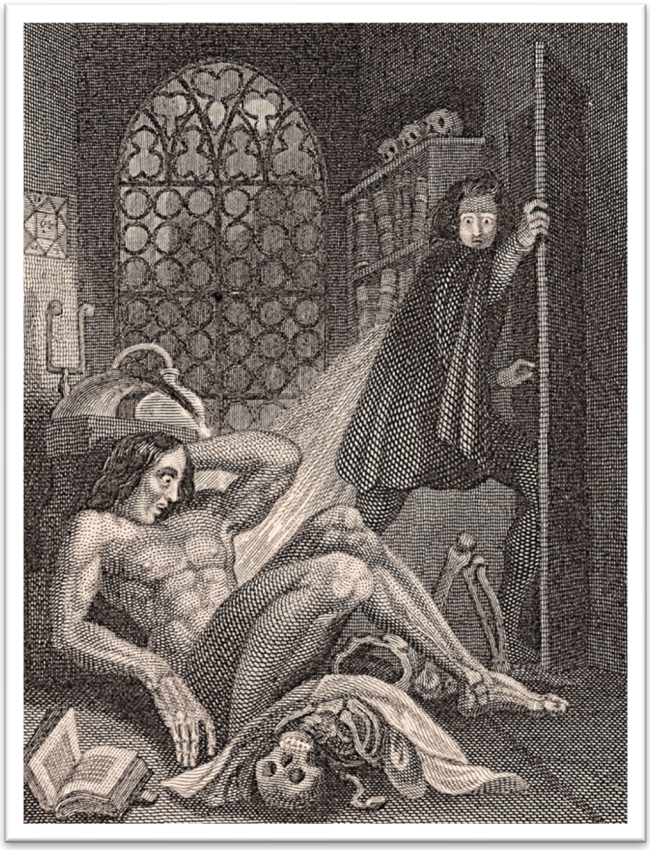

FIG. 1. Frontispiece from the 1831 edition of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein,* by Theodor von Holst. Victor Frankenstein, the 'Modern Prometheus', flees in horror upon seeing his Creature come to life.

James Whale's 1931 movie adaptation of *Frankenstein* made the image of Victor Frankenstein's Creature waking, amidst lightning and rains of electrical sparks, an iconic one.[1] Since then, the figure of the Creature has come to dominate as a mainstay of the horror genre. More commonly referred to as Frankenstein's 'monster', the Creature has occupied the name of his flawed creator so completely that the two have become indistinguishable in elements of popular culture. For many, the name 'Frankenstein' has been more likely to conjure images of a green-skinned, bolt-necked giant than the over-reaching student scientist who brought him to life.[2] As a result,

[1] *Frankenstein,* dir. by James Whale (USA, 1931).

[2] Boris Karloff played the Creature in Whale's seminal film adaptation, and it is this portrayal that is responsible for both the bolts in the Creature's neck and the green skin; though the movie was black and white, Karloff wore green-tinted make-up as this would enhance his corpse-like complexion for the

Victor Frankenstein, the defining literary example of the hubristic masculinist scientist who aspires to a godlike state by creating life without the need for the female body, has drifted out of the popular imagination. Frankenstein, the 'Modern Prometheus' of Mary Shelley's subtitle, is thus frequently elided as the titular subject of the novel: a novel as much about Prometheanism as an expression of the arrogance of masculinist science and technology as it is about a taxonomically vague monster whose uncanny nature troubles boundaries that had long been presumed impenetrable.

Shelley's is a story about a specific kind of masculinity: a masculinity whose ambition and conceit lead a man to create life, only to abandon his creation when he finds that it reflects back to him his own folly, flaws and limitations — and even his own animality. Building upon an extensive body of existing scholarly analysis of *Frankenstein,* this thesis emphasises the centrality of masculinist technoscience to the text,[3] and to texts written later as responses to Shelley's work. It demonstrates the need for greater specificity in the theoretical and practical conception of hegemonic masculinity in the analysis of fiction during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[4] I suggest that this form of masculinity requires its own categorisation as 'Promethean masculinity', a technoscientifically-driven form with an umbilical connection to hegemonic masculinity more generally. The myth of Prometheus, as drawn upon by Shelley, offers a resilient, perpetually adaptable narrative paradigm for male scientific and technological innovation and domination, particularly over women and other species. Frequently invoked at the advent of significant technoscientific advance, it is the ideal narrative archetype through which to construct an understanding of this

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camera. In fact, Mary Shelley herself describes the Creature's skin as yellow. See Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus: The 1818 Text,* ed. by Marilyn Butler (Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 39. The now ubiquitous Hallowe'en mask depiction, an avatar for horror in popular culture, owes its existence to the Karloffian characterisation.

[3] 'Technoscience' refers throughout to combined technological, engineering and scientific innovation.

[4] The definition of 'hegemonic masculinity' in use in this thesis is that conceived and subsequently revised by R. W. Connell. Specifically, it draws on the framework laid out in R. W. Connell and James W. Messerschmidt, 'Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept', *Gender and Society*, 19.6 (2005), pp. 829–59, doi:10.1177/089124305278639, and fuller discussions in R. W. Connell, *Masculinities,* 2nd edn (Polity, 2005). In brief, hegemonic masculinity can be understood as masculine identity prescriptions and associated actions and performances that serve to reinforce male dominance in society. The hegemons within this structure are the small minority, their hegemony shored up by the oppression of women and the feminisation and marginalisation of 'subordinate' men. Hegemonic masculinity requires that other types of masculinity be defined derogatorily in relation to itself. The characteristics of the hegemon are not static; they can and do shift according to what is institutionally and culturally venerated as ideally masculine at a given time. Promethean masculinity, and how myth has been employed to create hegemonic archetypes, are discussed in more detail later.

specific form of masculinity. Prometheanism, in this context, is characterised by the interminable striving for reunion with a golden age made manifest in the Prometheus myth when man was at one with notions of the divine, where he did not have to toil and strive for the necessities of life and, crucially, when he did not have to bring women and animals under the yoke in order to survive. Through the pursuit of scientific endeavour, Promethean man seeks to relocate the lost communion with the divine. However, in so doing, he loses the ability to consider his own inadequacy and limitations; he cannot think in holistic ways. When confronted with the possibility of his own fallibility, he employs accusations of hysteria, a concept that is historically loaded with misogyny, as a weapon to discredit any kind of challenge. Promethean man refuses to be penetrated by critique in this way, to the extent that he is either unaware of his own inherent dangers or considers them a worthy risk. Seeking to reify the Cartesian radical separation between mind and matter, he does so by associating the mind, that transcendent characteristic that supposedly places man over beast, with the masculine, and the body and fleshly with the feminine. Thus, the pursuit of disembodied intelligence, of the soul, the redundancy of pain, the cryogenically frozen brain or even artificial intelligence can be perceived as the masculine fantasy of Prometheanism.[5] This specific form of hegemonic masculinity therefore typifies the role of masculinist technoscience in oppressing, degrading and exploiting women and the more-than-human world, shoring up patriarchal power structures. It also provides a theoretical standpoint from which to consider how the three fictional texts analysed in this thesis serve as literary examples of the cultural perception of this particular kind of science. While there exist many allusions to key periods of technoscientific revolution across literary genres, the potential of such texts to offer insight into the extent to which this type of masculinity is perceived as fuelling the voracity of these periods of invention has been largely overlooked. In this thesis, a contextual analysis of certain culturally significant fictional narratives serves to illuminate this phenomenon.

Interventions in science fiction, in particular, whether these have served to reify or to challenge masculinity in its hegemonic form, have also been contemporaneous with each stride in technoscience. A genre that functions as both speculative and

[5] A fuller discussion and definition of Promethean masculinity follows below.

allegorical, it can also be reflective, and an address to real-world scientific fact in the present or near future, imagining both the promises and the threats of technoscientific advancement. The myth of Prometheus, and Promethean masculinity itself, are frequent features of nineteenth- and twentieth-century science fiction that offers literary responses to the condition of scientific and technological progress at a given moment. These responses to technoscience can be analysed and compared through a lens of scholarship on gender, masculinity, and ecofeminist animal studies theory. Examples of this textual analysis form the three main chapters of this thesis.

This introduction sets out the theoretical scope for the thesis as a whole. It begins with a discussion of myth as socio-cultural narrative, followed by an analysis of the Prometheus myth and an explanation of why it, specifically, provides a useful archetype for understanding masculinist science. A review of key theoretical work in gender and masculinity studies then serves to clarify the meaning of hegemonic masculinity in general and Promethean masculinity in particular. The third section offers an analysis of selected, relevant works in ecofeminist animal studies, with an emphasis on ecofeminist responses to Enlightenment principles of science and philosophy, explaining why this theoretical lens is useful for revealing the limitations, inequalities and oppressions inherent in the literary characterisation of Promethean masculinity. The introduction concludes with an examination of science fiction as a genre, its speculative character and an explanation of its usefulness as an object of analysis for this topic. In each section, the theoretical context offered is, by necessity, selective in accordance with the thematic priorities of the thesis itself; it is not intended to be, nor is it presented as, an exhaustive list of the literature available in each field.

Prometheus as Mythical Archetype

In general terms, a myth can be understood as a story, taken literally or symbolically, that carries with it an explanatory, reassuring, justificatory or prescriptive function. It can explain features of the world, human experience, repeated behaviours, adherences or performances. Myth is constructed, spoken, written and adapted by an agent or agents for the purposes of accessing understanding of existences and ideologies, and for shoring up resultant ideas about identity and the human condition. Crucially, myth

does not spring from the earth, fully formed. Rather it is created and recreated by individuals and groups in a way that produces interpersonal and socio-cultural precedents. Presenting moral abstractions, a myth can be didactic if (re)told for that purpose. An examination of some examples of how myth has been understood in the past is instructive at this point.

In his *Primitive Culture* (1871), Edward Burnett Tylor asserted that animism, or the belief that there is a spirit to all things, is the principal cause of the emergence of religion and myth.[6] He argued that myth is an inherently religious phenomenon, a 'primitive' means of explaining the physical world before more civilised sciences provided explanations that rendered mythical explanations obsolete. In *The Golden Bough* (1890), James George Frazer took a view that was broadly analogous with that of Tylor, opposing myth to science and asserting the 'primitive' nature of the former, while emphasising that myth is also generative of, and dependent upon, the enactment of ritual.[7] Both Tylor and Frazer viewed myth and science in a progressivist and dualistic way, suggesting that science came to explain parts of the human experience about which humans had previously turned to myth, thus rendering myth superfluous.[8] Despite the assertions of Tylor and Frazer, however, the growing dominance of science that they associated with the trajectory from the savage to the civilised did not result in an end to myth as a socio-cultural language. In fact, as this thesis demonstrates, myth and science continue to co-exist, and myth has continued, throughout the early twentieth century to the Cold War period and beyond, to inspire and furnish many facets of the human experience, including science itself. In *Myth and Reality* (1963) historian Mircea Eliade emphasised that the continued presence of myth stands as proof that it and science are not fundamentally at odds, and that myth enables man, in all his supposed scientific rationality, to obtain a spiritual connection he still needs.[9] In

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[6] Edward B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art, and Custom* (Brentano's, 1924).

[7] James G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion* (Macmillan, 1925). Robert A. Segal describes the distinction between Tylor's and Frazer's positions in simple terms, suggesting that, while Tylor holds that myth 'functions as the counterpart to scientific *theory*, for Frazer it functions even more as the counterpart to *applied* science […] Tylor treats myth as an autonomous text, Frazer ties myth to ritual, which enacts it' (italics in original). See Robert A. Segal, *Myth: A Very Short Introduction,* 2nd edn (Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 21.

[8] Segal, *Myth*, p. 22. Segal provides an inevitably brief but wide-ranging summary of the intellectual landscape of the theory of myth since the nineteenth century, illustrating its multi-disciplinarity across topics including myth and science, myth and literature and myth and ritual.

[9] Mircea Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, trans. by Willard R. Trask (Harper and Row, 1963).

his *Conjectures and Refutations* (1962), philosopher Karl Popper suggested that science may be viewed as mythmaking in a different form, albeit one more open to interrogation, verification or refutation.[10] Myth and myth-making have proven resilient despite advances in science, even if the reason for this resilience remains a matter of debate.

Clearly there has existed an urge to create a dualism out of science and myth, and to regard the scientific as the dominant way of knowing over the primitive mythical. Given the masculine domination of science in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the evocation of such a dualism is perhaps unsurprising; the masculine force of science, victorious over the weaker, more feminine force of myth and superstition is, in such a context, rhetorically useful.[11] This oppositional positioning is of particular interest when considering the Prometheus myth, because it describes, amongst other things, how man came to possess fire, both in its literal form and as a metaphor for the spark of knowledge. As such, it offers a mythical precedent for the very pursuit of science itself. Rather than telling the story of some other facet of the human experience for which civilising science must then find a rational explanation, it locates the foundation of science in myth. Indeed, the resilience of Prometheus as a story suggests that masculinist science itself can be considered a form of mythmaking and myth-repeating: both a theoretical explanation for the world and a ritual of discovery. Inasmuch as science can be made to tell a story, it is difficult to radically separate it from mythmaking in the way that Tylor or Frazer did. If science serves to provide rational, empirically proven answers to questions presented by myth, then myth feeds science in a way that renders the former a fundamental part of the latter. In essence, both are engaged in telling the stories of humanity and the world. To quote Popper, 'science must begin with myths, and with the criticism of myths'.[12] The myth of Prometheus is thus the myth of how science itself began and, crucially, the myth from which the Promethean scientist, as a literary-aesthetic figure preoccupied not just with scientific knowledge but with using that knowledge to exert control,

[10] Karl R. Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations: The Growth of Scientific Knowledge* (Basic Books, 1962).
[11] As is discussed in more detail below, nature, superstition and emotion have all historically been coded as feminine forces. Myth, which requires belief in what cannot be empirically proven except by the intervention of science, has all the characteristics of a feminine force in this context.
[12] Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations*, p. 50.

comes to emerge.[13] Bruno Bettelheim, in his *The Uses of Enchantment* (1976), suggested that the mythical figure embodies an ideal so unattainable that to aspire to it is psychologically stunting.[14] The textual analysis in this thesis demonstrates that it is the aspiration towards a mythical ideal, even if it is not attainable, that is the driving force of Promethean masculinity, and that such an aspiration does indeed result in inevitable self-defeat.[15] That unattainable ideal to which Bettelheim referred becomes, in effect, the very point of the myth: the ritual of repeating masculinist technoscience in pursuit of an identity always slightly out of reach.

The mythologisation of tangible things, as well as ideas, is crucial to the way in which myth forms identity. In the case of the story of Prometheus, meat, as well as fire, is symbolically significant. In his *Mythologies* (1957), Roland Barthes considered the function of myth in modernity. Analysing myth, and mythmaking, as features of the propaganda of the dominant voices in a society, Barthes' theory is that myth emerges when specific meaning, over and above the literal, is given to an image or object (a 'sign') by the dominant and hegemonic forces of the moment in which the myth operates. The literal meaning of a sign is thus disfigured, superseded by its mythical codification, which in turn becomes misunderstood as its true or correct meaning. Barthes discussed a range of examples of this phenomenon. Of most relevance to a study of the Prometheus myth is his 'Steak and Chips', where he considered the connection between the eating of rare steak and French nationality. In asserting that steak is 'part of the same sanguine mythology as wine', Barthes emphasised that steak is a literal object, the meaning of which has been over-written by a mythical usefulness that is not natural in form, but culturally constructed.[16] Thus

[13] Anne K. Mellor has highlighted that it is precisely this distinction that is central to Shelley's characterisation of Victor Frankenstein. See Anne K. Mellor, 'A Feminist Critique of Science', in *New Casebooks: 'Frankenstein',* ed. by Fred Botting (Macmillan, 1995), pp. 107–39 (p. 108).

[14] Bruno Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* (Vintage, 1976). Bettelheim contrasts the divine mythical figure with the more relatable fairy tale hero, who presents a more achievable goal. The latter supports psychological development, the former prevents it. See also Segal, pp. 89–90.

[15] Prometheus has previously been analysed as an aspirational figure. Classicist Carl Kerényi, for example, characterises the Prometheus myth as the Jungian archetype for human (read male) behaviour. See Carl Kerényi, *Prometheus: Archetypal Image of Human Existence,* trans. by Ralph Manheim (Princeton University Press, 1991).

[16] Roland Barthes, 'Steak and Chips', in Barthes, *Mythologies,* trans. by Annette Lavers (Vintage, 2009), pp. 69–71 (p. 69).

steak becomes not simply steak, but an object laden with nationalistic meaning.[17] More recently, Amber Husain, in *Meat Love: An Ideology of the Flesh* (2023), has described the twenty-first century middle-class masculine effort to rehabilitate the notion of 'ethical meat'. Under unprecedented scrutiny due to both climate activism and animal rights discourses, this rehabilitation has been enacted through gentrification: an example of a myth of meat being adapted so as to continue to service ideals of masculinity, which include the eating of meat, within their socio-cultural and historical context.[18] Following Barthes, I suggest that the adoption of objects and ideas as mythical palimpsests upon which new, expedient meanings can be written is not limited to those objects and ideas which are peculiar to the modern world; red meat itself is not, after all, a uniquely modern image. Those things mythologised by Prometheus — meat, fire and so on — have undergone the process described by Barthes, but the myth itself has also become a sign that can be made to signify in different ways. In taking a Barthesian view, it is possible to see that the myths themselves may be the objects over which meaning is superimposed over time.

The retelling and adaptation of myth, its narrative malleability, is proof of its cultural and political usefulness. Classical myth, whether it appears in histories, plays, film or literary fictions, is rarely adopted wholesale from the ancient form. Indeed, even in the ancient context, the myth is not conveyed in the same way between one account and the other, and the true foundational version of a myth, a story that might even have emerged from oral traditions, is often impossible to trace. Essentially, it can be almost impossible to arrive at a canonical form of a classical myth. Lillian E. Doherty addresses this: 'classical poets could and did make some rather controversial points by introducing the issues of their own times into their treatments of ancient stories […] the modern rewriting of myths is a continuation of ancient practice'.[19] As such, it is useful to understand myth not as a finished, self-contained story, but as a

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[17] Carol J. Adams' *Burger* (Bloomsbury, 2018) has demonstrated that the same is true for US identity and the hamburger. Note also the British 'Sublime Society of Beefsteaks', an exclusive, men-only dining club, founded in 1735, where men eat beef and celebrate Britishness on the premise that the two are fundamentally connected. The Society still meets today. See Rachel Naismith, 'A Rare Look Inside Britain's "Sublime Society of Beefsteaks"', *Atlas Obscura,* 1 March 2024 <https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/sublime-society-of-beefsteaks> [accessed 28 June 2024].

[18] Amber Husain, *Meat Love: An Ideology of the Flesh* (MACK, 2023). Historical and contemporary links between meat and masculinity are discussed in greater detail in the chapters to follow.

[19] Lillian E. Doherty, *Gender and the Interpretation of Classical Myth* (Duckworth, 2001), p. 10.

dynamic, ongoing, living narrative process, the results of which change shape and form over time according to need. Carol Dougherty's assertion that 'the elements of a myth that are omitted are just as significant as those that are included' is also relevant here.[20] A key focus of this thesis is the meaning and message revealed by the elements of the myth that are emphasised in specific literary adaptations, and those elements that are absent.

The earliest written source for the Prometheus myth is Hesiod's *Theogony*, a genealogy of the Greek gods, and *Works and Days*, a didactic treatise on farming and morality (both *c*. 700 BC).[21] Prometheus also emerges as a character in Greek drama, most notably in Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound* (*c*. 450 BC),[22] and in two of the dialogues of Plato, the *Gorgias*[23] and the *Protagoras* (both *c*. 380 BC).[24] The myth also appears, in varying levels of detail, in the works of Apollodorus, Ovid and Pausanias. Drawing from these ancient sources, the key aspects of the Prometheus myth relevant to the current thesis can be distilled as follows:[25]

(a) The titan Prometheus is the architect of humanity. He and his brother, Epimetheus, are tasked by Zeus with creating all the creatures of the earth. Epimetheus creates the animals, imbuing them with a range of godlike traits such as strength and flight. Prometheus creates man, whom he fashions out of clay in the shape of the gods themselves. However, Epimetheus had used up all the godlike qualities in making the other animals, leaving man vulnerable.

(b) The Trick at Mekone. Prometheus introduces man to the concept of sacrifice to the gods, setting him apart from the other animals. Prometheus conceals the superior portion of the sacrifice to trick Zeus into accepting the inferior portion. Paradoxically, the Trick marks both the fundamental sundering of gods and men, and the foundation of the practice of animal sacrifice as supplication of the latter to the former in hope of reunion.

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[20] Carol Dougherty, *Prometheus* (Routledge, 2006), p. 10.
[21] Hesiod, *Theogony* and *Works and Days,* trans. by M. L. West (Oxford University Press, 2008).
[22] Aeschylus, *'Prometheus Bound' and Other Plays,* trans. by Philip Vellacott (Penguin, 2003).
[23] Plato, *Gorgias,* trans. by Robin Waterfield (Oxford University Press, 2008).
[24] Plato, *Protagoras,* trans. by C. C. W. Taylor (Oxford University Press, 2009).
[25] The order of these stages varies from source to source, and not all stages are explicitly present in each. Dougherty's *Prometheus* remains the most detailed specialised analysis of the myth available in English.

(c) Zeus withholds fire from man as punishment.

(d) Zeus creates Pandora, his second punishment, gifting her to Prometheus' brother, Epimetheus. She is both beautiful and deceptive, and needs to be cared for by man, consuming the fruits of his labours and imbuing him with the burden and privilege of reproduction and creation. She also opens Pandora's Box, inside which only Hope remains, causing all of man's ills.

(e) Prometheus steals fire from the gods to give to man. This gift imbues man with both the ability to cook and eat meat, and the metaphorical 'spark' of knowledge, science and industry.

(f) Zeus chains Prometheus to a rock in the Caucasus, where an eagle eats out his liver each night for it to be grown back the next day.

(g) Man loses the knowledge of when he will die.

The myth's account of the creation of the creatures of the earth thus separates man from animals from the start. Epimetheus creates a natural world, a heterogeneity of bodily shapes and forms, against which Prometheus' god-shaped, bipedal man is immediately defined. Prometheus' clay man is exceptional because he is given life by Athena, the goddess of wisdom but also of war, who had herself been born from the head of her father, Zeus, rather than by means of a natural birth from the body of a mother.[26] The first element of the myth is thus steeped in images of the male creator and conflict between the natural world on the one hand and man on the other. Prometheus' formation of man from clay in the shape of the gods is a statement of the importance of that shape and how it connects to what it means to be human. The myth is, therefore, foundational to the idea that humanity as a characteristic is tied to that specific shape, and this will prove to be central to nineteenth- and twentieth-century versions of the myth in literature. Furthermore, deviation from that shape, whether in the form of the female body, the body of the non-human animal, the disabled body or the racialised body, emerges as a marker of inferiority, expendability and consumability. The framing of this idealised male figure as a transcendent being of rational faculties separate from the animals and striving for reunion with the divine

[26] As the textual analyses that follow demonstrate, creation without the need for a mother's body, or at least involving the manipulation of the functions of that body for scientific ends, proves to be a key characteristic of the literary Promethean figure.

requires other bodies to be framed as abject, animal and fleshly.[27]

The establishment of this shape as sacrosanct and inviolable, and deviations from it as fundamentally subordinate, provides the rhetorical basis for male consumption of female bodies as resources and animal bodies as meat. Both of these bases are furnished by parts of the myth. The Trick at Mekone begins the association of meat with the myth: another theme that proves to be a vibrant feature of retellings in fiction. Prometheus adds the gift of fire to Athena's gift of wisdom, further marking man out as exceptional among the creatures of the earth. The gift of fire is both literal and metaphorical, imbuing man with 'freedom from the constraints of nature', 'cooked not raw food' and 'skills that mark his existence as superior to that of the beasts'.[28] Meat-eating thus becomes a mythically sanctioned marker of masculinity: a way of restating, through repeated action, the privileges conferred on man, including his right to dominion over the animals and their consumption as meat. It assumes the role of a performative marker, or ritual, of all of the privileging facets of the myth, from the radical separation of man from animal and his patriarchal government over woman to the very foundation of knowledge, science, and industry. As such, the rejection of meat-eating presents an undermining of, and even a threat to, all of these aspects of Promethean status. To refuse to eat meat is to refuse to partake of the ritual that re-enacts the conferring of the mythically-linked features of Prometheanism.[29] Significantly, this refusal also represents a refusal to reify the distinction between the edibility of the animal other and the inedibility of man; as man's inedibility is constructed in contrast to the edibility of other animals, then that edibility, and its rejection, have significant rhetorical force.[30] Thus, the question of man's edibility is a

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[27] See Dougherty, *Prometheus*, p. 17. Dougherty explains that 'the Promethean myth of creation offers a visual symbol of the Neoplatonic dualistic concept of the body and soul'. Thus, it offers a mythical basis for the persistent dualism recognisable from the Enlightenment and Cartesian thought which inflects Promethean masculinity.

[28] Ibid., pp. 18–21.

[29] Indeed, the traditional symbolic significance of meat gives rise to a need to reconfigure masculinity to permit vegetarianism on physically and morally hygienic grounds at key points during the period discussed in this thesis.

[30] See Carol J. Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory* (Bloomsbury 2015). First published in 1990, Adams' seminal text introduced the term 'the sexual politics of meat' to refer to connections between masculinity and meat-eating, including the analogous ways in which women's and animal bodies have been portrayed in media and advertising and the meanings of meat avoidance. Adams suggests that 'people with power have always eaten meat' (p. 8), and that meat-eating has been a resilient marker of virility. Adams' work on this subject is a significant theoretical influence on the current thesis and will be discussed in more detail in the sections and chapters to follow.

persistent anxiety of the Promethean focus on meat, and this anxiety is, in fact, present within the myth. Even Prometheus himself is literalised as flesh when Zeus condemns him to be chained to a rock so that an eagle can peck out his liver every night, only for it to grow back again each day. He is effectively presented as a sacrificial 'edible god' from whom Zeus is extracting a flesh sacrifice in a grimly fitting punishment for the Trick at Mekone. In having his viscera eaten by an animal, the Titan is shown to be comprised of edible parts; he is a divinity who can be harmed, wounded and dismembered, the wholeness of his body defiled.[31] Thus, the myth also offers a caution that takes the form of a subversion of the idea of god, man and beast as being clearly separate on the spectrum of what is consumable and who consumes.[32] In the texts analysed in the chapters that follow, masculine vegetarianism, and masculine edibility, are raised in a variety of ways, but are ever-present anxieties and threats to his hegemonic subjectivity and radical individuality.

Paradoxically, then, the myth marks both the point at which gods and man are sundered, and the point at which man is given the gift necessary to pursue his seemingly eternal attempt to be reunited with the divine. Before the Trick at Mekone, the institution of animal sacrifice, the theft of fire by Prometheus and the subsequent creation of Pandora, there is no rift between man and the gods. Prometheus is thus responsible both for this profound sundering and the resultant striving towards reunion, both through the ritual of sacrifice and the perpetual ritual of the search for knowledge. Man seeks the return to a golden age of harmony with the gods, and uses his Promethean gifts in hope of achieving this. At this moment, the pursuit of knowledge becomes man's pursuit of the divine within himself, the performance of a yearning to be reunited with the gods as he was in his primal state. In this unending endeavour man stands alone, in a position of dominion over not just other animals, but women too. The myth is, fundamentally, both a masculine and masculinist myth: a feature it has in common with many of the classical myths. This thesis demonstrates

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[31] The perpetual eating of the liver is also a vivid symbol of the repetitive yet self-defeating nature of the Promethean figure, who is always the architect of his own destruction.

[32] See Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat,* p. 5, pp. 9–10. Adams notes that cannibalism comes to be associated with indigenous peoples as a justification for colonialism because 'they supposedly did to humans what Europeans only did to animals', thus contravening the Promethean injunction to eat animals but not men. The impact of cannibalism on masculinity is discussed in more detail in later chapters. Adams also points out that cannibalistic women were considered 'warped or monstrous women in the eyes of a patriarchal world' (p. 5).

that myth of this kind has proven especially ideologically fruitful at moments where masculinist progress has been at odds with conceptions of female and more-than-human subjectivity and bodily autonomy. Doherty focuses on the interpretation of classical myth from a gendered perspective, and emphasises the element of experimentation with myth that is grounded in and constrained by a familiarity that makes them 'safe' in a societal mainstream: 'the story patterns are based on conflicts that arise within the familiar frameworks of the patriarchal family and of a wider society in which authority and property are still distributed on patriarchal lines'.[33] Vanda Zajko and Miriam Leonard concur: 'These myths are after all not only the products of an androcentric society, they can also be seen to justify its most basic patriarchal assumptions'.[34] As the chapters that follow demonstrate, the Prometheus myth is among those that continue to offer a fabular sanction to patriarchal structures and their attendant oppressions even into the twenty-first century.

That both the gift of meat and the 'curse' of womanhood emerge from the same mythical narrative is significant. Human women are cast as tools in the process of (re)production to which man has been condemned, as resources to enable men to achieve this, in much the same way that the ox is a resource to enable proper sacrifice to the gods, or seed to enable planting and crop growth. These gifts require constant toil and sacrifice. Doherty describes the dynamic thus: 'Fire and plant foods, which were originally freely given by the gods, now have to be carefully preserved and reproduced; men themselves have to reproduce by planting their 'seed' in the 'bellies' of women'.[35] Woman, represented by the curse of Pandora, is to be understood as a stomach which needs to be fed both with food and with the seed of man in order to procreate; she needs to be fed in the same way that the stolen fire is not eternal and must be fuelled and is both a resource for (re)production and a consuming and draining force. One of the consequences is that man will perpetually be required to labour agriculturally to feed the bellies of his woman, children and all animal others over whom he has 'dominion'. His need to plant seed and to feed the belly of woman with food is mirrored by his need to plant seed in her womb to procreate and replicate

[33] Doherty, *Gender and the Interpretation of Classical Myth*, p. 10.
[34] Vanda Zajko and Miriam Leonard, *Laughing with Medusa: Classical Myth and Feminist Thought* (Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 3.
[35] Doherty, *Gender and the Interpretation of Classical Myth*, p. 135.

mankind. Woman, then, is figured as an obstacle to male endeavour towards a prelapsarian state, and animals and women begin a long history of being conceived of as analogous within the imagination of the myth. As in the Fall of the Judeo-Christian tradition, woman is represented as part of the catastrophic separation between man and the gods and placed in a liminal space between human and animal. Pandora is the classical Eve figure, a symbol of the fall of man and the distance between him and the gods that Promethean man is cursed to forever attempt to close. Devoid of the knowledge of when he will face his inevitable death, he becomes fixated on technoscience as a means of achieving divine immortality. The fire that cooks meat is the literal counterpart to the metaphorical fire of science, knowledge and innovation. Thus, misogyny, meat and science share an intrinsic link at the root of the myth.

Promethean Masculinity: The Technoscientific Hegemonic

In order to mark out the boundaries of Promethean masculinity, it is first necessary to establish those of hegemonic masculinity more generally. The latter is an ideology that promotes masculine ideals which are unattainable for the majority of men. Despite this unattainability, it shapes and prescribes behaviour through coercing those same men into compliance with the promise of what R. W. Connell has called the 'patriarchal dividend'.[36] Connell's remains the defining account of hegemonic masculinity as a feature of gender order theory. It suggests that this kind of masculinity is attended by complicit, marginalised and subordinate masculinities, these four types together forming a framework for the cultural experience of lived masculinity itself. The complicit group is made up of that mass of men who, while not inhabiting the hegemonic position themselves, still obtain relative advantages from its structural operation. The experience of masculinity is itself subject to a network of intersectional considerations, including race, class, (dis)ability and sexuality. Connell's marginalised group refers most often to those black men who, though they may perform many of the desirable hegemonic behaviours, are denied entry to that category based on their race. The subordinate category refers most directly to gay men, who are most likely to

[36] Connell, *Masculinities*, pp. 76–81. In other words, rewards or benefits reaped by all men, to varying extents, when they comply with the hegemonic structure.

be framed as feminine and so categorised out of the masculine altogether. Hegemonic masculinity, then, relies on both the oppression of women and a status hierarchy among men to function; it defines itself through the exclusion of those it perceives as inferior. Just like the modern myths of Barthes, it is the dominant institutions and voices that dictate the messages associated with masculinity in the hegemonic framework. The messages are frequently tacit, engrained through repetitive performance and a sense of tradition. Qualities and characteristics regarded as desirable change over time, but the hegemonic framework and its essential functions remain.

The myth of masculinity upon which the hegemonic form depends is socio-culturally grounded to such an extent that it is self-policing; thus, masculinity begins to take the form of a panopticon, wherein anxieties about being observed in transgression are sufficient to ensure compliance. Its power rests largely in the complicit masculine and its attendant promise of great reward for the achievement of ideal manhood for the very few who meet all of the prescribed conditions. Hegemonic masculinity as performance and aspiration associated with nebulous rewards operates as a reifying mechanism for patriarchy; it devalues the subjectivity of the individual man in favour of a structure empowering the already powerful minority, attempting to make theoretically monolithic that which is heterogenous in reality. Emerging from socially constructed and prescribed ideals brought to bear on lived male identity, it regulates behaviour in a way that is detrimental, both to men and to their environments. It is a specific form of masculinity — not to be understood as masculinity in its entirety, or the state of being male more generally — the toxicity of which is rooted in its status as a prescriptive, performative phenomenon, often policed most effectively by those it oppresses. Crucially, it is ritual; it is the observance of repetitive acts to assuage anxiety about what might happen should they not be observed.

Beyond the experience of men themselves, however, is the crushing power that hegemonic masculinity has over both human and cross-species co-existence generally. One of its perennial features is that it asserts the essential nature of human male superiority over any individuals who are not human and male, while also employing mechanisms for othering human males who do not fit into the prescribed models of male identity for one or a combination of reasons, classifying them out of the privileged group. The rhetoric of the hegemonic masculine frequently entails a harking

back to what are perceived as more stable times, when gender roles were more binary, making the world seem easier to navigate, at least for those to whom the status quo conferred power. After all, a more gender-prescriptive society allows far less space for nuance or interpretation, much less subversion. As a result, it offers expectations that, however unreasonable, are at least more clearly defined. Christopher Forth has suggested that there is no categorically stable historic period in relation to Western masculinity, and that its trajectory is a 'secret history of becoming': a process of negotiation, often marked by 'failures' and 'lapses', with the ever-changing socio-cultural circumstances with which masculinity is faced during any period of time, disaffirming the notion of masculinity as a constant and stable product of nature.[37] David Buchbinder, too, characterises masculinity and femininity as 'discursive', mutable processes rather than natural, essential certainties occurring in spite of modern threats striking at the heart of allegedly proper maleness.[38] This thesis suggests that while Forth's position is accurate, and masculinity is in effect always becoming, there are still moments where this becoming is hastened by the perceived threat of female and more-than-human agency and action. If hegemonic masculinity is engaged in a constant war against threats to its stability, these moments are specific battles — and they often occur alongside significant technoscientific advance.

In essence, then, moments where there has been a pronounced emphasis of the hegemonic masculine might be regarded as defensive responses to crises in masculinity brought about by a blurring of lines that previously marked out sex and gender identity and categorisation. As previously noted, the tenets of the hegemonic within this form of masculinity are not static. Rather, they shift depending on the socio-cultural and socio-political conditions in which it is operating and attempting to consolidate power. As Connell has posited, even where the masculine ideal is out of reach and confined to the aspirational, it is in the pursuit of it, the acknowledgment of it as the ideal that ought to be striven for, that its power lies. Therein lies the ritual element of the myth: masculinity functions as performance as well as status.

There is, of course, an accompanying history of resistance to the Promethean masculine project. Social justice movements which have centred, promoted and

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[37] Christopher Forth, *Masculinity in the Modern West: Gender, Civilization and the Body* (Palgrave, 2008), p. 3.
[38] David Buchbinder, *Studying Men and Masculinities* (Routledge, 2013), p. 177.

interrogated issues such as prescribed gender roles, racial equality and queer identities in recent history have served to make oppressed groups more visible within society. By highlighting the ways in which 'otherness' and abjection have historically been used to expel certain groups, they have rendered patriarchy itself visible as a cultural construct as opposed to a natural state. Buchbinder explains that white masculinity has been figured as the naturalised human identity to such an extent that it need not be explicitly stated or named. Thus, the white male comes to occupy the default status to the point where he is not marked out by racial or gender identity at all; only women and people who are not white are marked by their race or gender, precisely because they deviate from the white male norm. Buchbinder refers to this as 'ex-nomination', and resistance against it by emphasising the white male as subject to categorisation as 'renomination'.[39] This renomination can occur along the lines of race, disability, gender, sexuality and, as this thesis demonstrates, even species.

It is out of the perceived degeneration of the ideal, then, and in individual or collective refusals to strive towards it in that prescribed way, that crises in masculinity arise. Male homosexuality is one example of an identity that provides a wealth of examples of how ideal masculinity is framed, and non-conformism seen as a threat, even to society itself. In general terms, male homosexuality is characterised by the hegemonic masculine as something inherently 'unnatural', as a feminisation and a departure from the ideal which is not simply offensive to it but that threatens its integrity. In his 1987 essay 'Is the Rectum a Grave?', Leo Bersani, writing amid the AIDS epidemic, interrogated the socio-political response to that crisis. Bersani identified the perceived loss of power and feminisation of receiving anal sex as a man, the 'shattering' of the self inherent in sex, as the locus of fear for the masculine ideal.[40] Male homosexuality presents to the hegemonic masculine a very literal anxiety about the penetrability of hard and clearly individually marked out male physicality. As Bersani suggested, men receiving anal sex are considered to have lost power and to have succumbed to the uncontrollable and uncontrolled sexual appetite, characterised as feminine precisely because it is incontinent, and the shattering of the (male) self of gay sex that is the source of terror and hostility. In the hegemonic masculine

[39] Ibid., p. 104. Ex-nomination is the process by which facets of identity effectively 'go without saying'.
[40] Leo Bersani, 'Is the Rectum a Grave?', in Bersani, *Is the Rectum a Grave? And Other Essays* (University of Chicago Press, 2010), pp. 3–30.

framework, to be feminised is to be disempowered, and to be disempowered is to be feminised, and both serve to classify the passive gay man into the subordinate group where he, at least notionally, ceases to be a threat.

However, in a complication of male interpersonal engagement, the dynamics of homo*sociality* are in fact part of a crucial figuration of the policing of hegemonic masculine behaviours and boundaries. It is in homosocial settings that men find examples, exemplars and cautionary tales relating to conduct that is acceptable within the framework and that which is not. These are the settings in which men learn self-preservation through avoiding 'gay' behaviours which might include flamboyance or an excess of emotion. This creates a set of circumstances where men are urged to partake in social interaction with other men as part of the package of performances required of proper manliness, while at the same time reinforcing a hyper-awareness of the boundary between the homosocial and the homosexual and the need for that to remain unbreached and homosexuality repressed. Gyms are excellent examples of sites where the distinction between the homosexual and the homosocial must be perpetually navigated. Buchbinder reflects on gyms as sites of masculine performance, and on the role that physical discipline — hardness, definition and impenetrability — plays in drawing out the parameters of the ideal man. This leads us to what is a highly recognisable example: a picture of aspirational, if not necessarily attainable, masculinity.[41] Buchbinder describes gyms and places where collective exercise takes place as 'the workshops for the "creation" of man'.[42] These are spaces where individual men are expected to engage in and observe the engagement of their peers in the pursuit of largely unattainable standards of manhood: the emphasis typically being on a process of becoming. The gym can therefore be regarded as a site for the enactment of ritual: a church of masculinity, which image also invites us to consider the ideal man as the architect of his own mythical identity.

The centrality of the ideal male body to the image of the default human is neatly illustrated by Leonardo da Vinci's Vitruvian Man. As part of a broader conversation about who and what counts in humanism and the humanities, Rosi Braidotti explains that Vitruvian Man represents 'a Eurocentric paradigm' and 'the notion of "difference"

[41] Buchbinder, *Studying Men and Masculinities*, p. 123.
[42] Ibid., p. 146.

as pejoration'.[43] He is depicted as a white human male who has defined musculature and what we are meant to conclude are ideal proportions. This is an image of what Braidotti refers to as 'individual and collective perfectibility'.[44] However, this Vitruvian gold standard immediately expels femaleness, disability and other-than-white racial identities. This kind of humanism, Braidotti asserts, privileges a very specific type of human, reflecting that the default human being in the Renaissance humanist tradition was a male, wealthy, white European, conforming to prescribed body type and proportion. The image thus tacitly privileges the male-coded rational and scientific over the female-coded emotional and superstitious. As a framework for the illustration of the hegemonic masculine, it is a helpful means of making visible Buchbinder's 'ex-nomination' or naturalisation of the white human male and of considering the plethora of subjectivities erased from this default. In emphasis of this point, later in Braidotti's discussion we are presented with equivalent Vitruvian models: an evocation of Vitruvian woman features on the front cover of the book itself. Later we see albeit more light-hearted depictions of Vitruvian cat and Vitruvian dog. Vitruvian robot also appears, even if this cyborg proposition is still in entirely recognisable human male form.[45] These are all subjectivities and identities which are not visible in Leonardo's Vitruvian Man. A fifteenth-century image, it nonetheless remains recognisable and meaningful because the principles it embodies have endured from the Renaissance into the twenty-first century. In scientific enquiry, the white European man remains definitive and archetypical, and any deviation from his subjectivity becomes aberrant, and thus racialised or gendered. As such, Vitruvian Man is emblematic not just of the hegemonic masculine, but of the scientific Promethean specifically.

Promethean masculinity, then, locates the tenets of hegemony set out in the foregoing examples in the pursuit and achievement of technoscientific experimentation and advancement, employing the scientific process in the recalibration and reinforcement of male ascendancy. Promethean science is not the neutral pursuit of technoscience for mutual and universal benefit. Neither is it to be understood as technoscience wholesale. It is an inherently biased and flawed project,

[43] Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman* (Polity, 2013), p. 15.
[44] Ibid., p. 13.
[45] Ibid., pp. 72–73, 90–91.

the aim of which is to sanction patriarchy and the hoarding of power at the hegemonic level. In this thesis, the literary iterations of Promethean masculinity discussed are examples of a cultural perception of a certain kind of hegemonic masculine science arising during periods of tripartite flux across the scientific landscape, women's rights and questions about the subjectivity of animal bodies and the human/animal boundary. These moments, such as the co-incidence of the campaign for women's suffrage and anti-vivisection at the *fin de siècle* and the emergence of second-wave feminism contemporaneous with nuclear weapons and reproductive technologies from the 1960s, are the backdrop to these critical literary flashpoints in the story of masculine identity: moments of masculinity-in-crisis.

As previously intimated, Promethean masculinity is defined by the nature of what it excludes, with those excluded representing inferiority and weakness. Forth has expressed the view that 'any history of masculinity must also be the story of weakness denied'.[46] Promethean man casts out the weakness in himself when he casts out the feminine and animal. When, as in the case of Promethean masculinity, masculine strength is located in the pursuit of knowledge, all excluded, subordinated groups become ripe for experimentation and investigation in the name of acquiring that knowledge. They become framed as things which are natural, in opposition to the cultural figure of the male scientist. They are often the objects of his fear and disgust, and so things which must be neutralised by being understood and made unmysterious, even if it results in their destruction. This pursuit compounds the Promethean idea of a radical separation between Promethean man and all other forms of life, emphasising the status of the latter as aberrant and abject, despite their populational majority. Oppressed groups thus come to be devalued in comparison to the Promethean ideal.

Promethean masculinity, with its focus on the technoscientific, prizes intellectual hegemony over the physical prowess that frequently typifies hegemonic masculine thinking.[47] Promethean man is occupied with science, and with the consumption of bodies in the pursuit of that science. At its heart is the fundamental right to consume

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[46] Forth, *Masculinity in the Modern West*, p. 3.

[47] This is not to say that Prometheanism is therefore permissive of the human body in all its forms. On the contrary, as chapter three of this thesis demonstrates, just like the hegemonic in general, Promethean masculinity resists the inclusion of the imperfect male body into its ranks. The crux of Prometheanism is that it is frustrated by the limitations of the physical and bodily, associating them with animality and feminisation.

what is other in order to advance the project of becoming closer to, and reunited with, the divine. It is engaged in a perpetual defensiveness which requires the insatiable consumption of other bodies. It is also dogged by its own contradictions; science becomes a project for elevating the male scientist to a divine status, even as science itself challenges the very concept of divinity and mystery, and the penetration of feminised nature reveals more of man's animality than his superiority. The consumption of animal bodies as objects of scientific experimentation and the collateral damage of technoscientific advance, too, comes to reveal not masculine supremacy but the commonalities between man and beast. Meanwhile, the male consumption of meat, so emblematic of his hegemony, becomes vexed: a battle between the idea that it is his right as a marker of superiority and the paradoxical fear that to eat meat is itself to be beastly and base. Where meat might, for other forms of hegemonic masculinity not predicated on the technoscientific, equate to physical strength, in Promethean thought it might become the stuff of intellectual nourishment, or even be avoided altogether in order to preserve the hygienic boundary between Promethean man and beast. In its determination to emphasise the transcendent intellectual over the brawny physical as a marker of ascendancy, and its struggle to return to the communion with the divine of a prelapsarian golden age, Prometheanism cannot help but fall into the trap of returning to the battlefield of body and flesh which it has so determinedly categorised as female. For this reason, the characteristics of this form of masculinity have frequently been the subject of ecological feminist thought.

An Ecofeminist Epistemology

The Scientific Revolution of the early modern period saw the focus of science become deconstructive and revelatory. The intention of those men carrying out scientific experimentation was to understand, by destruction if necessary, the way a historically feminised natural world functioned. This philosophy was dominated by the experiential, empiricist scientific method asserted by Francis Bacon in works including

'The Masculine Birth of Time' (1603)[48] and *Novum Organum* (1620),[49] and Cartesian dualism, the rationalist theory that proposes a radical separation of mind from matter as articulated by René Descartes in his *Discourse on Method* (1637).[50] Baconian science was predicated on the idea of male discovery through the penetration of a female-coded nature. In 'The Masculine Birth of Time', Bacon aspired to 'a blessed race of Heroes and Supermen'[51] created through the pursuance of science, for 'Nature with all her children to bind her to your service and *make her your slave'*.[52] He also described science as 'the restitution of and reinvesting of man to the sovereignty and power […] which he had in his first state of creation'.[53] Thus, science, a masculinised pursuit dominated by white, culturally powerful men, became hegemonic: a new form of idealised masculine authority with formative socio-political and socio-cultural power, and a mechanism by which nature, a feminised and threatening unknown, could be tamed. Descartes' assertion that man's ability to reason evidenced an existence beyond the physical is the basis of Cartesian dualism, dichotomising mind and matter, and man and animal: 'But what, then, am I? A thinking thing, it has been said […] a thing that doubts, understands [conceives], affirms, denies, wills, refuses, that imagines also, and perceives'.[54] The separation of the male subject from an othered majority, a separation which had previously been shored up by the patriarchal authority of religion, thus came to be restated in the scientific and philosophical language of men like Descartes and Bacon. Cartesian dualism proved useful in articulating reason and emotion as masculine and feminine respectively, emphasising the inferior material and bodily as female and animal, and the superior mind or soul as male and human. Many dualisms emerge here: the universal/contextual, the male/female, and the

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[48] Francis Bacon, 'The Masculine Birth of Time; or, The Great Instauration of the Dominion of Man Over the Universe', in *The Philosophy of Francis Bacon: An Essay on its Development from 1603 to 1609 with New Translations of Fundamental Texts,* ed. and trans. by Benjamin Farrington (Liverpool University Press, 1964), pp. 59–72.
[49] Francis Bacon, *Novum Organum; or, True Suggestions for the Interpretation of Nature*, ed. by Joseph Devey (Collier and Son, 1902).
[50] René Descartes, *A Discourse on Method: Meditations on the First Philosophy Principles of Philosophy,* trans. by John Veitch (Everyman, 2002).
[51] Bacon, 'The Masculine Birth of Time', p. 72.
[52] Ibid., p. 62 (my emphasis).
[53] Francis Bacon, 'Valerius Terminus of the Interpretation of Nature', in *The Philosophical Works of Francis Bacon,* ed. by John M. Robertson, trans. by Robert Leslie Ellis and James Spedding (Routledge, 1905), pp. 177–206 (p. 188).
[54] Descartes, *A Discourse on Method*, p. 82.

rational/emotional are all applied in devaluing women's experiential approaches. These rational theories frame the dominant patriarchal discourse as being separate from nature and the non-human animal, rejecting a holistic understanding of humans within the natural world, thus sanctioning domination. This framework of binaries, which forecloses the appropriate complication of complex subjects in favour of the simplistic language of polarity, has been the subject of many decades of ecofeminist critique.

Ecological feminism, or 'ecofeminism', proposes that the oppressions of women and the more-than-human world, connected as a result of the patriarchal insistence on a radical separation of a masculinised culture and a feminised nature, require solutions that are likewise connected. The term was first coined by Françoise d'Eaubonne in her 1974 collection of ecofeminist essays, *Le Féminisme ou la Mort (Feminism or Death)*.[55] The late 1970s and 1980s saw the emergence of a substantial body of ecofeminist theory and activism, a response to Cold War nuclear geopolitics and the ever-increasing excesses of capitalism. Since d'Eaubonne's seminal work, this ecofeminist corpus has continued to expand. Ecofeminism itself now encompasses a wide variety of conceptual strands, wherein theorists debate on subjects including vegetarianism and veganism as acts of liberation, the role of socialism in achieving ecofeminist objectives, spirituality and religion in the ecofeminist movement, and feminist scientific theory and practice. As the theoretical foci of this thesis are the juxtaposition of women's and animal bodies and ecofeminist responses to technoscience, what follows in this section is a discussion of selected foundational ecofeminist animal studies texts that respond to the key features of Promethean masculinity.[56]

In 'A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century' (1985), Donna J. Haraway critiques not just the human/animal boundary, but also the boundary between human/animal and machine that has been complicated by the technoscientific advances of the twentieth century.[57]

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[55] Françoise d'Eaubonne, *Feminism or Death*, ed. and trans. by Ruth Hottell (Verso, 2022).

[56] The discourses that feature in this discussion are predominantly Western, in line with the focus of the thesis itself. This, and indeed all forthcoming discussions, should not be taken to imply global homogeneity either now or in the past.

[57] Donna J. Haraway, 'A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century' in Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (Free

Advocating ‘pleasure in the confusion of boundaries and for responsibility in their construction’,[58] Haraway suggests that ‘the cyborg appears in myth precisely where the boundary between human and animal is transgressed’.[59] As such, her notion of the cyborg is a figure that resists more traditional, negative connotations of monstrosity, instead representing a rejection of essentialism of all kinds. Neither completely male nor female, human nor animal, organic nor artificial, it expresses that transgression of boundaries, and is a site of celebratory repudiation of ‘the discredited breach of nature and culture’ which has so persistently shored up the conception of the two as a dichotomy.[60] Using this notion of the cyborg, ‘A Cyborg Manifesto’ calls for kinship and multiple perspectives that make possible what the singular patriarchal gaze cannot, suggesting that ‘we can learn from our fusions with animals and machines how not to be Man, the embodiment of Western logos’.[61] Haraway’s cyborgism is thus the means by which both identities and perspectives can be opened up beyond the received Western patriarchal idiom. Allowing for a peaceful acceptance of ‘joint kinship with animals and machines’, it presents an optimistic refiguring of the future of technoscience, where its output may furnish affinities and co-existences rather than the destruction sown by Promethean man.[62]

The relevance of Haraway’s critique to the current discussion takes two principal forms. First, it identifies the patriarchal technoscientific perspective, referred to in this thesis as Promethean masculinity, as underpinning exclusions in and by science — and makes visible the limitations resulting from these exclusions. It demonstrates that the radical separation of man from women and the more-than-human world, and man’s domination and colonisation of the excluded other on this basis, is the cornerstone of patriarchal technoscience. As such, it is man who categorises and taxonomises, and man who confers meaning on the words used to do both: ‘“the West” and its highest product — the one who is not animal, barbarian, or woman; man, that is, the author of

Association Books, 1991) pp. 149–81.
[58] Ibid., p. 150.
[59] Ibid., p. 152.
[60] Ibid., p. 152.
[61] Ibid., p. 173.
[62] Ibid., p. 154. Haraway asserts that her ‘cyborg myth is about transgressed boundaries, potent fusions, and dangerous possibilities which progressive people might explore as one part of needed political work’.

a cosmos called history'.[63] Science, when theorised and performed through this one perspective, is necessarily circumscribed by it; it lacks the inflection of multiple affinities that characterises Haraway's cyborgism. This critique of perspective in science is a central concern in her work. In a later essay, 'Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective' (1988), she problematises the 'God trick', or the traditional idea that one particular Western masculinist perspective can furnish a detached, omniscient, radically disembodied and dislocated objectivity.[64] Rather than the 'God trick', described as 'the standpoint of the master, the Man, the One God, whose Eye produces, appropriates, and orders all difference',[65] Haraway advocates for situated knowledges that acknowledge and embrace partiality, politics, experience and embodiment: 'the view from a body, always a complex, contradictory, structuring and structured body, versus the view from above, from nowhere, from simplicity'.[66] Thus, both situated knowledges and the cyborg present a response to Promethean masculinity, and to its insistence on rigid taxonomy that privileges its own perspective over that of the excluded other. In 'A Cyborg Manifesto', this response takes the form of hybridity: of an embracing of that which is a confusion of the bodily and the conceptual, of nature and culture and of real and imaginary, and which therefore repudiates the domination that follows when these dualisms are constructed as hierarchised rather than blended.

Haraway's examinations of the role and significance of perspective and agency in science have influenced important later scholarship on the question of how ideas are theorised and practice conducted across the sciences. For example, feminist physicist Karen Barad, in *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (2007), presents the theory of agential realism, suggesting the existence of a web of intra-actions which create meaning as they occur, undermining the traditional scientific dichotomy of what acts and what is acted upon.[67]

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[63] Ibid., p. 156.
[64] Donna J. Haraway, 'Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective', in Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (Free Association Books, 1991) pp. 183–201.
[65] Ibid., p. 193.
[66] Ibid., p. 195.
[67] Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Duke University Press, 2007). Barad's work is a feminist development of Niels Bohr's 'philosophyphysics'. Barad characterises science as a process of becoming for both subject and object. Vinciane Despret's scholarship on affinities and co-evolution is likewise significant here, and is also

Like Haraway's cyborg, Barad's agential realism proposes a network of co-constitution that offers an alternative to the isolationist, radically individual Promethean scientist. In Barad's words: 'We don't obtain knowledge by standing outside the world; we know because we are of the world. We are part of the world in its differential becoming'.[68] The textual analyses that follow in the chapters to come offer a reading of three literary Prometheus figures for whom this physical and intellectual separation from the excluded other is crucial. Each believes himself capable of the 'God trick', and of possessing individual meaning without the need for any kind of affinity or co-constitution with the world around him. He confers meaning, but will not allow meaning to be inscribed onto him by others. As such, the ideas nourished by the concepts of cyborgism and agential realism allow for a novel way of analysing these literary figurations.

The second crucial feature of Haraway's theories is that they locate the agency of both Promethean man and the cyborg in the power of words: of narrative, myth and story. As has been demonstrated, Promethean science is rooted in its own myth, and ecofeminists have acknowledged that masculinist science emerges from the power of language and narrative. Carolyn Merchant's *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution* (1980) is an early example of an ecofeminist text that interrogates this idea.[69] Merchant examines the ways in which the Scientific Revolution heralded a change in attitudes to nature, based on the stories that were considered legitimate and those which were not. Thus, during the Scientific Revolution, earlier narratives of nature as a mother to be protected and nurtured gave way to the narratives of male mastery exemplified by Francis Bacon: narratives that 'functioned as cultural sanction[s] of the denudation of nature'.[70] One mythical idea, the sacredness of nature, was thus replaced with another — Prometheanism. For Prometheanism, the story of the cosmic ordering of all things made sense of the

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influenced by Haraway. See, for example, Vinciane Despret, 'From Secret Agents to Interagency', *History and Theory,* 52.4 (2013), pp. 29–44, doi:10.1111/hith.10686. Other examples of important scholarship in feminist science that responds to Haraway include Lynda Birke, *Feminism, Animals and Science: The Naming of the Shrew* (Open University Press, 1994), and *Between Monsters, Goddesses and Cyborgs: Feminist Confrontations with Science, Medicine and Cyberspace*, ed. by Nina Lykke and Rosi Braidotti (Zed Books, 1996).

[68] Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, p. 185.

[69] Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution* (Harper, 1990).

[70] Ibid., p. 2.

subjugation of a female nature by a masculine science. On the basis of this narrative power, Baconian science held that human improvement must take precedence over natural mysteries, and over a 'mother' who might even be reappraised as hostile, as concealing knowledge and resources over which Promethean man ought to have dominion. Vandana Shiva, in *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Development* (1989), demonstrates how masculinist science has used this ordering narrative to rationalise colonialism and imperialism. Shiva describes how holistic and nature-centred ways of being come to be devalued, categorised as primitive and feminine superstition, in need of the ameliorative effects of the masculinist, scientific, Western mind.[71] Shiva traces the ways in which this 'masculine mode' has found expression in imperialist and colonialist agricultural policy, removing food sovereignty from indigenous populations and handing it to multinational companies and organisations. These multinationals have subsequently instigated systems of redistribution that are likewise predicated on masculinist and patriarchal principles, eliding the connection of indigenous peoples, and particularly indigenous women, with the lands they have worked for centuries. In yet another example, Evelyn Fox Keller's *Reflections on Gender and Science* (1985), dedicates a chapter to the critique of Baconian science.[72] Keller complicates Bacon's ideas about the masculinisation of science, his 'blessed race of Heroes and Supermen',[73] characterising the gendered nature of his metaphors about the mastery and dominion of scientists over nature as 'not simple violation, or rape, but forceful and aggressive seduction', indicating that it is through this seduction that a new, male, virile science might be born.[74] For Bacon, then, science was something of a love story crossed with a new creation myth: one where nature was aggressively pursued and subdued in order that he might extract its secrets and birth their story himself. Thus, the right to tell that story, to write history, and to name is potent in the construction of both Promethean masculinity and resistance to it. When Promethean masculinity seizes this right in dismissal of the affinities discussed by Haraway, Barad and others, the story that emerges leaves no space for 'stories unimaginable from the vantage point of the cyclopian, self-satiated eye of the master

[71] Vandana Shiva, *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Development* (Zed Books, 1994).
[72] Evelyn Fox Keller, *Reflections on Gender and Science* (Yale University Press, 1985), pp. 33–42.
[73] Bacon, 'The Masculine Birth of Time', p. 72.
[74] Fox Keller, *Reflections on Gender and Science*, p. 37.

subject'.[75]

'A Cyborg Manifesto' acknowledges the role of technoscience as 'discourses', providing 'instruments for enforcing meanings', and emphasises the role of cyborgism in resisting it.[76] In Haraway's vision of 'cyborg writing', cyborgism allows for the previously excluded other to tell stories, 'seizing the tools to mark the world that marked them as other', thus conferring 'access to the power to signify'.[77] In other words, cyborg writing becomes a means of resisting the male domination that is rooted in traditional Western myth:

> The tools are often stories, retold stories, versions that reverse and displace the hierarchical dualisms of naturalized identities. In retelling origin stories, cyborg authors subvert the central myths of origin of Western culture. We have all been colonized by these origin myths […] Feminist cyborg stories have the task of recoding communication and intelligence to subvert command and control.[78]

As such, Promethean masculinity can be defied through the telling of stories that hold space for the excluded other, and the reclamation of other stories, particularly indigenous stories, whose legitimacy had been denied in favour of dominant, patriarchal narratives. This thesis traces a journey of Promethean scientist as literary figure from a female-authored inception. By the time Aldiss is writing in 1980, a new wave of feminist science fiction is also emerging, including work by Joanna Russ, Octavia E. Butler and Marge Piercy, which delivers on some of the promises of Haraway's cyborg.[79] In each of the three science fiction texts discussed in this thesis, it is possible to learn a great deal about Promethean masculinity from whose perspectives are accessible to the reader and whose are not.

Contemporaneous with this new wave of feminist science fiction was the burgeoning field of ecofeminist scholarship already discussed. This scholarship is narrative and storytelling of a different kind. Just as science fiction may offer ways of

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[75] Haraway, 'Situated Knowledges', p. 192.
[76] Haraway, 'A Cyborg Manifesto', p. 164.
[77] Ibid., p. 175.
[78] Ibid., p. 175.
[79] Fuller treatments of the feminist science fiction of this period follow in the sections and chapters to come.

perceiving the socio-scientific context in which it is written, so ecofeminist scholarship offers examples of perspectives that allow for a way of interrogating dominant technoscientific rhetoric: they too are the 'subversion of command and control' of Haraway's vision. In fact, one of the strengths of this body of work is that it also incorporates contributions that resist the patriarchal prescriptions of what constitutes the legitimately scholarly; the flourishing movement was made up not just of academic interventions, but protest movements, art and creative writing. In *Woman and Nature: The Roaring Inside Her* (1984), for example, Susan Griffin offers a lyrical, even poetic intervention into the intersections between gender, environment and race.[80] While a somewhat essentialist view of the connections between women and nature, her creative approach, eschewing the academically theoretical in favour of such methods as poetry and anthropomorphism, reflects that wider openness in the ecofeminist movement of the late twentieth century to creative and practical applications of theory. The practice of the movement was itself a rejection of the Promethean binaries that insisted on a radical separation between the intellectual and the bodily, male and female, and science and experience. Griffin's contribution demonstrates that the ecofeminist movement found space for traditionally feminised emotion in its responses to hyper-rationalistic Prometheanism. By presenting alternatives to the Promethean narrative and process, ecofeminist theory, in its heterogenous forms, helps to make visible the shortcomings and exclusions of Prometheanism as a literary aesthetic. Haraway's seminal work on both situated knowledges and the cyborg, in particular, offers an invaluable way of reading texts that foreground Promethean masculinity, not just in the moment in which she is writing, but as a theoretical standpoint for considering the literary Prometheus throughout the time period covered by this thesis. In the case of all three of the texts analysed in the following chapters, the function of the creator's masculinity has been largely overlooked in critical responses that tend instead to focus, understandably, on the hybrid bodies of the created. Approaching the analysis of these texts with a theoretical framework that considers the role of masculinity in the construction of each Prometheus figure enables original observations about the men creating the monsters and what those monsters mean in their respective texts.

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[80] Susan Griffin, *Woman and Nature: The Roaring Inside Her* (Women's Press, 1984). Griffin's work slightly pre-dates the publication of 'A Cyborg Manifesto', but I suggest is still a useful example of broadly contemporaneous scholarly-creative work being undertaken in ecofeminism at the time.

As mentioned previously, the consumption of animal bodies as meat, and the politics of its avoidance, are also a fundamental part of this Promethean story; whether or not meat is consumed confers both masculinity and monstrosity. Because there is substantial overlap between ecofeminism and critical animal studies, a consideration of some examples of where and how these have come to intersect is useful at this point. There are persistent and frequently pernicious connections between the ways in which the bodies of women and animals are theorised, and the consumption of both is a feature of Promethean masculinity that is challenged by interventions in ecofeminist animal studies. Much feminist theory and debate about the place of non-human animals and nature in feminism has been influenced by, and offered in response to, two specific publications in the field of animal rights. In *Animal Liberation* (1975), Peter Singer posited a 'utilitarian' theory for the treatment of non-human animals, emphasising the key ethical concern for the best outcome for the greatest number of individuals, including the non-human animal.[81] Singer does not advocate for animal rights homogenous with those of humans. Rather, he makes the Benthamite proposition that consideration be granted all species on the basis of their capacity to feel pain, rather than on their capacity for reason or intelligence.[82] Singer makes the often controversial comparison between animals and humans with impaired intelligence due to factors such as disability to illustrate the illogic of conferring rights on the basis of intelligence alone.[83]

In *The Case for Animal Rights* (1983), Tom Regan suggests that both humans and non-human animals have an inherent value and are thus due moral 'rights' in accordance with their having a subjectivity, which might be constituted of a sense of individuality, emotional lives and a sense of their own welfare.[84] Like Singer, Regan invokes the case of severely disabled humans as a means of comparison to demonstrate the illogic of conferring moral rights on the basis of such things as reason or

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[81] Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation: Towards an End to Man's Inhumanity to Animals* (Thorsons, 1983).
[82] Philosopher Jeremy Bentham is responsible for the now famous statement on animal rights: 'the question is not, Can they *reason*? nor, Can they *talk*? but, Can they *suffer*?' (emphasis in original). See Jeremy Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (Clarendon, 1823), p. 311.
[83] See, for example, Sunaura Taylor, *Beasts of Burden: Animal and Disability Liberation* (New Press, 2017) for an animal rights case against the utilitarian position of Singer. Taylor argues that Singer's position undermines both animal and disability rights cases as it erases the capacity of both to feel emotion, instead insisting upon a rigid and universalising conferment of 'use' and value.
[84] Tom Regan, *The Case for Animal Rights* (University of California Press, 1983).

intelligence. While Singer and Regan were both of crucial importance in beginning the late-twentieth century dialogue on animal rights, it remains the case that their theories rely upon anthropocentric, androcentric and rights-based understandings of non-human animals and ethical frameworks for dealing with them, as well as anthropocentric ideas about value and subjectivity itself. A feminist examination of themes such as diversity in the animal rights movement, the pertinence of animal difference, the language used to describe the products of non-human animal oppressions, treatment and testing processes, the ethics of care and of empathy, and how sense can be made of a field which is persistently both anthropocentric and androcentric builds upon the work of Singer and Regan, appraising their foundational ethical positions through a feminist lens.

Carol J. Adams' *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory* (1990) and *The Pornography of Meat* (2003)[85] both focus on the subjectivity of animals as it relates to gendered ideas about bodies and what and who constitutes meat. The 'sexual politics of meat', argues Adams, is 'an attitude and action that animalizes women and feminizes animals', by means of the rhetorical linkage of women's bodies with animal bodies: a central feature of Promethean philosophy.[86] Adams has previously identified some of the key Promethean themes presented in *Frankenstein*, but in focusing on Frankenstein's Creature specifically, stops short of a detailed examination of the Promethean scientist himself as a means of articulating the exceptionalism of the Promethean subject, and how his Shelleyan figuration proves useful beyond an analysis of the text itself and into the twentieth and even twenty-first centuries.[87] Adams does, however, take a close look at how meat is advertised and marketed to the modern audience, and finds that the language of meat advertisement is frequently the language of masculine consumption and the objectification of women; examples include a poster for 'Dirty Dick's Crab House' in Nags Head, North Carolina which features a sexualised shrimp with voluptuous lips and large breasts exclaiming 'I'm Shrimplee D. Licious! Peel me and eat me!',[88] and an account of hunter Rex

[85] Carol J. Adams, *The Pornography of Meat* (Lantern Books, 2015).
[86] Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, p. xviii.
[87] Adams devotes a whole chapter of *The Sexual Politics of Meat* to 'Frankenstein's Vegetarian Monster', and an explanation of how Frankenstein's Creature's meat avoidance represents a rejection of the 'Promethean gift' of flesh. Ibid., pp. 95–107, p. 101.
[88] Ibid., p. 201.

Perysian declaring of a hunted boar that he would 'grab it like I grab my women!', before bellowing into the woods and 'boasting that the kill had sexually aroused him'.[89] The ideal man is thus characterised as one who light-heartedly conflates his sexual appetites with his alimentary ones, with animal flesh and women's flesh becoming interchangeable in the pursuit of mastery over both. The language of meat and hunting are used, particularly in advertising, the media, and vested interests such as pro-bloodsports organisations, to reinforce a model of masculinity which values an interconnected dominance over women, nature, and the non-human animal. In order for this spurious conjuring of maleness to 'work' as an advertising trope or a justification for consumption of meat, hunting, pornography or casual violence against women, the socially constructed characteristics of the male/female dualism need to be reinforced and upheld. First, however, they must be created through a persistent narrative. These men must also ensure they eat meat ostentatiously and avoid feminised salad and plant foods at all costs. Among examples cited by Adams is an advertisement for Morningstar grillers which offers an example of women portrayed as the tricksters attempting to sneak vegetarian food into the family diet: 'Half the fun of our veggie burger is eating. The other half, tricking your husband'.[90] Here, the popular cultural linkage between meat and masculinity, and meat avoidance and femininity, are writ large, reminding the consumer that the risk of feminisation is always a threat to the stability of the male subject.[91] In the same way that meat-avoidance is characterised as an inversion or a lack, so too is being female. The image of a woman tricking a male partner, to whom she is figured as subservient, into meat avoidance is a potent one. In so doing, she is engaged in the sabotage of his masculinity, by at once feminising and animalising him. Surreptitiously feeding him plant-based food rather than meat can be interpreted as a reduction both in terms of status and in the sense that the former is so often conflated with diet food, appealing

[89] Adams, *The Pornography of Meat*, pp. 84–85.
[90] Ibid., p. 101.
[91] Robert McKay has written about his experiences of being served what his heterosexual male host referred to as vegan 'lesbian food'. McKay argues that, in equating what he regards as two 'socially unintelligible' categories, his host reveals his own anxieties about what an identification with non-humans inherent in veganism means for his humanity. Thus, the heterosexual male attempts to shore up the distance between his own humanity, which is predicated on both heterosexuality and maleness, by restating the otherness of both homosexual women and animal-sympathising vegans. See Robert McKay, 'A Vegan Form of Life', in *Thinking Veganism in Literature and Culture: Towards a Vegan* Theory, ed. by Emelia Quinn and Benjamin Westwood (Palgrave, 2018), pp. 249–71 (pp. 250–51).

to women as a means of ensuring the desired physical quality of smallness.

Even though Promethean masculinity prizes the intellectual over the physical, it carries this loaded relationship with animals and women as flesh into its technoscientific sphere. It locates both women and animals in the realm of the physical and consumable, and defines its masculinity in terms of the right to carry out that consumption, and what forms it ought to take. As well as permeating advertisement media, the gender-coded matrix of consumption that reflects these linkages is a frequent theme in fiction as it explores what it means to be human and to be embodied. In science fiction, in particular, questions of species, flesh and consumability have proven generative across centuries.

Science Fiction as Critical Artefact

Science fiction,[92] broadly defined as a sub-genre of speculative fiction dealing specifically with the role of science in making possible new worlds and ways of thinking and being, invites the reader to consider subjectivity and embodiment in both the human and more-than-human experience. It proposes alternative realities by abstracting what it is to experience existence and projecting it into worlds where certain rules of physics, chemistry or biology are suspended. In such worlds, knowledge and application of technoscience may be far advanced, permitting ways of living that would otherwise be impossible. It thus removes many of the constraints of realism, while retaining others to form resonance and meaning, making new realities possible and questioning whether, how and to what extent these new realities fundamentally alter subjective experience.[93] Indeed, science fiction can even present contemporaneous concerns to the reader as if they were futuristic or conditional in some way, often reimagining their consequences and changeability; the genre can produce both caution and aspiration, and it can suggest both expansion and

[92] While the term 'science fiction' was only popularised after the 1920s, fiction that draws upon science and speculative imagination can be said to have existed since at least the sixteenth century. Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516) and Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis* (1626) were both early contributions to the speculative fiction genre. Women writers, too, have been intervening in the genre for centuries: Margaret Cavendish's *The Blazing World* (1666) is an early example.

[93] For example, the science in all three of the texts analysed in this thesis is credible. Each author has selected as their subject scientific processes which are plausible, even if not necessarily possible, within their historical context.

recalibration. Where what is possible and what is impossible are unstable categories, space can be made for alternative socio-cultural and geopolitical histories. Science fiction creates literary pathways for asking why things are the way they are, and whether the way they are is truly as immutable as society holds them to be. How writers choose to experiment with character and story when such rules are suspended is a chief concern of the critical study of speculative fiction in general and science fiction in particular.

Promethean masculinity is a form of hegemonic masculinity predicated on the possession and use of technoscience. That the literary Prometheus of interest in this thesis emerges from the genre of science fiction is, therefore, of little surprise. The genre allows for those suspensions of reality that are required to explore both the dualistic and patriarchal premises that form his character and the potential results of his mythos. The literary Prometheus is always looking to the possibilities of greater command over nature through technoscience; his objective is a future where what is possible is not circumscribed or limited by the secrets of nature to which he is denied access. Specifically, he is engaged in the pursuit of extending the limits of what is possible through the manipulation of flesh. Fixated as he is upon the transcendence of the mind over the constraints of the bodily and the material, he requires the possibilities and opportunities of science fiction in order to perform his Prometheanism. Moreover, it is only in critiquing the texts in which these figures appear as belonging to this specific genre that a robust analysis of their masculinity, and its significance for their characterisations and behaviours, can be achieved. In short, what is made available to them by the versatility of the genre matters. Equally, resistance to this figure requires the possibilities and potentialities of science fiction in order to propose subversions and alternatives to his domination. Resistance of this kind takes the form of the excluded other discussed above; female and animal bodies, and the stories they tell, are thus of central importance in understanding the anxieties, challenges and obstacles with which the literary Prometheus is confronted. Ecofeminist theory, the focus of which is on treating the oppression of these bodies as connected, is therefore an apt means of considering the Prometheus of science fiction. As such, it is useful, at this point, to further consider the role and function of the genre, and its usefulness for thinking about gender and animality generally and Promethean masculinity as a

literary aesthetic in particular.

Gender has been thematically significant in science fiction throughout the period under discussion in this thesis. All three of the focal texts in the chapters that follow have gender as a core relevance in their narratives. In fact, there is a compelling argument for the science fiction genre as the ideal means of observing and practicing the gender distinctions of the history of storytelling more generally. In her 1988 essay 'The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction', Ursula K. Le Guin applies Elizabeth Fisher's Carrier Bag Theory of human evolution to the process of storytelling. Fisher argued that the first technological object of human culture must have been some sort of carrier or receptacle for fruit and vegetables, carried by the female gatherer, as opposed to a blade or weapon for hunting, figured as masculine. As such, the human technological journey began with the gathering female, despite the dominant assertion that human civilisation was driven by the hunter and his phallic, penetrative weapon.[94] Science fiction, says Le Guin, can itself be viewed in these terms, as a site of both Promethean endeavour and its subversion, depending on which voices are audible, and which are silenced. In a great deal of science fiction, as in science fact, the loudest voice is that of the conquering hero, and the most resilient story the one of man's scientific success. However, science fiction also offers writers opportunities to subvert this trope by recognising the potentialities of the genre as a means of telling not just violent, penetrative tales, but tales of the gathering of understanding and knowledge in fellowship, too. Le Guin laments the framing of technology as a Promethean vision that hunts (and kills) too much and gathers (and preserves) too little:

> If science fiction is the mythology of modern technology, then its myth is tragic. 'Technology' or 'modern science' (using the words as they are usually used, in an unexamined shorthand standing for the 'hard' sciences and high technology founded upon continuous economic growth), is a heroic undertaking, Herculean, Promethean, conceived as triumph, hence ultimately as tragedy. The fiction embodying this myth will be, and has been, triumphant (Man conquers earth, space, aliens, death, the future, etc.) and tragic

[94] Elizabeth Fisher, *Woman's Creation: Sexual Evolution and the Shaping of Society* (McGraw Hill, 1980).

(apocalypse, holocaust, then or now).

> If, however, one avoids the linear, progressive, Time's-(killing)-arrow mode of the Techno-Heroic, and redefines technology and science as primarily cultural carrier bag rather than weapon of domination, one pleasant side effect is that science fiction can be seen as a far less rigid, narrow field, not necessarily Promethean or apocalyptic at all, and in fact less a mythological genre than a realistic one.[95]

The 'prick tale', as Haraway describes it, is 'the Man-making tale of the hunter' in which others are 'props, ground, plot space, or prey […] to be overcome, to be the road, the conduit, but not the traveler, not the begetter'.[96] Science fiction has produced many of these prick tales, but it does also offer a generative space for the subversions called for by Le Guin. This thesis demonstrates that all three of its focal texts interrogate the Promethean scientific tale in a related way to one another. All three deal with Promethean anti-heroes who set out on penetrative projects but who are, ultimately, stymied by factors both external and internal. They are not the unironic celebrations of Promethean visions as described by Le Guin above. Each sets out on a Promethean journey, but the crux of each tale is that its respective Prometheus is hubristic, because he takes the masculinist view of his endeavours and seeks, each in his own way, to control and supplant female-coded nature and ways of knowing.

As has been discussed, the female and the natural are frequently bound up together in Promethean understanding. Inevitably, this results in an intrinsic link between gender and animal bodies, too. In *Animal Alterity: Science Fiction and the Question of the Animal* (2010), Sherryl Vint explores animal bodies and animality in science fiction, questioning what the presence and absence of animals in texts can

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[95] Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction* (Ignota Books, 2019), p. 36. Le Guin's essay will be revisited in more detail later.

[96] Donna J. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Duke University Press, 2016), p. 39. In discussion of the work of anthropologist Marilyn Strathern, Haraway suggests that 'It matters what matters we use to think other matters with; it matters what stories we tell to tell other stories with' (p. 12). Storytelling, and mythmaking, are never neutral, and this is important both in understanding the prick tale of the Promethean and narratives that trouble or subvert it. See Marilyn Strathern, *Reproducing the Future: Essays on Anthropology, Kinship and the New Reproductive Technologies* (Manchester University Press, 1992); Marilyn Strathern, *The Gender of the Gift: Problems with Women and Problems with Society in Melanesia* (University of California Press, 1990).

reveal about humanness, interspecies connections and, most importantly, the impact of technoscience on species existence.[97] In this thesis, I suggest that the presence of animals in the science fiction stories analysed serves a range of purposes, both in terms of storytelling and of how those stories reflect their historical and socio-cultural moment. Animal presences in these novels invite the reader to question the stability of boundaries between species, and how the interrogation of these boundaries has contributed to crises in the Promethean image at key points in the last two hundred years, confronting Promethean man with his own animality at specific moments. This confrontation is consistently gendered, and the animalisation of Promethean man bound up with a simultaneous feminisation.

Each of the following chapters analyses one of three texts, all of which tell the story of a man who is a Promethean figure in his own epoch. Each text represents a critical perception of its time and is analysed accordingly, the analyses presented in chronological order, from the Romantic period to the Cold War. These close readings of literary science fiction texts offer critical analysis through the theoretical lens of masculinity studies and ecofeminist animal studies. The first chapter examines Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) as an urtext, considering the significance of the novel's subtitle, *The Modern Prometheus*, and re-analysing the text through the lens of Promethean masculinity and ecofeminist animal studies in relation to the context of Romanticism. The second compares and contrasts H. G. Wells' *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896), analysing it as a critical response to the advent of Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection. An analysis of Brian Aldiss' *Moreau's Other Island* (1980) follows in the third chapter, revealing how the scientific developments of the Cold War inspired yet another example of a literary Prometheus. The thesis concludes with reflections on the burgeoning of a feminist science fiction corpus in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century which responds to the literary Prometheus and his inability to conceptualise human progress in holistic ways.

[97] Sherryl Vint, *Animal Alterity: Science Fiction and the Question of the Animal* (Liverpool University Press, 2014).

A Note on Terminology

The foregoing sections serve to clarify the meaning of key terms, as well as theoretical backgrounds, which are of consistent relevance within this thesis. In each chapter, other terms are often used to locate a concept or event within a historical moment or socio-cultural context. The scope of the discussion does not allow for a comprehensive analysis of each term every time it becomes relevant, and specific definitions and qualifications are provided where this is necessary. However, to ensure that the chronology of the discussion is clear, a clarification of certain words and phrases relating to periods and intellectual movements is useful at this point. The Age of Enlightenment is taken to refer to the emerging primacy of rationalism during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, growing out of, and to some extent contemporaneous with, the Scientific Revolution which began in the sixteenth century. Where the Romantic period is mentioned, this relates to the period from the French Revolution in 1789 to around 1840. The Romantic movement refers to the philosophical and intellectual movement contemporaneous with the Romantic period, which was predominantly taken up with a focus on the subjective, individual and emotional, a reverence of nature and radical politics emphasising the rights of man and, as such, is distinct from the foregoing Enlightenment period. Later, the post-Darwinian refers to the period after the publication of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* in 1859, while the *fin de siècle* indicates the period between 1880 and 1920. Finally, the post-war period indicates events in or after 1945; the Cold War period is broadly analogous with this period, terminating in the early 1990s.

Chapter 1

Romantic Prometheanism: Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818)

> But these philosophers, whose hands seem only made to dabble in dirt, and their eyes to pore over the microscope or crucible, have indeed performed miracles. They penetrate into the recesses of nature, and shew how she works in her hiding places.[1]

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818) is the modern urtext of literary Promethean masculinity. It was a text conceived of and published during a period of intense socio-political change and radicalism across Europe.[2] The French Revolution, beginning in 1789 and culminating in 1799, had generated a wave of intellectual and philosophical interrogation of the place of man[3] in the world, and the impact of class inequality on society and individuals. This was a context in which hierarchical social structures such as monarchy and religion, taken for granted as unchanging and unchangeable, began to be not only questioned, but violently deconstructed. The Romantic movement, of which this novel was a part, was ostensibly predicated on the philosophy of equality that emerged as a response to the inequalities of the past.[4] In broad terms, the Romantic period came to be preoccupied with the emotion and imagination of the individual and radical positions on rights,

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[1] Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus: The 1818 Text,* ed. by Marilyn Butler Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 30. All references to the text are to this version unless otherwise specified.

[2] Radicalism, for the purposes of the forthcoming discussion of Romanticism, refers to ideas generally at odds with, and considered to be progressive in comparison to, the dominant conservative ideologies of the day. 'Shelley' henceforth refers to Mary Shelley. Percy Bysshe Shelley/Percy Shelley is named specifically where discussed.

[3] It is important to understand 'man' as a loaded rather than neutral term, the socially constructed default, white, European, able-bodied, heterosexual, wealthy man, in accordance with the definition of Promethean man offered previously.

[4] The Romantic period, and Romanticism as a movement, is difficult to reduce to general definitions. For the sake of clarity, as previously indicated this thesis will take the Romantic period to have begun with the French Revolution and to have come to an end by around 1840. The movement was defined by its contrasts with the foregoing classical movement and characterised by such intellectual concerns as subjective and individual experience, human reason, poetics, the heroic and sublime, and the idealisation of nature and the notion of a past golden age. This definition owes a great deal to Michael Ferber, *Romanticism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2010).

where Enlightenment philosophy had been predicated on reason and the empirical.[5] However, as this chapter demonstrates, the radical philosophising of predominantly male Romantic figures did not necessarily translate into practical action or transform lived realities. While the chief preoccupations of Romantic thinkers were concepts such as revolution, oppression and the reconfiguring of human society in a way that was markedly nostalgic in tone,[6] this was still an intellectual context saturated with men who fit the Promethean masculine mould remarkably well.[7] To understand the context out of which *Frankenstein* emerged, then, one must first consider the ways in which Romantic radicalism responded to earlier, traditional notions of idealised masculinity. The analysis that follows in this chapter provides the basis for the interpretation of Promethean man in later literary texts, explaining the position of *Frankenstein* as the text which lends so much to later literary manifestations of this persistently recognisable and yet stubbornly contradictory figure.

Enlightenment thought of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries utilised rationalism to shore up existing ideas about the dominion of man. The study and theorisation of natural history and other sciences reinforced a sense of human exceptionalism that was rooted in sexism, classism, racism and colonialism, placing white, European, wealthy, heterosexual man at the pinnacle of the earthly Great Chain

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[5] This is, inevitably, something of a generalisation, and is not to suggest that the Enlightenment was entirely devoid of thinkers concerned with the emotions and rights; indeed, the Enlightenment philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau, in his *Discourse on the Arts and Sciences* (1750) expressed the view that man had become degraded in part by cultural progress. See Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 'Discourse on the Arts and Sciences', in *The Basic Political Writings*, ed. and trans. by Donald A. Cress, 2nd edn (Hackett, 2011). Equally, as this chapter demonstrates, the Romantic period supplied many prominent intellectuals with an active interest in scientific progress. Rather, this contrast is offered as a means of providing some demarcation of these two distinct periods in history and thought.

[6] In this context, nostalgia was characterised by a sentimental longing for a past golden age wherein man lived in better balance with nature and his supposed 'natural' state.

[7] Prominent literary figures of the period include Byron, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Edgar Allan Poe, William Blake and Mary Shelley's own husband, Percy Bysshe Shelley. William Wordsworth's ode, *Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood* (1807), and Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *The Garden of Boccaccio* (1829) are just two examples of works that drew upon nostalgic tropes that characterised the literary tone of the period. See William Wordsworth, *Ode (Intimations of Immortality)*, in *Wordsworth's Poetry and Prose,* ed. by Nicholas Halmi (Norton, 2014) pp. 432–39; Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Garden of Boccaccio*, All Poetry, n.d. <https://allpoetry.com/The-Garden-Of-Boccaccio> [accessed 29 June 2024]. An analysis of Romantic nostalgia as having scientific and even medical roots is offered by Kevis Goodman, 'Romantic Poetry and the Science of Nostalgia', in *The Cambridge Companion to British Romantic Poetry,* ed. by James Chandler and Maureen N. McLane (Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 195–216. None of this is to say that the Romantic movement was entirely without female voices. Besides Mary Shelley herself, Dorothy Wordsworth and Mary Robinson are among the better-known female Romantic poets, and Ann Radcliffe was producing seminal Gothic fiction during this period.

of Being as an archetype. Life that existed outside of this archetype became the life that was abjected as other than the default. Promethean man, the embodiment of this archetype, was considered to be imbued with mental faculties and reason that set him apart from women, children and people of colour, and certainly from the more-than-human world. This lent him a transcendental state beyond the purely physical and fleshly, locating him as the locus of intellect in opposition to the feminine-coded body. The right of Promethean man to dominion was now regarded as not just Biblically granted but, after the experiments and discoveries of the Enlightenment, scientifically assured too. As well as dominion over other humans, the right to use non-human animals as a resource, whether for purposes of transport, vivisection, meat, or pleasure, was thus entirely embedded in the construction of Promethean man: a construction emerging from the Scientific Revolution and later Enlightenment thought. As previously indicated, the works of Francis Bacon, a prominent figure of the Enlightenment, offer testament to this. In his 'The Masculine Birth of Time' – tellingly subtitled 'The Instauration of the Dominion of Man Over the Universe' – Bacon calls for 'a blessed race of Heroes and Supermen who will overcome the immeasurable helplessness and poverty of the human race'.[8] Enlightenment science was thus presented as a noble endeavour, a way to ensure man's progress and release from the tyranny of predestination and religious certainty.

While it should not be assumed that the Romantic period saw a wholesale dismissal of science in favour of the aesthetic and emotional, its literary output did tend to advocate a greater connection with nature rooted in a yearning for a more natural, prelapsarian state.[9] Politically, Romantic radicalism called for the rights of

[8] See Francis Bacon, 'The Masculine Birth of Time; or, The Great Instauration of the Dominion of Man Over the Universe', in *The Philosophy of Francis Bacon: An Essay on its Development from 1603 to 1609 with New Translations of Fundamental Texts*, ed. and trans. by Benjamin Farrington (Liverpool University Press, 1964), pp. 59–72 (p. 72). Both Vandana Shiva, *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Development* (Zed Books, 1994), p. 16, and Evelyn Fox Keller, *Reflections on Gender and Science* (Yale University Press, 1985), pp. 38–39 discuss this text in their treatments of Bacon and Baconian science. In his *New Atlantis* (1626), Bacon's utopia is ruled by a male scientific elite. See Francis Bacon, *New Atlantis*, in *Three Early Modern Utopias*, ed. by Susan Bruce (Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 149–86.

[9] This is to define the Romantic view in general terms, and not to suggest that Romantic intellectualism and philosophy were literally monolithic or ideologically organised. Neither should it imply that the Enlightenment and Romantic periods were entirely mutually exclusive, or that there was no chronological overlap between the two. John Keats, William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Percy Bysshe Shelley and Mary Shelley herself are all among the many Romantic writers who drew upon connections to nature as a creative theme.

man as individual. Such a socio-cultural context might invite comparison with Enlightenment insistences on intellectual hierarchies, tempting the conclusion that the later movement offered antidotes to the Promethean project as it had been figured in earlier decades and centuries. In the sense that Romanticism tended towards the reconciliation of man with nature, it certainly envisaged alternatives to earlier figurations of their radical separation. However, at this time, man, for intellectual purposes, was still understood as a privileged, and very specific, category. The assertions of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, that it was civilisation, science, and those things collectively viewed as 'progress', that had condemned humans to a state of perpetual inequality, certainly evolved into a feature of Romantic thought.[10] However, these ideas were not enough to bring about anything like a cessation of intellectual curiosity in technoscientific fields; while Romantic poetry spoke of connection with nature and more holistic, balanced ways of being human, the industrial revolution continued apace. Percy Bysshe Shelley himself, despite his poetic yearnings for nature, was fascinated by discoveries of the power of electricity to excite movement, even in dead flesh, and is known to have conducted his own experiments in this field.[11] Naturalist and physician Erasmus Darwin also married his scientific and literary creativity in his poem *The Botanic Garden* (1791), which uses rhyming couplets to celebrate science and to theorise on scientific questions of the day.[12] Andrew Smith's definition of Romanticism suggests that it 'emphasized the importance of the creative imagination which had links to a model of freedom that was both artistic and political'.[13] However, the matter of who and what this freedom extended to, both in theory and practice, is

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[10] Rousseau, 'Discourse on the Arts and Sciences'.

[11] For Shelley's experiments and friendship with the royal physician James Lind, see D. G. King-Hele, 'Shelley and Science', *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London,* 46.2 (1992), pp. 253–66, doi:10.1098/rsnr.1992.0025. For an overview of the scientific landscape of the day, see Iwan Morus, '*Frankenstein*: The Real Experiments That Inspired the Fictional Science', *The Conversation,* 26 October 2018 <https://theconversation.com/frankenstein-the-real-experiments-that-inspired-the-fictional-science-105076> [accessed 11 November 2024]. That he once tethered a local stray tomcat to a kite alive to see what would happen when it was struck by lightning is possibly apocryphal; it would certainly be incongruous of a man who once wrote a whimsical and affectionate poem comparing the sufferings of a hungry cat to those of humans. See Percy Bysshe Shelley, 'A Cat in Distress', in *Percy Bysshe Shelley: The Major Works,* ed. by Zachary Leader and Michael O'Neill (Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 1.

[12] Erasmus Darwin, *The Botanic Garden* (J. Johnson, 1791). Erasmus Darwin was the grandfather of Charles Darwin.

[13] Andrew Smith, 'Introduction', in *The Cambridge Companion to 'Frankenstein'*, ed. by Andrew Smith (Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp.1–10 (p. 2).

complex. In responding to hierarchical and patriarchal socio-political notions such as monarchy and organised religion, it is possible to observe that the male radical Romantic figure himself was often of the type that was grounded in a pragmatic privileging of Promethean man. The movement itself was made up of an exclusive and privileged group of thinkers. This is the context in which Shelley lived and wrote *Frankenstein*.

The Myth of Prometheus and the Intellectual Context for *Frankenstein*

The Prometheus myth was a perennial source of inspiration for the Romantic movement. Shelley's intellectually rigorous beginnings would have left her familiar with the classics,[14] and this is evidenced by the intertextual role played by ancient figures such as Plutarch, Pliny and Ovid in the novel. This intertextuality is pertinent and central to a proper understanding of several of the novel's characters. Shelley intended *Frankenstein* to be read as a Promethean narrative, and to draw out ideas about masculinist science and the creation of life through direct allusion to the myth. It was a myth that was also used by her contemporaries to create their own literary interventions and allegories. Percy Shelley's lyrical drama, *Prometheus Unbound,* was published in 1820, two years after *Frankenstein*, and featured Prometheus as the freed benefactor of humanity, standing in opposition to the divine *fiat* of Zeus.[15] Lord Byron, too, conjured with Prometheus as creator figure in his *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1812),[16] and invokes the 'binding' of the titan in 'Prometheus' (1814).[17] The myth, then, was one that had profound symbolic meaning for Shelley's contemporaries, providing a lexicon for writing about the preoccupations of the day. These other writers, like Shelley, all adopted and adapted the elements of the myth that were rhetorically useful to them in their own creative contexts. None is a wholesale retelling

[14] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, p. xii. These beginnings included the influence of her parents, Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin, discussed in more detail below. *Frankenstein's* roots in the classics are wide-ranging. See *'Frankenstein' and its Classics: The Modern Prometheus from Antiquity to Science Fiction,* ed. by Jesse Weiner, Benjamin Eldon Stevens and Brett M. Rogers (Bloomsbury, 2020).
[15] Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Prometheus Unbound*, in *The Major Works,* ed. by Leader and O'Neill, pp. 229–313.
[16] Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, in *The Major Works,* ed. by Jerome J. McGann (Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 19–206.
[17] Byron, 'Prometheus', in *The Major Works,* ed. by McGann, pp. 264–6.

as one finds it in Hesiod's *Theogony*, which is arguably the closest thing to a 'canonical' version extant from antiquity. These retellings and adaptations, then, are all examples of the phenomenon previously discussed: a myth being utilised to create and sustain ideas in a given moment. Rather than being retold in a way that is faithful to a perceived canonical version, the myth could be picked apart, and its constituent parts called into service for whatever the ends of a text might be.

The Romantic relationship with Prometheus is conflicted. He was recognised as a deeply flawed, tragic hero, engaged in a constant undoing of himself: a destruction that occurs because of the desire to create. For male radicals, the archetypical figuring of Prometheus as a creator, an innovator who improved the lot of man in defiance of divine tyranny, was a particularly useful rhetorical device. On the one hand, he was emblematic of the moment man was torn from his prelapsarian state, and from harmony with both the natural and the divine. The punishment of Prometheus, condemned by Zeus to be chained to a rock in the Caucasus and to have his liver eaten out every night by an eagle, was for many intellectuals of the time symbolic of the end of a golden age, the repeated eating of the liver signifying the perpetual suffering and pain of man resulting from the Promethean act. The myth of Prometheus is recognisable as an earlier form of the Fall, echoed Biblically in Genesis. In each case, the gift of fire and meat is a blessing and a curse, and cannot be the one without the other. On the other hand, the feat of Prometheus, and Prometheanism in a broader sense, would have troubled the Calvinist conviction that 'presumption, essential to the Promethean impetus, was a cardinal sin'.[18] Thus, despite his less palatable elements, Prometheus held promise for radicals who prized the value and centrality of the human, and human advancement and perfectibility, over religious dogma. The perennial question, then, became how to reconcile the blessing and the curse: and how man was to return to his natural state while preserving his civilisation. Percy Bysshe Shelley expressed it in these terms:

> The whole of human science is comprised in one question — How can the advantages of intellect and civilisation be reconciled with the liberty and pure

[18] Jane Goodall, 'Electrical Romanticism', in *Frankenstein's Science: Experimentation and Discovery in Romantic Culture, 1780–1830*, ed. by Christa Knellwolf and Jane Goodall (Routledge, 2016), pp.116–32 (p. 124).

> pleasures of natural life? How can we take the benefits and reject the evils of the system which is now interwoven with all the fibres of our being?[19]

Later, Mary Shelley would draw upon the Prometheus myth herself in *Frankenstein*, presenting a vision of science untempered by human feeling: of Prometheanism unchecked. Lisa Vargo has described the novel as 'a palimpsest of Mary Shelley's own reading',[20] which included an obvious familiarity with the myth, but also with a plethora of other texts that spoke to her theme. Most prominently, there are several important intertextual evocations of Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667) at key points throughout the novel.[21] The Creature's formative reading includes *Paradise Lost*, in addition to Volney's *Ruins of Empires* (1791), Plutarch's *Parallel Lives* (c. AD 100) and Goethe's *Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774).[22] Mary's familiarity with Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1798) is also well evidenced in the novel.[23]

Much of the intellectual context is a result of Shelley's own parentage; her father, William Godwin, was a significant influence on her work. Godwin's *Caleb Williams* (1794) tells the story of a protagonist who is pursued, even hunted, and buffeted by events that escalate from his curiosity about his employer, Falkland.[24] *Frankenstein* certainly bears some narrative resemblances to Godwin's work; the hunting of Victor by the Creature, and the reversal that sees the climactic hunting of the Creature by Victor, echo this narrative device. In addition, both novels take the concept of freedom as a central idea. Godwin's *St Leon* (1799) is also a source of inspiration for

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[19] Percy Bysshe Shelley, *A Vindication of Natural Diet: Being One in a Series of Notes to Queen Mab (a Philosophical Poem)* 2nd edn (Shelley Society, 1886), p. 12. As the next section of this chapter shows, Shelley's answer to this question was vegetarianism.

[20] Lisa Vargo, 'Contextualizing Sources', in *The Cambridge Companion to 'Frankenstein'*, ed. by Smith, pp. 26–40 (p. 26).

[21] These include the Creature's relief at discovering the De Laceys' hut: 'as exquisite and divine a retreat as Pandæmonium appeared to the dæmons of hell after their sufferings in the lake of fire' (Shelley, *Frankenstein*, p. 83). See John Milton, *Paradise Lost,* ed. by John Leonard (Penguin, 2003).

[22] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, p. 103. See C. F. Volney, *The Ruins; or, Meditation on the Revolutions of Empires*, trans. by Count Daru (Josiah P. Mendum, 1869); Plutarch, *Plutarch's Lives*, trans. by Bernadotte Perrin, 11 vols (Harvard University Press, 1968); Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, ed. by Nathan Haskell Dole, trans. by R. D. Boylan (Francis A. Niccolls, 1902).

[23] Perhaps most notably in one of Walton's early letters to his sister, in which he reassures her that he 'will kill no albatross' in the course of his voyage to the pole (Shelley, *Frankenstein*, p. 10). See Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (Vintage Books, 2004).

[24] William Godwin, *Caleb Williams,* ed. by Pamela Clemit (Oxford University Press, 2009).

Frankenstein, as it tells the story of a man with access to eternal life.[25] Indeed, Shelley inscribed *Frankenstein* to her father. It is possible, of course, that this was nothing more than an act of familial respect and affection. But it is also likely that Shelley was acknowledging more tangible inspiration from Godwin, too. Paul O'Flinn has criticised both Muriel Spark's attempt to 'try to pass *Frankenstein* off as a conservative riposte to the politics of Godwin and Shelley', and Jane Dunn's assertion that Mary Shelley held the same 'innately conservative' views when writing before 1818 as she did later in life, emphasising instead 'the book's brave dedication to the unpopular Godwin'.[26] Godwin's radical views attracted censure, although he was venerated by fellow Romantics including Percy Shelley.

There is little evidence that Shelley intended *Frankenstein* as a counterpoint to Godwinian radicalism, or a defence of conservative religious values. Rather, the narrative at once interrogates the monomaniacal rationalism of the Enlightenment and the more masculinist qualities of the Romantic radicalism that responded to it. In short, it was Prometheanism that was the subject of her riposte, and not radicalism in general. Godwin held to ideals of the perfectibility of man, and an ultimate rejection of his fallen state as irremediable, that Percy Shelley and others agreed with.[27] It was this rejection of the notion of predestination that was at the heart of the Romantic fascination with the Prometheus myth, which was reconfigured as 'man freed from this curse by becoming divine in his own right, through the power of knowledge'.[28] It is possible to read *Frankenstein* both as a rejection of the certainties of pre-Enlightenment religiosity and an interrogation of the masculinist scientific discourse

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[25] William Godwin, *St Leon: A Tale of the Sixteenth Century,* ed. by William Brewer (Broadview, 2006).

[26] Paul O'Flinn, 'Production and Reproduction: The Case of *Frankenstein*', in *New Casebooks: 'Frankenstein',* ed. by Fred Botting (Macmillan, 1995), pp. 21–47 (p. 25). O'Flinn is referring to chapter eleven of Muriel Spark's *Child of Light: A Reassessment of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley* (Hadleigh, 1951), and Jane Dunn's *Moon in Eclipse: A Life of Mary Shelley* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1978), p. 134 respectively. O'Flinn's reading of Spark tends to avoid the central point, which is less that Shelley was conservative in the general sense and more that she was a young and immature writer responding to the intellectual influences of prominent radicals to whom she had been exposed since childhood. Dunn, on the other hand, is more explicit, asserting that Shelley was 'innately conservative, and romantic about religion, believing in a comfortable, anthropomorphic God and life after death'.

[27] See for example Rod Preece, *Sins of the Flesh: A History of Ethical Vegetarian Thought* (UBC Press, 2008), pp. 232–66. For a fuller account of Godwin's ideas on Man's perfectibility see Peter Marshall, *William Godwin: Philosopher, Novelist, Revolutionary* (PM Press, 2017).

[28] Goodall, 'Electrical Romanticism', p. 120. Goodall quotes Percy Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound:* 'Heaven, hast thou secrets? Man unveils me, I have none'. See Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Prometheus Unbound*, p. 308.

that rose up to replace it. In essence, Mary Shelley was cautioning her contemporaries about the nature of the discourse that was emerging after the French Revolution,[29] and remarking on the lack of what we might now understand to be a feminist approach to this socio-political sea-change. The novel, then, was neither Spark and Dunn's 'conservatism' nor O'Flinn's 'bravery' but an acknowledgement of the Promethean contradictions of the Romantic tradition into which she was introducing her own interpretation of scientific progress.[30]

Shelley's mother was also an influence in her thinking and writing. Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin is best known as the author of the proto-feminist *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), a treatise on gender inequality in education and rights, influenced by Rousseau among others, which remains a mainstay of feminist curricula in the twenty-first century.[31] As Wollstonecraft died shortly after giving birth to Shelley, the latter never knew her mother, but her engagement with her work and her fascination with the radical notions of equality that she espoused are well documented.[32] Despite the overwhelmingly male surroundings of her intellectual

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[29] See Chris Baldick, 'The Politics of Monstrosity', in *New Casebooks: 'Frankenstein',* ed. by Botting, pp. 48–67 (p. 63). Baldick states that 'the creation of a monster emerges from her parents' debate with Burke over the great monstrosity of the modern age, the French Revolution'. Both Lee Sterrenburg, 'Mary Shelley's Monster: Politics and Psyche in *Frankenstein*', in *The Endurance of 'Frankenstein': Essays on Mary Shelley's Novel*, ed. by George Levine and U. C. Knoepflmacher (University of California Press, 1979), pp. 143–71, and Adriana Craciun, '*Frankenstein's* Politics', in *The Cambridge Companion to 'Frankenstein'*, ed. by Smith, pp. 84–97, also note the importance of seeing the Creature as to some extent an embodiment of the revolutionary populace, enacting vengeance against those who have shunned and debased them. Goodall, in 'Electrical Romanticism' (p. 117), adds that 'electrical experiment became symbolically associated with revolutionary energies and ideals'.

[30] See, however, Goodall, 'Electrical Romanticism', p. 131. Goodall asserts that it is a 'crucial misunderstanding' to perceive *Frankenstein* as 'simply anti-Promethean', and of Shelley herself intriguingly that 'in her own critical writings, her position is always consistent with that of her parents […] and of the radical intellectual milieu in which she grew up'. Goodall falls into the trap of regarding 'Promethean' as solely synonymous with 'scientific' here, rather than the far more specific notion of the Promethean *masculine* of her day that this thesis suggests that Mary Shelley had in mind. Either way, it is difficult to argue with the established view that *Frankenstein* is, broadly speaking, a cautionary tale about the over-reaching of a privileged category of human being.

[31] Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman with Strictures on Moral and Political Subjects*, ed. by Ashley Tauchert (Everyman, 1997). The publication of Thomas Taylor's pamphlet *A Vindication of the Rights of Brutes* in the same year was calculated as a satirical *reductio ad absurdum* to Wollstonecraft's work and shows the extent to which women and animals were regarded as analogous at this time. See Thomas Taylor, *A Vindication of the Rights of Brutes*, intro. by Louise Schutz Boas (Edward Jeffery, 1792; facsimile repr. Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1966).

[32] See Charlotte Gordon, *Romantic Outlaws: The Extraordinary Lives of Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Shelley* (Windmill, 2016). Gordon's extensive double biography of mother and daughter draws upon sources including Mary Shelley's letters to offer thoroughgoing descriptions of how Wollstonecraft's political radicalism and early death impacted the life and writing of the former. See also biographies of Mary Shelley including Dunn's *Moon in Eclipse* and Spark's *Child of Light.* Wollstonecraft's work is a mainstay of Shelley's considerable lists of her own reading. See Mary Shelley, *Mary Shelley's Journal,*

development, then, there was still an ever-present proto-feminist aspect to Shelley's education and radicalism. Given Shelley's enthusiasm for her mother's work, it is unsurprising that her novel was inflected by questions about the masculinist overtones of the thinking of the day, and just how far it truly went in troubling the impersonal rationalism of the Enlightenment. Themes such as the reversal of death and the creation of life without the need for either sex or childbirth, central to the narrative of *Frankenstein,* also connect writer to text; as well as losing her own mother in childbirth, Shelley had personal experience of infant mortality in the loss of two of her own children. Ideas about the uncovering of a nature that had long been coded female, and the seizing of the generative forces of creation from Mother Nature and bringing them under man's control, had not ended with Enlightenment masculinist scientific thought.

The positioning of women as marginalised and sacrificial beings in the novel — the hanging of Justine for a murder she did not commit, the death of Caroline Beaufort in the course of caring for a sick family member — serves not to reify female characters as expendable, but rather to emphasise the consequences of their absence. Ellen Moers has appraised *Frankenstein* as a story about birth: as a text in which Shelley's preoccupation with the trifecta of motherhood, love and death meets in the creation of monstrosity and the bloodiness and disgust of flesh, where birth is separated from the female.[33] Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar read it as a parody of Milton's *Paradise Lost,* a literary expression of what Milton's 'male culture myth' might mean for women.[34] This reading of the novel as a parody of one of the Romantics' most prominent literary idols indicates that there were elements of that movement's vision of women that troubled Shelley. Indeed, in her introduction to the 1831 edition, Shelley

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ed. by Frederick L. Jones (University of Oklahoma Press, 1947), pp. 32–33, 47–49, 71–73, 88–90. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar describe Shelley's forays into her mother's work as a means of learning about her family; see Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination,* 2nd edn (Yale University Press, 2000), p. 672. Note too that Shelley, in her introduction to the 1831 Standard Novels edition of *Frankenstein,* refers to herself as 'the daughter of two persons of distinguished literary celebrity'. See Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus,* ed. by Maurice Hindle (Penguin, 2003), p. 5.

[33] Ellen Moers, *Literary Women: The Great Writers* (Doubleday, 1976).

[34] Gilbert and Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic,* pp. 220–21. Gilbert and Gubar thus invite a consideration of *Paradise Lost* as an example of the masculine hero tale or 'prick tale' as theorised by Donna Haraway after Ursula K. Le Guin. See Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction* (Ignota Books, 2019) and Donna J. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Duke University Press, 2016).

recounts the creation of her 'hideous progeny' at the Villa Diodati in Switzerland in the 'Year Without a Summer' of 1816,[35] where she was 'a devout *but nearly silent listener*' to conversations between Percy Shelley and Lord Byron.[36] This gives insight into how a woman like Shelley may have experienced the so-called radicalism of the period, when socio-religious certainties were being deconstructed but the male voice was still privileged in intellectual and social contexts: a Promethean past being painted over with potentially Promethean alternatives.

Shelley's rejection of such patriarchal arrogance also accounts for the fact that so much of the novel is ambiguous and generative of questions, rather than didactic and morally prescriptive. As such, *Frankenstein* is often analysed as part of the female Gothic tradition: a genre of women's writing which takes the masculine oppression of the feminine as one of its subjects.[37] The genre had been popular since the 1790s and included such authors as Ann Radcliffe and Elizabeth Inchbald. Angela Wright has proposed the inclusion of the novel in the genre, arguing that, while it lacks the 'central female character' traditionally required of an example of the female Gothic, and also defies many of the other traditional tropes of the genre, there are moments of the sublime,[38] as well as the positioning of Elizabeth Lavenza as the 'property' of the Frankenstein family, that echo Gothic motifs.[39] It is possible that, much like Jane Austen in the case of *Northanger Abbey* (1803), Shelley carefully selected Gothic tropes and, in the female Gothic tradition, subverted them in order to satirise the genre and particularly the theme of ownership exerted over women, who in their turn are typically confined by patriarchal power, over-imaginative and even hysterical.[40] Ironically, in Shelley's novel, it is the character of Victor Frankenstein, the quintessential Promethean man, who isolates and confines himself in the over-reaching imagination of his creation, descending into sickness, madness and obsession. It is also

[35] So called due to the climatic fallout of the eruption of Mount Tambora in Indonesia in 1815. The story of the novel's creation has long since boasted mythical status itself.
[36] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, ed. by Maurice Hindle, pp.192–97 (my emphasis).
[37] Gilbert and Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic* and Ellen Moers' *Literary Women* remain among the more comprehensive studies of the female Gothic.
[38] In this context, the sublime refers to moments of awe or transcendence in literary work, for example Victor's description of watching a storm during his boat trip across the lake to Plainpalais and the 'lightnings playing on the summit of Mont Blanc'. See Shelley, *Frankenstein*, pp. 55–56).
[39] Angela Wright, 'The Female Gothic', in *The Cambridge Companion to 'Frankenstein',* ed. by Smith, pp. 101–15.
[40] Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey*, ed. by Susan Fraiman (Norton, 2004).

possible to argue that the claim that the novel lacks a central female character is misplaced. It is Safie's story that exists at the very centre of the novel's frame narrative,[41] and it is another woman, Margaret Savile, who frames the whole as the recipient of the letters that tell the tale. While *Frankenstein* is in many ways a poor fit for the broader concept of eighteenth- and nineteenth- century female Gothic, there are some aspects of the narrative where the influence of this genre can be clearly observed.

Shelley was well-appraised of the scientific discourse of her day, including a well-documented familiarity with the work of Erasmus Darwin, who had suggested that human bodies could serve to fertilise soil.[42] The prospect that the human form could be reduced to such a level of abject materiality forced the question of what it meant to be human at all. As Promethean man was supposedly at the pinnacle of humanity, the question became whether he too was, or ought to be considered, consumable in this way. Shelley was also familiar with the work of the chemist Humphrey Davy, and with the physician Luigi Galvani, for whom the 'galvanic' electrical current is named. This experimental scientific climate — dominated, unsurprisingly, by European white men — is visible in Victor's studies in the novel, beginning as he does with the study of Renaissance figures such as Swiss physician Paracelsus and German polymath Cornelius Agrippa. Debates around vitalism and materialism also characterised the period in which Shelley was writing. William Lawrence, a prominent materialist scientist of the day, theorised that the human body was essentially animated material and thus flesh. This was at odds with the more traditional notions of vitalists such as John Abernethy, who claimed that the human body was imbued with a 'vital spark', something analogous to a soul, that set it apart from the beasts. Indeed, *Frankenstein* can be read as a response to the well-documented and bitter dispute which occurred between Lawrence and Abernethy in the years immediately preceding 1818.[43] Their public disagreements were reported in

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[41] Mathew Siegel has suggested that Safie represents Mary Wollstonecraft in the narrative. She is a woman with uncommon intelligence, independence and reason, who has travelled extensively. Siegel contends that Safie was Shelley's subtle way of placing her mother at the centre of her work. See Mathew Siegel, 'A Veiled Inclusion: Safie as Mary Wollstonecraft in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein', The Incredible Nineteenth Century: Science Fiction, Fantasy and Fairy Tale,* 1.1 (2023), pp. 8–30.

[42] See Anne K. Mellor, 'A Feminist Critique of Science', in *New Casebooks: 'Frankenstein',* ed. by Botting, pp. 107–39 (p. 118).

[43] See Shelley, *Frankenstein,* pp. xv–xxi, in which editor Marilyn Butler points out that the Shelleys were personally connected to William Lawrence, who was Percy Shelley's own surgeon, and that Lawrence was a potential model for Victor Frankenstein. However, more recently, David Wootton has

the *Quarterly Review* in 1819, which suggested that the materialist William Lawrence was irreligious, and should be removed from his position as a lecturer if he did not 'expunge from his lectures already published all those obnoxious passages which have given such deserved offence'.[44] Thus, the potentially blasphemous and salacious nature of scientific endeavour as revelatory of divine design had some wider public entertainment value as well as philosophical and political currency at the time that Shelley was conceiving of *Frankenstein*. The experiments of Victor Frankenstein would therefore speak to broader public, as well as scientific and philosophical, preoccupations of the day. Victor's burgeoning interest in Paracelsus and Cornelius Agrippa, and his experiences in Ingolstadt under the tutelage of mentors like M. Krempe and M. Waldman, are a deliberate reference to the conflict between materialism and vitalism of Lawrence and Abernethy. As the analysis that follows demonstrates, whether or not Victor creates an ensouled being, or simply animates flesh, and what this means for the subjectivity of the Creature, still invites discussion and debate more than two hundred years after the novel's publication.

Frankenstein, and its author, received criticism upon publication, much of it rooted in objections to the perceived immoral and macabre nature of the subject. This criticism occurred against an intellectual backdrop where ascendant rationalisms and radicalisms threatened the authority of religion that had come before them, much as they had done throughout the Enlightenment period.[45] Despite the clear cautionary note of the novel, John William Croker, in the *Quarterly Review* of January 1818, complained that *Frankenstein* 'inculcates no lesson of conduct, manners, or morality',

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contested this, suggesting that Victor is more closely modelled on Abernethy, that Butler has 'failed to understand Lawrence', who was not opposed by vitalists, that his stance 'did not imply […] that life could be artificially produced', and that Abernethy simply 'thought that life was something additional to matter'. Wootton further goes on to claim that the moral of the novel is straightforwardly twofold: 'obsession is dangerous and so one ought to pursue a tranquil domestic life'. These are doubtlessly morals to be found within the novel, but the claim that they represent the entirety of the moral is dubious. Wootton casts doubt on the novel's purpose as 'a novel about Promethean ambition' solely on the basis that the phrase didn't exist at the time of Mary Shelley's writing. See David Wootton, '*Frankenstein*: Between Two Worlds', *History Today*, 70.9 (2020) <https://www.historytoday.com/archive/feature/frankenstein-between-two-worlds> [accessed 13 September 2024]

[44] Shelley, *Frankenstein,* pp. 229–51. See 'Abernethy, Lawrence, &c, on the Theories of Life', *Quarterly Review,* 22.43 (1820), pp. 1–34.

[45] George Levine, 'The Ambiguous Heritage of *Frankenstein*', in *The Endurance of 'Frankenstein',* ed. by Levine and Knoepflmacher, pp. 3–30 (p. 29). This was certainly true of the Shelley circle, who Christa Knellwolf and Jane Goodall suggest displayed 'unashamed atheism'. See Christa Knellwolf and Jane Goodall, 'Introduction', in *Frankenstein's Science,* ed. by Knellwolf and Goodall, pp. 1–15 (p. 12).

while in April 1818, the *British Critic* accused Mary Shelley of a 'diseased and wandering imagination', and asserted that her being female only made the subject matter more objectionable. [46] The nature of patriarchal control may have been undergoing a shift, but power, whether it was scientific, creative, or critical, was still being wielded from a privileged male, white, wealthy, Western locus. Anne K. Mellor has pointed out that there is a discernible distinction in Shelley's novel between science which seeks simply to know, and science which seeks to '*control* or *change*'.[47] This is important; there is little evidence to suggest that Shelley was anti-science, or indeed anti-progress, in any broad or reactionary sense. Rather, it was the way in which science and progress were being enacted that troubled her, recognising as she did that they were not neutral, but processes carried out by certain people in certain circumstances for certain ends. Her intellectual context offers plentiful evidence that she knew of and, more importantly, understood the nature of scientific developments in the early nineteenth century. Shelley's immersion within the elite literary community of the Romantic period threads through the novel itself, and her work simultaneously problematised both conservative philosophies and the supposedly radical solutions to them presented by many of her male Romantic peers. These conservative philosophies and radical solutions were several. One of the facets of Romantic thought with which she would have been well acquainted is Pythagoreanism, or 'Romantic vegetarianism'. Conceptions of vegetarianism, and meat consumption and avoidance as markers of gender and identity, are a useful means of analysing Promethean attitudes contemporaneous with Shelley's work, and of fully understanding the Prometheanism of Victor Frankenstein.

Romantic Vegetarianism

The term 'vegetarian' was coined around the same time as the foundation of the Vegetarian Society in Britain, in 1847. The Romantics referred to meat-avoidance as

[46] See 'Review of Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus* (1818)', *British Critic*, 9 (1818), pp. 432–38; John William Croker, 'Review of Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus* (1818)', *Quarterly Review*, 36 (1818), pp. 379–85.
[47] Mellor, 'A Feminist Critique of Science', pp. 108–13 (original emphasis). Mellor suggests that Mary Shelley favoured Erasmus Darwin's inclination to 'observation and celebration' of nature and was sceptical of any notion of science being a universal good.

the 'Pythagorean' diet or system,[48] referencing a specific element of a more general classical tradition with which they would have been familiar. Indeed, Pythagoras was not the only classical source wherein the ethical question of meat-eating and meat avoidance was raised. Plutarch's 'On the Eating of Flesh', a moral essay on the virtues of meat avoidance, urges the Pythagorean diet, asking how meat-eaters could 'endure the slaughter when throats were slit and hides flayed and limbs torn from limb'.[49] Plutarch, even if the essay is deliberately declamatory, did not hesitate to link Pythagoreanism with the welfare and rights of animals as subjects capable of pain and fear. Romantic vegetarianism could therefore look back to a body of work that evidenced a classical precedent for meat avoidance as a philosophical position.

Meat avoidance emerged as a significant intellectual preoccupation from the end of the eighteenth century. Antiquarian Joseph Ritson, physician William Lambe, writer and activist John Frank Newton, Byron, writer and philosopher Lewis Gompertz and the Shelleys all theorised and practiced vegetarianism to varying degrees during their lifetimes.[50] In his *A Vindication of Natural Diet* (1813), an extended note to the poem *Queen Mab,* Percy Bysshe Shelley says of vegetarianism that 'it is only among the enlightened and benevolent that so great a sacrifice of appetite and prejudice can be expected',[51] but that those who undertook the 'regimen' could expect to be healthier, and a vegetarian society more economically and morally sound. As a rejection of prevailing attitudes, it was regarded as a possible means of destabilising the power imbalances that marked out injustice. The culmination of the French

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[48] See Colin Spencer, *Vegetarianism: A History* (Grub Street, 2016), p. 238 and Tristram Stuart, *The Bloodless Revolution: A Cultural History of Vegetarianism from 1600 to Modern Times* (Norton, 2008). Pythagoras was a Greek philosopher of the sixth century BC who abstained from meat for philosophical and ethical reasons. For clarity, the term Romantic vegetarianism will be used throughout.

[49] Plutarch, 'On the Eating of Flesh', in *Moralia*, ed. by Jeffrey Henderson, trans. by Harold Cherniss and William C. Helmbold, 15 vols (Harvard University Press, 1957), XII, pp. 537–79 (p. 541). The essay is likely to be somewhat oratorically exaggerated, but this does not mean these were not views actually held by Plutarch. In fact, he wrote further work on the subject of animals, including 'Beasts are Rational', and 'Whether Land or Sea Animals are Cleverer'. See Plutarch, 'Beasts are Rational', in *Moralia*, ed. by Henderson, trans. by Cherniss and Helmbold, pp. 489–533; Plutarch, 'Whether Land or Sea Animals are Cleverer', in *Moralia*, ed. by Henderson, trans. by Cherniss and Helmbold, pp. 311–486.

[50] Preece, *Sins of the Flesh,* p. 259. Preece asserts that 'Mary was sympathetic to the vegetarian cause and […] apparently, she practiced vegetarianism for much of the span of her married life'. Mary was therefore doubtless aware of the way in which vegetarianism was being deployed as what we might now consider a 'counter-cultural' radical device by fellow Romantics.

[51] See Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Queen Mab*, in *The Major Works*, ed. by Leader and O'Neill, pp. 10–88. This edition includes the *Vindication* as a note. See also Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Vindication of Natural Diet,* p. 18.

Revolution catalysed much Romantic philosophy regarding the subversion of established hierarchies. This was also true of the growing popularity of meat avoidance. Rod Preece makes a compelling claim that, for ethical vegetarian thought as well as for practice, which are not necessarily to be understood as one and the same, 'the jump from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century was dramatic', and suggests that '1789 is the decisive moment in which the balance shifts from thought to action'.[52] There is, then, an explicit connection between the broader radical, revolutionary epoch and meat avoidance as a practice of that radicalism. Connections between revolution and the avoidance of meat emerge in no small part from the work of Rousseau, who asserted the essential benevolence of man and his vegetarian origins. Both his *A Discourse on Inequality* (1755) and *Émile* (1762) are grounded in the notion of a natural vegetarianism; man, he suggested, could best pursue an end to inequality by bringing animals into his vision for revolution and aspiring to a pure, vegetarian prelapsarian state that rejected the meat-heavy political ideologies of religious and monarchic hegemons.[53]

This pursuit of vegetarianism for purposes of civilisation and improvement is most clearly articulated in links drawn between meat-eating and the Fall. Meat avoidance can be framed as an attempt to return to a prelapsarian ideal, a more natural state that came before, where man more nearly approximated perfection and exercised a non-violent dominion on earth. This yearning for a more 'natural' ideal characterises Romantic thinking about vegetarianism. The story of the Fall has distinct connections with the myth of Prometheus. In one aspect of the myth, at least, the introduction of meat-eating and of fire as a means of preparing meat for human consumption, we can observe a fall from a previously utopian state, and a separation of man from God. In her seminal *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory* (1990), Carol J. Adams comments on the centrality of the Prometheus myth and the story of Adam and Eve to radical Romantic thought, claiming that both were interpreted by vegetarians of the time 'as being about the introduction of meat-

[52] Preece, *Sins of the Flesh,* p. 232.
[53] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile; or, On Education,* trans. by Allan Bloom (Penguin, 1991). In this treatise on the education of children, Rousseau posits that children are naturally vegetarian and must be trained to the taste for meat. See also Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *A Discourse on Inequality*, trans. by Maurice Cranston (Penguin, 1984).

eating'.[54] She suggests that 'Romantic vegetarians heartily accepted the notion of the meatless Garden of Eden', and that 'they transformed the myth by locating meat-eating as the cause of the Fall'.[55] Furthermore, she explains that the Romantic vegetarian position was that 'the story of Prometheus's discovery of fire is the story of the inception of meat-eating'.[56] This neatly illustrates the vacillatory nature of the Romantic fixation with the myth. Male Romantic figures admired Prometheus, inasmuch as he provided an archetype for the industry and innovation of man: the 'fire' of knowledge. That an element of the myth can be read as the genesis of man's fall, then, appears contradictory to the veneration of Prometheus as an ideal archetype of masculinity, the instigator of man's industry and scientific endeavour. Yet many embraced these contradictions. As has been established, Prometheus was perceived as a complex figure: a crucial archetype, but essentially flawed.[57] Adams is correct in her assessment that the story of the Garden of Eden and the myth have common threads. Both Percy Shelley, in his *A Vindication of Natural Diet*, and Frank Newton in his *The Return to Nature* (1811) note the relevance of the myth of Prometheus to an understanding of how man came to become a meat eater against his true nature. That the cooking of meat and the theft of fire are mythologically entangled, both argue, means that the eating of meat is a symbol of the rupture between man and his natural, utopian state, where violence is absent and death comes peacefully.[58] Both emphasise the deleterious effects of meat on the health and morality of man. Indeed, these concerns are far more prominent in both works than any appeals to humanitarianism.

Both Percy Shelley and Newton asserted that violence emerged as a corruption from the advent of meat-eating. Core to Romantic vegetarianism was the belief that

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[54] Carol J. Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory* (Bloomsbury, 2015), p. 96.
[55] Ibid., p. 100.
[56] Ibid., p. 101.
[57] In his *A Vindication of Natural Diet*, Percy Shelley bemoans this event which has created a paradox: 'The supereminence of man is like Satan's, a supereminence of pain; and the majority of his species, doomed to penury, disease, and crime, have reason to curse the untoward event that, by enabling him to communicate his sensations, raised him above the level of his fellow animals'. Thus the Promethean act serves both to debase and to elevate man. See Percy Bysshe Shelley, *A Vindication of Natural Diet*, p. 12; John Frank Newton, *The Return to Nature; or, a Defence of the Vegetable Regimen* (T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1811).
[58] See Percy Bysshe Shelley's *A Vindication of Natural Diet* and Newton's *The Return to Nature*. Percy Shelley's treatise is to some extent a response to Newton's. The latter focuses in more detail on the medical and health benefits of vegetarianism and distilled water as proposed by his friend Dr William Lambe, another prominent Romantic vegetarian and physician.

meat-eating was both a brutal and a brutalising act, one that not only exacted violence on the animal but rendered the perpetrator of that violence bestial himself. Meat-eating was thus associated with a lack of purity, bound up with anthropocentric questions of human hygiene and exceptionalist notions of being radically separate from meat-eating beasts, rather than emotional fellow-feeling. For Romantic vegetarians, the advent of meat-eating coincided with the advent of a kind of decline: a fundamental distancing of man and the divine. In this sense, the act of rejecting flesh was the act of rejecting the fallen state of man as complete and unchangeable. In addition, vegetarianism rejected the consensus that meat was a natural and requisite food for humans. Tristram Stuart agrees with this analysis, suggesting that the 'idea of stripping humanity down to its primeval natural origins [...] remained a constant point of reference for writers in the Romantic era'.[59] Like Adams, Stuart also locates the Fall and the commencement of meat-eating at the same point, remarking that 'Adam and Eve's eating of the forbidden apple was really an allegory for the beginning of meat-eating' and that the Prometheus myth is a comparable story, where 'fire and medicine' are the forbidden fruit taken by man from the Tree of Knowledge.[60]

Stuart proposes that, for Percy Shelley, 'meat-eating was the Pandora's box that introduced savagery into the world, and vegetarianism was the key with which it could be locked away again'.[61] Percy's vegetarianism was a mechanism by which he could assert his civilisation over the brute creation, reconciling meat avoidance and masculinity. He further suggests that Percy managed to avoid accusations of seeking to debase humankind by 'keeping humans on an elevated level' and concludes that his vision was anthropocentric rather than biocentric.[62] While an accurate analysis of the rationale of his vegetarianism, Stuart's assessment glosses over the fact that the Promethean Romantic vision was more androcentric than it was anthropocentric. Animals themselves are frequently elided in Romantic thinking about vegetarianism,

[59] Stuart, *Bloodless Revolution*, p. 375.
[60] Ibid., p. 376.
[61] Ibid., p. 386.
[62] Ibid., p. 397. In his *Vindication of Natural Diet*, Percy Shelley, like Newton before him, cites the herbivorous orangutan as evidence that man is not by nature a carnivore: 'The orang-outang perfectly resembles man both in the order and number of his teeth' (p. 13). This prescient observation is a likening of man to an animal, even if Percy Shelley, is so doing, is not suggesting a moral equivalence. The suggestion that man is a type of primate would have been no less controversial in 1813 than it was when Charles Darwin proposed the analogy later in the century.

the question of eating flesh often centring instead on human fallibility, meaning, and the political symbolisms of meat and the eating of it rather than animal suffering and subjectivity as a unique concern.[63]

The prelapsarian idealism of Rousseauian vegetarianism that characterised the period was thus tempered by the sense that it was a site of protest at least as much as it was a site of animal ethics. It is this thinking with the linked notions of Promethean masculinity and the advancement of man that also goes some way to characterising the vegetarian theme in *Frankenstein*. The avoidance of flesh re-stated the need for man to improve himself to become, or at least remain, the dominant form of life. The radical nature of Romantic vegetarianism rested in its rejection of traditional mores around meat, and an upsetting of a status quo which had created from animals a language that marked out 'proper' masculinity, in terms of physical strength, wealth, civilisation and class.[64] The consumption of meat signified wealth, and so the rejection of it required these wealthy male radicals to reconfigure this aspect of masculinity. While movements to limit or ban activities like cockfighting and bearbaiting turned the humanitarian gaze to largely working-class pursuits, the question of the ethics of meat-eating interrogated the concerns of the upper classes.[65] It had been broadly accepted that strong, wealthy men ate meat and engaged in blood sports, and that the lack of meat consumption was typically a result of poverty rather than a preference. Male Romantic vegetarians, then, were engaged as much in an exercise of redefining the

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[63] It is useful to consider Romantic vegetarianism in terms of what Timothy Morton has called 'politicized abstinence' from the status of consumer: a status which had been forming throughout the eighteenth century and of which the consumption of meat was a part. See Timothy Morton, 'Consumption as Performance: The Emergence of the Consumer in the Romantic Period', in *Cultures of Taste/Theories of Appetite: Eating Romanticism,* ed. by Timothy Morton (Palgrave, 2004), pp. 1–17 (p. 5). Percy Shelley was certainly among those Romantics who took the 'politicised abstinence' position as his own rationale for vegetarianism, at least in part; as discussed, both his *Queen Mab* and *A Vindication of Natural Diet* advocate for vegetarianism as political protest.

[64] The association of British nationalism, masculinity and roast beef is perhaps best encapsulated in Henry Fielding's 'The Roast Beef of Old England' (1731). The song was written for his play *The Grub Street Opera,* and is still used by the Royal Navy at officers' mess dinners. The song is nostalgic for a time 'when mighty roast beef was the Englishman's food', when 'our fathers of old were robust, stout, and strong', and bemoans the French influence on English diet which threatens to make men 'a sneaking poor race, half begotten and tame'. See Henry Fielding, 'The Roast Beef of Old England'. All Poetry, n.d. <https://allpoetry.com/The-Roast-Beef-Of-Old-England> [accessed 30 June 2024]. The song inspired *The Gate of Calais*, a 1748 painting by William Hogarth depicting roast beef being carried to an English tavern past starving Frenchmen. Note also the 'Sublime Society of Beefsteaks' discussed previously, which was founded on the basis of beef, masculinity and British nationalism. See Rachel Naismith, 'A Rare Look Inside Britain's "Sublime Society of Beefsteaks"', *Atlas Obscura*, 1 March 2024 <https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/sublime-society-of-beefsteaks> [accessed 28 June 2024].

[65] Adams certainly takes this view. Adams, *Sexual Politics of Meat*, p. 99.

correct way to be a man as they were in civilising both individual and society. Stuart points out that there was 'a notion that meat-eating made men courageous, assertive and even aggressive, a sentiment that was widely accepted at the time, and still remains a common preconception today'.[66] This stereotype functioned alongside both a concern for national security and identity, particularly in relation to conflict with France, and the emergence of consumerism out of the industrial revolution. For the wealthy man, the ability to consume meat helped to mark him out as superior; meat had become as much a matter of symbolism, and of myth-making, as it was about nourishment. The challenge with which the Promethean Romantic man was thus faced was how to reconcile meat avoidance with their own masculine identity.

Much of the Romantic, and indeed later nineteenth-century, thinking within the vegetarian movement, quickly identified that pro-vegetarian rhetoric that was focused on hygienic anthropocentric questions of self-improvement and public good were far more compelling to potential converts than animal welfare issues that would have seemed more nebulous. [67] This is not to suggest that the connection between meat avoidance and bodily health was an orthodox or uncomplicated one at this time. Rather, it was unorthodox in a less emasculating way than the association of vegetarianism with emotional fellow-feeling towards animals would have been, at least to a Promethean perspective. Thus, the matrix of contradictions between Romantic vegetarianism and Romantic Prometheanism becomes ever more visible; while Romantic ideologies seemed to yearn for a past golden age, Prometheanism steadfastly required that the distance between man and beast be maintained. In the dietary context, this could be achieved in one of two ways: either avoiding meat in order to avoid its corrupting the body or consuming it to emphasise that animals are edible and man is not.

Joseph Ritson made himself unpopular by approaching vegetarianism from the point of view of animal rights. The fact that Ritson's ethical view of vegetarianism compromised his intellectual reputation is revealing of this anthropocentrism, as well as of fixed ideas about manliness and the consumption of meat. Among the more recognisable satires of Ritson is an 1803 caricature by James Sayers. Sayers depicts

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[66] Stuart, *Bloodless Revolution*, p. 382.
[67] Ibid., p. 380: 'It was far more effective, they realised, to defend vegetarianism *from an anthropocentric viewpoint*' (my emphasis).

Ritson at work on a treatise, which he is writing in gall, surrounded by animals and vegetables. Behind him a cow puts her head through the window to graze on some of the leafy vegetables, while a cat is restrained from attacking nearby rats. A copy of *The Atheist's Pocket Companion* is in his pocket, and he wears sandals, which were regarded as a marker of the vegetarian eccentric. The reaction to Ritson's ethical position reveals that men could more easily eschew flesh for reasons of personal improvement, but that the emotional engagement required to ground vegetarianism in ethical concerns for the subjectivity of animals was still far too aligned with the emotional and hence the feminine, rather than the rational masculine. This focus on hygiene and self-improvement reflected Enlightenment notions of reason and emotion as binary opposites, permitting radical thinking about a flesh diet without too much disruption to foregoing privileging of reason over emotion which characterised masculinist scientific models. As the prefatory note to the 1884 edition of Percy Shelley's *Vindication of Natural Diet* makes clear, the treatise 'is not an appeal to humanitarian sentiment, but an argument based on […] the intimate connection of health and morality with food'.[68] Meat avoidance was, in Romantic terms, frequently framed as a civilising act that distanced man from the status of the brutes, rather than an overt act of compassion or a concerted effort to deconstruct the human/animal boundary. The reaction to Ritson's ethical position tells us a great deal about the extent to which this was true. His sympathy for animals marked him out as departing from acceptable notions of male engagement with the issue of diet.[69] As the reaction to Ritson's ethical vegetarianism might imply, Percy Shelley and those like him managed to navigate around this problem by framing their vegetarianism androcentrically, as a question of political protest and the pursuit of the ideal human life, rather than a movement for animal rights of the type that would be recognisable in the twenty-first century.

In summary, the rejection of flesh as food was inflected through anthropocentric, and arguably far more pragmatic, concerns and motivations. What we might think of as Romantic vegetarianism cannot be fully explained by a burgeoning

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[68] Percy Bysshe Shelley, *A Vindication of Natural Diet*, p. 3.
[69] See Rebecca Jones, 'Soyboys and Sensitivity: Mocking Meat-Avoidance from *Punch* to Twitter', *EPOCH*, December 2020, <https://www.epoch-magazine.com/jonesmockingmeatavoidance> [accessed 16 April 2024].

altruistic concern with the non-human animal. Certainly, the act of eschewing flesh had to be made to negotiate with masculinity, just as it would have to negotiate with it throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and beyond. Thus, while meat avoidance was in part a question of a developing theorisation of animal sentience and increased consideration of animals as moral and ethical subjects, this was, to a considerable extent, de-emphasised. Indeed, Plutarch's 'On the Eating of Flesh' itself, in making its case against meat-eating, shifts from a question of animal subjectivity to one of human definition and even improvement. Plutarch emphasised that eating flesh was 'contrary to nature', and an affront to the generosity of Demeter and Dionysus.[70] These classical references to meat avoidance as an expression of man's true nature appealed to Romantic thought which, as has been discussed, inclined to a nostalgia for a bygone era when man was supposed to have occupied that prelapsarian state so aspired to by Rousseau. This nostalgic imagining was evidently far easier to present rhetorically in a radical Romantic context than the argument for animal welfare and rights.

Frankenstein

Shelley had a far more ambivalent relationship with the Prometheus myth than her male Romantic peers, and *Frankenstein* subtly satirises several aspects of it. In the novel, features of the masculine hero tale, the tale of triumph idealised in both Enlightenment and Romantic thinking, are interrogated through the question of where the female, and the natural, are located or elided. It has been established that Shelley was familiar with the scientific landscape of her day. From the electrochemical experiments of Humphry Davy and the galvanism of Luigi Galvani and Giovanni Aldini to the vitalist/materialist debate centred on John Abernethy and William Lawrence, Shelley will have been aware of the burgeoning interest in scientific exploration of the Enlightenment and her own age.[71] *Frankenstein* was a response to

[70] Plutarch, 'On the Eating of Flesh', p. 545. Demeter and Dionysus are gods of grain and wine respectively. Plutarch also remarks on the necessity of cooking and spicing meat in order to make it palatable to humans, presenting this, alongside remarks about the structure of the human body, as evidence that meat-eating is not the natural state of man.

[71] Sharon Ruston's *The Science of Life and Death in 'Frankenstein'* offers a thorough account of the science of the age and how it influenced Shelley's novel. See Sharon Ruston, *The Science of Life and Death in 'Frankenstein'* (Bodleian Library Publishing, 2021)

this scientific moment, which Shelley viewed as having a Promethean character; she was writing in a context in which the male scientist was increasingly revealing the secrets of nature through experimentation and using his discoveries to shape the narrative about what it meant to be human. In Victor Frankenstein, the reader is presented with an Enlightenment Prometheus engaged in trying to formulate such a narrative in which he is the hero, but for whom the attempt is disastrous. He is an illustration of what might happen where this kind of Promethean project is stymied by its own insistence on individualism and radical separation from nature and the excluded other, so much so that, paradoxically, it begins to undermine the scientist's own status as human entirely. The textual analysis that follows considers the novel and its characters through the lens of Promethean masculinity as defined in the introduction to this thesis, illuminating the themes within the novel, some of which have been more widely recognised by previous critical studies than others. It will also demonstrate the ways in which the intellectual and historical context described previously inflects understanding of the text, establishing the relevance of the novel to the context of Romantic masculinity and vegetarianism in which it was written, and to broader philosophy and emerging ideas about the moral and ethical location of the human and the non-human animal respectively. The analysis is underpinned by the masculinity and ecofeminist animal studies theoretical framework described in the introduction, and draws out the implications of the presence of Promethean masculinity in *Frankenstein* in ways that have not been fully explored previously.

Frankenstein has been subject to a vast body of critique from a range of theoretical perspectives, including by feminist-vegetarian theorist Carol J. Adams. As previously noted, it was Adams who coined the phrase 'the sexual politics of meat' in her seminal work of the same name, published in 1990.[72] Adams presented a feminist-vegetarian theoretical framework for analysing and understanding the relationship between masculinity and meat on the one hand, and the figuring of both women and animals as commodities on the other. Her work provided a lexicon for discussing the links between masculine identity and meat-eating, and the oppression of animals as meat and women as sexualised bodies. This included such terms as the 'absent referent', which refers to the way in which the subjectivity of animals and of women

[72] See Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat.*

is elided, in the consumption of animal flesh and the sexualisation and objectification of female bodies. Adams uses Victor's Creature, who is made up of both human and animal parts and rejects the 'masculine symbol' of meat,[73] as a literary case-study of feminist-vegetarian ideas of corporeality, embodiment, dismemberment and species: 'the Creature's futile hopes for admittance to the human circle reflect the position of that time's vegetarians; they confront a world whose circles, so tightly drawn, refuse them admittance, dividing *us* from *them*'.[74] In a chapter on *Frankenstein* and the Romantics, her discussion offers a reading of the novel as it relates to a twentieth-century political and cultural understanding of the sexual politics of meat. Adams' analysis of *Frankenstein* is brief, and it forms one part of a larger critical work on feminist theory in the late twentieth century. It is drawn upon in this chapter as a means of introducing a more detailed consideration of the links between Romanticism, vegetarianism, Promethean power and *Frankenstein* as a text.

Stephanie Rowe has taken up the theme of the Romantic vegetarian in '"Listen to Me": *Frankenstein* as an Appeal to Mercy and Justice, on Behalf of the Persecuted Animals'.[75] Rowe emphasises Shelley's knowledge of, and enthusiasm for, vegetarianism, and locates the themes of the novel very firmly within the vegetarian discourses of her day.[76] Enumerating the ways in which an insistence upon radical differences between humans and all other animals forecloses Victor's sympathy for the Creature, Rowe also highlights that the primacy of vision over language entrenches the exclusion of the Creature from the human sphere; the Creature is hideous to behold, and so, despite his ability to reason and to communicate rationally, he cannot fully be heard. Drawing upon a reading of the novel as a narrative of what is human and what is not, Rowe over-simplifies with claims that the human/animal boundary that is obscured by the part human, part animal construction of the Creature emerges from an

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[73] Ibid., p. 105.
[74] Ibid., p. 107 (original emphasis). 'Creature' is the term Adams generally uses, and the one which will be used in this discussion (the Creature is often referred to interchangeably elsewhere as the Monster). For clarity, I have chosen to refer to the Creature using the male pronoun. However, this is not to overlook that the gender of the Creature has been critiqued in the past, for example in Gilbert and Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic,* pp. 213–48.
[75] Stephanie Rowe, '"Listen to Me": *Frankenstein* as an Appeal to Mercy and Justice, on Behalf of the Persecuted Animals', in *Humans and Other Animals in Eighteenth-Century British Culture: Representation, Hybridity, Ethics*, ed. by Frank Palmeri (Ashgate, 2006), pp. 137–53.
[76] Ibid., p. 139–41. Rowe focuses in particular on the influence of John Oswald's *The Cry of Nature; or, An Appeal to Mercy and Justice, on Behalf of the Persecuted Animals* (1791).

'anthrocentric moral community that […] embraces the whole of the human species but excludes other animals'.[77] As has already demonstrated, the human sphere is also subject to exclusions, and animalisations, on the basis of features such as gender and race. The current discussion builds upon Rowe's observations by illustrating the importance of these intra-human dynamics to an understanding of the exclusions conjured in the novel.

Jackson Petsche's 'An Already Alienated Animality: *Frankenstein* as a Gothic Narrative of Carnivorism' offers a reading of the Creature's vegetarianism, describing him as 'a by-product of meat-eating', constructed as he is from parts of animals that had been processed in slaughterhouses for the purpose of human consumption, and posits that 'both the monster's corporeality and his vegetarian diet threaten the carnivorist and speciesist social order which underscores human-animal relations'.[78] The Creature, argues Petsche, is subject to a double animalisation, because he is made up of animal parts which are themselves already marked by the process of industrial slaughter. He represents not just animality, but decay: 'his body symbolises the horrors of the slaughterhouse that are meant to be hidden'.[79] These animal parts, rather than being consumed, have been 'resurrected' in a form that 'endangers the speciesist and carnivorist social order' through both their resurrection and the Creature's rejection of meat.[80] In short, 'what was intended for the human table comes to life and defies the social order'.[81] Petsche's reading of this troubling of the human-animal boundary highlights the fact that it troubles the logics of carnivorism too. In essence, the Creature challenges both Victor's sense of the distinction between human and animal, which he himself muddied when he combined both in his Creature, and the ascendancy of meat-eating as a human privilege. Petsche describes Victor as an Enlightenment figure, both in the sense of his determination to master nature through science and his ideas about compassion: he is 'emblematic of the problems that arise out of humanism's project to master nature and simultaneously treat the nonhuman beneficently as a mark of

[77] Ibid., p. 138.
[78] Jackson Petsche, 'An Already Alienated Animality: *Frankenstein* as a Gothic Narrative of Carnivorism', *Gothic Studies*, 16.1 (2014), pp. 98–110 (pp. 98–99), doi:10.7227/GS.16.1.8.
[79] Ibid., p. 107.
[80] Ibid., p. 99.
[81] Ibid., p. 107.

humanity'.[82] Any sense of compassion that Victor feels, argues Petsche, is predicated on an anthropocentric notion that his humanity is contingent on such compassion; he convinces himself, however, that the acts of cruelty he perpetuates are the necessary price of scientific discovery. Thus, Victor's humanity-through-sympathy is undermined by a partly animal Creature who proves more humane than himself. Petsche, however, does not explicitly link meat-eating or meat avoidance with gender which, as has been demonstrated, inflects both in very important ways.

Joshua Bulleid and Emelia Quinn have both critiqued the novel from a theoretical base of vegetarianism and veganism respectively. In *Reading Veganism: The Monstrous Vegan, 1818 to Present*, Emelia Quinn characterises Shelley's novel as 'the origins of the monstrous vegan as a literary trope'.[83] Quinn's wide-ranging analysis of the vegan monster in work by Shelley, H. G. Wells and Margaret Atwood also draws upon the Creature's assemblage from both human and non-human parts, identifying this, along with his creation by a male creator and not through human reproduction, as key to a complex and disruptive monstrous veganism which 'associates the monster with a pre-Promethean Eden'.[84] The association of the Prometheus myth with meat-eating is mentioned in *Reading Veganism*,[85] as is the primacy of 'masculine gendered science',[86] and 'the objectifying power of the male gaze, responsible for policing the boundaries of that which counts as human'.[87] However, the chief focus is on the multiplicity of meanings afforded by the embodiment of the Creature himself, rather than the explicit linkages of Victor's Prometheanism with his masculinity that underpin the textual analysis to follow. Joshua Bulleid's *Vegetarianism and Science Fiction: A History of Utopian Animal Ethics* is yet another critique that locates the novel in Shelley's familiarity with the rich seam of vegetarian treatises and other writings of her time.[88] For Bulleid, as for Quinn, *Frankenstein* represents 'a dichotomy between vegetarian innocence and

[82] Ibid., p. 100.
[83] Emelia Quinn, *Reading Veganism: The Monstrous Vegan, 1818 to Present* (Oxford University Press, 2021), p. 40.
[84] Ibid., p. 40.
[85] Ibid., p. 41.
[86] Ibid., p. 37.
[87] Ibid., p. 44.
[88] Joshua Bulleid, *Vegetarianism and Science Fiction: A History of Utopian Animal Ethics* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2023).

increasingly carnist violence' that marks the foundation of a science fiction trope that includes the work of H. G. Wells and Margaret Atwood.[89] Bulleid's focus on vegetarianism, like others, stops short of theorising the Prometheus myth, vegetarianism and gender as related themes within the novel. The current thesis develops this relationship.

In *What Animals Mean in the Fiction of Modernity*, Philip Armstrong's discussion correctly identifies Victor Frankenstein's fatal flaw in the isolation of himself from others in pursuit of his scientific experiments and his abandonment of his creation: 'the refusal of parental responsibility towards his creature' and 'the separation of the hero of modernity from affective sympathy as a result of his quest for scientific advancement'.[90] Victor's inability to access such affective connections beyond the visual is also critiqued by Armstrong. He argues, compellingly, that Shelley uses Victor to criticise both 'Enlightenment science, in particular its privileging of visual perception over any other sense and its artificial separation of observation from affect', and the self-absorption of the Romantic imagination.[91] Armstrong offers a detailed interrogation of the physical nature of the Creature and what both his multi-species body and his ability to sympathise when the humans around him cannot mean for the stability of human as a category.[92] However, discussions of vegetarianism, and how this intersects with figurations of femininity and animality, are less theorised in Armstrong's critique. The current thesis adds to Armstrong's discussion by examining more closely the roles of vegetarianism as it relates to Promethean masculinity in the novel.

The textual analysis presented here, then, is a development and response to a corpus of thorough and varied scholarly critiques including the above which, while offering important interventions into the topic, lack attention to one or more of the various aspects of Promethean masculinity. The introduction to this thesis described the characteristics of this technoscientific, hegemonic masculinity. While some of these are comparatively stable, others shift across time and context. It also suggested ways in which an understanding of this type of masculinity can be developed and

[89] Ibid., p. 49.
[90] Philip Armstrong, *What Animals Mean in the Fiction of Modernity* (Routledge, 2008), pp. 63–64.
[91] Ibid., p. 66.
[92] Ibid., pp. 67–75.

informed by analysing it from a point of view of ecofeminist animal studies generally, and the sexual politics of meat more specifically. It is helpful to draw more closely on that theoretical analysis now, and to apply it to offer a more comprehensive reading of *Frankenstein* as a vegetarian text than that offered by Adams and others. By expanding upon this discussion, it is possible to elaborate further on the novel as a text which foregrounds two separate but intrinsically linked themes — Promethean masculinity, and the vegetarianism of the Creature — and how these concepts might have been understood in a Romantic context. It is also possible to observe the ways in which Shelley herself created and subverted myths relating to man's dominion and human/non-human identity through a process of storytelling. While Adams' analysis focuses almost entirely on the Creature, and the other important critiques discussed are subject to their own necessary circumscriptions, the following expanded analysis of the novel considers a range of other questions of narrative, characterisation and context relating to Promethean masculinity. This provides a fuller explanation of the role of *Frankenstein* as a literary text which is essential, even foundational, to an analysis of Promethean masculinity and the sexual politics of meat in the modern and contemporary literary fiction examined in subsequent chapters.

It is useful to begin with an analysis of the Creature himself. Constructed of disparate human and animal parts, he defies species categorisation, immediately presenting a challenge to notions of distinct human separation from other animals, and to the Promethean form of human exceptionalism. The nature of the Creature's construction figures man himself as a product, the stuff of anatomy study, graveyards and 'charnel houses', which can be dismembered and employed in the production of something else.[93] Victor describes how 'the dissecting room and the slaughterhouse furnished many of my materials'. [94] Being made both from these parts of dead humans and also from animal parts from slaughterhouses, the Creature is neither human nor animal. When he speaks, his capacity for both reason and emotion, traits highly prized by Enlightenment and Romantic notions of man respectively, and his disarming oratorical skill muddy the waters still further. When he tells Victor about his suffering after his abandonment, and pleads for a mate, Victor confesses that 'his tale, and the

[93] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, pp. 33–37.
[94] Ibid., p. 37.

feelings he now expressed, proved him to be a creature of fine sensations'.[95] despite his provenance, then, the Creature demonstrates the ability to learn, persuade, and garner sympathy, even if the latter is short-lived. In relating his own experiences to his creator, allusions to the Creature's sense of his uniqueness, and the isolation that comes of his defying the received god/man/beast categorisation, are also expanded. The Creature describes feeling 'that I was not made for the enjoyment of pleasure' and 'so desolate in this peopled earth'.[96] This literal construction of a new species — or, at least, the first of a new species — from both animal and human flesh, which Victor anticipates 'would bless me as its creator and source', is central to Shelley's evocation of Promethean masculinity.[97] She figures this construction as scientific arrogance: a seizure of the creative force of nature. The result of this arrogance shatters everything about man and beast that had been regarded as ontologically irrefutable in the context of Enlightenment science.

As has been established, the heritage of the Creature's disparate parts is unknown, and probably unknowable, even to Victor Frankenstein. Jerrold E. Hogle describes the Creature as 'a simulacrum of the body composed of decomposed tissues, *a figure of many other faded figures*, and an interweaving, fabrication, or *textus* of the conflicting rhetorics engulfing his maker'.[98] This is a problem of belonging or not belonging that is impossible to solve. The parts of his body are parts of others, whether they are animal or human, because they have been co-opted into a state of anonymity, even if they had identity in life. Thus, a plethora of subjugated identities can be read onto the Creature: a collocation of others who are the opposite of the individualised, enfranchised Promethean masculine. Adams, for example, reads the Creature's hybridity as literally embodying vegetarianism, in the sense that he is composed of 'parts from herbivorous bodies' from the slaughterhouse and parts of violently anonymised human bodies which are, in the Romantic vegetarian philosophy, anatomically vegetarian by nature.[99] The inclusion of animal parts in the Creature's

[95] Ibid., p. 120.
[96] Ibid., p. 116–17.
[97] Ibid., p. 36.
[98] Jerrold E. Hogle, 'Otherness in *Frankenstein*: The Confinement/Autonomy of Fabrication', in *New Casebooks: 'Frankenstein',* ed. by Fred Botting (Macmillan, 1995), pp. 206–34 (p. 218) (my emphasis).
[99] Adams, *Sexual Politics of Meat*, p. 104. See also Anita Guerrini, 'Animal Experiments and Antivivisection Debates in the 1820s', in *Frankenstein's Science*, ed. by Knellwolf and Goodall, pp. 71–85 (p. 71). Guerrini describes the Creature as inhabiting 'that liminal area between human and

physical make-up of course compounds the sense of his monstrosity; a compilation of mismatched human body parts would signal horror enough, but the mixture of an ultimately unknowable number of species results in further inability 'to conform to neoclassical aesthetic ideals of unified design, harmonious composition of parts in simple regularity and proportion'.[100] Thus, the Creature embodies all that is abjected from the Promethean ideal; he is both lacking in the purity conferred by the one, congruous, self-contained male form, and rejects what Adams calls the 'Promethean gift' of meat because his own status as both meat and vegetarian is manifest in his physical existence.

The irony of the Creature's manufacture out of disparate, natural, organic parts in an unnatural and clandestine experiment is that it produces in the novel the character who most closely approximates the qualities most prized by the Romantic vegetarians. This is something that Adams also observes, reflecting on Shelley's creation of 'a Creature seeking to re-establish the Golden Age of a vegetarian diet', who finds himself in empathetic relation to the non-human and 'who, like the animals eaten for meat, finds itself excluded from the moral circle of humanity'.[101] His eventual intellectual development disrupts ideas about his species identity; despite being part animal, he finally has impressive command of that faculty which is persistently associated with humanity and indeed human exceptionalism: language. However, it transpires that this command of language, and even eloquence, is not enough to qualify him for the Promethean human sphere into which he seeks entry,[102] and his unnatural creation out of natural parts renders him both animal and human, and neither at the

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animal'.

[100] Fred Botting, 'Introduction', in *New Casebooks: 'Frankenstein',* ed. by Botting, pp. 1–20 (p. 5).

[101] Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, p. 104.

[102] Peter Brooks, 'What is a Monster? (According to *Frankenstein*)', in *New Casebooks: 'Frankenstein',* ed. by Botting (Macmillan, 1995), pp. 81–106 (pp. 86–93). Brooks agrees that the '"godlike science" of language is thus explicitly a cultural compensation for a deficient nature'. However, the Creature 'overvalues' language and remains in a 'specular position', his location always determined by his physicality and appearance. See also Peter Brooks, '"Godlike Science/Unhallowed Arts": Language, Nature and Monstrosity', in *The Endurance of 'Frankenstein',* ed. by Levine and Knoepflmacher, pp. 205–20 (p. 209), in which Brooks highlights the association of language with culture rather than nature, and the Creature's belonging to the sphere of nature as a result of his 'monsterism'. Brooks also emphasises the way in which nature can yield the monstrous as problematic for 'optimistic Romanticism' (p. 217). Again, one can observe Shelley troubling the masculine attitudes of her Romantic peers, in the creation of an other who fails to fit the paradigm for idealistic and exclusive Prometheanism.

same time.[103] The Creature is inevitably animalised by his very exclusion from the moral and ethical circle of humanity. Shelley indicates an inner sanctum of a privileged type of human here; not only is the Creature denied access to the circle of the human, he is still further removed from the Promethean masculine circle, from which all but the Promethean, like Victor, are also excluded. In this respect, the Creature has much in common with the women, as well as the poor and the animals of the novel. Again, he becomes an avatar for suppressed and subversive identities.

The fact that the Creature's mere existence defies species boundaries and a sense of belonging are also a mirror to Victor's own rejection of the community of family and friends during his periods of scientific experimentation. In creating his Creature, he is enacting Promethean masculine dominion. Yet, at the same time, this action removes him from his patriarchal role within the human community. This isolation proves to be fatal to Victor, as there is no community of human affection to temper his catastrophic individualism. The Creature's isolation, on the other hand, is not self-imposed. Rather, it is forced upon him by his creator's rejection, and by the inability of the other humans he meets to identify and categorise him. His monstrosity lies in his uncanny resemblance to man and his proximity to the human form, coupled with his obvious status as being outside of that definition, with his possession of inhuman characteristics such as his speed and large stature. He truly is neither man nor beast, and in this sense, defies the categorisation required for being either. He is at once aware that he resembles his creator enough to yearn for the community of other humans, but not sufficiently like him for that common feeling to be forthcoming from humans themselves. Lisa Vargo suggests that 'consideration of how the creature is constructed from human ruins writes ruin into his destiny'.[104] Because of the macabre anonymity of the parts from which he is constructed, he is rendered radically other, unidentifiable of substance and thus also of community. His eventual rejection by Felix De Lacey and his family makes this painfully explicit. After having been discovered

[103] Brooks, 'What is a Monster?', p. 99. Brooks describes the Creature as 'postnatural and precultural'.
[104] Lisa Vargo, 'Contextualizing Sources', p. 33. Vargo goes on to comment on the relevance of the Creature's early reading, and how this ultimately exacerbates his otherness rather than helping him find community with man; the texts offer 'a kind of short course in the history of Western civilization', but 'his own matter of species leads him to misread, as the works he reads are not applicable to his own situation' (p. 34). In other words, where man might look to such texts for archetypes, the Creature's ability to do the same is foreclosed by his species ambiguity.

by the De Laceys, the Creature's despair and fury at this latest of exclusions that began with his own creator's rejection is, ironically, what begins to imbue him with traits that are perceived as animalistic or even demonic; he may not be a brute by nature, but he is certainly brutalised by humanity. When he first finds shelter in a shepherd's hut he describes it as 'as exquisite and divine a retreat as Pandæmonium appeared to the dæmons of hell after their suffering in the lake of fire',[105] and after he is discovered and shunned by the De Laceys, he recalls how 'I, like the arch fiend, bore a hell within me'.[106] These twin references to Milton's *Paradise Lost* are frequently invoked to illustrate the way in which the roles of God, Satan and Adam, and even god, man and beast, shift during the narrative. Vargo agrees, describing the way Milton appears 'as both [Victor and the Creature] move from innocence to a fall and play varying roles from Creator to Adam to Satan'.[107] The way the Creature describes his own isolation to his creator belies any idea of him as an unthinking, irrational beast, precisely because it repeatedly shows him to be conscious of the fact of his difference and his exile from community. His sense that he is 'meant' to belong amongst men is obvious: 'I am thy creature, I ought to be thy Adam; but I am rather the fallen angel'.[108] This allusion is striking as it casts Victor in a godlike role as creator while simultaneously emphasising his failure in this role; Brooks refers to him, aptly, as the '*deus absconditus*', or 'absconded god'.[109]

The Creature's exclusion results in his beginning to define himself outside of the human sphere, accepting that he will never be able to penetrate it. Just as Victor has embarked on a journey of Promethean masculinity through scientific over-reaching, trying to occupy a blurred space between man and god, so his Creature, far from being an example of the improvement and creation of a superior form of man which was Victor's intention, occupies a space between man and animal that, when he goes out into the world, leaves him excluded from both spheres. Upon being rejected by Victor and fleeing his apartments, the Creature finds himself 'a poor, helpless, miserable wretch'.[110] His first actions are to find food, water, and warmth. His first

[105] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, p. 83.
[106] Ibid., p. 111.
[107] Vargo, 'Contextualizing Sources', p. 36.
[108] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, p. 77.
[109] Brooks, 'What is a Monster?', p. 89.
[110] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, p. 80.

meal is ‘some berries which I found hanging on the trees, or lying on the ground […] I slaked my thirst at the brook’.[111] This first repast foretells of his eventual vegetarianism when, as Adams says, he rejects the ‘Promethean gift’ of meat-eating.[112] His first encounters with fire reinforce this theme. At first ‘overcome with delight at the warmth’, the Creature recounts how he ‘thrust my hand into the live embers, but quickly drew it out again with a cry of pain’.[113] This early experience of the dangers of the Promethean element is evocative of the overarching caution of the novel itself, as well as representing another foretelling of the Creature’s later denouncement of peculiarly human privileges. He finds some ‘offals’ and uses the fire to cook them: an overtly Promethean act that might be viewed as signalling his coming into a greater state of humanity.[114] As he experiences one unkindness after another from the humans he encounters, however — the villagers fleeing in fear at his appearance, being cast out by the De Laceys, William’s fear and disgust — it is these ‘Promethean gifts’ that he begins to shun. He at last declares that ‘my food is not that of man; I do not destroy the lamb and kid to glut my appetite’.[115] Here the Creature is staking a claim to an existence autonomous from the humanity, and the Promethean masculinity, that have shown him such cruelty and neglect. Adams argues that this is an act of rebellion against the inhumane human circle that will not permit his entry, the way in which he ‘announces [its] difference and separation from its creator by emphasizing [its] more inclusive moral code’.[116] This separation is, however, less a question of the human circle in general terms, and more specifically about a Promethean masculine circle and its very particular exclusion of anything and everything other. The Creature’s vow that he will take his mate and ‘neither you nor any other human being shall ever see us again […] we shall make our bed of dried leaves; the sun will shine on us as on man, and will ripen our food’, is a declaration of rebellion against the paternal and against the patriarchal.[117] It is a moving out from under the control of the creator, which is in itself distinctly Promethean, and even resonant of Romantic preoccupations with

[111] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, p. 80.
[112] Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, p. 101.
[113] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, p. 81.
[114] Ibid., p. 82.
[115] Ibid., p. 120.
[116] Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, p. 97. Adams chooses to use ‘its’ rather than ‘his’.
[117] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, p. 120.

revolution and the rejection of religion and monarchy. Nevertheless, Adams' view of this as rendering the 'default' human act of meat-eating visible and conjuring an almost paradisal vegetarian alternative, where the Creature would live in peace with the solace of the companion he later seeks to persuade Victor to create, is incisive. Hogle suggests that the Creature's increasing autonomy represents a castration of sorts for Victor: the loss of control over 'the product of his phallic push for a metaphoric child'.[118] The paradox here is intriguing. Victor denounces his Creature, but in his autonomy the Creature undermines Victor's Promethean masculinity. This suggests that Promethean power lies in the privilege of being able to exclude and denounce, and that the loss of that power over the excluded subject is realised when the excluded subject self-autonomises. Invoking the frame narrative of the novel as a series of concentric circles, Adams encourages consideration of who or what is able to break through the lines between each frame or 'circle', and how permeable the boundaries between them are, or could be. She concludes that the Creature includes animals in his own moral circle as a means of 'breaking through the concentric circles of *us* and *them*'.[119]

As well as reflecting the kind of exclusion from the Promethean circle experienced by women, who were confined to the private space, and animals, conceived of as life on the wrong side of the human/animal boundary, it is also possible to observe that the Creature is a racialised figure, occupying a supposedly monstrous position of biological and ethnic dubiety that fails to fit with the civilised Promethean model of man. The unknowable nature of his physical provenance means that he also lacks any patriarchal appeal to descent or lineage that might confer identity or belonging. He is nameless, and while he may be the fruit of Victor's efforts in the most literal of terms, his creator's rejection of him as anything more than a failed experiment leaves him cast out of any family he might perhaps have had a claim to. The colonialist and imperialist fixations of Promethean masculinity are thus inherent in the way in which it privileges the white European male human. The Creature is of dubious species origin, but also challenges racial categorisation in a way that ontologically undermines a Promethean masculinity that requires to be able to name the other in order to render itself transcendent and to restate its own privilege as the architect of classification.[120]

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[118] Hogle, 'Otherness in *Frankenstein*', p. 220.
[119] Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, pp. 97–98 (original emphasis).
[120] Patrick Brantlinger, 'Race and *Frankenstein*', in *The Cambridge Companion to 'Frankenstein'*, ed.

In creating a being capable of speech, reason and autonomy out of nothing but 'meat', Victor has, in several ways, undermined rather than reinforced the Promethean ascendancy he sought to enact.[121] It is this undermining of the Promethean in his pursuit of its ambitions that characterises him. When the Creature is brought to life, he is transformed from the symbol of Victor's ambition to an affront to his Promethean self-image.

Through the character of Victor, Shelley conjures an archetypical wealthy, white, European Promethean. It is Victor's tutor, M. Waldman, who speaks the words that will come to define the essence of the former's experimental act, describing the way philosophers 'penetrate into the recesses of nature, and shew how she works in her hiding places'.[122] Thus, the Enlightenment vision of a feminised nature requiring unveiling and taming by masculinist science is foregrounded from early in the novel. Victor's own actions prove to be profoundly penetrative, involving the uncovering and seizure of aspects of nature personified. He is the focus of Shelley's critique of the often-monomaniacal strides towards masculine scientific endeavour that predominated in Enlightenment and even Romantic thinking. In his determination to seek out individual glory, to seize the principle of life for himself as Prometheus did, Victor's intention is to create a new species of which he would be, in true Promethean style, the founding father. He is the modern Prometheus of the subtitle, but what he creates is a parody: a 'filthy dæmon'.[123] In the obsessive creation process, and the eventual realisation that his Promethean vision will not be realised in the shape of his creation, Victor descends into physical and mental illness, further distancing himself from the Promethean ideal of the healthy, robust man. His direct quotation of a passage from

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by Smith, pp. 128–42. Brantlinger makes the important point that, where it came to separating out civilisation and savagery in categorising colonisers and the colonised, the difference 'often seemed as great as one between species' (p. 136). In other words, it is important to understand that in the Romantic period and earlier, the racialised other was also frequently animalised in order to facilitate the distinction between races. Victor may well be read as a caricature of the supposedly benevolent coloniser who brings civilisation to the so-called savages; he fails to lead his Creature into any kind of light, leaving him instead to 'civilise' himself, thus undermining patriarchal ideals about the noble nature of empire.

[121] Levine, 'The Ambiguous Heritage of *Frankenstein*', p. 27.

[122] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, p. 30. This moment reminds the reader that Victor and his instructors in science are quintessentially Enlightenment figures, imbued with all the violent intentions of Baconian science.

[123] Ibid., p. 56. This is in interesting contrast to the idea of man's free will as it is presented in Milton's *Paradise Lost*. It is clear that Victor does not envisage a Creature possessed of free will. At the very least, he anticipates a species that cleaves to *his* will. That Shelley places into the Creature's hands a text that deals so fundamentally with the notion of free will is no accident.

Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* on the morning after the Creature awakens reveals that he already fears he is being pursued; it is a particularly evocative example of a derangement that will grow ever more acute throughout the novel, further emphasising a foreboding sense of self-inflicted curse.[124] This is a departure from the rationality and sanity that have been so effectively coded as essentially masculine. Victor, then, undergoes what the proponent of Promethean masculinity would regard as something of a feminisation. In attempting to gain control of reproductive power, he has lost control of his own body and mind.[125] He becomes alienated from his family and friends, divorced from any emotional human connection that might distract him from his task, effectively living outside of civilised society in a way that might be perceived as animalistic. Mellor describes how his 'passion for his scientific research is a displacement of normal emotions and healthy human relationships'.[126] Even before the Creature awakens, Victor immerses himself in a kind of self-obsessed introspection that, isolated as he now is, goes unchecked. This exemplifies a key feature of the Promethean: that it is always already undoing itself and undermining its own ideals.

Victor has created a living being out of body parts conjoined in a way that defies the distinct categorisation of human and animal: a categorisation that had been considered natural and immutable. His attempt to create a superior being has instead resulted in a hybrid with profound ontological ramifications for a natural order where Promethean man is supposedly at the pinnacle. While Victor's reaction tells us a great deal about the Creature's physical and taxonomical state, it is also revealing of Victor himself. He is a scientifically-driven Promethean man who has sought to take control of the reproductive principle in a manner consonant with Enlightenment concepts of masculine rationalism that transcends the emotional maternal connection. This leaves him unable to sympathise with the being he has created, despite the Creature himself having shown compassion, the ability to reason and to learn, and considerable rhetorical skill, often beyond that of the human sphere from which he is expelled. Victor proves himself incapable of grasping ways of knowing other than the

[124] Ibid., p. 41. Victor quotes a passage from Coleridge that speaks of walking 'in fear and dread', being pursued by 'a frightful fiend'. See Coleridge, *Rime of the Ancient Mariner,* p. 26.
[125] Andy Mousley, 'The Posthuman', in *The Cambridge Companion to 'Frankenstein'*, ed. by Smith, pp. 158–72 (p. 165). Mousley suggests that Victor becomes 'a form of automaton' in his 'mindless' pursuit of his aim. There is certainly a sense that he loses fundamental aspects of humanity in his pursuit.
[126] Mellor, 'A Feminist Critique of Science', p. 127.

Promethean: ways which would enable him to engage with and even attempt to understand his creation. As it stands, he is unable to reconcile himself with the Creature in any other way of being, beyond his status as abortive Promethean experiment. He has pursued what he regards as the perfectibility of the human form, an ambition to create a better-than-human species of which he is the ultimate benefactor — the new, or 'modern', Prometheus.

Yet Victor's entire concept of what is 'better' is mired in the Promethean socio-cultural context of European white male dominance in which he lives. He perceives to his horror that, rather than creating a human form better approximating the divine, an improvement upon man as he exists, he has forged an entity that occupies a previously empty space between man and animal. This entity, while having an uncanny resemblance to man, is dismembered, horribly flesh-like and meaty, and distinctly bestial and animal. The Creature, then, invites comparisons that mortally offend the Enlightenment sense of masculine, scientific rationalism that sets man apart from animal. Victor has created a new species, but the process has debased him rather than deified him, resulting instead in a mirror of his failure. In essence, he has destabilised the very scheme of life that has conferred a sense of exceptionalism on Promethean man. George E. Haggerty suggests that Victor 'has queered the very notion of God, and in doing so, he has deprived himself of all satisfaction, love and friendship'.[127] Haggerty is correct in two ways. The first, that Victor's act of creation has left him isolated, both from others and from a Promethean sense of self that his creation had been intended to vindicate. Secondly, that he has intervened as a god might, in an attempt to elevate the status of man. In essence, Victor embodies man's attempt to become what might now be called posthuman.

In an analysis of *Frankenstein* and the posthuman, Andy Mousley identifies Victor as the Promethean figure 'bent on surpassing himself',[128] yet it is not just himself but the very definition and capacity of Promethean masculinity that he seeks to surpass. His goal is to elevate Promethean man to the position of creator of life, to push the boundaries of what is possible for *men like him*. Mousley describes how he

[127] George E. Haggerty, 'What is Queer about *Frankenstein*?', in *The Cambridge Companion to 'Frankenstein'*, ed. by Smith, pp. 116–27 (p. 125).
[128] Mousley, 'The Posthuman', p. 161.

'co-opts the role of a creator-god in a capricious act of *individualistic hubris*'.[129] There can be no doubt that he is motivated by selfish desires to wield generative power: the drive of Promethean masculinity that venerates individualism and is unable to perceive of the myriad other ways of knowing the world around him, even to the extent of consuming the other in order to aggrandise the self.[130] However, it is also the boundaries of a type of masculinity with which he is experimenting, even if subconsciously, that should be attended to. His stated intention of benefitting his own kind is indicative of his broader purpose of seizing this power in order to re-assert the exceptionalism of Promethean masculinity as a more general governing concept. In essence, the others of his kind that he seeks to benefit are literally those *of his kind*: those admitted to the Promethean masculine sphere.

After the murder of William for which Justine is wrongly executed, Victor and the Creature at last come face-to-face again at the summit of Montanvert.[131] On the ascent, Victor wonders at 'the awful and majestic in nature', and even laments at the human separation from it: 'if our impulses were confined to hunger, thirst, and desire, we might be nearly free'.[132] The arrival of the Creature, the material proof of his own defiance of nature, interrupts a moment of sublime reflection on the power of nature, wherein Victor's heart 'now swelled with something like joy'.[133] The Creature appears as something 'superhuman' and unnaturally large and strong: 'his countenance bespoke bitter anguish, combined with disdain and malignity, while its unearthly ugliness rendered it almost too horrible for human eyes'.[134] While the fact of the Creature's ugliness is established, Victor also resists looking at him because he is a spectacle of Victor's own inadequacy, reflecting back to him his own inhumanity and his obliteration of the categories of man and animal. For Victor, to be confronted with the Creature is to be confronted with the failure of his own Promethean project: his failure as an extension of himself, at large in the world and not under his control. He has attempted to colonise the female capacity of reproduction and the narcissistic

[129] Ibid., p. 162 (my emphasis).
[130] Ibid., p. 168. Mousley highlights Victor's narcissism, his 'extension of the boundaries of the self'.
[131] Victor is confronted with the consequences of his Promethean act on a rocky mountain in an echo of the chaining of Prometheus on a mountain in the Caucasus.
[132] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, p. 75–76. This lamentation is followed in the text by a quote from Percy Shelley's poem 'On Mutability', the theme of which is change and the transience of human life.
[133] Ibid., p. 76.
[134] Ibid., p. 76.

reproduction of the self but has only revealed his own failure, and his own monstrosity, in doing so. The Creature has thus become an affective mirror, an insight into the self of Victor, who has created 'that to which he is inextricably linked, at once his child and his *Doppelgänger'*.[135] It is not just his scientific hubris but his subsequent neglect and evasion of consequences that indicate that Shelley is problematising the uncritical veneration of Prometheus as archetype. Ultimately, the scientific endeavour into which Victor has invested so much of his faith and his very self in the search for Promethean ascendancy betrays him, revealing the stripped-down reality of his own fleshly, animal, mortal status.[136] Convinced from an early age of his own status as a prodigy amongst men, and in wishing to 'be useful to my fellow-creatures', he eventually perceives himself 'like the archangel who aspired to omnipotence […] chained in an eternal hell', once again invoking both Milton's Satan and the myth of Prometheus.[137] Victor's scientific over-reaching was intended to mark himself out as an individual Prometheus and, just as Prometheus was chained to a rock for his hubris, so Victor feels that the autonomy of his Creature to enact his own freewill unmediated by a creator figure is his own 'chaining'. As is the case with male Romantic thinkers themselves, Victor's relationship with the Promethean archetype is confused and selective, some elements of the myth seized upon as useful, others cast aside.

Other elements of the myth emerge through the character of Walton. When events lead Victor to chase the manifestation of his own hubris into the Arctic, he and the reader are confronted with yet another *doppelgänger*, in the form of the single-minded explorer. Victor's exchanges with Walton, the captain of the ship seeking the Pole which rescues him in a near-dead state from his climactic pursuit of the Creature, are once again revealing of the Promethean masculinity of the protagonist. This is the case not least because Walton represents a Promethean masculine figure in waiting, embarking on an analogous hubristic route to failure to the one Victor has recently trodden himself. Walton occupies a critical role in the novel. Like the Creature, he holds a mirror up to Victor's choices and where they have led, projecting the chaotic

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[135] Andrew Griffin, 'Fire and Ice in *Frankenstein*', in *The Endurance of 'Frankenstein',* ed. by Levine and Knoepflmacher, pp. 49–73 (p. 62).
[136] Levine, 'The Ambiguous Heritage of *Frankenstein*', p. 26. As Levine puts it, 'science, penetrating to the sources of life, finds our animal selves, our own uncontrollable instincts for life and death'.
[137] Shelley, *Frankenstein,* pp. 179–80. Frankenstein here locates himself similarly to the Creature; they both recognise themselves in the figure of the fallen angel.

potential of Promethean masculinity into a future beyond the novel. Walton's letters to his sister, Margaret, begin and end the frame narrative. Margaret is the outermost frame, the recipient of the letters her brother writes communicating all of the rest of the story. Walton is on an expedition to the Arctic, a pursuit which embodied much of the spirit of scientific endeavour that was characteristic of Enlightenment thought.[138] Like Victor, he is the ideal man of ambition. It is when Walton is describing his plans of exploration to Margaret that Shelley first references Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, when Walton reassures her that 'I will kill no albatross'.[139] Walton infers some cautionary note from his sister at this point: an emotional, feminine principle, perhaps a maternalistic warning not to over-reach, not to be driven forward by unchecked masculine Promethean ambition. He exhibits similar characteristics to Victor, essentially representing the threat of history repeating itself: unless, of course, he curtails or drastically alters his own plan for an adventure of conquest with profoundly penetrative undertones that echo Victor's own. Mellor argues that both Walton and Victor are 'products of the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century', who 'accord nature no living soul or "personhood" requiring recognition or respect'.[140] They both hail from a masculine tradition where the natural world represents an object to be conquered and won. Walton certainly does not journey to the Pole purely for the purposes of observing and learning. Rather, he presents his motivation for journeying to the Arctic as 'the inestimable benefit which I shall confer on all mankind to the last generation', and shares that his hope is to 'satiate my ardent curiosity with the sight of a part of the world never before visited […] a land never before imprinted by the foot of man'.[141] His opening letters, steeped in notions of self-satisfaction and the exploration of virgin territory, are a forewarning of Victor's own conceit that he will benefit mankind through scientific endeavour and himself become the creator of a whole new species.

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[138] Craciun '*Frankenstein's* Politics', p. 92 highlights the 'Arctic fever' of the Romantic period and suggests that Walton's occupation in the novel should be seen as 'part of the modern landscape of utopian thought'.
[139] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, p. 10. This is a foretelling of his meeting with Victor. Killing the albatross is precisely what Victor has done, of course, by insinuating himself into the process of creation in unnatural ways, costing him his 'shipmates': the human connections entailed in his relationships with friends, a brother, a wife and a father.
[140] Mellor, 'A Feminist Critique of Science', p. 130.
[141] Shelley, *Frankenstein,* p. 6.

Amid his ambition, Walton yearns for companionship, and for friendship, which is eventually delivered in the inauspicious form of a frozen Victor, clearly near death, who is at once both the hunter of his creation and his prey. Walton's persistent complaints of loneliness are couched in starkly colonialist terms, and his perceived isolation one of attitude rather than of fact. He has a crew, and so his expedition is a communal one in the way Victor's Promethean pursuit is not. However, Walton's crew is not made up of the 'correct' kind of men. He seems fond of the crew, but still dismisses them as 'merchants and seamen […] the dross of human nature'.[142] As his fellows hail from humbler backgrounds, he regards himself as being as good as alone, and the men as resources to facilitate his Promethean ambition, rather than partners who share in it. Later, the crew's near mutiny serves as the catalyst for Walton's turn from the individual to the collective; the threat of mutiny evidences the communal nature of his expedition, and snatches him from the precipice of a Promethean fate like Victor's own. The relationship to the way in which the Creature is excluded from the circle of humanity is mirrored here; it is clear that the sphere of Promethean masculinity is exclusive indeed, closed tightly against anyone or anything that does not adhere to a sharply drawn archetype. Victor has cachet with Walton as a 'glorious spirit',[143] intellectual to the point of transcendence, hardly to be compared with the lesser examples of manhood on board his ship. O'Flinn has argued that the communal (Walton) when set against the solitary (Victor) is a dualism crucial to a proper understanding of the true message of Shelley's work: that it is not, strictly speaking, a caution against scientific endeavour in general terms: 'rather it sees scientific development as neutral, its results tolerable or disastrous entirely depending on the circumstances in which they are produced'.[144] Effectively, O'Flinn argues, Victor fails because of an arrogant insistence on going it alone, and it is only Walton's willingness to be compelled by a near-mutinous crew that saves him from a similar fate. The irrational focus on science as a lonely pursuit does, of course, characterise the Promethean. As discussed previously, Shelley was neither anti-science nor anti-progress *per se*; she simply grasped that these things could be disastrous when carried out in the context of unchecked Promethean hubris. Shelley is suggesting, then, that it

[142] Ibid., p. 8–9.
[143] Ibid., p. 186.
[144] O'Flinn, 'Production and Reproduction', pp. 26–28.

is in fellowship with others, and the ability to exist with others in symbiotic ways, that allows for different ways of seeing the world. It is through this fellowship, rather than through a Promethean individualism, that Promethean man is ultimately saved. Mutuality and symbiosis prove a protection against Promethean individualism and exceptionalism. This is made manifest in the physical origins of the Creature, who represents a literal embodiment of mutualism, being composed of disparate parts from several bodies. The Creature is a chimera, whose vegetarianism, and vegetarian construction, are symbols of the rejection of Promethean individualism and radical separation of the Promethean male from the heterogenous group of abjected others.

The foregrounding of male figures in *Frankenstein* is no coincidence, especially when one considers that it is a novel that tells a tale of Promethean exceptionalism. Women, in the worlds of Victor and Walton, form at best a partially visible element of that biological, embodied reality against which they define themselves as transcendental men of intellect. However, women *are* present in the novel, often at crucial junctures which serve to throw Promethean hubris into ever greater relief. One female presence, often overlooked in critical discussion, is that of nature. As has already been established in earlier discussion of ecofeminist theory, the gendering of nature as a female force, while essentialist, is longstanding and persistent. The conception of nature as female and radically embodied, and therefore as penetrable by masculine science, has been discussed in great depth by ecofeminist theorists over several decades.[145] This conception of nature went to the very heart of Enlightenment thought. When M. Waldman describes how philosophers '*penetrate* into the recesses of nature, and *shew how she works* in her hiding places',[146] that feminised personification of nature is literally verbalised, and Baconian science summoned. The understanding of their study as being penetrative is overtly sexual, and even sexually *forceful.* In performing a revelation of this, then, *Frankenstein* is an early novelistic precursor to ecofeminist understandings of a feminised 'mother' earth, and potential feminist rejections of that narrative. In other words, *Frankenstein* may

[145] See for particular examples Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution* (Harper, 1990), and Fox Keller, *Reflections on Gender and Science*. See also Mellor, 'A Feminist Critique of Science', p. 107, who notes how Francis Bacon's stated aim was to 'bind' nature, and to make a 'slave' of her, thus linking the scientific endeavour of his day with sexual identity. One could suggest that this choice of words has class and racial connotations too.
[146] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, p. 30 (my emphases).

be read as a work of proto-ecofeminism. As previously discussed, Romantic philosophy had a contradictory relationship with nature. Male Romantics frequently venerated the natural world with a sense of nostalgia: a concept of the bucolic as a civilising force that might seem to be at odds with the Romantic drive for man's advancement, scientific endeavour and progress. *Frankenstein* forces the reader to confront at least some of the truth of nature, such as cruelty and disgust, which are an uncomfortable fit with some of the more utopian views of it espoused by the Romantics.[147] Indeed, the creation of a monster is surely the quintessential troubling of Romantic idealisations of nature. Andrew Griffin proposes that Victor's reaction to the waking reality of his creation is an expression 'of a disgust on Mary Shelley's part with something deeper than Romantic metaphors and habits of mind: a disgust with organic life or biological being […] Nature's workshop is as filthy as Victor's'.[148]

The efforts of man to gain mastery over the natural world in anthropocentric and androcentric ways thread throughout the novel. Promethean man is presented as perceiving himself capable of wielding 'unlimited powers' to 'command the thunders of heaven'.[149] Victor, in his Promethean exceptionalism, seeks to elide the maternal principle altogether, casting the feminine out of his vision for a Promethean project.[150] Despite his putative engagement to Elizabeth, and the opportunity for procreation and continuation of his name that this marriage would presumably have offered, Victor is consumed with the determination to procreate alone. Adams, too, considers the role of women in the novel, reading the Creature as 'the New Being who represents the complete critique of the present order which Shelley attempted', who 'condemns the

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[147] Brooks, 'What is a Monster?', p. 100. Brooks describes the novel as 'a profound dissent from some of the more optimistic Romantic views of the moral principles embodied in nature […] it is rigorously amoral, it is absence of principle'. As previously mentioned, Victor experiences moments of sublime wonder in the novel. Insofar as this is the case, he typifies a perennial problem for Promethean man; he is at once overawed by nature and determined to possess and conquer it, at once called to belong and commune with nature and irresistibly tempted to strike out alone. His observations about the Creature, too, are steeped in awe and wonder, albeit with disgust, in a sort of anti-sublime.

[148] Griffin, 'Fire and Ice in *Frankenstein*', p. 63.

[149] Ibid., p. 30.

[150] See Jon Turney, *Frankenstein's Footsteps: Science, Genetics and Popular Culture* (Yale University Press, 1998), p. 24. Turney comments on the novel's place as a 'feminist critique of science', pointing out that 'Victor creates a new life without female aid, destroys the creature's potential mate in a scene figured as a virtual rape, and brings about the death of his own partner before the marriage is consummated'. It is difficult to resist comparisons with the way in which Shelley had existed on the sidelines of conversations between Percy Shelley and Byron, cast out by a Romantic radicalism that continued to privilege men.

food of the fathers as well as their mores'.[151] Adams argues that Shelley's anger at the limitations and restrictions placed on women is made manifest in the character of the Creature.[152] This is compelling, but it is certainly the case that the feminine is figured both by nature and by female characters in the novel, too. The novel is about Promethean masculinity as an excluding force, but also about those who are excluded by it. Mellor discusses the conviction of Erasmus Darwin in his *Zoonomia* (1794) that the male parent had more influence on both the sex and characteristics of a child, and that he 'attributed the bulk of monstrous births to the *male* imagination'.[153] One can observe, then, a scientific context in which the role of the female in the development of children was being underplayed: and a tempting conceptual thread in which it is men who generate monstrosity rather than women. It is entirely possible that Shelley drew on this belief in writing a Promethean paternal figure who not only disdains the female role in reproduction but creates a physical aberration to which he imparts nothing but monstrosity and yet which develops faculties of logic and compassion without paternal guidance.[154] Mellor argues that it is the gradual process of evolution that Victor has contradicted in his own act of creation, a process in which the female has an essential role,[155] while Margaret Homans suggests that 'the novel is about the collision between androcentric and gynocentric theories of creation, a collision that results in the denigration of maternal childbearing through its circumvention by male creation'.[156] It is possible to expand upon this still further, by viewing this

[151] Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, p. 105.
[152] Ibid., p. 105–06. Others agree. Gilbert and Gubar have considered the Creature as an Eve figure in their *The Madwoman in the Attic*, while Brooks' 'What is a Monster?' (p. 101) argues that the Creature symbolises a woman 'seeking to escape from the feminine condition into recognition by the fraternity'. One might more accurately suggest that Shelley uses the Creature not to symbolise the yearning for recognition by the Promethean masculine proponents of Romanticism, but as a way to critique their philosophies and attitudes, and consider other ways of knowing and being.
[153] Mellor, 'A Feminist Critique of Science', p. 117 (original emphasis). Darwin's assertions on the topic owe a great deal to Aristotle's theory of the embryo, which held that it was the sperm that played the dominant role in the development of the embryo, shaping it from blood in the uterus. See Erasmus Darwin, *Zoonomia: The Laws of Organic Life* (e-artnow, 2021), and *The Status of the Human Embryo: Perspectives from Moral Tradition*, ed. by G. R. Dunstan and Mary J. Seller (Oxford University Press, 1988).
[154] As well as birth, death too is a preoccupation that is tied up with nature in the novel. Victor himself asserts that 'to examine the causes of life, we must first have recourse to death' (Shelley, *Frankenstein*, p. 33). The Creature is, in essence, born not of a woman, but out of death. Just as the creation of the Creature can be viewed as a seizure of the principle of life, then, so Victor has supplanted that other side of the natural coin — death — in animating 'the lifeless clay'.
[155] Mellor, 'A Feminist Critique of Science', p. 120.
[156] Margaret Homans, 'Bearing Demons: Frankenstein's Circumvention of the Maternal', in *New Casebooks: 'Frankenstein',* ed. by Botting, pp. 140–65 (p. 155).

androcentrism as specifically *Promethean*, excluding not just an essentialised female principle analogous with nature, but a far more expansive other that envelopes the poor, the colonised and non-human animals too.

The female characters in the novel certainly occupy excluded and liminal locations. Margaret Savile is a character who the reader never actually meets, who exists at the outermost limits of the narrative and yet encloses it as the outside frame. There is an omniscience to Margaret, and a maternal power that threatens to contain the kind of Promethean masculine authority pursued by Victor and by Walton. Yet she has no agency in the novel itself. She exists in a space somewhere between reader and character, receiving the narrative in a quasi-curatorial way, acknowledged within the text itself yet never quite part of it.[157] Peter Brooks contends that she 'has no more existence than a postal address', and a 'lack of characterised personality' that 'makes her all the more effectively stand for the reader'.[158] There are problems with both of these assessments. Indifference is a difficult quality with which to imbue her when her receipt of the story is assumed rather than seen. In addition, it is not the case that Margaret is an entirely neutral quantity, an 'every-reader', even in her relative anonymity. Arguably, she represents the kind of middle class, even educated woman of Shelley's social acquaintance who is, in this case literally, left behind by the Promethean ambition of their male counterparts who existed on the same social stratum. Margaret, then, becomes a stand-in not just for the reader, but for a *certain kind* of reader in the context in which the novel was written.[159] In the true spirit of Promethean masculine thinking, she does not have the status or authority of Promethean man to be physically present, containing the narrative; she is a leaky vessel

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[157] Timothy Morton, '*Frankenstein* and Ecocriticism', in *The Cambridge Companion to 'Frankenstein'*, ed. by Smith, pp. 143–57 (p. 151). Morton sees something else in Margaret Savile's role, arguing that her 'indifference' stands in contrast to the over-reaching, penetrative, controlling forms of 'care' expressed by other characters in the novel, in a way that calls to mind, he argues, Heidegger's contention that 'indifference is a form of care'.

[158] Brooks, 'What is a Monster?', p. 96.

[159] Once again, there are echoes of Shelley's description of herself as peripheral to conversations between her husband, Byron and other Romantics, wherein she became witness rather than active interlocutor. See Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism', in *New Casebooks: 'Frankenstein',* ed. by Botting, pp. 235–60 (pp. 253–54). Chakravorty Spivak points out that the lack of response to Walton's letters from Margaret represents a failure to contain the narrative, and links this to the ongoing escapes of the Creature from the bounds of the text itself. Chakravorty Spivak also notes that the Creature extends out of the end of the narrative because the reader doesn't witness his death.

at the outer reaches of the story, enabling an autonomous symbol of otherness to go forth into the world. The positioning of another woman, Safie, at the very centre of the frame narrative literally decentres the Promethean men of the novel. Safie arrives during the Creature's concealment next to the De Lacey cottage and heralds the education that the Creature will receive through overhearing her own. Safie embodies both the female and the racialised other, whose story the Creature conveys to Victor, who then conveys it to Walton, who conveys it to Margaret at the outside of this frame narrative construction. While Promethean man is necessarily foregrounded in the novel, then, one should not forget that Shelley chooses to have women both centre and contain the narrative.

None of the women of the Frankenstein household survive to the end of the novel. Victor's mother Caroline dies of scarlet fever early on. Justine, an adopted woman who seems to exist in a servant-governess role within the family, is wrongly hanged for the murder of the child William, which was actually perpetrated by the Creature. Elizabeth is murdered by the Creature on the night of her eventual wedding to Victor. As Homans asserts: 'there are many mothers in the Frankenstein circle, and all die notable deaths.'[160] One could argue that it is in the dying, in the being consumed by the Promethean masculine project, that the Frankenstein women reveal their symbolic value in the novel. Of course, without a deeper understanding of the moral of the novel, this could be regarded as a strikingly unfeminist approach for a writer of proto-feminist ideals. Indeed, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has remarked that the novel 'does not speak the language of feminist individualism which we have come to hail as the language of high feminism in English Literature'.[161] The novel does not yield the foregrounded, change-making women that the reader might seek in more recent feminist texts. Yet it is possible to contend that this is entirely the (feminist) point. Shelley, in allowing these women to be 'consumed' during her narrative, is emphasising a central point about both the science and the gender politics of her day. They are a literary sacrifice to demonstrate the reality of the position of women, and of nature, in both Enlightenment and Romantic thinking.

The final characterised female presence in the novel is the Female Creature

[160] Homans, 'Bearing Demons', p. 141.
[161] Chakravorty Spivak, 'Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism', p. 248.

who never is. Victor once again enters into an isolation to perform his second creation. Sequestering himself in a remote part of the Orkney Islands, he begins the 'filthy process' of her construction.[162] The hindsight furnished by the disastrousness of his first attempt changes his outlook when it comes to forming the second: 'during my first experiment, a kind of enthusiastic frenzy had blinded me to the horror of my employment […] now I went to it in cold blood'.[163] It is apprehension of the Female Creature's potential independence and agency, characteristics already displayed so convincingly by the first, that eventually prevents Victor from completing his project. He fears that she will 'become ten thousand times more malignant than her mate […] he had sworn to quit the neighbourhood of man, and hide himself […] but she had not'.[164] Victor, who had initially hardened his Promethean resolve with assurances that his 'new species would bless me as its creator',[165] now turns his mind to his legacy amongst his fellow men, declaring that 'I shuddered to think that future ages might curse me as their pest' for having created a second creature, thus allowing the two to propagate.[166] In a frenzy, he 'tore to pieces the thing on which I was engaged'.[167] Hogle posits that Victor's eventual refusal to construct the Female Creature, and violently to destroy what he has constructed of her, is tied to white European colonial racism, and the reluctance to 'confront the multi-racial nature' of the imagined 'greater and more unified humanity'.[168] The Female Creature, if she were allowed to live, would certainly represent a figure of the radical other, yet another embodiment that would confound Victor's notions of taxonomical stability. She would be other in all the same ways as the Creature himself, and female too, her nature altogether unknowable, especially to a Promethean man like Victor. Hogle hints here at the problem at the heart of Romantic thinking that the novel articulates: that the perfectibility of man is limited, circumscribed by gender, race, class and, of course, species. The prospect with which Victor is confronted by the Female Creature is different from that with which he was confronted by the Creature. In creating a pair, and in allowing them to go forth

[162] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, p. 137.
[163] Ibid., p. 137.
[164] Ibid., p. 138.
[165] Ibid., p. 36.
[166] Ibid., p. 138.
[167] Ibid., p. 139.
[168] Jerrold E. Hogle, 'Romantic Contexts', in *The Cambridge Companion to 'Frankenstein'*, ed. by Smith, pp. 41–55 (pp. 44–45).

independently of him as creator, the generative *fiat* he sought is truly removed from his grasp. The reproductive principle is returned to a female body, albeit one of vague species identity: he fears that 'a race of devils would be propagated upon the earth, who might make the very existence of the species of man a condition precarious and full of terror'.[169] The creation of the Female Creature represents a further step away from Victor's control, and a step closer to the prerogative of the Creature to rebel against Victor as creator/Zeus and to adopt some of the aspects of the Promethean himself, including the rebellion against the divine, that are sometimes elided in the understanding of Victor as the Promethean figure in the novel. That this next step towards rebellion from the paternal figure takes female form is striking indeed. The Female Creature figures Pandora here: the woman, made not born, who is sent as a punishment for Prometheus' theft of fire.[170] Hogle, quite correctly, points out that 'women and violence came to punish Promethean *hubris*' in Hesiod's version of the classical myth, and that 'Victor's presumption comes back to haunt him in the prospect of a female creature'.[171] For Victor, the Female Creature represents an entrenchment of the otherness of the Creature himself. She would possess all the identity and species dubiety of the Creature, but may possess the capacity for reproduction, too: the very thing he had sought to seize when he created the Creature. She could surely only further erode his self-identity as quasi-divine Promethean man.

Conclusion

Victor Frankenstein, then, is a figure who represents all the flaws of a Promethean human exceptionalism that Shelley observed being theorised and philosophised around her.[172] Andrew Smith suggests that 'we might say that the novel as a whole represents an ambivalence towards the Romantic project and the type of artistic and political

[169] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, p. 138.
[170] Homans, 'Bearing Demons', p. 156. Homans likens the Female Creature to Eve, claiming that 'it is for her resemblance to Eve that he destroys her', fearing that she may not obey the agreements made between himself and the Creature before her own creation. It is her potential for independence, her potential to move beyond his control, that is the source of Victor's fear.
[171] Hogle, 'Otherness in *Frankenstein*', p. 214.
[172] David Punter, 'Literature', in *The Cambridge Companion to 'Frankenstein'*, ed. by Smith, pp. 205–18 (p. 205). Punter agrees that both Victor and the Creature have moments of recognisable Prometheanism, albeit different strands of the myth and at different times, and asks whether Victor's characterisation isn't in fact 'satirizing the whole notion of the Promethean'.

idealism with which Romanticism was associated'.[173] It is possible that this is an over-simplification. In fact, the novel invites the reader to ask *who* is constructing and carrying out the 'Romantic project', because the type of idealism in question was entirely dependent on these factors. In other words, where Smith suggests that Shelley's ambivalence was aimed at *what*, we might instead consider that it was aimed at *who* and *how*. By extension, this invites us to question who or what was excluded from the project itself. Hogle suggests that 'the creature's mixture of incongruous parts from different classes of beings' represents the great mass of beings who are excluded from the perfecting educational project of Romantic thought'.[174] This is a compelling interpretation. The novel interrogates a species and gender hierarchy that had been considered immutable, foregrounding the egotism of Promethean masculinity as a manifestation of masculine exceptionalism. Haggerty describes the way the 'masculine figures, obsessed only with each other, destroy the female in their quest for masculinized mutuality'.[175] This serves to highlight that the Promethean project is always, by definition, engaged in the denial and elision of the female, which includes those aspects of the more-than-human that are historically female-coded. The Promethean masculine human being insinuates himself into natural processes, often with literal acts of violence, and disrupts them with catastrophic results.

Frankenstein is an alternative Promethean narrative: a narrative in which the oppressed other is foregrounded, and the patriarchal defaults that are so engrained as to be virtually invisible given name. The very act of writing the novel, in the context of Romantic thought in which, as has been demonstrated, most others remained othered, is in itself a subversion of the Promethean act. Catherine Lanone argues that *Frankenstein* is itself a 'Promethean fire', a subversion of Prometheanism casting light on what might otherwise be invisible and outside the boundary and what meaning it possesses, in which Shelley presents us with a Creature who is 'the ultimate Other struggling on the margins'.[176] The Creature takes on some Promethean characteristics as he shifts from seeking the approval of a human world created by and for the

[173] Smith, 'Introduction', p. 4.
[174] Hogle, 'Romantic Contexts', p. 47.
[175] Haggerty, 'What is Queer about *Frankenstein*?', p. 117.
[176] Catherine Lanone, 'The Context of the Novel', in *The Cambridge Companion to 'Frankenstein'*, ed. by Smith, pp. 56–68 (p. 57).

Promethean masculine to imagining his own existence outside of Victor's control. When the reader considers this, it is possible to view *Frankenstein* as suggestive of a true subversion of Promethean masculinity: it presents the excluded other reaching a state of independence from paternalism and patriarchal structure which have never included them or been rendered in their image.[177]

Shelley has presented the reader with a proto-ecofeminist work, identifying the massive shift in the way man engaged with the natural world and environment brought about by the Industrial Revolution, and who or what was overlooked and commodified in the process of this advancement. Timothy Morton has stressed the relevance of the Anthropocene to an understanding of *Frankenstein*: that the novel emerged from a historical context of 'decisive human intervention in geophysical systems'.[178] Such enormous shifts go some way to explaining how nostalgic bucolic ideals and an urge for scientific and industrial progress went hand-in-hand. Goodall asserts that 'the modern Prometheus of the early nineteenth century had to realise his mission in a world riven by misgivings about anything purporting to change the parameters of human destiny'.[179] However, it is the parameters of Promethean masculinity that are being most fiercely guarded at this time; the Shelley circle ostensibly supported the concept of revolution in theory, and yet they were engaged in a rhetorical Romanticism that sustained Promethean masculine principles of human perfectibility. There is comparatively little evidence to suggest that their revolutionary attitudes were practically underpinned by radicalism in gender equality or animal rights; if Percy Shelley had strong convictions about either, these were not foregrounded in his work. Shelley and her peers lived through a period of rapid change in industry, agriculture and population size. While this was driven by an industrialising urge that was distinctly Promethean in character, the Romantic inclination to nostalgia is indicative of a contradictory anxiety about the pace of change, man's ability to continue to control what he had begun and, crucially, the price that would need to be paid for the Promethean project. With the forward march of industrialisation and capitalism came

[177] Homans, 'Bearing Demons', p. 149. Homans argues that 'Frankenstein is the story of what it feels like to be the undesired embodiment of romantic imaginative desire', suggesting, as others have done, that in the Creature, we can observe something of Mary Shelley's own feelings about her place in, or at least peripheral to, the Romantic elite.
[178] Morton, '*Frankenstein* and Ecocriticism', p. 145.
[179] Goodall, 'Electrical Romanticism', p. 119.

an ever-greater imperative to commodify whatever was necessary for the Promethean project. Animalisation became an increasingly important tool for this purpose.

Promethean masculinity, then, is in constant resistance against a natural order over which it seeks dominance, and the persistent problem must be how to exercise that dominion when one is no more than a part of the whole. Morton suggests that, at the moment of the Creature's awakening, Victor is faced with the awful truth: the 'idea that life is merely animated meat becomes horribly real, right in front of him'.[180] The problem for Promethean masculinity here is the self-identification as that 'animated meat' that reduces Promethean man to the feared baseness of women, nature, animal, foreigner and so on. The distinction between Promethean man and animal begins to break down, disrupting what Morton calls 'the normative subject-object dualism in which I can recognize myself as decisively different from a non-human'.[181] This is best demonstrated by Victor's perception of the Creature, and how the Creature's reason and rhetorical aptitude upset the notion of him as monstrous non-subject. In effect, Victor has experienced the dehumanisation of himself and the humanisation of a monster of an as yet uncategorised species: a creative process that should have reaffirmed all the received boundaries of man and other has instead troubled them catastrophically.[182] This is reflected in critical understandings of Victor and the Creature as *doppelgängers*, wherein Victor is able to observe the beastly within himself.[183]

It is, of course, important to remember that *Frankenstein* was born of its

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[180] Morton, '*Frankenstein* and Ecocriticism', p. 153.

[181] Ibid., p. 155. Morton uses this phrase in the context of the Nazi Lebensraum project, in which he contends that Nazi support of animal rights is not inconsistent because it by no means breaks down the distinction between the ideal German on the one hand and the animal on the other.

[182] Mousley, 'The Posthuman', p. 166. Mousley makes the point that Victor regards the Creature as 'a purely physical existence'. Of course, this is a perception that the Creature destabilises when he and Victor meet and Victor is temporarily persuaded by the Creature's eloquence to create a female creature in the Creature's image.

[183] The centrality of this 'mirroring', even to popular appreciation of the story, can be seen in how the characters have been acted in several of the nearly countless stage and screen adaptations of the novel: for example, in the National Theatre's 2011 production directed by Danny Boyle, in which the two lead actors 'swapped' the roles of Victor and the Creature, playing one and then the other on alternate nights: see Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*, dir. by Danny Boyle (National Theatre, 2011). See also Mark Jancovich, '*Frankenstein* and Film', in *The Cambridge Companion to 'Frankenstein'*, ed. by Smith, pp. 190–204 (p. 197). Jancovich refers to an adaptation of the story in the *Mystery and Imagination* series in 1968, in which Ian Holm played both roles. See 'The Body Snatcher', *Mystery and Imagination* (ABC Weekend Television/ITV, 1966–70), 5 February 1966. Given the fact that adaptations often bear little to no resemblance to the original story, it is striking that this element of it is frequently still in evidence.

historical and socio-political context. However, the longevity of the story, even in versions that stray so far from the original text as to be barely recognisable as Frankensteinian, is no coincidence. As David Punter puts it, 'Mary Shelley's book has now mutated into something which is no longer a book, a single text, but which is instead a *world*'.[184] The way in which the story of the creation of the novel has in itself become quasi-mythical is testament to the extent to which it has burst out of its own covers to take on meaning beyond a Gothic horror for a Romantic audience. Indeed, Shelley's preface to the 1831 edition reveals both consciousness and anxiety about the way in which the novel had taken on a life of its own in the years since its original publication. It is this mutation, this *world*, that is useful in analysing texts that are themselves historically separated from Shelley's original by decades and even centuries. As George Levine puts it, 'it has tapped into the center of Western feeling and imagination', and 'it has become a vital metaphor, peculiarly appropriate to a culture dominated by a consumer technology'.[185] Levine also significantly points out that 'reverberations' of the novel can sometimes be observed 'even where no direct allusion is intended'.[186] This is crucial to an understanding of the continued relevance of *Frankenstein* not just as an individual text, but as a world. It has inspired deliberate retellings, but its central themes are so resonant as to be identifiable in far more subtle ways in later texts. The seemingly endless retellings of *Frankenstein* since its original publication prove that something about this seminal retelling of the Prometheus myth speaks to audiences and readerships even into the twenty-first century. This is perhaps due to the persistent nature of the subject at its heart: the Promethean masculine desire not just to know but to control, and diligently to police the boundary between itself and the other.

The chapters that follow demonstrate how this proto-ecofeminist model of Promethean man provided by Shelley can be recognised in literary fiction of later periods, when the question of gender, and particularly of the role of the Promethean masculine in society, has been vexed or interrogated. In the next chapter, H. G. Wells' *The Island of Doctor Moreau* is analysed through the lens of Promethean masculinity, to illustrate the development of retellings of forms of the Prometheus myth, and the

[184] Punter, 'Literature', p. 211 (original emphasis).
[185] Levine, 'The Ambiguous Heritage of *Frankenstein*', p. 3.
[186] Ibid., p. 21.

attendant development of Promethean masculinity in the context of the *fin de siècle*, a suffrage campaign and anti-vivisection movements. *The Island of Doctor Moreau* is a deliberate invocation of *Frankenstein* and, as with other retellings of the Prometheus myth, emerges at a moment of crisis in relation to meat, gender and science.

Chapter 2

Evolutionary Prometheanism: H. G. Wells' *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896)

The previous chapter established the importance of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) as an evocation and interrogation of Promethean masculinity within the Romantic context in which it was written. The use of *Frankenstein* as an example demonstrated how Promethean masculinity in the Romantic period was tied up with the tenets of an age of scientific innovation that was not just anthropocentric, but specifically androcentric, shoring up white, male, wealthy, Eurocentric privilege, and the Baconian dualisms that had been foundational to Enlightenment concepts of science and progress. It showed how this Promethean figure was constructed in relation to an 'other' that was defined as anything exterior to itself, encompassing for general exclusion women, the poor, racialised others, nature, and animals. Crucially, it also demonstrated the usefulness and the importance of looking to a fictionalised literary creation to investigate and seek illumination of masculinist science at a specific point in history. A careful analysis of both Shelley's own life, and of the text itself, reveals a keen interest in and enthusiasm for science, tempered by clear anxieties about the form, function and potential of scientific knowledge and discourse at the time. This chapter will examine how H. G. Wells, a writer immersed in the scientific community of his day, drew upon the *Frankenstein* narrative in his own story of Promethean over-reach, *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896).

Herbert George Wells was born in Bromley, Kent in 1866 into a lower middle-class family. Eventually realising academic ambitions that had been frustrated when he was forced to leave school as a teenager to earn a living, Wells proved dedicated to the pursuit of the sciences, and particularly biology, his education including a period of study under Thomas Henry Huxley at the Normal School of Science in South Kensington.[1] Educated in the wake of Darwinism, these scientific advances were to

[1] Wells received a scholarship to the Normal School, which later became the Royal College of Science and a subsidiary college of Imperial College London. Huxley, so committed and prominent an advocate of Darwin's theories of natural, sexual and artificial selection that he came to be known as 'Darwin's Bulldog', had a significant influence on Wells' work, and was his correspondent for many years. His

prove foundational to Wells' own fiction and non-fiction writing. His fiction interrogated ideas including evolution and degeneracy, socialism, politics and women's suffrage, and the question of extra-terrestrial life. By the time of his death in 1946, he was the author of a body of work consisting of well over a hundred books, including a vast corpus of scientific essays and some well-known scientific romances,[2] including *The Time Machine* (1895), *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896), *The War of the Worlds* (1897), and *The First Men in the Moon* (1901).

In *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, the focal text of this chapter, Wells fictionalises the question of artificial selection, and the moral, ethical and ontological implications of man's use of it to alter the speed and course of evolution and to purge animal materiality and irrationality from the human form. The influence of Shelley and *Frankenstein* on *The Island of Doctor Moreau* and Wells has been well established, and critical comparisons and contrasts between the characterisations within the two texts have been made before. Emelia Quinn, for example, compares the texts as offering examples of literary monsters who adopt a queer veganism, a rejection of the animal foods marked as the privilege of hegemonic humanity, as a means of constructing species-queer identities through the subversion of normative carnophallogocentrism.[3] Margaret Atwood, too, in her introduction to the 2005 Penguin edition of *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, makes the link between the two texts. Atwood describes how, through an ongoing process of cinematic as well as literary adaptation, *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, like *Frankenstein*, has 'taken on a life of its own' and 'acquired attributes and meanings not present in the original'.[4] It is certainly the case that both texts have inspired a plethora of cinematic responses since their respective publications, some more faithful to their original sense and meaning than others, with many demonstrating how that sense and meaning is prone to shift with

work is discussed in more detail later.

[2] An earlier descriptor for the genre now understood as science fiction. See respectively H. G. Wells, *The Time Machine*, ed. by Patrick Parrinder (Penguin, 2005); H. G. Wells, *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, ed. by Patrick Parrinder (Penguin, 2005); H. G. Wells, *The War of the Worlds,* ed. by Patrick Parrinder (Penguin, 2005); H. G. Wells, *The First Men in the Moon*, ed. by Patrick Parrinder (Penguin, 2005). Future references are to these editions unless otherwise stated.

[3] Emelia Quinn, *Reading Veganism: The Monstrous Vegan, 1818 to Present* (Oxford University Press, 2021). For other useful comparisons of the two texts, see for example Chris Danta, *Animal Fables After Darwin: Literature, Speciesism and Metaphor* (Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 119–21, and Philip Armstrong, *What Animals Mean in the Fiction of Modernity* (Routledge, 2008), pp. 49–99.

[4] Wells, *The Island of Doctor Moreau,* p. xiii.

historical context and readership.[5] Not least because of their speculative nature, both texts have value for understanding the contexts in which they were written and the preoccupations of subsequent readers revealed in their reception.

While the novel has been the subject of copious and wide-ranging scholarly analysis, much of it remarking on the novel's descent from Shelley's urtext, the benefits of a consideration of its presentation of Promethean masculinity through an ecofeminist critical animal studies lens have been largely overlooked. Significant analyses include Philip Armstrong's *What Animals Mean in the Fiction of Modernity*, which considers how human cruelty in the novel results in humans who seem beastly, and 'Beast Folk' — animals vivisected into human shapes by the Prometheus figure Moreau — who seem uncannily human.[6] Human animality is a key theme of Armstrong's analysis, as is the fear of human degeneration that emerged from Darwinism. While Armstrong does note that 'a (specifically masculinist) form of humanity' is in play when Prendick, having been rescued from certain death, craves meat,[7] and that a yearning for meat in men signifies an animal appetite that must be controlled in order to preserve his ascendancy over the animal,[8] the link between this and Promethean masculinity specifically is not explored. Quinn's *Reading Veganism*, which analyses Frankenstein's Creature as the archetype of the 'monstrous vegan', extends this analysis to Wells' Beast Folk. Quinn's discussion offers a detailed analysis of the novel as exploring 'the complex interplay between alimentary and sexual desires […] a way of thinking through the complexities of marking bodies as desirable and undesirable'.[9] The current chapter adds to Quinn's critique by presenting

[5] Film and theatre adaptations of *Frankenstein* are legion, but the best known is probably 1931's *Frankenstein*, directed by James Whale and starring Boris Karloff in the titular role. As previously noted, Karloff's continues to be the most instantly recognisable visual representation of the Creature. See *Frankenstein,* dir. by James Whale (USA, 1931). In 1994, Kenneth Branagh directed himself as Frankenstein, opposite Robert De Niro's Creature, in *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*. See *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein,* dir. by Kenneth Branagh (USA/Japan/UK, 1994). In 2011, actors Benedict Cumberbatch and Jonny Lee Miller alternated playing Victor Frankenstein and the Creature in the National Theatre production. See Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*, dir. by Danny Boyle (National Theatre, 2011). *The Island of Doctor Moreau* has been made over for the big screen several times, including in 1977, starring Burt Lancaster as Moreau, and in a critically-panned version in 1996, starring Marlon Brando as Moreau. See *The Island of Dr. Moreau,* dir. by Don Taylor (USA, 1977), and *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, dir. by. John Frankenheimer (USA, 1996).
[6] Philip Armstrong, *What Animals Mean in the Fiction of Modernity* (Routledge, 2008), pp. 78–98.
[7] Ibid., pp. 88–89.
[8] Ibid., p. 90.
[9] Quinn, *Reading Veganism*, p. 63.

a closer focus on Promethean masculinity, and how it inflects the significance of the eating or prohibition of meat, as mechanisms by which this (un)desirability is constructed and performed. Joshua Bulleid's comprehensive *Vegetarianism and Science Fiction* also identifies a textual and thematic link between *Frankenstein* and Wells' fiction, including *The Island of Doctor Moreau*.[10] Bulleid discusses the centrality of vivisection in the novel, and its ramifications for the human/animal boundary, as well as the enforced vegetarianism of the Beast Folk and meat-eating as a marker of dehumanisation. Gender and masculinity are not the chief foci of Bulleid's critique, thus this thesis makes explicit the links between the vegetarianism theorised by Bulleid and others, and Promethean masculinity as a specific construct.

By means of a close textual analysis of key moments in *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, this chapter sets out to consider the novel as a fictionalised expression of Promethean masculinity inflected by the post-Darwinian moment in which Wells was writing, and in which he was himself intellectually embedded. First, the chapter examines how Darwinism heralded a scientific revolution that brought about altered attitudes and anxieties about the boundary between human and animal. This is followed by a discussion of the vegetarian movement contemporaneous with these scientific shifts, and the ways in which meat-eating and meat avoidance emerge as themes in the text itself. The chapter then proceeds to a consideration of the *fin de siècle* anti-vivisection movement, and how the question of vivisection, ethics and feeling became a focal point of the Promethean masculinity of the day and the main theme of the novella. Finally, a discussion of the groundswell of action for women's rights taking place alongside these shifts in the scientific landscape provides context for an analysis of the role of women in the text.

Drawing from Darwin

The introduction to this thesis set out the themes emerging from the myth of Prometheus, and how these interconnect with a body of work in gender and masculinity studies to create a lens through which it is possible to view hegemonic

[10] Joshua Bulleid, *Vegetarianism and Science Fiction: A History of Utopian Animal Ethics* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2023), pp. 76–84.

masculinity, as proposed by R.W. Connell.[11] Specifically, it demonstrates that this interconnection allows for an interrogation of Promethean masculinity. As previously set out, Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity suggests that, attendant upon a hegemonic, idealised and highly unattainable masculinity are complicit, subjugated and marginalised masculinities. These sub-groups provide comparison points against which that hegemonic form can define itself, in much the same way that radical human separation from other animals requires their subjugation and marginalisation in order to function. Promethean masculinity was as in evidence when Wells was writing as it had been when Shelley wrote decades before, because the former, too, was living through a period of upheaval in terms of both science and gender. Where Shelley's Promethean figure emerged from the context of Galvanism and the question of whether or not the corporeal was ensouled, Wells' was a response to the monumental shocks of Darwinism that characterised the second half of the nineteenth century.

The work of Charles Darwin is without question the most important contextual element separating Shelley's world from that of Wells.[12] Darwin's work on evolutionary theory, which confirmed notions of common descent through natural and sexual selection across thousands of millennia, had a seismic impact on established concepts of religion, humanity and animality. It was perceived as a very real threat to how civilisation was understood, and the natural and cultural impetus by which it functioned, such was the enormity of its consequences for the theory of independent acts of creation which had dominated for so long.[13] The broader concept of evolution had a more complex theoretical history stretching back to antiquity, and had been a feature of scientific discourse since much earlier in the nineteenth century. For example, in 1802, William Paley had suggested that species adaptation, far from undermining the concept of God, could be used as evidence of divine *fiat*.[14] Jean-

[11] R. W. Connell, *Masculinities*, 2nd edn (Polity, 2005)

[12] Wells' body of work, both fiction and non-fiction, demonstrates that the influence and relevance of Darwinism extended beyond science, offering a new inflection on how humans and other animals were used to think with, particularly in storytelling. See Danta, *Animal Fables After Darwin,* pp. 96–128. Danta considers Wells' fiction as fable reimagined in the wake of Darwinian understandings of the human/animal boundary. It is certainly possible to read *The Island of Doctor Moreau* as Darwinism-made-fable.

[13] In simple terms, the theory of independent acts of creation held that each species was the result of an independent act of divine creation, as opposed to being the result of a complex system of evolution over time.

[14] William Paley, *Natural Theology: or, Evidences of the Existence and Attributes of the Deity, Collected from the Appearances of Nature* (John Morgan, 1802). It was Paley who proposed the familiar metaphor

Baptiste Lamarck had proposed the theory of adaptive, progressive transmutation of species and the inheritance of acquired characteristics, referred to as Lamarckism, in 1809,[15] while August Weismann's germ plasm theory, 'Weismannism', which proposed that heredity depended solely on the gametes and not somatic cells, followed in 1892.[16] In the eighteenth century, Charles Darwin's own grandfather, Erasmus Darwin, had suggested that species might be descended from one primordial form.[17] However, it was *On the Origin of Species* (1859) which proposed the theories of evolution through natural and sexual selection and the struggle for survival, presenting not the already-posited idea of evolution itself, but a proposal as to how evolution might be observed to come about.[18] Natural selection explained the heritability of traits that ensured survival and reproduction. However, one of its modes, sexual selection, proved especially controversial, as it indicated that species choose mates based on certain attractive characteristics that indicate strength — and that the sex most often selecting for these characteristics was the female. Darwin's seminal work emerged from a race to publish, as his contemporary, Alfred Russel Wallace, had arrived independently at very similar conclusions at around the same time.[19] While *On the Origin of Species* details Darwin's research into the process by which only the organisms best adapted to their environments survive, the much-quoted phrase 'survival of the fittest' does not appear in the first edition of the work. The phrase, which would come to arm many of the pernicious arguments of social Darwinism, was coined by political philosopher Herbert Spencer, in his *The Principles of Biology* (1864).[20] That Spencer's own interpretation entered the popular consciousness to the

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of God as watchmaker: that evidence of design in organisms implies a designer.

[15] Jean-Baptiste Lamarck (1809), *Zoological Philosophy: An Exposition with Regard to the Natural History of Animals,* trans. by Hugh Elliot (Macmillan, 1914).

[16] August Weismann, *The Germ-Plasm: A Theory of Heredity*, trans. by W. Newton Parker and Harriet Rönnfeldt (Charles Scribner's Sons, 1892). Weismannism held that only the gametes (i.e. the egg and sperm cells that create life) influence hereditary characteristics, and that somatic cells (characteristics acquired during the life of an organism) cannot pass information to the germ cells; in essence, that somatic cells do not impart hereditary characteristics. This is in contrast with the Lamarckian theory of inheritance of acquired characteristics which held that the use or disuse of certain characteristics became a hereditary factor in evolution.

[17] Erasmus Darwin, *Zoonomia*: *The Laws of Organic Life* (e-artnow, 2021).

[18] Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species* (Oxford University Press, 2008).

[19] In fact, Wallace and Darwin made a joint presentation on the topic to the Linnean Society of London in 1858. Wallace's contribution was titled 'On the Tendency of Varieties to Depart Indefinitely from the Original Type'.

[20] Herbert Spencer, *The Principles of Biology*, 2 vols (Appleton, 1910).

extent that it came to be misunderstood as having originated from Darwin himself is far from merely anecdotal. In fact, it is indicative of the importance and impact of Darwinism, the culmination of so much previous theory, not just in the scientific arena, but in the socio-cultural and socio-political too.

Wells' autobiography makes clear the influence of Darwin on much of his writing, and also stresses the importance of Thomas Henry Huxley's teaching and correspondence, as well as his dedication to Darwin, to his work.[21] Indeed, it was Huxley's Romanes Lecture, 'Evolution and Ethics', delivered at the University of Oxford in 1893, that was arguably of most striking influence on, and relevance to, *The Island of Doctor Moreau*. In the lecture, Huxley argued that the inherent chance and cruelties of the evolutionary or cosmic process can, and indeed should, be countered by kindness and the ethical capacities peculiar to man. He suggested that 'cosmic nature is no school of virtue, but the headquarters of the enemy of ethical nature',[22] and that 'social progress means a checking of the cosmic process at every step and the substitution for it of another, which may be called the ethical process'.[23] Significantly, then, Huxley retained a vision of human supremacy despite the challenge that Darwinism posed to this, by emphasising the way in which the human species evolved with the capacity for ethical action in a way that sets it apart. In the context of *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, much of the narrator Prendick's reaction to Moreau's vivisectional experiments accords with this Huxleyan position: that the latter's monstrosity lies precisely in his lack of those ethical capacities referred to by Huxley. Moreau's apparent imperviousness to empathy and ethics reads as a recognisable affront to Huxley's assertions, and a transgression against his appeal that 'the ethical progress of society depends, not on imitating the cosmic process, still less in running away from it, but in combating it'.[24] In Moreau, Wells presents an antagonist whose aim it is not just to imitate the cosmic process but to usurp it by developing a species which has no need for pain. Thus, he seeks to create beings which are, in a very real

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[21] H. G. Wells, *Experiment in Autobiography: Discoveries and Conclusions of a Very Ordinary Brain (Since 1866)* (Read Books, 2016), pp. 183–89.
[22] Thomas Henry Huxley, 'Evolution and Ethics: The Romanes Lecture 1893', in *Collected Essays: Evolution & Ethics and Other Essays*, 9 vols (Macmillan, 1911; facsimile repr. Elibron Classics, 2005), IX, pp. 46–116 (p. 75). Huxley coins the phrase 'survival of the fittest' several times, despite the fact that it comes not from Darwin himself, but from Spencer.
[23] Ibid., p. 81.
[24] Ibid., p. 83.

sense, monstrous. In so doing, he reveals the monstrous in himself, when his disdain for physical pain proves to be accompanied by a fundamental failure of the ethical and empathetic advancement that marks the human in Huxleyan terms.

While Moreau is certainly to be viewed as a dangerous and inhumane figure, this should not imply that Wells was expressing some overwhelming conviction that science, in more general terms, was either of these things. Rather, the novel is a realisation of Huxley's word of caution: a demonstration that the scientist ought to combat, rather than imitate, the cosmic process. Good science, to Huxley's mind at least, was science that was tempered with the humanity that marks man out as unique. Any analysis of the novel is thus preoccupied with what constitutes the boundaries of both humanity and humanitarianism.[25] Wells' own scientific writings, most notably 'The Limits of Individual Plasticity' (1895),[26] 'The Province of Pain' (1894),[27] and 'Human Evolution, An Artificial Process' (1896),[28] further confirm the influence of both Darwin and Huxley on his work, and provided the raw intellectual material with which he created *The Island of Doctor Moreau.* 'The Limits of Individual Plasticity', in particular, lays the foundations for the themes of the adaptability of flesh and possibilities for cross-species organic grafting presented in the narrative. In chapter fourteen of the novel, 'Doctor Moreau Explains', Moreau expounds at length on the basis for his experiments and his motivation for carrying them out. Much of what he discloses is essentially a fictionalisation of ideas put forth by Wells in that earlier essay. The concept of the living being as 'raw material, as something plastic, something that may be shaped and altered',[29] is a clear precursor to the vivisected 'monsters manufactured' of Moreau.[30] So connected are the essay and its fictionalised offspring that exemplars from the former even appear verbatim in Moreau's monologues, including a reference to the 'Hunter's cockspur flourishing on the bull's

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[25] The discussion of vivisection in the nineteenth century which follows later in this chapter will offer some answers to this crucial question.
[26] H. G. Wells, 'The Limits of Individual Plasticity', in *H. G. Wells: Early Writings in Science and Science Fiction,* ed. by Robert M. Philmus and David Y. Hughes (University of California Press, 1975), pp. 36–39.
[27] H. G. Wells, 'The Province of Pain', in *H. G. Wells: Early Writings in Science and Science Fiction,* ed. by Philmus and Hughes, pp. 194–99.
[28] H. G. Wells, 'Human Evolution, An Artificial Process'', in *H. G. Wells: Early Writings in Science and Science Fiction,* ed. by Philmus and Hughes, pp. 211–19.
[29] Wells, 'The Limits of Individual Plasticity', p. 36.
[30] Wells, *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, p. 71.

neck'.[31] Perhaps most strikingly of all, in light of the Huxleyan position, is Moreau's declaration that 'very much indeed of what we call moral education is such an artificial modification and perversion of instinct': another assertion lifted verbatim from 'The Limits of Individual Plasticity'.[32] Thus Moreau expresses, perhaps in less optimistic terms, Huxley's conviction that the capacity for ethical and moral consciousness, a defence against the ever-present animality of instinct, is unique to man.

'The Province of Pain' also deals in the theory of pain as an indicator of animal origins that characterises Moreau's attitude to pain in his experiments. Pain, suggests Wells, exists to prevent catastrophic damage to the animal body, and could be rendered obsolete if man could evolve to a state where intellect could replace its function. Moreau seeks to expunge the evolutionary imperative of pain from the living being and, in so doing, become the creator of a materially and sensorily hyper-evolved super-being. When he stabs himself in the thigh with a knife in a gruesome and bizarre demonstration of his own transcendence over pain, he is in fact performing an exaggerated version of the 'common trick among medical students to thrust a pin into the thigh' described in Wells' essay.[33] In 'The Province of Pain', Wells is asking the question that becomes the hypothesis of Moreau's work — namely whether man can eventually exist without the need for the protection from harm that pain provides: 'may he not grow so morally and intellectually as to get at last beyond the need of corporal chastisement, and foresight take the place of pain?'.[34] Here, as ever, the influence of Darwin on Wells was very clear; the former had expressed confidence in the ability of humans to progress towards perfection through natural selection,[35] and it is this pursuit of perfectibility to which Wells alludes in his own essay, and which Moreau is

[31] Wells, 'The Limits of Individual Plasticity', p. 37; Wells, *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, p. 71.
[32] Wells, *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, p. 73; Wells, 'The Limits of Individual Plasticity', p. 39. This is of particular interest considering Huxley's position, namely that ethics are what imbue man with his uniqueness and set him apart from the rest of the animal kingdom. That Wells appears to complicate his mentor's position on this, emphasising the thinness of such a distinction between man and animals, is both significant and relevant to analysis of the text.
[33] Wells, *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, p. 74; Wells, 'The Province of Pain', pp. 195–96. That this was a 'trick' performed by the medical fraternity at the time demonstrates that scientific thought was being paid to the question more generally, and that these men, like Moreau, were framing themselves as intellectually superior. The image of the medical scientist at the *fin de siècle* is discussed in more detail later.
[34] Wells, 'The Province of Pain', p. 197.
[35] Darwin, *On the Origin of Species*.

attempting to master and expedite in *The Island of Doctor Moreau*.[36]

Finally, in 'Human Evolution: An Artificial Process', Wells refers explicitly to *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, indicating that he intended the novel to demonstrate the two factors, inherited and acquired, that make up civilised man, and that their interplay is involved in the struggle to 'keep the round Palaeolithic savage in the square hole of the civilised state'.[37] This is perhaps most vividly illustrated in Prendick's own reflections on his humanity on Noble's Island, especially as he is eventually left alone with the rapidly 'degenerating' Beast Folk, who seem to return to their animal states in the absence of Moreau's oversight. This degeneration throws into relief the author's remarks about the role of ethics in the forward progress of evolution, the robustness of the ethical shield keeping man from his bestial roots, and what might need to be done to ensure its integrity. Prendick might be said to be holding on desperately to this ethical shield, this product of culture and not of nature, as it eventually becomes the only protection he has against the degeneration he sees around him. Alternatively, the degeneration of the Beast Folk might be seen to signal that they are, in the end, fundamentally distinct from Prendick; despite the damage done to his humanity by his experiences on the island, that humanity ultimately remains, thus the Beast Folk degenerate in a way that he does not. However, by this point in the narrative, Prendick has become aware of his own animality, and of the fact that the ethical shield in question is little more than social nicety in the face of nature. Zoologist Edwin Ray Lankester, another of Wells' one-time teachers, published a response to Darwinism which focused on degeneration as being one of three possible outcomes in the process of evolution.[38] Wells' first published novel, *The Time Machine* (1895), focuses on degeneration as resulting from the socio-political imbalances of a society misgoverned, evidencing his enduring interest in degeneration as an evolutionary outcome. Wells' own fascination with this topic thus reflects the general late Victorian ontological fear that if man has been raised up from a bestial form through a process of evolution, he might degenerate through a reversal of that process and be returned to

[36] As indicated in the first chapter, the idea of man's perfectibility had been an intellectual concern for the Romantics nearly a century earlier, and in particular for Shelley's father, William Godwin.
[37] Wells, 'Human Evolution', p. 218.
[38] E. Ray Lankester, *Degeneration: A Chapter in Darwinism* (Macmillan, 1880). The other possible outcomes were 'balance' and 'elaboration'.

the lesser form or forms from which he came.

The Meanings of Meat

The core controversy of Darwin's research was that it had located man as an animal: a notion anathema to many, and certainly disruptive to the idea of man's dominion over the earth. The truth he uncovered — that all humans could and ought to be regarded as animals, even Promethean man — was a destabilising revelation. If man could be figured as an animal, then he was necessarily confronted with the reality of his own animal qualities. One of the plethora of ways in which *The Island of Doctor Moreau* responds to the post-Darwinian moment in which it was written is by suggesting that where animality is present, so too is the question of edibility and what or who can be categorised as 'meat'. By presenting the reader with Beast Folk who are vegetarian by command of their creator, and a narrator who, at various points, must confront the prospects of his own edibility and vivisection, Wells experiments with the meaning of flesh against a backdrop of vegetarian thought that had gained impetus throughout the nineteenth century. This was a moment when the links between masculine identity and meat were as complex as they had been for the Romantics decades earlier.

The consumption of meat remained the norm, at least amongst those who could afford it, and the avoidance of it the aberration. It endured as both a valued status symbol and a standard of national identity. Colin Spencer describes this phenomenon thus, with reference to that most British of symbols, beef:

> Man, the product of the industrial society, allied with man, the representative of the British Empire, was a dynamic force and British beef was part and parcel of the British man. To claim that this substance was debilitating, exhausting and disturbing was absurd, which is why society as a whole tended to relegate the vegetarian movement to the pages of *Punch*.[39]

The mockery of vegetarianism as an attempt to neutralise what were regarded as its

[39] Colin Spencer, *Vegetarianism: A History* (Grub Street, 2016), p. 250.

inherent threats, then, was nothing new, and the wit of *Punch* revealed a great deal more than an idea of vegetarianism as ludicrous but harmless. The claims that had characterised Romantic vegetarianism — that the consumption of meat rendered man brutal and ethically and intellectually inept — remained a key tenet of vegetarian philosophy throughout the nineteenth century and beyond. The dominant cultural response to this assertion was frequently couched in terms of disdain and satire. The 'Grand Show of Prize Vegetarians', a *Punch* cartoon of 1851 (Fig. 2) in which vegetarian figures such as the 'Old Gent Fed Upon Beet Root' and the 'Young Gentleman of Property Fed Upon Radishes' are portrayed as if they were exhibits in a vegetable show with bodies part human and part vegetable, reveals mid-century anxieties about what the vegetarian diet could mean for a society that was struggling both to build and maintain an empire and to come to terms with a profound shift in understandings of both gender and species identity brought about through the revelations of science.[40] Nationalistic anxieties about the co-incidence of Darwinism, vegetarianism and social radicalism are evident in much of the mockery of vegetarianism that emerged throughout the second-half of the nineteenth century.[41] However, this did not mean that the radicalisms and reformist movements that came

[40] Darwin's *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex* (1871) described his theory of how natural and sexual selection had shaped the evolution of the human species specifically, emphasising the similarities between man and other animals. See Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex* (Penguin, 2004). See also Evelleen Richards, *Darwin and the Making of Sexual Selection* (University of Chicago Press, 2017). Richards makes the point that Darwin used the *Descent* to claim that, unlike other animals, the human male had been able to seize the power of sexual selection from women due to his physical and mental superiority. Despite the hostile note of much contemporary criticism of the *Descent*, then, and accusations that it credited both animals and women with too much power of discernment, it actually offered considerable consolation to the male ego, in concert with the sexist and racist overtones discussed previously. Modern criticism, including that of Richards, notes the sexist and racist tone of the work. For a briefer analysis, see Ian Hesketh and Henry-James Meiring, 'Guide to the Classics: Darwin's *The Descent of Man* 150 Years on — Sex, Race and Our "Lowly" Ape Ancestry', *The Conversation,* 24 February 2021 <https://theconversation.com/guide-to-the-classics-darwins-the-descent-of-man-150-years-on-sex-race-and-our-lowly-ape-ancestry-155305> [accessed 30 June 2024].

[41] While Darwin could be invoked in an attempt to locate man at the head of a natural order of which meat-eating was an inevitable part, the propositions of evolutionary theory were often also of rhetorical use to the vegetarian cause: a cause which was characterised as part of a broader movement of progressive politics and radicalism. See Elsa Richardson, 'Man is Not a Meat-Eating Animal: Vegetarians and Evolution in Late-Victorian Britain', *Victorian Review,* 45.1 (2019), pp. 117–34 and Elsa Richardson, 'Cranks, Clerks, and Suffragettes: The Vegetarian Restaurant in British Culture and Fiction 1880–1914', *Literature and Medicine,* 39.1 (2021), pp. 133–53. For a brief analysis of the mockery of vegetarianism in the nineteenth century, see also Rebecca Jones, 'Soyboys and Sensitivity: Mocking Meat-Avoidance from *Punch* to Twitter', *EPOCH*, December 2020, <https://www.epoch-magazine.com/jonesmockingmeatavoidance> [accessed 16 April 2024].

to exist by the end of the century always embraced vegetarianism as part of the vision for an improved society. In fact, vegetarianism was arguably subject to as much mockery and disdain from reformism as it was from more conservative voices.

FIG. 1. 'Grand Show of Prize Vegetarians'*, Punch,* 1851.

The scientific socialism of the *fin de siècle* with which Wells himself identified presented one such stream of radical thought, favouring as it did government in accordance with the rationalism of science as opposed to the idealistic will of socialism more generally. This scientific socialism was notable in its exclusion of the animal question. Indeed, the mockery of vegetarians of earlier in the century was still in evidence in scientific socialist rhetoric. In 1881, Henry Hyndman, the leader of the Social Democratic Federation (SDF), openly stated in defence of scientific socialism that 'I do not want the movement to be a depository of old cranks: humanitarians, vegetarians, anti-vivisectionists and anti-vaccinationists, arty-crafties and all the rest of them'.[42] Like many proponents of socialism more generally, Hyndman characterised the people engaged in these radical factions as emotional, faddish and sentimentalist 'cranks' who served to devalue, irrationalise and divide the socialist cause. This is not, of course, evidence that all adherents to the socialist movement

[42] Stephen Winsten, *Salt and his Circle* (Hutchinson, 1951), p. 64.

shared Hyndman's view. However, it does demonstrate that it was a view held by some at the very vanguard of the movement, and that movements for animal welfare such as vegetarianism and anti-vivisection were positions held in contempt even within progressive circles. It is thus possible to see, in the reformist landscape of the day, glaring exclusions that throw into relief inequalities that could be said to be a hangover from Enlightenment and pre-Enlightenment thought, and an expression of purported radicalisms that were nonetheless still coloured by Promethean values of male human exceptionalism. The act of othering and exclusion was being replicated and constructed anew, even within movements dedicated, ostensibly, to its opposition.[43]

Still, the Romantic vegetarian notion that cruelty to animals indicated a lack of humanitarian sensibilities, and that the Promethean gift of meat had been the moment of separation of man from God, persisted. In 1891, prominent vegetarian Henry Salt was among a group of radicals who established the Humanitarian League, the foundational principle of which was that it was fundamentally inhumane to do unnecessary harm to any sentient animal, including man. It was still the case that 'a mark of man's humanity was his potential for kindness towards animals',[44] largely because animals in general were still viewed as lower species and because a lack of care for animals marked a man out as bestial in his own way. The co-existence of differing ideas about animals at the *fin de siècle* is reflected in attitudes towards animals as food. The Shelleyan conviction that the morality and civilisation of man could be better assured by avoiding meat was still in evidence by the *fin de siècle*, and the ever-uneasy connections between masculinity and meat were further problematised in the wake of Darwinism. Rod Preece's commentary on the vegetarian movement in the Victorian and Edwardian periods is among the more comprehensive available, and paints a picture of a moment where spirituality and religion, secularism and socialist radicalism met in the regrouping of a movement now becoming more demonstrably focused on humanitarianism and the question of animal welfare for its own sake.[45] Like socialism itself, the vegetarian movement was made up of a heterogeneity of

[43] This proved to be as much the case in respect of women's rights and the suffragette movement as for the animal rights and welfare question. The impact on the former is discussed in more detail later.
[44] Hilda Kean, *Animal Rights: Political and Social Change in Britain Since 1800* (Reaktion Books, 2013), p. 108.
[45] Rod Preece, *Sins of the Flesh: A History of Ethical Vegetarian Thought* (UBC Press, 2008), p. 267–89.

interested parties from disparate backgrounds. Those involved in the foundation of the Vegetarian Society in Ramsgate in 1847 included William Horsell, the editor of the temperance magazine the *Truth Tester*, attendees of the Alcott House Concordium, a college which advocated education through the simple life under the leadership of socialist mystic James Pierrepoint Greaves, and Joseph Brotherton, the MP for Salford. Vegetarianism may well have remained the fringe concern of a minority, but that minority hailed from a wide range of other political and philosophical standpoints. The foundation of the Vegetarian Society was followed by a period of dwindling interest in vegetarianism in the 1860s and 1870s, before the movement returned to the socio-cultural foreground from the 1880s onwards. This dovetailed with increased public attention being paid to vivisection towards the end of the century, which helped to crystallise an ideological shift from vegetarianism for health and hygiene reasons to animal welfare specifically.[46]

In *The Island of Doctor Moreau,* vegetarianism proves to be a site of contradiction, and eating and edibility both significant to the boundary between man and animal.[47] Moreau is engaged in his Promethean scientific endeavour, the vivisection of animals, in the hope of creating a variant of man whose artificial evolutionary advancement has rendered pain obsolete. In so doing, he seeks to close the gap between man and god that was created by that first Promethean act, the consumption of meat. To maintain civilisation and order amongst the Beast Folk, and to prevent their degeneration back to their un-vivisected animal forms, Moreau has set down the 'Law': a set of commandments which prohibit certain 'animal-like' behaviours, including walking on four legs, lapping up water like animals, clawing, chasing other men and eating meat.[48] The Law is ostensibly intended to maintain the aspiration of the Beast Folk to human characteristics, even if that aspiration is trained into them through the threat of positive punishment: the prospect of a return to

[46] Spencer, *Vegetarianism*, p. 266. Spencer highlights the connection between this vegetarian resurgence and the anti-vivisection movement, adding that 'vivisection was entwined with vegetarians' dislike of medicine and doctors'.

[47] For Wells' part, he viewed vegetarianism with a distinct cynicism that is exemplified in his *Ann Veronica* (1909), in which he is scathing of the suffragette Miss Miniver, who is a friend of the idealistic fruitarian Goopes. See H. G. Wells, *Ann Veronica,* ed. by Sita Schutt (Penguin, 2005), p. 113–16. While meat is not eaten in Wells' *A Modern Utopia* (1905), this is due more to hygienic misgivings rather than ethical ones. See H. G. Wells, *A Modern Utopia,* ed. by Gregory Claeys and Patrick Parrinder (Penguin, 2005).

[48] Wells, *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, p. 59.

Moreau's laboratory, the 'House of Pain'. If one applies the vegetarian convictions about the bestialising effects of eating meat discussed previously, the enforced vegetarianism of the Beast Folk can be read as a civilisation imposed upon them by their creator, and their voracious consumption of meat after his death intrinsically connected to their concurrent degeneration. This vegetarianism also serves to emphasise the distinction between the 'real' animals on the island, such as the wild rabbits, and the Beast Folk, and the fact that the latter, like Frankenstein's Creature, occupy a space that is at once neither animal nor human. Where the Creature *chose* to avoid meat, the Beast Folk are marked out as less-than-human by a prohibition which is borne of Moreau's fear of their degeneration. While the Creature rejects meat of his own volition, as an expression of his capacity for thought and agency, the Beast Folk are prohibited from eating it by their creator's decree: a decree which is mostly obeyed, and against which disobedience is marked in violence and narrative significance. The possible civilising effects of Moreau's decree against meat notwithstanding, the decree itself is only necessary because Moreau recognises and fears the carnivorous animal in his creations which he has failed to purge. The Law itself is, in essence, a repetitive restatement of Moreau's Promethean failure.

Intriguingly, it later transpires that it is Montgomery, Moreau's drunken right-hand man, who has given the Beast Folk the taste for cooked meat, having demonstrated to his servant M'ling 'how to skin and cook a rabbit'.[49] This is striking, because the Promethean hierarchy on the island is ostensibly very clearly structured in all other relevant ways; Moreau is the Promethean scientist, and Montgomery and the narrator Prendick are located in positions of marginalisation or complicity throughout. Yet it is Montgomery who has engaged in perhaps the most quintessentially Promethean act of all. Despite his own patent failure to qualify as a Promethean man, he has given the Beast Folk fire to cook meat. The results of this will, of course, prove fatal for both him and Moreau. Montgomery's moment of Prometheanism was always going to be his undoing, just as Moreau's would be his, because self-destruction is precisely the nature of Promethean acts. The rejection of fire later proves to be another of the markers of degeneration among the Beast Folk: 'the creatures had lost the art of

[49] Ibid., p. 88.

fire too, and recovered their fear of it.'[50] Their eventual 'degeneration' into their animal forms at the end of the novella thus involves the eating of (uncooked) flesh, which had been denied them in a tacit recognition of their animality and, to borrow from Carol J. Adams, a 'rejection of the Promethean gift' of fire, too.[51] It is possible, in light of the logic of the novella, to read the degeneration of the Beast Folk into a prelapsarian state of greater animality that marks the complete and inevitable failure of Moreau's Promethean vision, as a type of humanisation. Thus the association of humanity and meat-eating remains fundamentally troubled and mired in paradox in a narrative which owes so much to the Darwinian interrogation of the human/animal boundary.

In addition to the question of animals as meat, Darwinian revelations of man as animal inflected ideas about man's edibility. Cannibalism represented an animalisation on two fronts. To cannibalise was, after all, both to animalise oneself and the cannibalised human, making oneself bestial by making another edible. Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century colonial projects in the global south had compounded the notion of the racialised other with which cannibalism came to be associated. This association proved rhetorically useful to the imperialist, colonialist project. If the image of the racialised natives of colonised lands could be elaborated upon with tales of their cannibalisation of white colonisers, the 'white man's burden' that was the impulse to civilise racialised others could be framed as ever more urgent, and justified by their characterisation, in Darwinian terms, as atavistic, under-evolved beings. This atavism was understood as a presence of primitive features from an earlier stage of human evolution which was evidenced in the physicality and behaviour of non-white populations; in other words, bestial, sub-human markers, which included the consumption of human flesh. Thus, Darwinian theory gave a scientific gloss to racist figurations of white European supremacy, and the notion of cannibalism amongst indigenous populations that marked them as evolutionarily inferior and so legitimate subjects of domination. The edibility of the white man and the primitive

[50] Ibid., p. 126. This adoption of the symbol of fire as a marker of civilisation recalls a similar state of affairs in *The Time Machine*, in which the Professor discovers that the human populations of the year 802,701 AD have lost their civilised relationship with fire. See Wells, *The Time Machine,* p. 36, 55.
[51] Carol J. Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory* (Bloomsbury, 2015), p. 101. Adams here refers to Frankenstein's Creature and his rejection of the Promethean gift of meat. I suggest that the Beast Folk's rejection of fire is analogous.

monstrosity of the cannibal were sources of terror for Wells' readership. This was illustrated by the outcome of *Regina v. Dudley and Stephens* (1884).[52] The case was made against Dudley and Stephens, two members of the crew of the wrecked *Mignonette,* that they, stranded at sea and starving, had committed murder when they cut the throat of, and ate, teenage cabin boy Richard Parker. Dudley and Stephens were found guilty of murder and initially sentenced to death before commutation to imprisonment. *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, too, opens with the looming, terrible prospect of cannibalism,[53] foreshadowing the preoccupation with the definition and consumption of 'meat' that slips persistently into the consciousness of the novel. Prendick is one of three men in the dinghy of the sunken ship *Lady Vain,* faced with drawing lots to decide which of them will become meat for the others to ensure their survival. So anathema is this very idea that Prendick, in reporting it to the reader, never names it, referring to it euphemistically as 'the thing we all had in mind',[54] signifying the ontological horror of human edibility, and his own capacity for being willing to countenance realising that edibility in order to survive. He is only spared this ordeal when his two shipmates brawl and subsequently fall overboard and drown. The double animalisation noted above is apparent here; Prendick is at once confronted with the possibility of his resorting to an extreme that is coded as racialised, animal and atavistic, or being rendered edible. Both trouble his identity as a white Englishman: an identity which offers him comfort and protection. The question of cannibalism is raised again when he is rescued and returned to health by Montgomery. Montgomery feeds Prendick a bloodlike red liquid by way of a restorative to counteract the hunger that he describes as a force that drains his masculinity.[55] The unmanning desperation of a hunger that renders the taboo of cannibalism a conceivable possibility is thus demonstrated once again. Cannibalism, then, is one of the ways in which the boundary between human and animal is constructed through food and eating in the novel. Food, and what or who is eaten, serve as loci where this boundary begins to break down.

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[52] *R v Dudley and Stephens* [1884] 14 QBD 273 <https://www.iclr.co.uk/document/1881000425/casereport_71820/html> [accessed 30 June 2024].
[53] Wells was very probably inspired by *Regina v Dudley and Stephens*. See Wells, *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, p. 133.
[54] Wells, *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, p. 8.
[55] Ibid., p. 24. 'Hunger and a shortage of blood-corpuscles take all the manhood from a man.'

Vivisection as Science and Violence

During the nineteenth century, access to scientific education had undergone something of an expansion from a gentlemanly occupation to an arena in which middle-class participants might professionalise. Developments in science, Darwinism not least among them, had engaged the attention of the public, to the extent that science was both culturally and politically significant, influencing, and being influenced by, the wider context in which it was being carried out.[56] Bernard Lightman and Bennett Zon locate the emergence of disciplines and professionalisms, a development from earlier visions of 'unity' in science, in the latter part of the nineteenth century,[57] occurring against a backdrop of socio-cultural and institutional flux.[58] John Pickstone, too, has emphasised the developing status of nineteenth-century science as a 'collective' of disciplines,[59] wherein, by the latter part of the century 'middle-class dissenters opposed to the state church' had begun to find a home.[60] Chief among these dissenters was Wells' own teacher, Huxley. In the early part of the century, the broader landscape of science had been dominated by Oxbridge-educated aristocrats, with the middle class beginning to enter the field in earnest around the 1850s.[61] Huxley became a prominent voice in a movement for the more widespread learning and teaching of science, arguing that it was every bit as necessary as the traditional, and traditionally elitist, classical curriculum.[62] As science gradually came to reflect a secularisation and professionalisation exemplified by its Huxleyan participants, so attention turned to

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[56] Bernard Lightman, 'Introduction', in *Victorian Science in Context*, ed. by Bernard Lightman (University of Chicago Press, 1997), pp. 1–12 (pp. 1–3).
[57] Bernard Lightman and Bennett Zon, 'Introduction', in *Victorian Culture and the Origin of Disciplines*, ed. by Bernard Lightman and Bennett Zon (Routledge, 2020), pp. 1–17. See also Bernard Lightman, 'The Evolution of the Scientific Disciplines', in *Victorian Culture and the Origin of Disciplines*, ed. by Lightman and Zon, pp. 21–40.
[58] Bernard Lightman, 'The Evolution of the Scientific Disciplines'.
[59] John Pickstone, 'Science in Nineteenth-Century England: Plural Configurations and Singular Politics', in *The Organisation of Knowledge in Victorian Britain*, ed. by Martin Daunton (Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 29–60 (p. 32).
[60] Ibid., p. 45.
[61] Bernard Lightman, 'Introduction', p. 1. See also Pickstone, 'Science in Nineteenth-Century England', p. 44. Pickstone juxtaposes 'British Association gentlemen of the 1830s' and 'professional-scientist "players" from the 1850s'.
[62] Thomas Henry Huxley, *Science and Culture, and Other Essays* (D. Appleton, 1882), pp. 13–14. Huxley argued that 'for the purpose of attaining real culture an exclusively scientific education is at least as effectual as an exclusively literary education'. See Lightman and Zon, 'Introduction', p. 1, and Pickstone, 'Science in Nineteenth-Century England', p. 38.

practical and experimental methods in favour of the more analytical ones that had gone before.[63] Among these experimental methods, spurred by an increased interest in what could be learned from animal bodies as a result of Darwinism, was a particular interest in vivisection. The century's scientific revolution and burgeoning field of medical science and surgery were attended by a greater interest in physiology, which in turn brought practical and ethical questions around the practice of vivisection to both scientific and public attention.

The increased interest in vegetarianism at the *fin de siècle* coincided with a moment of intensified attention to vivisection and the moral and ethical concerns around its use, particularly given the gradual rise to prominence of what was referred to, in some quarters, as a 'new priesthood' of scientists emergent in the wake of Darwinism. In 1893, novelist Maria Louise Ramé, writing under the pseudonym Ouida, published an anti-vivisection essay titled 'The New Priesthood: A Protest Against Vivisection', in which she suggested that 'the leading physiologists claim much such a blind trust in their wisdom from the rest of humanity as did the augurs of old'. In this context in which the secular scientist was in ascendancy, Ouida decried the vivisector as a man who had replaced the priest as an intermediary between ordinary people and knowledge and understanding.[64] Where critique or objection to the actions of the vivisector arose, this was frequently dismissed as emerging from an excess of feminine emotion analogous to the irrational and yet-to-be-tamed natural world and the non-human, or else as a throwback to religious superstition. The practice of vivisection, underpinned by Darwinian science, became one of the key foci of critique about scientists' status and conduct and, significantly, the value they placed on those who fell outside of their Promethean sphere.

The status of the bodies of animals as sites of experimentation, far from being undermined by Darwin's revelation that the difference between human and animal was one of degree and not of kind, was sanctioned by the scientific and medical establishment primarily in terms of its being a necessary evil if the furtherance of

[63] Lightman and Zon, 'Introduction', p. 4. See also Lightman, 'Introduction', pp. 7–8, in which Lightman characterises this period in science as a jostling for influence between 'Tory-Anglican' traditionalists and the more secular reformer typified by Huxley.
[64] See Ouida, 'The New Priesthood: A Protest Against Vivisection', in *The Collected Works of Ouida* (Delphi Classics, 2017).

science and human medicine was to be achieved. This furtherance was frequently couched in terms of man's destiny and the good and noble nature of the goal. Social Darwinism, which sought to apply Darwin's ideas about natural and sexual selection to socio-economic and socio-political questions in order to privilege the strong over the weak, could be employed to reinforce the idea that to vivisect lesser species was justified on account of the potential benefits to man. French physiologist Claude Bernard, for example, framed the pursuit of vivisection as a means by which the previously unattainable religious hope of everlasting life could be achieved through man's scientific pursuits, which need not exclude either animal or indeed human experimentation.[65] The scientific man, went the argument, must be allowed these resources to lead the advance of the species. That the commitment to a very specific conception of human exceptionalism survived Darwin into the 'heyday' of physiology, then, is clear. In fact, Darwin's contribution to scientific discourse furnished the catalyst for new Promethean projects. The belief that *some* humans somehow represented an evolutionary zenith displaced religious notions of man's God-given dominion over the Earth, and this is evidenced not least through observing how the utility of a living being is decided and by whom in science at this time. The status of the man of science, of course, had the useful effect of sanctifying acts of cruelty when conducted in a laboratory setting.

Through vivisection, animal bodies were presented as a preliminary to discoveries about the human body, and as a means to an end, whatever that end might be. One of the aspects of vivisection so fearful to many was the very fact that it was performed, not by those of the ostensibly brutish and bestial working classes in whom cruelty might be expected, but by men who were legitimised by education, and by readings of Darwinism that sanctioned cruelty based on a hierarchy of evolution and male human exceptionalism. It is also noteworthy that the concept of scientific objectivity, too, emerged in the context of the latter part of the nineteenth-century. Mechanical objectivity, an alternative to the universality-seeking truth-to-nature approach that had characterised the naturalism of the eighteenth century, involved the use of mechanics and apparatus in the hope of observing nature in ways that were not

[65] Claude Bernard, *An Introduction to the Study of Experimental Medicine*, trans. by Henry Copley Greene (Dover Publications, 1957). As is discussed later, this is a conviction that one can find clearly reflected in Wells' characterisation of Moreau.

subject to human bias.[66] Thus, an overweening concept of authority-through-objectivity, coupled with the utilisation of objectivity-bringing apparatus that were nonetheless man-made, inflected the context in which this renewed interest in vivisection emerged. In this sense, there proved to be some advantages to the vivisector in being framed as priestlike in the way Ouida had articulated. Indeed, it was imagery that could be useful in making the act of vivisection seem more palatable as a necessary ill conducted by an objective professional, especially when the public expressed concern about the ethics of the project. In figuring the vivisector in this way, the image of his performing a sacrifice in order to call down the benefits of physiology on the uneducated public flock is a striking one; as Coral Lansbury expresses it, 'like the priest offering up the sacrifice of Christ's body and blood for the salvation of mankind, the vivisector killed his victims for the sake of humanity', and the operating table represented his altar.[67] Such trappings served to confer upon vivisectors a veneration bordering on quasi-spiritual awe. However, couching the vivisection of an animal in terms of 'sacrifice' was, of course, rhetorically useful for the anti-vivisectionist movement too, emphasising as it did the bloody and unwilling sacrifice of innocence at the altar of the vivisectionist's pride.

As an organised political movement, anti-vivisection gained significant momentum from the 1870s onwards, in response to the reported actions of continental vivisectors including Bernard and his compatriot Francois Magendie, both of whom were infamous for their experiments on animals. The National Anti-Vivisection Society was founded in 1875, and the Cruelty to Animals Act (1876), known as the Vivisection Act, came about in response to an increased opposition to vivisection in the preceding decades, with the stated intention of ensuring that only licensed professionals would be permitted to perform such experiments. While the Act was fiercely opposed by the scientific establishment, for many, its restrictions went nowhere near far enough. Author and lawyer Stephen Coleridge decried it as

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[66] See Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, *Objectivity* (Zone Books, 2010) for a comprehensive discussion of the emergence of the concept in the mid nineteenth century.

[67] Coral Lansbury, *The Old Brown Dog: Women, Workers, and Vivisection in Edwardian England* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), pp. 163–65. The journals of Lizzy Lind-af-Hageby and Leisa Schartau, two female students recounting the incompetence and unruly behaviour they witnessed during vivisectional experiments, described the physiologist lecturer as wearing 'the blood-stained surplice of the priest of vivisection'. See Lizzy Lind-af-Hageby and Leisa Schartau, *The Shambles of Science: Extracts from the Diary of Two Students of Physiology* (Ernest Bell, 1903), p. 20.

legislation that 'expressly exempted the vivisector from observing the law of the land, and permitted him to do what cabmen and costermongers remained punishable for doing. It legalized the torture of animals, domestic or wild, if the torture were inflicted by a selected class of persons'.[68] Coleridge's denunciation gestures at one of the crucially important points about vivisection as a Promethean endeavour at the *fin de siècle*: namely that it was legitimised as a pursuit for knowledge that would improve the condition of man.

Conversely, vivisectors were vehement in their objections to the limitations placed on their experiments by the Act, as well as in their dismissal of the anti-vivisection movement generally. Surgeon James Paget, for example, employed some of the more ubiquitous defences of vivisection: that its objectors were nonetheless permissive of hunting practices far more painful to the animal than physiological experiments; that such animals were bred to be vivisected; that the gains outweighed the harm; and that anti-vivisection arguments 'are mainly based on kindly feeling and sympathy with sufferings of which the amount is guessed at'.[69] This last is of particular relevance to the scientific socialist vision, which insisted upon the moral and ethical infallibility of government by scientific principle. Much of the opposition to the control of vivisection centred on the argument that those who favoured control were not cognisant of how the experiments were performed or their importance for human physiology: that they lacked the scientific education, not to mention the robust objectivity, to fully understand the issue. A frequent refrain of the scientist in defence of vivisection was that its detractors ought to be disregarded due to their ignorance, and that the scientific establishment was made up of informed, good men who could be trusted never to inflict pain unless entirely necessary.

However, the scandal caused by the testimony of vivisector Emanuel Klein before the Royal Commission in 1875 arguably did more to undermine the assertion that vivisectors never caused unnecessary pain than the anti-vivisection movement

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[68] Stephen Coleridge, *Vivisection: A Heartless Science* (John Lane, 1916), p. 15. Coleridge's words, like those of Ouida, draw attention to the fact that vivisection was performed by an intellectually exclusive group. Coleridge, who led the National Anti-Vivisection Society, was a religious man who opposed what he regarded as the Darwinian reduction of man to a species of animal and felt that the scientific revolution had had a detrimental impact on society.

[69] James Paget, 'Vivisection: its Pains and its Uses – I', *Nineteenth Century,* 10.58 (1881), pp. 920–30. Thus empathetic humanitarianism towards animals continued to be framed as a characteristic of eccentricity and/or ignorance.

itself ever did, and doubtlessly contributed to the passing of the Vivisection Act the following year.[70] Klein, much to the chagrin of many of his fellow vivisectors, made it clear that it was not considered the business of the vivisector to invest thought or time in the level of pain suffered by vivisected animals:

> just as little as a sportsman or a cook goes inquiring into the detail of the whole business while the sportsman is hunting or the cook putting lobster into boiling water, just as little as one may expect these persons to go inquiring into the detail of the feeling of the animal.[71]

As to what constitutes cruelty, here the subjectivity of the animals concerned was doubly removed: first by the act of vivisection itself, and then by the insistence that the one who defines the level and necessity of the pain they experience is the man inflicting it. While members of the establishment continued to insist on the necessity of experiments on animals, then, the contemporaneous anti-vivisection movement was made up of key figures from a variety of socio-political backgrounds and grew in power and influence in the latter part of the nineteenth century. As a result, vivisection, as well as having material and practical significance, came to have important symbolic and ideological meaning, too.

The 'new priesthood' was thus made up of Promethean men who were the holders of power and legitimacy in the form of knowledge, which they deployed in ways that oppressed animals and the more-than-human world. Even if this reality was a far cry from the spirit of Wells' aspirations to an ideal of scientific socialism, he certainly believed in the scientists' right to govern, and drew upon this in both his fiction and his non-fiction. In *A Modern Utopia* (1905), for example, he offers a detailed insight into his vision for a scientific socialist society governed by the educated, rather than by means of aristocracy, nationalistic sentiment or party

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[70] Richard D. French, *Antivivisection and Medical Science in Victorian Society* (Princeton University Press, 1975), p. 103. French says of Klein that he was 'Frances Power Cobbe's archvivisector incarnate' (referring to prominent anti-vivisection campaigner Frances Power Cobbe, discussed in more detail later) and cites 'bitter indictments of Klein' sent by Huxley to Darwin and Burdon Sanderson in which Huxley made clear his feeling that Klein had done nothing but to benefit the anti-vivisection cause.
[71] Ibid., p. 104.

politics.[72] His utopia is a world state governed by a group of volunteers called 'Samurai',[73] who rule over a population divided into four intellectual 'classes', namely the Poietic, the Kinetic, the Dull and the Base. Membership of the Samurai is only open to the Poietic and the Kinetic, who are considered, to all intents and purposes, to be those of creative, or at least capable, intellect. Personal property is minimal, and so the classes in Wells' utopia are arranged on these intellectual functions rather than on the basis of wealth. The free availability of education in his utopia notwithstanding, in structuring its governance in this way, Wells is simply redistributing power to those with a predisposition to intellect rather than inherited wealth. There is a distinct implication that such intellect is indeed a predisposition, and a dismissal of the two 'lower' orders as inherently incompetent and so naturally subject to the higher orders. What this demonstrates is that Wells' vision for an ideal societal structure sustained the concept of the 'new priesthood': of a group who enjoyed pre-eminence on account of their scientific expertise.

Strikingly, there is a notable supposition that those predisposed to intellectual ability would also always be predisposed to the moral and ethical integrity required to rule for the good of all — that human character to which Huxley asserted that the scientific mind ought to aspire. What results is a vision of a benevolent patriarchy: a dictatorship of the scientifically educated which governs without opposition. In his autobiography, Wells asserted that 'we want the world ruled, not by everybody, but by a politically minded organization open, *with proper safeguards*, to everybody'.[74] This, of course, calls into question what these 'safeguards' were, or ought to be, both in theory and in practice, and who or what was to be rendered invisible in their pursuit. While the latter part of the nineteenth century saw scientific education popularised and made more accessible through the efforts of Huxley and others to improve scientific

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[72] While the concept dates to the early nineteenth century, scientific socialism, or the idea of scientific government driven by reason rather than unqualified will, became of greater interest in the Darwinian context.

[73] A concept reminiscent of, if not strictly analogous to, Salomon's House of Bacon's *New Atlantis,* the pre-eminent society whose focus is 'the study of the Works and Creatures of God' (p. 167). Bacon's utopia has a king, and so governance is not the preserve of the scientifically adept as in Wells' own vision, but the veneration of the members of Salomon's House offers an interesting pre-cursor to the propositions of scientific socialism and the 'new priesthood' of scientists at the *fin de siècle.* See Wells, *A Modern Utopia,* pp. 174–211; Francis Bacon, *New Atlantis*, in *Three Early Modern Utopias*, ed. by Susan Bruce (Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 149–86.

[74] Wells, *Experiment in Autobiography,* p. 605 (my emphasis).

learning and teaching,[75] it is also the case that nature remained female-coded and that this framing of nature was further entrenched by the 'decisive authority' of science post-Darwin.[76] While Pickstone correctly points out that learning about natural history became accessible to women, there were still socio-cultural and socio-political structures preventing women from accessing education and professionalising on an equal footing with men in science.[77] Wells will have seen and understood this for himself. While he suggests that neither sex nor race should be a barrier to intellectual ascendancy in his utopia, his explanations of how this would be made the case can seem idealistic and naïve in their simplicity. Of course, the real world at the *fin de siècle* was a different proposition altogether, as Wells was presumably acknowledging in the very act of putting forward his utopian vision at all.

Less than ten years after the publication of *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, the so-called Brown Dog Affair demonstrated the strength of the burgeoning anti-vivisection movement. In 1906, a statue of a brown dog was erected in Latchmere Recreation Ground, Battersea, in commemoration of the victims of vivisection. The erection of the statue, and particularly its inscription, which they regarded as inflammatory, had infuriated vivisectionists who, characteristically of the 'new priesthood', felt that the anti-vivisection movement represented sentimental naïveté at best and the calculated obstruction of scientific progress at worst.[78] The scientists' position was upheld by the Research Defence Society (RDS), which would find itself leading the charge against the anti-vivisection movement during the episode, in a moment that would polarise Promethean science on the one hand and the question of ethics and subjectivity in their dealings with the expelled non-Promethean on the other.[79] Founded in 1908, the RDS was a concerted response by scientists to the successes of the anti-vivisection movement at that time, and its very existence

[75] See Bernard Lightman, 'Introduction', p. 3, and Pickstone, 'Science in Nineteenth-Century England', p. 58.
[76] Bernard Lightman, 'Introduction', p. 8.
[77] Pickstone, 'Science in Nineteenth-Century England'. p. 35.
[78] James Gregory, *Of Victorians and Vegetarians: The Vegetarian Movement in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Bloomsbury, 2020), p. 70. Gregory discusses the medical establishment's dismissal of vegetarianism and other perceived anti-scientific and radical 'fads' as a symptom of a lack of understanding, a result of 'popular discomfort at being left behind by advancing science'. See also Richardson, 'Cranks, Clerks and Suffragettes'; Preece, *Sins of the Flesh,* and Spencer, *Vegetarianism* for more on the connections between these radicalisms and how they were employed to conjure stereotypes about vegetarians and anti-vivisectionists.
[79] See Lansbury, *The Old Brown Dog* for a detailed discussion.

evidences the fear within the scientific community that the movement had the potential for considerable public sway. Wells himself was a member of the Society and, while *The Island of Doctor Moreau* itself reveals him to have been conscious of vivisection's potential monstrosities, he was nevertheless profoundly sceptical of the anti-vivisection movement. In his *Textbook of Biology* (1897), in a discussion about nervous and muscular reflexes, he suggested that 'perhaps after all, pain is not scattered so needlessly and lavishly throughout the world as the enemies of the vivisectionist would have us believe'.[80] By 1927, he was categorical in his condemnation of anti-vivisection, writing in the *Sunday Express* that anti-vivisectionists were motivated not by a desire to prevent cruelty but a determination to hold up scientific progress, based on a 'fantasy' of what animal experimentation actually looked like:

> anti-vivisection is not really a campaign against pain at all. The real campaign is against the thrusting of a scientific probe into mysterious and hidden things which it is felt should either be approached in a state of awe, tenderness, excitement, or passion, or else avoided. It is, we begin to realise, a campaign to protect a world of fantasy against science.[81]

Thus, Wells, by 1927 at least, was subscribing to the stereotype of the anti-vivisectionist as equal parts emotional and ignorant, and was well aware that the contentiousness of vivisectionists' behaviour related to their penetrative attitude to animal bodies. The image of the 'thrusting probe' echoes the Baconian science of Victor Frankenstein, and calls to mind the penetrative Promethean 'prick tale'. Wells does not favour the legal prohibition of vivisection. Jill Felicity Durey suggests that the purpose of *The Island of Doctor Moreau* was 'to demonstrate the danger in absolute

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[80] H. G. Wells, *Textbook of Biology: Part 1 — Vertebrata* (University Correspondence College Press, 1897), I, p. 44.

[81] H. G. Wells, 'The Way the World is Going', *Sunday Express,* 24 July 1927, p. 10. Laura Otis suggests that both Wells' *The Island of Doctor Moreau* and Wilkie Collins' *Heart and Science* (1882) were fictionalised responses to the 1881 trial of physiologist David Ferrier for performing experiments in contravention of the Vivisection Act (1876). The charge against Ferrier was dropped when it transpired that it was in fact another physiologist, Gerald Francis Yeo, who had conducted the experiments. See Laura Otis, 'Howled Out of the Country: Wilkie Collins and H. G. Wells Retry David Ferrier', in *Neurology and Literature, 1860–1920*, ed. by Anne Stiles (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 27–51, and Wilkie Collins, *Heart and Science: A Story of the Present Time* (Okitoks Press, 2017).

prohibitions of scientific practices',[82] and that one of the salient points of the narrative was that Moreau might have been able to carry out his experiments with far less cruelty if he hadn't been cast out of society for vivisection in the first place. This is admittedly compelling, though Moreau's disdain and disregard for his experimental subjects remains a damning aspect of his character. It is possible, then, that Wells' own attitude to vivisection underwent a shift in the early decades of the twentieth century, his commitment to its necessity later becoming more assured than the ambivalent characterisation of Moreau in 1896 might initially suggest. One might even speculate that the increasing momentum of the anti-vivisection movement, and events such as the Brown Dog Affair, served to effect this entrenchment of Wells' views.

The Brown Dog Affair eventually led to marches and riots demanding the removal of the statue. This was the eventual outcome, with the local council deciding to remove it under cover of darkness on the night of 10 March 1906, largely because of the scale of the resources that had been required both to protect the statue and to police protest and counter-protest. The Brown Dog Affair was a flashpoint in the late Victorian and Edwardian conflict between animal experimentation and anti-vivisection.[83] Crucially, it represented something of a culmination of debate around how science was carried out and by whom that had raged throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, and had been playing out as Wells conceived of and wrote *The Island of Doctor Moreau*. It served to emphasise the male domination and control of scientific pursuits that were alleged to be for the benefit of all, while simultaneously oppressing and objectifying those who existed outside of a Promethean privilege that was justified in the language of social Darwinism and objectivity. The 'new priesthood' is thus analogous with Prometheanism, a hegemonic masculinity wherein unchecked scientific ambition confers hegemony. Vivisection proved to be a site where this hegemony manifested.

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[82] Jill Felicity Durey, 'Vivisection Through the Eyes of Wilkie Collins, H. G. Wells and John Galsworthy', *Medical Humanities,* 47 (2021), pp. 333–43 (p. 337).

[83] This is not to suggest that there were no exceptions, or that there was a complete lack of opposition to vivisection within the scientific and medical communities. In the mid nineteenth century, veterinary scientist William Youatt had dismissed 'most animal vivisection […] as unnecessary and overrated'. William Youatt, *The Obligation and Extent of Humanity to Brutes, Principally Considered with Reference to the Domesticated Animals* (Longman, Orme, Brown, Green and Longman, 1839), p. 37. Edward Berdoe, too, an anti-vivisectionist physician, wrote damningly on the subject of vivisection based on his own experiences in the field.

In *The Island of Doctor Moreau,* Moreau's project is a vivisectional one. He has menageries of animals brought to the island, whose intended purpose is as experimental material. They are not released into the wild in their animal forms, instead suffering the curtailment of these natural states of animality, first through imprisonment, and then through vivisection. It is human intervention into evolution and the prospect of degeneration that are the matters at issue on the island. Mindful of Darwin's discoveries as to the genesis of human life, Moreau uses artificial means to select for certain features, taking advantage of the proposed 'plasticity' of forms, in this case focusing on the elimination of pain with the intention of creating the perfect human. The result, though, is the creation of a species of mismatched hybrids, a population of animals vivisected into vaguely humanised shapes.

The inhumane and unethical nature of Moreau's experiments is most vividly conveyed in Prendick's description of their uncanny results. When he first lands on the island, he considers the boatmen, registering 'something in their faces — I knew not what — that gave me a spasm of disgust'.[84] This is compounded later on by their voices, described as 'guttural' and 'chattering'.'[85] As M'ling attends him on the island, he seems 'unnatural' to Prendick, and gives him 'a nasty little sensation'.[86] At this point in the novella Prendick is taking these creatures to be human, rather than the vivisected animals they in fact are, and it is an unconscious realisation of their non-human animality that is inspiring in him this sense of horror and the uncanny. His unconscious is reaching to acknowledge the animality of the Beast Folk, and it is his sense of the impossibility of men being animal, and animals being men, that forecloses this realisation until it is made undeniable by the evidence of his own senses. For Prendick, as for the reader at the *fin de siècle*, Moreau's scientific over-ambition has created what should not exist, and what is thus an enormous challenge to parse into reality.

The features that Prendick associates with humanity and civilisation are revealing and speak to the disruption to the human/animal boundary caused by Darwinism, his preconceived ideas providing much of the map by which the species categorisation of the Beast Folk is navigated. For example, he equates being clothed

[84] Wells, *The Island of Doctor Moreau,* p. 27.
[85] Ibid., p. 28.
[86] Ibid., p. 37.

with being civilised. When he is shocked to see one of the Beast Folk lapping water like an animal — 'a man, going on all fours like a beast!'[87] — he reassures himself that, as the 'man' was 'clothed in bluish cloth' and 'not […] naked as a savage would have been', he could not be dangerous.[88] Later, when he becomes aware of the true nature of the Beast Folk, Prendick seems to undergo a shift in understanding. It is in the characteristics that his own thinking prescribes as inherently human that the shift in view of the Beast Folk occurs: 'they may once have been animals. But never before did I see an animal trying to think'.[89] Clearly it is in the ability to think and reason, and the use of language, that Prendick feels the essence of what it is to be human can be found. Yet he also looks to more superficial, and arguably far less scientific, markers, such as the wearing of clothes. Those things which he has been used to reading as human, and those he has been used to reading as animal, are in a constant state of flux during his time on the island, Moreau's vivisectional experiments having resulted in ontological disorder. When Prendick sees three of the Beast Folk chanting The Law, he observes that 'the three creatures engaged in this mysterious rite were human in shape, and yet human beings with the strangest air about them of some familiar animal.'[90] He perceives the Beast Folk through a lens of abjection and disgust, describing them as 'caricatures of humanity',[91] taking on a motley array of cross-species forms, some better approximating the human form than others. There are echoes of this conviction in Prendick's attitude to the Ape Man much later on in the novel, when Moreau and Montgomery are dead and he is the only man left on the island. He comes to resent the Ape Man, finding him irritating as 'he assumed, on the strength of his five digits, that he was my equal'.[92] This reaction to a species so close to the human is an interesting invocation of the Darwinian assertion of man's close relationship to the ape, and the frequency of satirical responses to it that emerged at the *fin de siècle*. Conversely, Prendick eventually arrives at a grudging fondness for the Dog Man,[93] who comes to embody all the loyalty and servility that humans have

[87] Ibid., p. 40.
[88] Ibid., p. 40
[89] Ibid., p. 69.
[90] Ibid., p. 42.
[91] Ibid., p. 60.
[92] Ibid., p. 122.
[93] Ibid., p. 121–23.

sought from, and trained into, the canine. There are, then, some species distinctions at play among the Beast Folk, some resorting to species-based stereotypes of role and behaviour, and it is an over-simplification to consider them as a homogenous group of others. Yet all the while, it is something uncanny and yet not of one species that disturbs Prendick: the 'generalized animalism'[94] of the Beast Folk, that defiance of categorisation, and the cross-species parts artificially combined to approximate the human. Moreau has contaminated the previous clarity of species distinction, disrupting animal taxonomy altogether.

While the existence and repetition of the Law certainly reveal a great deal about the Beast Folk, they also speak to Moreau's self-image. The Law is a means by which his Prometheanism is enacted through a quasi-religious set of commandments handed down from him to the Beast Folk. The proscriptions of the Law reveal Moreau's anxieties surrounding the Beast Folk and the threats they might pose if allowed to exist unrestrained. However, they also serve to fashion Moreau's own role on the island. When Prendick witnesses the Saying of the Law, he declares that 'a horrible fancy came into my head that Moreau, after animalizing these men, had infected their dwarfed brains with a kind of deification of himself'.[95] Such an observation invites comparison with the image of the 'new priesthood' of scientists previously discussed; Moreau's scientific exploits have resulted in his becoming quite literally priestlike, forced into the irrational position of one who leans on the Beast Folk's fears in order to remain in control.

Prendick admits to a vague feeling of communion in the spectacle of the Saying of the Law: that 'the contagion of these brute men was upon me, but deep down within me laughter and disgust struggled together'.[96] At this point, Prendick is still under the misapprehension that the Beast Folk are animalised men and so, in some respects, is viewing the spectacle upside down, as one of humans behaving uncomfortably animal-like, rather than animals doing a convincing job of that most human of activities — practising religion. Later, when he finds out that these are not men who have been animalised as much as they are animals who have been humanised, the spectacle of the Law and what it comes to symbolise undergo a shift. In the end, however, the

[94] Ibid., 124.
[95] Ibid., p. 59.
[96] Ibid., p. 59.

results are remarkably difficult to separate; the Beast Folk defy the species categorisation that Prendick believed he had very firmly marked out and hierarchised in his mind, and this mimicry of religious ritual compounds that destabilised categorisation. After all, despite the challenges to the radical separation of man from animal heralded by Darwin, such a separation remained deeply engrained, and the Promethean men of Victorian science restated it with every vivisection they performed.

Moreau himself regards the Law with disgust, dismissing it as a 'mockery of a rational life'.[97] However, it is clear that he depends on it, and on his myth as all-powerful deity, for safety and survival. This is, of course, profoundly unscientific; Moreau cannot rely on the rationalism of science to exert control outside of his laboratory, in the external space where the theoretical gives way to the messiness, emotion and comparative illogic of existence itself. The importance of mythmaking as a way to provide behavioural and attitudinal prescriptive archetypes is exemplified here. When the Leopard Man is found to have eaten flesh, it is the Law against such an act that Moreau invokes in his attempt to regain control.[98] The Law may well be a 'mockery', but it is a mockery that Moreau, and by extension Montgomery and Prendick, find useful for their own preservation. In responding in this way, Moreau is citing his own Promethean myth in order to prescribe certain behaviour and to attempt to shore up categories on the island that he himself has upset. Thus, Moreau's Prometheanism, like all Prometheanism, brings its own undoing.

The pursuit of the Leopard Man is a turning point in the narrative, and an episode that has a particularly profound effect on Prendick. The way in which the Leopard Man flees, on all fours, only compounds his offence against the Law.[99] The injunctions against exhibiting animal-like physical behaviours are intended to retain the human characteristics that have been artificially carved into the Beast Folk. It is after killing him in an act of mercy that Prendick truly begins to consider what it means for the Beast Folk to be the rejected, failed experimental subjects of Moreau's arrogant Promethean project. The agonisingly close encounter with the Leopard Man and that creature's fear of being returned to Moreau's 'House of Pain' reveals the true

[97] Ibid., p. 79.
[98] Ibid., p. 90.
[99] Ibid., p. 92.

messiness of what it is that Moreau has tried, and spectacularly failed, to do. Indeed, Prendick recognises in the Leopard Man an ability to feel fear and pain in a way that approximates the human capacity so closely that he understands he has a moral obligation to kill him to prevent that suffering. He regards 'the light gleaming in its eyes' and 'its imperfectly human face distorted with terror' as reflecting 'the fact of its humanity'.[100] He sees that, beyond being plunged into being in a context of unimaginable pain, these hybrid creatures must then live in a perpetual state of unbelonging and ontological confusion,[101] forced into an artificial community of all non-human species and yet none.

The Beast Folk, then, are symbols of Moreau's own intellectual and experimental failure,[102] and he presides over them as a disinterested god figure by means of the Law.[103] Initially, Prendick wrongly concludes that the Beast Folk are 'animalized victims'[104] of Moreau's experiments, whereas the uncanny nature of the Beast Folk in fact rests in their being humanised animals who Moreau has vivisected in order to attempt to locate and excise the very essence of animality. They are failed attempts to transcend the embodied weakness inherent in all animals, man included, and to apply Darwinian principles to a process of artificial evolution. Prendick starts out by trying to establish 'how far they were from the human heritage I ascribed to them'.[105] He confronts Moreau with his theory about the provenance of the Beast Folk, accusing him of having vivisected men: 'men like yourselves, whom you have infected with some bestial taint, men whom you have enslaved, and whom you still fear'.[106] Moreau's eventual explanation of his 'monsters manufactured' is the most crucial passage of the novel in terms of understanding the former's own character.[107] He has

[100] Ibid., p. 94. It is striking, too, that he does not admit this compunction to Moreau when the latter chides him for having shot the Leopard Man, dismissing it simply as 'the impulse of the moment'. It is clear that Prendick feels the need to perform a robust masculinity to Moreau, perhaps even to protect his own safety as well as his pride.
[101] Ibid., p. 95.
[102] Ibid., p. 78. Moreau admits that the Beast Folk 'sicken me with a sense of failure'.
[103] Ibid., p. 136. The textual note gives details of an anonymous review of the novella in *The Guardian* of 3 June 1896, in which the reviewer suggests that Wells' intention is to 'parody the work of the Creator of the human race, and cast contempt upon the dealings of God with His creatures'. See 'Unsigned Review, *Guardian*: 3 June 1896, 871', in *H. G. Wells: The Critical Heritage*, ed. by Patrick Parrinder (Routledge, 1972), pp. 52–53
[104] Wells, *The Island of Doctor Moreau,* p. 53 (i.e. animalised humans).
[105] Ibid., p. 55.
[106] Ibid., p. 66.
[107] Ibid., p. 71.

created ‘animals carven and wrought into new shapes’ in an attempt to pre-empt an evolutionary feat, [108] to create a version of humanity that has transcended the need for pleasure and pain. He identifies this need as that aspect of man which remains animal, and believes that the destruction of this aspect can result in an improved race of human beings. Asserting that ‘this store men and women set on pleasure and pain, Prendick, is the mark of the beast upon them, the mark of the beast from which they came’,[109] Moreau, in an echo of Wells’ ‘Province of Pain’, reasons that man can evolve to a level of intelligence at which there will be no imperative for pleasure or pain, and it is in pursuit of this sensorily and materially transcendent version of man that he is engaged: ‘the more intelligent they become the more intelligently they will see after their own welfare’.[110] Moreau explains that he started his experiments with blood transfusions, moving to tissue transplants which he is able to perform ‘armed with antiseptic surgery, and with a really scientific knowledge of the laws of growth’.[111] Given his Promethean attitudes, Moreau’s claim that he decided upon the human form as his template for his new species ‘by chance’ is hard to credit. [112] It is clear from the detail of his disclosure to Prendick that he regards man as the pinnacular form. Without the anthropocentric focus on creating a super-species based on the human template, Moreau’s project would seem neither so fantastic nor so horrible.

That Moreau is engaged in his own process of myth-making cannot be doubted.[113] However, his Promethean project proves a comprehensive failure. After Moreau’s death, Prendick watches as the Beast Folk revert to their animal natures. While Moreau lived, the Law offered them a talismanic protection against being returned to the House of Pain. It ensured that the Beast Folk aspired to a state of humanity, and that the quality of approximating humanity was prized among them; they have even created what Prendick calls a ‘strange street’ of huts in their otherwise malodorous camp.[114] They wrestle against their animal natures to varying extents,[115]

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[108] Ibid., p. 71.
[109] Ibid., p. 74–75.
[110] Ibid., p. 74.
[111] Ibid., p. 72.
[112] Ibid., p. 73.
[113] Ibid., p. 103. Moreau’s quasi-divinity is a myth that Prendick upholds, at least temporarily, after the former’s death, for purposes of self-preservation, telling the Beast Folk that Moreau is in the sky, watching them still, and that they should ‘Fear the Law’.
[114] Ibid., p. 57–58.
[115] Ibid., p. 81. Prendick remarks that the Law ‘battled in their minds with the deep-seated, ever-

but the reversion is nonetheless characterised by increasingly flagrant breaches of the Law, recognised by Prendick as marking a trajectory from human at one point and animal at another. Indeed, Moreau had given Prendick forewarning of this, lamenting that 'somehow the things drift back again, the stubborn beast flesh grows, day by day, back again […] I mean to conquer that'.[116] It is left to Prendick to witness the utter failure of the project that had been intended to crown Moreau's Promethean masculinity, to confirm his superior intellect and victory in the scientific field.

In *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, masculinity is marked out in Promethean ways. It hinges on the scientific and, as has been demonstrated, science is the site where Prometheanism is forged and proven. It is possible to read this site spatially, too. In the confines of his laboratory, inside his enclosure, the science of Moreau is categorised, cloistered and clinical. All his failed experiments, and all the unscientific vagaries that prove his failure, are cast out into the external space of the island. Early on, Prendick recalls that Moreau was exiled because of scandals relating to his previous experiments. He describes how Moreau was 'howled out of the country' on the basis of some ethical scandal surrounding his work, ostensibly on 'transfusion of blood' and 'morbid growths'.[117] At this point, Prendick maintains a sense of what he presumably regards as scientific pragmatism, lamenting that 'it was not the first time that conscience has turned against the methods of research', and that Moreau's 'desertion by the great body of scientific workers, was a shameful thing'.[118] Prendick is confused as to why such a quotidian scientific procedure should require such secrecy in any case: 'especially to another scientific man, there was nothing so horrible in vivisection as to account for this secrecy.'[119] Even after Moreau's full disclosure about his experiments, and finding himself in a situation of relative empathy with the Beast Folk, Prendick remains decidedly utilitarian:

> Had Moreau had any intelligible object I could have sympathized at least a little with him. I am not so squeamish about pain as that. I could have forgiven

rebellious cravings of their animal natures'.
[116] Ibid., p. 77.
[117] Ibid., p. 34.
[118] Ibid., p. 34.
[119] Ibid., p.35. Prendick's likening of himself to Moreau as a 'man of science' is demonstrably a delusion, but it does reflect the idea that to the former, the latter's status is viewed as aspirational.

> him a little even had his motive been hate. But he was so irresponsible, so utterly careless. His curiosity, his mad, aimless investigations, drove him on, and the things were thrown out to live a year or so, to struggle and blunder and suffer; at last to die painfully.[120]

Even at this advanced stage of his experience on the island, the gruesome spectacle Prendick is witnessing continues to provoke in him a defensiveness about his own masculine impartiality. Had there been a useful point to Moreau's experiments, he suggests, the horrors inflicted upon animals in its name would have been to some extent justified. Prendick tries to convince himself that he objects to Moreau's project based on the absence of robust scientific hypothesis and purpose, rather than the ethics of the thing itself: that his objection is intellectual and not emotional. However, the sound of the vivisection of the puma eventually erodes Prendick's equilibrium to the point where he puts his fingers into his ears to block out the 'emotional appeal of these yells' and the 'exquisite expression of suffering', eventually conceding that 'had I known such pain was in the next room, and had it been dumb, I believe — I have thought since — I could have stood it well enough'.[121] The reader must consider, then, what it is about this audibility of pain, which Prendick still takes to be animal and not human pain at this point, that renders a shift in his convictions regarding the rational man of science for whom vivisection is 'nothing so horrible'. It is the increasingly human appeals of the puma that prove effective against Prendick's own sense of masculine identity, that start to erode the sense that the puma — an animal, and a female one at that — is other to himself, subordinate and distant from his own sense of self. In short, he begins to be able to imagine and empathise with her experience of pain as she becomes more human. It becomes pain that he can imagine as his own. This is a stark contrast to Moreau's assertions that pain is trivial, or at least that he can make it so through his experiments.

In Moreau's Promethean philosophy, Prendick's masculinity would be found lacking here, gripped as he is by the empathy and fear evoked by someone else's pain. Where Moreau entirely lacks that Huxleyan capacity for tempering the cruelty of

[120] Ibid., p.95. A protestation of course belied by his emotional response to the sounds of the puma earlier.
[121] Ibid., p. 38.

nature with the ethical qualities that mark man out as unique, Prendick is engaged in a battle with sensibilities that he fears may mark him out as unmanly. As such, another paradox of Prometheanism is laid bare; to proceed ethically is manly, and Moreau seems not manly but beastly when he ignores this call to ethics, but an excess of pity is likewise construed as undermining to masculine identity, and particularly to its Promethean form. Prendick's masculinity is compromised by an excess of emotion, but also by an intellectual lack. It has been established that Prometheanism is predicated on scientific knowledge and application. Despite having had a scientific education himself, Prendick finds himself at an intellectual disadvantage to Moreau. Prendick's own masculine intellectualism is thus called into question, and there is a distinct defensiveness about the nature of his objections to the experiments taking place on the island. Upon his arrival, Prendick is unable to read some of Moreau's Latin texts, implying that the latter has a sounder classical education. Later, Moreau patronises him with Latin when trying to explain his experiments. There is, then, some connected sense of classicism as educational exclusiveness at play in the characterisation of Moreau. However, his intellectual capacity only serves to compound the clinical cruelty of his project, his conviction that pain and emotion, both of which Prendick experiences at several points during the narrative, are evidence of lesser being.

Suggestions of the animalisation of Prendick, a representation of the 'everyman' figure, begin to seep into the narrative early on. For the *fin de siècle* reader confronted with Darwinism and the suggestion of bestial origins within the human, the weakening of the foundations of human exceptionalism would have been underscored by Prendick's confrontation with his own animality in the novel. His feelings would resonate, even if they were coloured by the dramatic license of science fiction, and the threats of animalisation to his white, wealthy masculinity would have been both legible and shocking. In one scene, he tumbles out of his hammock 'upon all-fours on the floor',[122] in a distinctly animal pose, and finds that satisfying his hunger 'contributed to the sense of animal comfort' he felt.[123] Montgomery, too, invokes Prendick's animality and vulnerability when he was rescued, hinting at an image of the latter as

[122] Ibid., p. 49.
[123] Ibid., p. 50

an experimental object: 'I injected and fed you much as I might have collected a specimen. I was bored, and wanted something to do'.[124] The shift from Prendick as inquisitive, privileged European male subject to experimental object who flees from Moreau's House of Pain believing himself to be at risk is explicit here, when he launches himself bodily from the locus of hegemonic masculinity that is Moreau's compound and into the wilds of the island where the excluded eke out their existence. This act effectively reframes Prendick the subject into an object, eliding his intellectual identity and foregrounding his fleshiness and consumability.

Despite his protestations of scientific pragmatism, then, Prendick is so moved by the cries of the puma being vivisected by Moreau that he flees out of Moreau's experimental, Promethean sphere to escape them. Eventually, he becomes convinced that Moreau is vivisecting humans and that he is his next subject: that he will be tortured as the puma has been. For Prendick, the true horror of this fate is what awaits him afterwards: 'the most hideous degradation it was possible to conceive', being condemned to live as one of the Beast Folk, cast out of the community of the human, and forced to exist alongside dislocated beings who, in species terms, belong nowhere.[125] Having evaded the Beast Folk after the spectacle of the Saying of the Law, Prendick describes himself as 'hot and panting', and experiencing 'more than a touch of exultation, too, at having distanced my pursuers. It was not in me then to go out and drown myself. My blood was too warm.'[126] Panting like an animal and overwhelmed by the imperative of self-preservation, this equivocal subject position creates a focal point for the struggle of the human animal inside the European man. When Prendick wrongly concludes that Moreau and Montgomery intend to vivisect him, he experiences an intriguing moment of scientific curiosity. Despite his fears, and his belief that he is in imminent danger, he experiences 'an odd wish to see the whole adventure out, a queer impersonal spectacular interest in myself'.[127] This impulse is evocative of the kind of scientific thirst to understand the workings of nature through experiment that also marks out Moreau, and Victor Frankenstein before him. While

[124] Ibid., p. 19. Montgomery imagines himself as much like Moreau here: the ambivalent scientist exacting cruelty out of curiosity.
[125] Ibid., p. 53.
[126] Ibid., p. 63.
[127] Ibid., p. 54.

being animalised, then, Prendick simultaneously imagines himself as being in possible collusion with Moreau's ambitions. As well as being a potential object of his experiments, in a moment of aspiration, he envisages himself as Promethean man, imbued with the masculine superiority that confers. However, his inability to achieve Promethean status is restated at every turn.

The animalisation of Prendick marks him out as un-Promethean, and throws the pitiless Prometheanism of Moreau into greater relief. Indeed, Moreau's masculinity is frequently emphasised by comparison with the failure of his fellow men, Prendick and Montgomery, to make the Promethean grade. Prendick is always outside of the Promethean masculine, his masculinity undermined from the very beginning of the novel. Having narrowly avoided becoming either the victim or the perpetrator of cannibalism, he is rescued in a state of abject vulnerability, and the reassurances of his identity status as a wealthy Englishman vanish when they prove insufficient to secure him the respect or trust of those on the island. Montgomery is reluctant to disclose to him Moreau's purpose, reminding Prendick that he is an 'uninvited' guest at their 'little establishment', which 'contains a secret or so, is a kind of Bluebeard's Chamber, in fact. Nothing very dreadful really — to a sane man'.[128] Thus Prendick is not only animalised but feminised too, his masculinity insulted by the implication that he is a kind of Bluebeard's bride. Montgomery's refusal to disclose the truth of Moreau's vivisectional experiments to him as a fellow might can only be compounded by the implication that he cannot be sure Prendick is 'a sane man', and that the shield of his sanity may have been penetrated by madness. Montgomery himself can hardly be regarded as an example of the Promethean masculine. He is a drunk, generally morose and disengaged with what is happening around him, and his status as Moreau's reluctant underling is clear.[129] Moreau regards Montgomery with patriarchal distaste, sneering to Prendick that 'I believe he half likes some of these beasts'.[130] It is of course unsurprising that, given his pursuit of man's perfectibility and the obsolescence of

[128] Ibid., p. 32.
[129] There is also some suggestion that Montgomery may have been exiled from his own scientific studies due to being caught *in flagrante* in a homosexual act, and that this is, in fact, a nod to the 1895 trial of Oscar Wilde. This would, in Promethean terms, represent a self-feminisation of Montgomery, too. For a fuller discussion, see Ivan Cañadas, 'Going Wilde: Prendick, Montgomery and Late-Victorian Homosexuality in *The Island of Doctor Moreau*', *English Language and Literature,* 56.3 (2010), pp. 461–85, doi:10.15794/jell.2010.56.3.004. Cañadas also reads the possibility of Prendick as homosexual.
[130] Wells, *The Island of Doctor Moreau,* p. 78.

pain, Moreau would take any display of empathy on Montgomery's part as weakness. Perhaps understandably, given what he has observed on the island, Montgomery is decidedly misanthropic. His largely benevolent attitude to the Beast Folk in the context of his misanthropy, then, reinforces the idea that he doesn't regard them as human, which is undoubtedly another slight to Moreau's pride, and a reminder of his failure.[131]

Anything in Prendick that might be construed as Promethean is eroded in his experience of awakening to what is happening on the island. His wealth is useless, his intellect inferior to Moreau's, and his reason and even his sanity are called into doubt. After the eventual deaths of both Moreau and Montgomery, Prendick is the only human on the island. He admits to panic, saying that 'I tried to review the whole situation as calmly as I could, but it was impossible to clear the thing of emotion'.[132] The persistent characterisation of ideal masculinity as rational and not emotional results in the emasculation of Prendick at the moments when his fear is most obvious; thus, the last man alive on the island clearly fails to embody the rational ideal. He retains a form of curiosity, and even hubris, that might characterise the Promethean masculine, but discovers very quickly that he cannot achieve that pinnacle. When it becomes apparent to the Beast Folk that the whip-bearing human men on the island can be killed, Prendick arrives at a decisive realisation. He recognises that he has an opportunity to take up the role that Moreau's death at the hands of the puma has left vacant, that 'I might have grasped the vacant sceptre of Moreau, and ruled over the Beast People'.[133] He fails, however, to take up this role persuasively, instead coming more to co-exist with the devolving Beast Folk out of a kind of dependency than to lead them in that same patriarchal, quasi-divine way that Moreau had done.[134] This marks a failure of his own Prometheanism; Prendick, as has been the case since the beginning of the narrative, simply does not 'make the grade'.

Thus, Prendick, the narrator who is shown to be vulnerable, inadequate and volatile, is nevertheless not above conceiving of himself as the ultimate Promethean man, the quasi-divine creator figure with hegemony over the plethora of species

[131] Ibid., p. 83.
[132] Ibid., p. 115.
[133] Ibid., p. 117.
[134] Ibid., p. 121. Prendick, in his time living amongst the Beast Folk, recognises that he does not inhabit this quasi-divine role, though he does assert that he 'held something like a pre-eminence amongst them'.

populating the island — even if this conception is never truly realised. Like Moreau, he considers that there is something inherent in the right of man to dominion over nature. His is by no means a neutral narrative lens, and Wells' decision to focalise the narrative through him reflects the position of the reader. Prendick finds himself displaced to an island where Moreau, scientifically knowledgeable, uncompromisingly rational and transcendent of emotional response, is exercising a form of Promethean absolute power, and where both Prendick and Montgomery occupy subordinated, if occasionally complicit, masculine positions. If Moreau is enacting a form of scientific 'priesthood', it is clear that neither Prendick nor Montgomery are fit for ordination. This dehumanisation and emasculation of the latter men is key to the construction of Promethean masculinity, which is fearful of the penetration and control of the masculine by the animal and the feminine. This fear and suspicion of the female was compounded by the Darwinian discovery of sexual selection, which located reproductive agency with the female of many species. If female animals could possess this agency, and humans were animals, then this had profound implications for the socio-cultural orders of sex and gender, and the power patriarchy exerted over women across social classes.

Darwinism and Women

The pinnacular status of the white, wealthy, European man was rendered vulnerable by Darwinism, which disrupted not just the human/animal boundary, but the notion of a natural order of male domination of the female. The revelation of female sexual selection, its ramifications for female agency and its challenge to the earlier figuring of the woman as 'the angel of the house' coincided with a growing suffragette movement calling for a greater public role for women. Attitudes to suffragette feminism were frequently hostile across the political landscape and, much like vegetarianism and anti-vivisection, it was often regarded as a new-fangled radicalism that pushed the seemingly ever-expanding bounds of socialism too far. Where women's rights and anti-vivisection converged, it was easier still to dismiss the latter as a notion as hysterical and sentimental as the former. Frances Power Cobbe, the founder of the National Anti-Vivisection League in 1875 and author of anti-

vivisectionist treatises including *Light in Dark Places* (1883),[135] was one prominent voice at the intersection of these debates. Just like those engaged in the suffragette cause, women who were involved in the anti-vivisection and animal welfare movements were frequently characterised by the medico-scientific fraternity as sexually frustrated, unloved and unlovable, and desperately lacking the controlling influence of competent male family members. Coral Lansbury has described how 'the belief that compassion for animals was a manifestation of sexual frustration was long held to be a medical fact'.[136] Over-sentimental fellow feeling with animals could be pathologised as a symptom of the 'old maid' who 'has seen better days […] she has gradually become at variance with men […] she has only one who has her heart […] just as hostile to the world as herself […] her room and bed fellow, her lap dog'.[137] This characterisation dovetailed effectively with the catch-all diagnosis of 'hysteria' for women who experienced a swathe of mental health and gynaecological conditions relating to the female body at this time.[138] Other anti-vivisectionist women chose to engage directly with the practice in order to be able to offer informed and legitimate remark on it. In their journal *The Shambles of Science* (1903), physiology students Lizzy Lind-af-Hageby and Leisa Schartau recorded their experiences of attending vivisection demonstrations, where the vivisector, 'armed with scalpel, microscope, and test-tube […] is sure that he will succeed in wrenching the jealously-guarded secrets of the vital laws from the bosom of Nature'.[139] Women occupied a liminal, contradictory space between the civilising, hyper-sensitive force, and the irrational animal, characterisations employed interchangeably by the dominant narrative according to what was rhetorically expedient at any given moment. The medical students who opposed the erection of the statue of the brown dog at Latchmere, for example, weaponised feminisation against their opponents, determined to associate the

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[135] Frances Power Cobbe, *Light in Dark Places* (Victoria Street Society for Protection of Animals from Vivisection and International Association for the Total Suppression of Vivisection, 1883; facsimile repr. Franklin Classics, 2018).
[136] Lansbury, *The Old Brown Dog*, p. 83.
[137] Hermann Heinrich Ploss, Max Bartels and Paul Bartels, *Woman: An Historical Gynaecological and Anthropological Compendium,* ed. by Eric John Dingwall, 3 vols (Heinemann, 1935), III, p. 257.
[138] See, for example, Elaine Showalter, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness and English Culture, 1830–1980* (Virago, 1987).
[139] Lind-af-Hageby and Schartau, *The Shambles of Science*, p. 3. The journals of Lind-af-Hageby and Schartau served to undermine the idea that women could not contribute to the debate from a scientific standpoint. So damning was the account that the vivisector in question, Dr William Bayliss, went to court to have it censored.

defence of the statue, and the anti-vivisection movement more generally, with the supposed propensity of women for hysteria. The Brown Dog Affair also illustrated the marked overlap of women engaged in the *fin de siècle* suffragette cause and those who worked to ensure the welfare of animals. Lansbury makes the compelling suggestion that women 'read their own misery into the vivisector's victims' at a time when they and the poor were routinely subjected to medical experimentation in hospitals, justified on the basis that they were receiving the treatment for free.[140]

Wells also espoused many of the most prevalent stereotypes regarding femininity in his non-fiction. In 'The Province of Pain', he references the Italian criminologist Cesare Lombroso, whose 1892 article 'Physical Insensibility of Woman' had argued that women, in Wells' words, 'felt physical pain less acutely than men'. Wells bemoans the negative reaction and 'severely sarcastic retorts' of what he calls the 'militant feminine' to the article, insisting that they 'failed to observe the compliment he was paying them', and that 'while women are more sensitive to fear and to such imaginary terrors as reside in the cockroach and the toad, they can, when physical pain has secured its grasp upon them, display a silent fortitude quite impossible to ordinary men.'[141] The crux of his argument is that 'the lower animals […] do not feel pain because they have no intelligence to utilise the warning; the coming man will not feel pain, because the warning will not be needed'.[142] A lack of pain, argues Wells, is paradoxically both a marker of animality at its 'lowest' level, and also of having risen so far above one's animality as to not require this defence mechanism in order to survive. This, of course, created something of a paradox in the categorisation of women according to this theory, locating them either as lower animals or, potentially, as beings more prodigiously evolved on the basis of this alleged high pain threshold. This is particularly arresting when one considers, as Lansbury has, the intersection of medical interventions into women's health, and particularly mental and gynaecological health, and the vivisection of animals at the time. In addition to this, poverty, often regardless of sex, could have a deleterious

[140] Lansbury, *The Old Brown Dog*, p. 128.
[141] Wells, 'The Province of Pain', p. 196. Wells is discussing Cesare Lombroso's 'Physical Insensibility of Woman', *Fortnightly Review*, 57 (1892), pp. 354–57. Lombroso was a criminologist who held that criminality was an atavistic inherited feature that could be ascertained through 'defects' in a person's physicality and particularly their facial features.
[142] Wells, 'The Province of Pain', p. 198.

effect on how the sanctity of one's body was regarded or ignored. In fact, experimentation upon certain human bodies did, on occasion, even precede its equivalent on animals. There existed, then, considerable common ground between vivisected animals on the one hand and women subject to medical intervention and everything that accompanied it on the other. The feminisation of animals and the animalisation of women that has been traced so thoroughly by Adams is epitomised by the connections between vivisection and women's rights and autonomy at the *fin de siècle*.[143]

To return to *The Island of Doctor Moreau,* Noble's Island is the location of an experimental project that has Promethean masculinity at its heart, yet there are elements of the feminine at play, and these are of crucial importance. After all, the very nature of Promethean masculinity is that it must expel the female to reify itself. That the puma, whose screams of agony haunt Prendick for most of the novel, is clearly female, and is eventually responsible for the death of Moreau, is significant. At the sound of her screams during vivisection, Montgomery declares 'I'm damned […] if this place is not as bad as Gower Street — with its cats',[144] referring to the animals known to be vivisected at University College London at the time.[145] She is also described as crying out like 'an angry virago': an evocation of the figure of the New Woman.[146] Wells thus has his Promethean scientist eventually struck down by a female assailant who exists somewhere between woman and animal. Moreau's fate hardly inspires pity for him in the reader, yet the fact of that Promethean scientist being destroyed by the female animal victim is intriguing in what it might imply about Wells' own perceptions of women, subjectivity and power at the *fin de siècle*. The puma is doubtless justified in her killing of Moreau, yet she also figures as out of control, indeed uncontrollable, violent and vengeful: and she herself does not survive her

[143] Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat.*
[144] Wells, *The Island of Doctor Moreau,* p. 49.
[145] Erika Behrisch Elce, '"Never Mind the Dog": Experimental Subjects in H. G. Wells' *The Island of Doctor Moreau* and Wilkie Collins' *Heart and Science*', The Wilkie Collins Society, 19 October 2018 <https://wilkiecollinssociety.org/never-mind-the-dog-experimental-subjects-in-h-g-wells-the-island-of-doctor-moreau-and-wilkie-collins-heart-and-science/> [Accessed 19 May 2025].
[146] Wells, *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, p. 98. Talia Schaffer describes the figuration of the New Woman, or those women who sought independence, education and rights at the *fin de siècle*, as 'the unsexed, terrifying, violent Amazon ready to overturn the world'. See Talia Schaffer, '"Nothing But Foolscap and Ink": Inventing the New Woman', in *The New Woman in Fiction and in Fact: Fin de Siècle Feminisms*, ed. by Angelique Richardson and Chris Willis (Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), pp. 39–52 (p. 39).

rebellion against her creator. Lansbury says of the puma that 'it is no ordinary woman who breaks her bonds and rages forth to destroy the vivisector, but a virago trailing bloody rags as proof of her sex'.[147] Certainly, the evocation of the menstrual in this image simultaneously evokes the relevance of the *fin de siècle* debate about vivisection to women's bodies and the gynaecological nature of many of the investigations into these bodies by the masculinist medical establishment of the time. The puma represents a femininity that Moreau ultimately fails to control, and a feminist movement of which Wells was very conscious, and focuses the proximity of the Beast Folk to humans onto one specific character. She becomes the focal point for Prendick's unease, his realisation of what is taking place on the island, and the eventual killing of Moreau.

Other female characters in the novella also reveal and reflect some of the anxieties about gender and sex emerging from Darwinism. Prendick declares that 'I would meet the Fox-Bear Woman's vulpine shifty face, strangely human in its speculative cunning, and even imagine I had met it before in some city byway'.[148] The identification of certain species — the puma, the fox — with female figures reveals misogyny both on the part of their vivisector, Moreau, and on the part of Prendick himself, who projects slyness and cunning onto his encounters with these characters. Femaleness and animality are inextricably linked on the island. Moreau regards himself as engaged in a battle with a personified nature which, far from being nurturing and benevolent, is 'remorseless' and, he claims, inspires remorselessness in the scientist who tries to harness it.[149]

Femaleness comes to be associated with a certain type of degeneracy in the narrative, too. At the end of the novel, as the Beast Folk begin to devolve back into their animal forms, Prendick remarks that 'some of them — the pioneers, I noticed with some surprise, were all females — began to disregard the injunction of decency […] others even attempted public outrages upon the institution of monogamy'.[150] In addition to a female character killing Moreau, then, it is the female Beast Folk who are 'pioneering' a perceived degeneration on the island. Both examples recall the theme

[147] Lansbury, *The Old Brown Dog*, p. 151.
[148] Wells, *The Island of Doctor Moreau,* p. 84.
[149] Ibid., p. 75.
[150] Ibid., p.123.

of the island's being a quasi-Eden, in which it is the woman, or women, who bring about the Fall.[151] While Moreau may have prescribed what Prendick might perceive as an 'injunction of decency' by means of the Law, the latter's appeal to the 'institution of monogamy' in respect of the degenerating behaviour of the Beast Folk is bizarre. There is never any suggestion of monogamy as an 'institution' amongst them at any point, and it is intriguing that Prendick should invoke monogamy, or lack thereof, in his descriptions of female degeneracy specifically. Again, the relevance of Darwin's theory of sexual selection, and the power and agency it conceivably confers on female animals, is foregrounded here; in a space where adaptation is now taking place without Moreau's involvement, the female Beast Folk are assuming their roles as the selective parties in mating.[152] It is a fitting echo of Moreau's remarks regarding animal pleasure and pain, that the degeneration is signalled in part by the Beast Folk's unrestrained pursuit of sexual pleasure, and that this sexual pleasure is instigated by the females. The implication of burgeoning female agency, coupled with a resumption of meat-eating as a reclamation of animality as previously discussed, is indeed significant in the socio-political context in which Wells was writing.

Conclusion

When it was published in 1896, reviews were generally so preoccupied with the religious and blasphemous overtones of *The Island of Doctor Moreau* that they failed to touch in any meaningful way on the many themes that went into the melting pot of its narrative. Zoologist Chalmers Mitchell's review in *Saturday Review* described Moreau as 'a cliché from the pages of an anti-vivisection pamphlet',[153] but the novel is hardly anti-vivisectionist sensationalism. If the novel was a cautionary tale, it was not one that was intended to caution against either science in general or vivisection in

[151] The situation of the island allows for the creation of a literary world that is contradictorily Edenic, and the allusions extend beyond the framing of the puma as an Eve figure. In his eventual disclosure to Prendick, Moreau recounts a specific example of a creature, apparently snakelike, which broke out of his compound limbless and 'unfinished' and eventually killed a man, leaving the barrel of his rifle 'curved into the shape of an S' (Wells, *The Island of Doctor Moreau,* p. 77). Thus the text incorporates a Snake-Man as a literal embodiment of the serpent as well as Moreau as a God figure, visiting discord on the upside-down Eden of Noble's Island by means of a serpent he himself created (p. xxii).
[152] Or, at least, in copulation. Whether the Beast Folk are able to produce offspring is unclear.
[153] Chalmers Mitchell, 'Chalmers Mitchell, Review in *Saturday Review*: 11 April 1896, LXXXI, 368–69', in *H. G. Wells: The Critical Heritage,* ed. by Patrick Parrinder (Routledge, 1972), pp. 43–46.

particular. An anonymous reviewer in the *Speaker* denounced it as an irresponsible piece of 'extravagance and novelty […] at the expense of decency'.[154] Darwinism itself had proved shocking and controversial, so it is not entirely surprising that a fictionalisation of some of its most contentious aspects would be met with hostility. Another anonymous reviewer, this time in the *Guardian*, said of it that 'it is not altogether easy to divine the intention', as sometimes it seemed to be 'to satirise and rebuke the presumption of science' and at others 'to parody the work of the Creator of the human race'.[155] This last review seems to have been the only one of which Wells ever really approved, saying of it that 'the *Guardian* critic seemed to be the only one who read it aright'.[156] The novel can certainly be read as a parody of the idea of divine creation by a benevolent creator, presenting the reader instead with the monstrous creations of a maker who is cruel and ambivalent. Yet it is difficult to parse it as no more than a parody of religious certainties about a benevolent god. It is also quite clearly a story about a very human creator: a rebuke of the scientist who fails to act in accordance with the Huxleyan assertion that man is superior precisely because he is able to comprehend ethical approaches to the cosmos. Lansbury says of that seminal moment in the text, when Moreau tells Prendick of his motivations and intentions in carrying out his project and asserts that 'the study of Nature makes a man at last as remorseless as Nature',[157] that 'it as though he had taken Huxley's Romanes Lecture and turned it inside out'.[158] In his drive to be the father of a new stage of evolutionary progress, Moreau becomes the uncivilised, unempathetic creature foretold by Huxley; he is embodying not the conscious man, but the cruel cosmic force of evolution. In short, his attempt to burn out the bestial in others, to enact a Promethean creation, has rendered him bestial himself.

Vegetarian thought had long been preoccupied with the brutalising effects of eating meat, and this continued to undermine masculine associations with meat-eating into the *fin de siècle* and beyond. Darwinism, in problematising the human/animal

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[154] 'Unsigned Review, *Speaker*: 18 April 1896, XIII, 429–30', in *H. G. Wells: The Critical Heritage,* ed. by Patrick Parrinder (Routledge, 1972), p. 50.
[155] 'Unsigned Review, *Guardian*: 3 June 1896, 871', in *H. G. Wells: The Critical Heritage,* ed. by Patrick Parrinder (Routledge, 1972), pp. 52–53.
[156] Arthur H. Lawrence, 'An Interview with Mr H. G. Wells', *The Young Man*, 11 (1897), pp. 255–57.
[157] Wells, *The Island of Doctor Moreau,* p. 75.
[158] Lansbury, *The Old Brown Dog,* p. 150.

boundary, had also raised questions about edibility and what or who counted as flesh. In the novel, this results in a paradoxical relationship between the Beast Folk and meat; in forbidding them from eating meat in order to prevent them from figuring men like himself as edible, Moreau denies them that symbol of full humanity, while also making available, through the lens of vegetarian thought, the possibility that they are more civilised and less bestial as vegetarian beings. The male human as flesh is evoked not just in the meat question, but in the far more central practice of vivisection. Much of the more eventful action takes place because Prendick misunderstands the Beast Folk as vivisected humans and fears that he too will be vivisected in the same way. He is thus confronted with the prospect of his own animality and fleshiness, and the forced proximity to animality that he experiences on the island is a proximity as much in his own perception as of reality.

While it is not vivisection *per se* that Wells criticises in the novel, the literal act of rendering animals blood and flesh in an attempt to make them superhuman is central to the narrative.[159] To gloss over the literal act of vivisection in the novel, and the material reality of the result that Moreau hopes to achieve, is to fail to see in full the distinctions between Promethean man and animals that are in plain sight. To fully appreciate the relevance of *The Island of Doctor Moreau* to discussions about Promethean masculinity and its relation both to gender and to species, one must take both an allegorical and a literal view of vivisection in the text. When Moreau declares that 'least satisfactory of all is something that I cannot touch, somewhere — I cannot determine where — in the seat of the emotions', and his intention to 'burn out all the animal, this time I will make a rational creature *of my own',* he is seeking for this 'seat of the emotions' literally, in the flesh of the victims of his experiments.[160] He considers this 'seat' a physical matter, and not an abstraction. Moreau's project is not just a matter of changing behaviour or ways of thinking: it is experimentation in physical adaptation, and in that plasticity of the form that Wells had theorised previously, and

[159] Atwood, in her introduction to the novel, is wrong to dismiss the narrative as allegorical or fabular simply because 'no man ever did or ever will turn animals into human beings by cutting them up and sewing them together again'. While Moreau's story is cautionary, the literalness and specificity of his acts of vivisection are important. It is also important to note that part of the horror of the story rests in the sheer credibility of the science at the time; the science fiction of Wells is here close enough to the controversial science fact of the time to make it credible and all the more terrifying. See Wells, *The Island of Doctor Moreau,* p. xiv.
[160] Ibid., p.78 (my emphasis).

an attempt to seize the principles of Darwinism from nature to bend them to his Promethean will. As a Promethean figure, he believes he can locate the 'seat of the emotions' within the body and fundamentally alter it, as Prometheus fashioned man out of clay. In so doing, he can become the architect of his own masculine myth.

The Island of Doctor Moreau is, of course, 'about' a great deal more than vivisection. Yet the ideas about evolution, degeneration and the putative human/animal boundary within the novel are presented in a narrative that has not just the ethics and morality but the very act of vivisection front and centre. At the time that Wells was writing his own modern Prometheus, the subject of vivisection was a battleground of ethical ideas and convictions, tied up with the ramifications of Darwinism and the moment of the women's suffrage movement. The New Woman, the status of animals and the interrogation of a 'new priesthood' of masculinist scientists and their right to perform experiments on both threatened to compromise the foundations upon which Promethean masculinity was built.

The suffrage movement also represented a challenge to traditional forms of masculinity and gender roles at a time when, as has been demonstrated, the very nature of humanity was being called into question. While Enlightenment science had furnished a view of nature and the more-than-human world as fundamentally female and so prime for masculine revelation and control, Darwinism had uncovered the realities of sexual selection and agency within the female animal kingdom that might all too easily be interpreted as an analogy by the New Woman and those engaged in the push for greater involvement of women in what had traditionally been male spheres. The puma, the central female presence in the novel, remains heard but not seen until the very end of the narrative, when she flees Moreau's compound, bloodied rags in her wake, and kills Moreau in her own death throes. In her freedom, she becomes dangerous, and is able to fulfil the role of vengeful, felinised female, visiting destruction on the Promethean creator. Yet ultimately, like Frankenstein before him, it is Moreau himself who has fashioned his own end. In true Promethean style, he has created his own undoing, and has discounted ethics and the emotional capacities of the human at his own peril. Moreau, like Frankenstein, has created monstrosity in his search for the perfectibility of man. Indeed, he refers to the 'intellectual passion'[161] of

[161] Ibid., p. 75.

this scientific pursuit, in a way that undoubtedly echoes the Frankensteinian, and Promethean, isolating frenzy. Moreau, too, aspires to a sort of divine *fiat*, 'to be able to fabricate new and more complex machines from living tissue and become the creator of a second genesis'.[162] While there are distinctions between the type of 'materials' employed by Frankenstein and Moreau, and vitally important ones at that, the motivation is similar enough to make the influence of Mary Shelley's work on Wells' obvious. It is possible to read of Moreau and to conclude that Darwin's discoveries in natural and sexual selection, far from humbling the masculinist scientific fraternity, caused existential dread and inflamed its destructive curiosity.

The previous chapter demonstrated that it is possible to read *Frankenstein* as a critique of the scientifically driven Promethean masculinity of the Romantic period, and of the Enlightenment vision of progress that excluded women, animals, and the natural world. *The Island of Doctor Moreau* offers an analogous example of Promethean masculine scientific endeavour conducted in isolation and exile, and shares several common themes with its predecessor. Indeed, the role of this isolation in shoring up Promethean masculine scientific pursuit is at the heart of the novel. Noble's Island provides the exile with the same exclusion from the proper, civilising society of man that had been furnished by Victor Frankenstein's own 'workshop of filthy creation'. Just as the scientific trailblazing of the elite men of Salomon's House in Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis* took place in an isolation both literal and metaphorical,[163] and as Victor Frankenstein repeatedly isolates himself both physically and emotionally from his fellow humans, so too do the events of *The Island of Doctor Moreau* take place in a location that is distant from the literal and metaphorical mainland: an evolution of the exclusivity of the scientific community into individual scientists rejecting the notion of community altogether in search of their Promethean vision. These Promethean figures use these isolations and distances to reify their perceived superiority, and the privileged and exclusive nature of the power conferred by the knowledge they possess. *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, then, is a thematically loaded fusion of socio-cultural and socio-political subjects. The island is a space apart,

[162] Lansbury, *The Old Brown Dog*, p. 154.
[163] Bacon, *New Atlantis.* While Bacon's scientific elite is admittedly a group of men separated from the rest of society as opposed to any one individual, the result — the rendering invisible of the female principle and a monomania for technoscientific advancement — is the same.

both literally and conceptually, affording an ideal location not just for Moreau to figure himself as rightful, Promethean head and to exercise divine *fiat*, but for a reimagination of boundaries: between God and man, between men of differing status, between man and animal, and between nature and culture. On Noble's Island, just as in Frankenstein's 'workshop of filthy creation', creation is a force that is controlled by men with the privilege of scientific knowledge, that dispenses with the need for reproduction and the female principle. In the end, the island itself comes to represent not the idyll or site of androcentric exceptionalism of Moreau's ambition, but the locus of the power of nature to confound masculinist science.

Like Darwinism itself, the events on Noble's Island strike at the foundations of what it is that Prendick, and so the reader, had regarded as rational, or possible, or true. As Carrie Rohman correctly asserts, the Darwinian moment 'radically problematized the traditional humanist abjection of animality', articulating the animality within the human that had previously dared not speak its name.[164] The result, for Wells' novel, is 'a two-way trafficking of identity-deconstruction […] as Moreau's animals become partially human while Moreau and the other men seem increasingly animal'.[165] When he becomes fully aware of what is being done on the island, Prendick yearns 'to get away from these horrible caricatures of my Maker's image, back to the sweet and wholesome intercourse of men'.[166] However, by the end of the novel he is estranged from his idea of a benevolent deity, experiencing as he has how cruel and meaningless the act of creation can be, and equivocal about a return to civilisation.[167] Moreau has acted as an arrogant and vengeful 'god', perverting the notion of divine *fiat*. Prendick attempts to re-join humanity but finds he cannot do so without an excess of emotion and irrationality, the characterisation of animality as something abject and external to himself obliterated. Again, the events of the novel result in a series of ruptures. He recounts how 'I could not persuade myself that the men and women I met were not also another, still passably human, Beast People.'[168] The conclusion to which Prendick

[164] Carrie Rohman, *Stalking the Subject: Modernism and the Animal* (University of Columbia Press, 2009), pp. 65–77.
[165] Ibid., p. 74.
[166] Wells, *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, p. 97.
[167] Ibid., p. 129. Upon being rescued from the island he admits to feeling 'no desire to return to mankind'.
[168] Ibid., p. 130.

has been irresistibly drawn is that the human-animal boundary, if it exists at all, is not as self-evident as he had previously thought.

The reader is left with multi-faceted visions as to what degeneration really is, and how it manifests, when elements of embodied experience such as meat-eating and pain cease to mean what they have previously been taken to mean. As Prometheus sought to elevate man from the animals, so Moreau has succeeded only in bringing the humanity of animals, and the animality of humans, into sharper relief. Just as Victor Frankenstein both failed to achieve his desired quasi-divine state and succeeded in disrupting his own sense of Promethean masculine self, so Prendick's bearing witness to the experiments of Moreau — another Promethean man of quasi-divine ambition — has left him cast out of his own sense of self, and his sense of community with the human world. He has returned with some of the misanthropy of Montgomery, having spent time living among the Beast Folk, experiencing a shift in his lived reality of what constitutes life and death, human and non-human, natural and unnatural. At the beginning of the novel, Prendick had watched 'one of the bovine creatures who worked the launch' and found himself 'trying hard to recall how he differed from some really human yokel trudging home from his mechanical labours'.[169] He had seen the Beast Folk 'think', and the Leopard Man's 'imperfectly human face distorted with terror' that evidenced 'the fact of its humanity'.[170] His experience on Noble's Island has revealed as indistinct and messy categories that he had always held to be solid and indisputably factual. On Noble's Island, he has witnessed 'the whole interplay of instinct, reason, and fate in its simplest form'.[171] The certainties of Promethean categories have broken down, leaving muddy taxonomies and identities. Patrick Parrinder seizes upon the crux of the issue at the heart of the novel when he points out that 'the loss of human mastery over nature is a source of fear, horror and irony throughout the scientific romances',[172] and that Wells' fiction created a 'vision of dethronement' which 'both develops and distorts certain elements in the evolutionary outlook of Huxley and Darwin'.[173] Such a fear speaks to very real challenges to

[169] Ibid., p. 84.
[170] Ibid., p. 94.
[171] Ibid., p. 95.
[172] Patrick Parrinder, *Shadows of the Future: H. G. Wells, Science Fiction, and Prophecy* (Syracuse University Press, 1995), p. 49.
[173] Ibid., p. 51.

Promethean masculinity heralded by the Darwinian epoch, and raises vitally important questions about Moreau's motivations. The increased interest in vivisection at this time reflects the desperation of late Victorian masculinist science to regain something which has been perceived as lost in the assertion that man is, after all, just an animal.

Chapter 3

Nuclear Prometheanism: Brian Aldiss' *Moreau's Other Island* (1980)

Technologies that had been in their infancy at the *fin de siècle*, including photography, radio and the motor vehicle, developed quickly in the early to mid-twentieth century, coming to be more widely used in private and domestic settings. The pace of technoscientific development compounded the notion of the human as a species apart, transcendent of the fleshly limits of embodiment, eventually gesturing towards transhumanist concepts including remote warfare, genetic engineering and artificial intelligence. By the 1950s, science and technology had changed how humans lived, both individually and collectively, fundamentally altering the ways that the species met both its needs and its desires. However, through the use of the science and technology around which it was ideologically constructed, Promethean masculinity had also created unprecedented existential threat in the form of nuclear weapons and large-scale anthropogenic climate change. This chapter further demonstrates that Promethean masculinity and the progress of science are co-constitutive: a consuming cycle which feeds on those subjects — women, animalised others, nature — that inhabit the notional space between subject and object in Promethean masculine philosophy. Its consuming power is ultimately self-consuming, too, and a close textual analysis of Brian Aldiss' *Moreau's Other Island* (1980), a sequel to *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, reveals an astute critical response to this cycle of destruction. The novel responds to the Cold War moment, in which a nationalistic, militarised masculinity drew upon the results of Prometheanism in order to shore up its power. By providing technological advances such as genetic engineering and nuclear weapons, Prometheanism helped to build a hyper-militarised world in which the creature rather than the creator became god-like.

The creation of nuclear weapons in the mid twentieth century, and their geopolitical and socio-cultural impact, forms the technoscientific backdrop to the Cold War brinkmanship of the latter part of the century, and events including the space race and the Korean and Vietnam Wars. Following the inception of the Manhattan Project in 1939, the US dropped two atomic bombs over Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan in

August 1945, killing hundreds of thousands of civilians and forcing Japan's surrender, ending the Second World War. The Manhattan Project represented a significant moment of cooperation between the Prometheanism familiar from previous chapters and the militarised masculinity discussed in this chapter. Through the conduit of a militarised masculinity, then, Prometheanism expanded its reach, becoming a means of technoscientific development that strengthened ideas of military might and nationhood. The inevitable result was a new articulation of a longstanding friction between the ambitions of Prometheanism and religion: a return, in essence, to the discord between these two forces as articulated by Wells, and Shelley before him. Western male military hegemons had come to recognise the value of technoscientific methods for achieving and maintaining geopolitical power. Yet this cooperation would be characterised by a burgeoning power struggle in itself: a struggle between these two species of masculinity — the Promethean and the military — for greatest relevance. By the 1980s, both the immediate and long-term damage wrought by nuclear weapons had already become apparent as survivors of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki blasts were further devastated by secondary injuries including cancers and birth defects. The Cold War, a prolonged geopolitical conflict between the US and Soviet Union and their respective allies which lasted from the end of the Second World War until the 1990s, took place against the backdrop of this constant nuclear threat, and this uneasy alliance between Prometheanism and militarism, the former engaged in furnishing technoscientific resources for the latter.

The previous chapters demonstrated that both H.G. Wells and Mary Shelley employed the science fiction genre as a means of responding to the Promethean scientific visions of their day, and to prophesise potential technoscientific futures should they remain unchecked. This final chapter shows that the science fiction of the nuclear age inherited this creative legacy. This inheritance is never more visible than in the work of Brian Aldiss. Born in Norfolk in 1925, Aldiss served with the Royal Signals in Burma in 1943, before becoming a bookseller after the Second World War. Wells was a significant influence on Aldiss, who served as vice-president of the H. G. Wells Society which, at his death, celebrated him as a major contributor to 'the international appreciation of H. G. Wells'.[1] Aldiss was an expert on the literary descent

[1] Patrick Parrinder, 'Brian Aldiss (1925–2017)', The H. G. Wells Society Official Website, n.d.

of *The Island of Doctor Moreau,* and Mary Shelley's influence on Wells, too; his seminal *Billion Year Spree* (1973), a history of science fiction, credits Shelley as the genre's originator, and Wells as 'the man who could work miracles' within it.[2] It is unsurprising, then, that the voices of both Shelley and Wells are so conspicuous in some of Aldiss' most well-known science fiction publications. Aldiss' *Moreau's Other Island* continues the literary response to Promethean masculinity exemplified by both Shelley and Wells, foregrounding the power struggle between Prometheanism and militarism that was such a crucial feature of the Cold War period. Set in 1996, an imagined future on the precipice of nuclear war, Calvert Madle Roberts, a US government minister, arrives on Moreau's Island to discover that its Moreau-figure, Mortimer Dart, a mercurial scientist disabled by thalidomide, is engaged in the genetic engineering of foetuses with the intention of creating a species that can better withstand the fall-out of nuclear war. In so doing, however, like his predecessor Moreau, Dart has created a motley race of hybrids with animal features. An analysis of this text shows that Aldiss represents the next stage in the literary lineage that began with Shelley, and the evolution of the Promethean imagination in a nuclear world, by examining the relevance of technoscientific interventions into both war and women's bodies.

Militarised Masculinity-in-Crisis

What emerged during the Cold War period was a confrontation between two forms of masculinity. Scientifically-driven Prometheanism persisted through the power and practice of technoscience for warfare, including nuclear weapons and genetic engineering that could itself be weaponised for biowarfare in the form of toxins, pathogens and disease. Meanwhile, a militarised masculinity gained impetus by means

<http://hgwellssociety.com/in-memoriam/brian-aldiss-1925-1917/> [accessed 27 August 2023].

[2] Brian Aldiss, *Billion Year Spree: The History of Science Fiction* (Corgi Books, 1975), p. v. As well as *Moreau's Other Island*, Aldiss' *oeuvre* also includes his *Frankenstein Unbound* (1973), which imagines Texan protagonist Joseph Bodenland, a time-traveller from the twenty-first century, journeying back in time to insinuate himself, in strikingly Promethean ways, into both the story of the creation of *Frankenstein* at the Villa Diodati in 1816 and the events of the novel itself. Aldiss' critical response to both Shelley and Wells, and his own place in the lineage of the story that began with Shelley are, therefore, clearly articulated in his own work. See Brian Aldiss, *Moreau's Other Island* (Friday Project, 2013); Brian Aldiss, *Frankenstein Unbound* (Triad/Panther Books, 1985).

of the appropriation and application of these Promethean discoveries and inventions. The militarised form responded to the socio-cultural changes of the post-war period by attempting to shore up traditional forms of masculinity with appeals to forces such as brute strength, religion, nationalism and the nuclear family. These were periods of intense governmental support for jingoism, when ideals and behaviours were prescribed by the politically dominant, patriarchal idiom, as security against the danger of external forces, which were believed to include colonised peoples, feminists, and any other group that was seen to threaten the fabric of patriarchal tradition. The ever-decreasing importance of male physical strength in the automated workplace, in family life where consumerism had admitted labour-saving goods, and even in the modernised military, created a familiar panic about male softness as a threat to national security, both internally and geo-politically. Enormously significant, and often catastrophic, political decisions were driven by the fear male leaders had of appearing weak, emotional or 'chicken'.[3] Christopher Forth describes how the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s saw the male body 'regularly reminded of its warrior potential even as it seemed to dip even further into pampered softness and inactivity'.[4] Simultaneously, the first half of the twentieth century saw the transformation of the workplace into a site of gender conflict and perceived emasculation. War had meant that women were drafted into traditionally male-dominated fields including land labouring, mechanics, engineering and driving. The ubiquity, necessity and effectiveness of women in the workplace had undermined historical ideas about the capabilities of women and what constituted gendered working roles, and many men had returned from war to a socio-economic reality that no longer confirmed their identities in the terms in which they had been used to understanding them. Cold War rhetoric, in the militarised sphere, at least, saw something of a resurgence of the religious positioning of man as pinnacular. At the heart of Cold War militarised American masculinity was a performed Christian religiosity, if not necessarily a genuine belief. Religiosity, and the nationalistic idea of

[3] Marc Fasteau, 'Vietnam and the Cult of Toughness in Foreign Policy', in *The American Man*, ed. by Elizabeth H. Pleck and Joseph H. Pleck (Prentice-Hall, 1980), pp. 377–415. Fasteau describes how Presidents Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon were all very openly influenced by their fear of appearing 'soft' over the Vietnam War and their obsession with appearing unemotional, frequently making ironically irrational policy decisions on such a basis. The space race, too, formed part of an expensive performance of machismo between the US and the Soviet Union.

[4] Christopher Forth, *Masculinity in the Modern West: Gender, Civilization and the Body* (Palgrave, 2008), p. 204.

the nation under God, came to form a key characteristic of the militarised masculinity of the time. However, this religiosity was frequently more significant as a social performance than as a function of faith.

In *Moreau's Other Island*, Calvert, the US government official who finds himself at the mercy of the Promethean Mortimer Dart, embodies the Cold War militarised masculine; he is immured in a sense of identity whose only anchor points are nationalism and a religiosity that proves to be more performative than genuine. His story, like Prendick's, is that of a man forced into a struggle against his own animality, engaged in an ongoing quest to define himself in opposition to the bestial on the one hand, and the overweening Promethean on the other. However, as *Frankenstein*, *The Island of Doctor Moreau* and, indeed, *Moreau's Other Island* all demonstrate, that animality remains within man, and within Calvert, inherent rather than external, and results in a disrupted sense of self when it emerges. As was the case with Prendick, and with Victor Frankenstein before him, much about Calvert's sense of human self and animal other is revealed in his descriptions of the creature(s) he encounters. When Calvert first encounters Dart's Beast People, his descriptions of them are like Prendick's descriptions of Moreau's Beast Folk. He describes George, the first Beast Person he meets, in particularly vivid terms: an initial 'impression of brutishness' and a black face is followed by a description of 'as frightful a countenance as I have ever seen in my life', with features including a 'prognathous' jaw, 'fleshy lips', 'large incisors', a 'snout-like nose' and 'a sneer like a hyena's'.[5] There are striking similarities, in terms of both animalisation and racialisation, between Calvert's description of the creature who he comes to label Black George and Prendick's first impression of M'ling, the 'black-faced man'.[6] Both men have a similar experience of grasping at something uncanny, at something that resists their comprehension and taxonomical understanding. Frankenstein's description of his Creature, 'more hideous than belongs to humanity', is likewise a crying out at this ontological confusion: a frustration in the face of that which undermines man-made classification, the very bedrock of the biological sciences, the reaction to the uncanny and the terror provoked by the blurring of the boundary between human and animal. [7]

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[5] Aldiss, *Moreau's Other Island*, p. 9.
[6] H. G. Wells, *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, ed. by Patrick Parrinder (Penguin, 2005), p. 13.
[7] Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus: The 1818 Text,* ed. by Marilyn Butler

In these respective moments of confrontation, the conscious and subconscious of both men must grapple for understanding where what defines humanity and animality has become vague and the uniqueness of humanity problematised. When he meets other Beast People, Calvert notes that they avoid his gaze, and when he does see their eyes there is in many of them 'the red or green blank glare of iridescence, as if I were confronted by animals'.[8] The lack of eyes meeting, except for a few moments which induce fear, distrust and confusion in Calvert, can be read as both symptom and cause of the incomplete understanding passing between him and the Beast People. The Beast People are not just physically other, but subjectively and spiritually other, too, and radically uncommunicable as a result. However, Calvert is not entirely unable to complete the emotional connection of the gaze across species as articulated by Jacques Derrida in his *The Animal That Therefore I Am* (2002), in which Derrida describes feeling shame at being stared at while naked by his cat.[9] After all, he does experience an emotional reaction to the 'glares' of the Beast People, describing them as both 'ludicrous' and 'alarming'.[10] This is an early indicator that the gaze with which Calvert usually looks upon other animals will be subverted as the narrative progresses.

The first question Calvert asks Hans Maastricht, Dart's right-hand man, is whether there are any other 'white men' on the island.[11] In his search for rational understanding of the Beast People, Calvert draws racial or ethnic boundaries in order to restate the difference between himself and Hans as Caucasian men, and, for example, George, who he reads as both black and overtly animalistic. This one question betrays a great deal about his world view. Like Prendick before him, he associates civilisation with maleness, whiteness, humanity, understanding and the ability to communicate, and asserts all these things as marking out his distinction as an example of masculinity. His wish to contact Washington, both to seek rescue and to curtail what he sees as the barbarism of the island, comes to define his time there, and exemplifies this almost monomaniacal yearning for the Western world that validates him. Through this constant insistence on being allowed to be back in touch with the

(Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 56.
[8] Aldiss, *Moreau's Other Island*, p. 17.
[9] Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, ed. by Marie-Louise Mallet, trans. by David Wills (Fordham University Press, 2008), p. 3.
[10] Aldiss, *Moreau's Other Island*, p. 17.
[11] Ibid., p. 12.

familiar, and with the sphere in which he holds masculine authority, Calvert continuously tries to resist his own subsumption into, and consumption by, both Dart's project and the ecosystems of the island. This potential consumption is hinted at early on, when Hans declares ominously that Calvert is not welcome on the island, but that 'we can maybe find a use for you'.[12] This echo of Montgomery's welcome to Prendick foreshadows the nature of the experiments being carried out on the island, and Dart's perspective on human flesh as a legitimate resource for scientific enquiry. The prospect of Calvert's being 'made useful' in any experimental way is profoundly at odds with his own sense of being an individualised, masculine subject.

When George first leads Calvert in the direction of Dart's 'HQ', there is a significant moment where, again, Calvert is forced to reckon with his own identity as part of his confrontation with George's. George jumps down into some shallow waters and offers Calvert his hand — 'a black leathery deformed thing' — to help him.[13] At this point he falls into George's arms, 'leaning for a moment against his barrel-chest'.[14] He references George's mistrust of him, declaring that 'I felt in him the same revulsion as struggled in myself'.[15] George steps back reflexively, 'so that I fell on my hands and knees in the shallow waters'.[16] There are several observable moments of importance in this short passage of text. Again, George's blackness is referenced, and it is quite clearly bound up with the revulsion that Calvert feels in the same moment. Calvert falls into his strong chest in a manner that could be read as emasculating, and potentially even erotic. The moment that he is enveloped by George's flesh, to his mind, feminises him, penetrating his masculine self-image. George moves away, either out of the revulsion Calvert ascribes to him, or fear, or some kind of shame. Here, Calvert is forced to appraise himself as potentially disgusting in the same way that George disgusts him; again, the gaze of Derrida's cat is summoned. Finally, Calvert is left on all fours in the shallows: a quadrupedal moment of animality that mirrors the way in which Prendick falls out of his hammock onto all fours in Wells' novel.[17]

It is George's hybridity of animal forms, as well as his apparent defiance of the

[12] Ibid., p. 12.
[13] Ibid., p. 13.
[14] Ibid., p. 13.
[15] Ibid., p. 13.
[16] Ibid., p. 13.
[17] Wells, *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, p. 49.

human/animal boundary, that constitutes the insurmountable uncanny of the situation for Calvert. George's form resists categorisation as either human, jackal, or boar, and this results in both a subconscious and a conscious mistrust of him on the part of Calvert, who is accustomed to feeling both able and entitled to categorise. Calvert also notes that 'George did not know whether he should walk before me or behind me or beside me'.[18] In addition to conveying a sense of physical awkwardness, this observation is loaded with metaphorical implications about where the two exist in relation to one another. In other words, George's uncharacterisable nature, when confronted with Calvert's relatively stable (for now) sense of identity, forecloses understanding between them, leaving George unsure whether he leads or follows. Both are thus unsure, subconsciously, at least, who is predator and who prey, and who is herding and being herded. In all three of the texts examined in this thesis, definition and categorisation depend on perceptions of the physical, because other defining characteristics like language have become unreliable. Wells' Beast Folk speak and reason, as do Aldiss' Beast People. Frankenstein's Creature not only speaks and reasons but begins his own literary self-education. When such markers of masculine superiority become compromised in this way, a desire to seek the comprehensible through the bodily is inevitable. This is ironic indeed on an island where it transpires that the representative of the Promethean man lacks the surety of the masculine, able body.

Later, when the Beast People have rampaged and taken over the exterior of the island, leaving nothing to Dart and his team but the inside of his laboratory compound, his feline servant Bella attacks him, failing in her attempt to kill him, and lays in one of his laboratories, dying. Calvert goes to her, and during their exchange it becomes clear to him that she understands that her proximity to humanity, and her domestication, mean she has been placed in a position where she belongs neither in the human world, nor the beast world: 'own people make use death, same I go along Master too long time […] Bella smell like Master, make trouble', she tells him when he asks her why she didn't take the opportunity to escape.[19] Bella, then, knows she cannot live, whether she remains at HQ or tries to join the Beast People. Calvert is

[18] Aldiss, *Moreau's Other Island*, p. 14.
[19] Ibid., p. 141.

struck by her humanity at this point, their eyes meeting in a moment of exchange that parallels the death of Wells' Leopard Man: 'She was no more than a dying animal, yet — such was the will to communicate between us — at this moment she was perhaps more human than she had ever been. Words and thoughts still struggle up in her beat brain'.[20] Here, Calvert seizes upon something that has been at the very heart of his inability meaningfully to communicate with the Beast People thus far; he has been unable to consider the will of the individual Beast Person's gaze and subjectivity. At this crucial point, he believes that there exists between himself and Bella a desire to make meaning between subjectivities that can transcend the animality he still believes characterises her. Yet to make sense of this realisation, he must still preserve his anthropocentric worldview, persisting in perceiving this communication and sharing of meaning as inherently human, and as a capacity that Bella has in spite of, and not because of, their shared animality. For Calvert, it is for man to see, and the animal to be seen. Despite his earlier ability to make tentative connections with Bella on a primal, even sexual level, then, Calvert remains unable to reconcile her as subject and not object. Bella, and the other Beast People, can inspire in him emotions such as fear, disgust and even pity, but he remains unable to comprehend of the truly discursive exchange between them and himself, much less the prospect of a Harawayan symbiotic and co-constitutive relationship.[21]

Calvert finally meets the Stand-by Replacement Sub-Race (SRSRs), the most advanced iterations of Dart's genetically engineered super-species, and the pinnacle of Calvert's experience of the species uncanny in the text. He offers a vivid description of what he sees: 'a thing so fearful, so unlikely, that it might have stepped from the pages of an evil fairy story'.[22] He describes a 'creature […] even more of an aberration' than the Beast People, short and 'disproportionately thick of body', with 'extremely short legs, so that the arms trailed almost to the ground'.[23] The creature has a head that is 'distorted into cephalic form, the skull tapering almost to a point at the rear. This

[20] Ibid., p. 141. See also Wells, *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, p. 94.
[21] See Donna J. Haraway, *When Species Meet* (University of Minnesota, 2008), and Donna J. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Duke University Press, 2016). As previously noted, Haraway's corpus examines the intersections between feminism, animals and technology, and advocates an ethics based on multi-species symbiosis.
[22] Aldiss, *Moreau's Other Island*, p. 139.
[23] Ibid., p. 139.

cranial abnormality was emphasized by the creature's lack of hair'.[24] The 'inordinately fleshy' face and protruding forehead and chin reminds him 'of drawings of the faces of seven-month foetuses […] the overall effect of the creature was of a malignant gnome', and 'dead, greyish' coloured 'sloughed snake-skin' resembles 'a long-drowned face'.[25] However, it is the verbal articulacy of this creature when it greets him that most inspires Calvert with a sickening sense of the uncanny: 'That perfect diction, even and well-turned! How much more acceptable were the shattered vocabularies of the Beast People, reflecting in every distorted syllable their distorted lives'.[26] The creature even extends a hand to Calvert, but he is unable to shake it; like Frankenstein before him, it is the eloquence of a creature who he otherwise perceives as animal that provokes in him an ontological panic. The creature refers to Calvert as one of the 'Father People', apparently recognising him as belonging to the species of their Promethean creator, Dart, despite the very different physical forms of the two men. The phrase also reveals that the creatures have grasped their subordination to Dart and the other humans within HQ as part of a patriarchal dynamic.[27] Their 'uninflected' speech is yet another feature of their communication that compounds its uncanniness; they possess speech that is enough to convey 'humanness' to Calvert, but its flat delivery means that the spectre of animality, or even cyborgism, is never far from the surface.

The SRSRs, then, make clear to Calvert that Prometheanism will continue to march forward; unlike the drunk Beast People who are currently armed and rampaging around the island, these creatures represent the victory of the cerebral over the strong. Their designation as a 'sub-race' is ironic in the face of their evolutionarily advanced status. Their resistance to fallout, in the context of the imminent threat of nuclear war, is understood as a success beyond anything vivisection could achieve: a direct outcome of genetic engineering and editing, emergent in the 1980s, over manipulation of the flesh.[28] The Beast People may have seized the Promethean fire in a more traditional

[24] Ibid., p. 139.
[25] Ibid., p. 139.
[26] Ibid., p. 139.
[27] Ibid., p. 140.
[28] See Joel Greenberger, *Oncology and Radiation Biology: The Next 100 Years* (Springer, 2024), pp. 167–83, for an overview of genetic engineering and the emergence of 'gene therapy' in the 1980s. Greenberger analyses how useful genetic engineering might be in protecting astronauts in space for extended periods of time, thus demonstrating that genetic engineering has matured alongside the

and recognisable Promethean act, but what has been produced in Dart's laboratory is already redefining power. The SRSRs, in fact, represent an existential shift in the way the Prometheus myth is being used in texts that conjure with it. They are the result of the shift of Prometheanism from a technoscientific emphasis on the body to an emphasis on the cerebral. They are not the product of the messy fleshiness of the motley corpses of Frankenstein or Moreau's vivisection, but of a cleaner intellectualism that transcends it; where Frankenstein and Moreau were the godlike scientists creating monsters, Dart is figured as the 'monstrous' scientist, the creation of the Promethean thalidomide project which has left him disabled, creating a species so advanced that it itself is godlike.[29]

Most shockingly for Calvert, he at last discovers that his department, and by extension he himself, signed off on this experiment that has caused him such torment. Thus, he has directly enabled Dart's project, and the reassurance of his moral and ethical distance from the results disintegrates. This is emblematic of one of the key tenets of the uneasy alliance between the two forms of masculinity: the militarised desires the output of the Promethean while simultaneously keeping its hands clean of the moral implications. As such, the two men continue to exemplify the two distinct forms of masculinity: the former, a militarised Cold War masculinity that must appeal to the intellect of the Promethean to shore itself up; the latter, a Promethean masculinity convinced that only it can solve the problems it itself created, condemned to destroy itself even as it creates, making gods out of its creations, whether they are the products of genetic engineering or weapons of such power that they hold their creators at their mercy. Where Prometheanism is shifting from making gods of creators to making gods of their creations, religion itself, particularly as it relates to militarised masculinity, is further troubled.

Spirituality and religion are core tenets of the militarised masculinity to which Calvert cleaves. He subscribes to a performative Christianity in accordance with his conception of masculinity. Promethean Dart is predictably scornful of religious faith. However, like Moreau before him, he too weaponises religion, or at least a semblance of its performance, to maintain order amongst his Beast People. Calvert's reaction to

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necessities created by other technoscientific projects.

[29] The characterisation of Dart, and how thalidomide and disability inflect this, are discussed in more detail in the next section.

Dart's perspective on religion is deeply revealing of his militarised masculine ideology and the growing anxieties around his subjectivity that he experiences while on the island. Referring to it as 'Big Master stuff', Dart makes clear that, like Moreau, his instilling religious fear and fervour in the Beast People is intended as a means of control: and that he believes that this is the purpose of religion in general.[30] He occupies a quasi-divine position on the island, echoing the foregoing quasi-divinities of Moreau and Frankenstein. When Calvert arrives on the island, the Beast People greet Dart with chants — 'His is the Hand that Maims . . . His is the Head that Blames . . . His is the Whip that Tames' — that are uncannily similar to those repeated by the Beast Folk of Wells.[31] The Saying of the Law reinforces Moreau's godlike authority on Noble's Island and, for those familiar with *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, this is an early clue as to Dart's role as Promethean creator on Moreau's Island.

When a disenchanted Hans dies in a drunken accident at the lagoon, Dart uses his funeral as an opportunity to sermonise to the Beast People, and Hans' death as a cautionary tale, commanding them to obedience, invoking the concept of a god or 'Big Master' to reinforce order through fear of an unseen spiritual force on the island and portraying death as a loss of physical shape. He tells the Beast People 'Hans Maastricht, finally loses his shape […] he did not obey the Master, which is me […] we bring him here to the Death Place to be taken up by the Big Master Underground and in the Sky […] it takes a long while to acquire your shape, but not very long to lose it'.[32] He tells them that Hans 'took to the bottle', in a caution against drunkenness.[33] He plays music, a form of modern chant, from a cassette player, telling Calvert that he wrote the lyrics himself: 'the nearest I'll ever get to a hymn'.[34] The 'hymn' commands them to 'speak with speech and obey the Creed', and that 'it's better to suffer and keep your shape than lose it all and be dead indeed'.[35] Here Dart occupies the role of pseudo-priest, a mediator between the Beast People and an invisible spiritual Master, the fear of whom assists him in keeping control on the island. The warning of the 'hymn' is directed at both human and animal, implying a shared, post-

[30] Aldiss, *Moreau's Other Island*, p. 77.
[31] Ibid., p. 23.
[32] Ibid., p. 91.
[33] Ibid., p. 91.
[34] Ibid., p. 89.
[35] Ibid., p. 89.

mortem existence that transcends the physical, hinting at the mutual possession of a soul. While Dart clearly subscribes to none of the professions of life after death or souls implied by the song, he regards the Beast People as being human enough for this very human of lessons to confer meaning and to be at least partially effective. He suggests that 'the beasts like it because the words are simple and the sentiment's memorable'.[36] This, too, is difficult to reconcile with what the 'sentiment' really is and what its consequences are. The language may be simple, but the sentiment really is not, requiring a level of understanding that Promethean science in general, and Dart in particular, is habitually reluctant to allow non-human animals. In the context of Dart's Prometheanism, the message is a pragmatic one, if essentially empty. For Calvert and his militarised masculinity, however, this bastardisation of worship, coupled with the communion of human and animal 'souls', brings with it existential shock. When Calvert watches George remove his hat 'with an uncouth parody of reverence',[37] it is possible that he sees in him a mocking echo of the people back home who, confined to the nuclear family and the constraints of militarised masculinity, and fearing the social consequences of doing otherwise, attend church on a Sunday as a performance of identity rather than an act of faith.

Calvert is steeped in the culturally religious, patriarchal Christian attitudes that characterised the white, post-war American environment.[38] The performative nature of his own religiosity is clear; his doubts about the veracity of his 'beliefs' are pronounced throughout, and yet it is obvious that religion permeates his perception of the world and of the events he witnesses on the island. Religion, then, forms part of the socio-cultural lens through which he regards his surroundings, rather than a set of deeply held convictions *per se*. As such, his characterisation of George's 'uncouth parody' is strikingly hypocritical. For Calvert, and by extension his militarised self-image, it is simply not enough for George, who cannot access the human sphere of identity due to his physicality, to perform this exclusively human act, because he has no claim to the transcendent soul that separates man from animal, and so his respect can only ever be

[36] Ibid., p. 89.
[37] Ibid., p. 91.
[38] See Kristin Kobes Du Mez, *Jesus and John Wayne: How White Evangelicals Corrupted a Faith and Fractured a Nation* (Liveright Publishing, 2021). While Du Mez focuses specifically on evangelicalism, the analysis is useful for understanding the Christian inflection of militant masculinity in general.

an insulting mimicry. His animality permits only the base physical reaction, and not meaningful thought. However, it is precisely these physical, animal reactions that come to reveal Calvert's own animality.

After he is chased from Hans' funeral by the rampaging Beast People, Calvert takes refuge with Jed Warren, a retired naval serviceman who has been installed on the island to manage its power supply, and the two discuss religion at length. Calvert declares that 'last century and this, the Christian God has become discredited because he is identified more and more with materialist progress'.[39] From a man in whom religious, nationalistic and military masculine identity are so inextricably bound together, this seems a fascinating, even hypocritical pronouncement. By this point in the narrative, Calvert has already made clear that he is suspicious about scientific progress where it is not carried out under the strict auspices of the religious, nationalistic and military mores to which he himself is accustomed; he is not an advocate of unchecked Prometheanism, but does see how it can be useful when supervised by the military, or at the very least, governmental forces. Calvert recognises the truth of the Cold War moment: that, in a nuclear age, Prometheanism has conflated scientific progress and divine *fiat* to the extent that the one cannot easily be distinguished from the other. As such, the godly has become material and vice versa, until the Promethean has killed the godly altogether; with everything in reach, the godly holds no wonder. Calvert certainly identifies the degeneration of religious faith, as he perceives it, as being linked with the pace of scientific advances across the previous century or more. More than this, however, his remarks hint at an evolution in the image of God, a change of God's shape and meaning in accordance with the shifts brought about by technoscientific development. His meditations on the subject degenerate into the realisation that his religious convictions are built on shifting ground. The sentiment itself has a distinctly Frankensteinian flavour. It is Calvert's conviction that it is through the pursuit of goodness that man can best approach the divine and, by extension, best distance himself from animality. The distinction between 'doing good' and 'excellence' in a field is not as clear here as it may at first seem and, as the reader has already seen, Calvert's preconceptions about good and evil are proving as unstable as his views on God. If Dart believes that he is doing good, by

[39] Aldiss, *Moreau's Other Island*, p. 111.

Calvert's logic he is nearing God in a perfectly legitimate manner. Calvert, with his passive and apathetic God, is talking himself into a profession of his atheism:

> I realized as I was talking that my belief in God was hollow. I no longer believed in anything.
>
> Only a year or two ago, as the ideological blocs moved towards conflict, I had argued that God was the greatest invention of the human imagination, and merely a positive goal towards which we were all moving, generation by generation. The idea was that we should gradually evolve into a kind of godhead. Even as I expounded this view, I was moved by my own faith and sincerity; besides, it suited eminent Under-Secretaries of State to speak of profound matters. People had listened.
>
> Most of those people were now in uniform or subterranean bunkers.[40]

This is a moment of profound self-realisation for Calvert. Not only does he arrive at the awareness that his religious faith is an empty shell around which he has built other key tenets of his identity, but he reflects upon how this performative belief has enabled him to contribute to the building of a militaristic national identity that has radicalised men on the question of military service. It is, he reflects, a means of creating a 'godhead' entirely human, made up of a political elite, bolstered by the continuing progress of Promethean science. His belief in the need for such an endeavour was so profound that he came to believe his own rhetoric. Like Dart at Hans' funeral, Calvert himself has wielded profundities such as the nature of existence to persuade those over whom he has power to comply. Thus, he continues to observe similarities between Dart's worldview and his own.

In the balance of similarities and differences between these two worldviews, Aldiss reveals that Cold War masculinity is built from shifts in the form and significance of the Prometheus myth. Both Calvert's militarised masculinity and Dart's

[40] Ibid., p. 112. His acknowledgment that it 'suited' someone in his position to couch such things in terms of the religious is revealing of the dominant fondness for religiosity in governmental and nationalistic matters and the functioning of the patriarchal state, as well as the enduring power of the concept of manifest destiny in his own country.

Promethean exist in a world in which the Promethean creation, and not the creator, possesses more and more power and control. Militarised masculinity came to rely upon the products of Promethean intellectualism, such as nuclear weapons, in order to reify its own dominance, all the while ceding control to these very creations. Militarised masculinity and Prometheanism presented to one another opposing visions for the masculine. Despite this, they also came to depend on one another for their respective places in the masculine hegemony. It is these two forms of masculinity that Aldiss invokes in Dart and Calvert respectively. However, certain aspects of Dart's Prometheanism diverge dramatically from the Promethean figures discussed thus far.

Nuclear Technoscience and Promethean Masculinity

The military of this moment is faced with a contradiction. While militarised masculinity continues to prize and insist upon the importance of physical strength for masculine identity, the technoscientific Promethean is increasingly demonstrating that it is the cerebral, the technological and scientific, that is the true source of hegemony. John H. Gagnon neatly summarises the contradiction — 'any man can press the button to fire an intercontinental ballistic missile' — and references the example of the 1964 film *Dr. Strangelove,* in which 'a cripple is used to exemplify the cerebral quality of modern warfare'.[41] The promised technoscientific benefits of Prometheanism were far too great a temptation for a militarised masculinity that was suffering from an ongoing identity crisis. Yet, by the Cold War, the former further entrenched the idea that war was no longer necessarily a sphere limited to the physically strong. In fact, the very notion of 'strength' was being renegotiated in the flashpoint between these two forms of masculinity. While physical strength was still fetishised as an emblem of ideal military strength, the acquisition of perceived geopolitical strength depended upon the cerebral. As a result, the military industrial complex of the period in fact produced the very scientists who troubled it, with the reach of the scientific masculinity that

[41] John H. Gagnon, 'Physical Strength, Once of Significance', in *Men and Masculinity*, ed. by Joseph H. Pleck and Jack Sawyer (Prentice-Hall, 1974), pp. 139–49 (p. 141). Gagnon's implication that physical might was in the process of becoming less relevant than technoscience in the military sphere is crucial to an understanding of the uneasy relationship between Prometheanism and the military masculine ideal. Aldiss' Dart exemplifies the phenomenon.

characterised earlier periods now extending into the militarised sphere. This turmoil between nationalistic militarised masculinity and the 'cerebral cripple' Promethean forms the basis of Aldiss' narrative, and this is of key importance to the characterisation of Mortimer Dart, the Prometheus of Aldiss' novel.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the drug thalidomide, a sedative, became available and was prescribed to women who complained of symptoms like acute morning sickness.[42] Reassured that the drug was safe, the women who took it during pregnancy gave birth to babies with a range of birth defects, most frequently phocomelia, or the underdevelopment of limbs so that flipper-like appendages developed instead. Thalidomide had been tested on a range of animals, but this extensive testing had offered no indication that the drug would be harmful to human foetuses, because an inference had been made that safety in the animal test subjects would be analogous to safety in human women. Testing on humans was minimal, and there had been no testing on pregnant women.[43] The catastrophe resulted in around 147,000 thalidomide-affected pregnancies around the world, of which only 24,000 resulted in live births.[44] The resulting scandal called into question the responsibility and trustworthiness of scientists at Chemie Grünenthal, the drug company that had developed thalidomide, and the pharmaceutical industry and the medical profession more broadly.[45] The development of thalidomide, the evasions of truth related to its distribution and the dismissal of women who questioned its safety typify the Promethean medico-scientific project, and the injuries and trauma sustained by its survivors represent this failure in technoscientific responsibility.

Dart is a thalidomide survivor. He has severe phocomelia, which has shaped his self-image and motivation for the scientific experiments he performs. His disability is central to the plot of the novel,[46] and is caused by the Promethean scientific

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[42] Ruth Blue, 'Thalidomide, a Bitter Pill', Wellcome Collection, 22 April 2021 <https://wellcomecollection.org/articles/YIBmoBAAACgA1TRE> [accessed 13 September 2024].
[43] 'Thalidomide', Science Museum, 11 December 2019 <https://www.sciencemuseum.org.uk/objects-and-stories/medicine/thalidomide#:~:text=In%20the%201950s%2C%20scientists%20did,were%20done%20involving%20pregnant%20people.> [accessed 13 September 2024].
[44] Blue, 'Thalidomide'.
[45] Ibid. Blue recounts the story of one mother, June, whose daughter was born with an arm deformity. It transpired that June's doctor had withheld the fact that June's daughter was thalidomide-affected 'for her own good'.
[46] Alasdair Gray also conceived of a disabled, or at least seriously deformed, Promethean figure in his *Poor Things* (1992). Godwin Baxter, the Prometheus figure of Gray's novel, affectionately referred to

malpractice that was the thalidomide scandal; his body is literal, physical evidence, and a constant reminder, of Promethean scientific failure, and the way in which Prometheanism has self-destruction coded into its very existence. As a 'product' of Prometheanism, Dart differs from both Frankenstein and Moreau in that he, in the gaze of the period in which he lives, is coded as 'monstrous' as a result of his disability. From the outset, the physical features of the able-bodied man that offer an albeit tenuous boundary between creator and creature in the work of both Shelley and Wells are made unavailable to Dart through the Prometheanism of the scientists who came before him. Inasmuch as this is the case, Dart represents a culmination of the Promethean project traced by the texts that went before; Promethean science has produced its own 'monster', which has gone on to become the Promethean scientific self. As his disability is the result of Promethean failure and not military conflict, Dart cannot even make the claim that it was sustained in the pursuit of the noble military glory fetishised in Cold War military philosophy. Both his disability and its cause, then, place him firmly outside the militarised sphere.

Dart is the Promethean scientist who has been undermined in the womb, raging against the failures of Promethean science by occupying it as an intellectual space for his own ends. The image Aldiss presents is of a man whose physical disabilities disrupt his journey into full manhood; he is forced to remain foetal and feminine. He requires the use of mechanical legs that make him appear unnaturally tall in order to move around the island and to constantly re-assert his authority there.[47] Like all forms of Prometheanism, his requires vigilant reaffirmation and frequent restatement. His cyborg appearance elicits fear in Calvert when he first meets him. However, later and at closer quarters, the signs of Dart's humanity become more accessible to Calvert, who registers that he is not as tall as he had at first feared, and that he had 'a pale face

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as 'God' by his creation, Bella, was experimented upon by his own father, resulting in serious digestive disorder and an alarming, hulking appearance. Godwin, like Dart, turns to the Promethean project that had been the cause of his own misfortunes in order to create a woman with a mature body but the mind of an infant. See Alasdair Gray, *Poor Things: Episodes from the Early Life of Archibald McCandless M. D. Scottish Public Health Officer*, ed. by Alasdair Gray (Bloomsbury, 2002).

[47] Dart's is not the only example of human disability in the novel. Indeed, the real-life thalidomide scandal is ever-present in the narrative, in a critical response to burgeoning capitalist health economies driven by technoscience. After having met Dart, Calvert also meets the 'Seal People'. These are human triplets, born to a Japanese girl who had also taken thalidomide during pregnancy, who live on a rock off the coast of Moreau Island, separated from the rest of the island by the lagoon. Through the Seal People, the infantilisation and feminisation of disabled bodies in the novel is further reinforced.

which sweated just like mine did'.[48] In noting the fleshiness and smallness of Dart, Calvert finds his 'robotic' qualities diminished and becomes emboldened. Tellingly, he remarks that 'the self-styled Master looked weak and female', albeit with a 'remorseless quality'.[49] His reading of Dart's disability as a feminisation underlines his attitude to the hierarchy of bodies; through his response to it, the reader now understands him as a man who views animality, non-whiteness, femininity and disability as inferior, as degenerations from the masculinist ideal of the archetypical virile, white, male body. Even though he is not a Promethean figure, Calvert is complicit in the principles that set the Promethean apart. Dart also discloses that he has 'a penile deformity', a very literal emasculation at which Calvert 'had to fight an unexpected urge to apologize. Why the healthy body should apologize to the defective I do not know'.[50] He thus betrays a castration complex which he projects onto Dart, reflecting his own journey of emasculation that has just begun.

Dart thus depends on mechanical, transhuman interventions into his own physicality and embodiment. His cyborg identity hints at a self-image which transcends both the disabled body he has and the non-disabled human body that he regards with an attitude which vacillates between envy and contempt. The technological aspects of the body he has fashioned for himself are futuristic in their forward-looking gaze to a human identity not constrained to the fleshly; they are the Promethean solution to what he regards as a problem of the flesh. In addition, the echoes of Moreau's rejection of pain are striking here as the prostheses are parts of Dart that are invulnerable and impervious to pain. However, Dart is, in fact, highly dependent on others, both human and non-human, in the absence of these enhancements. By species a biped, he is effectively no such thing, and this has brought about significant fissures in his Promethean self-image. This is, after all, a significant departure from the characterisations of Frankenstein and Moreau, both embodying typical Prometheanism, both of whom are largely healthy and able-bodied men whose self-image is not disrupted by physical disability; they are not feminised and infantilised in the same way as Dart. In a world where, as R.W. Connell has expressed, masculinity is significantly reliant on the performance of the body, the limitations

[48] Aldiss, *Moreau's Other Island*, p. 21.
[49] Ibid., p. 28.
[50] Ibid., p. 37.

presented by his physicality mean that Dart must find other ways to assert his Promethean status, or at least to reimagine it in such a way that it can reflect himself. He does this by refiguring masculinity in a way that emphasises control over others, and the application of science to transhuman methods of overcoming his disability, thus rejecting the masculine ideal that privileges physical prowess over the intellect.[51] While his body has been the site of past scientific failure, he determines to make it the site of future scientific success.[52] What is crucial here is that he locates the failure at the gestational, maternal stage, and the possibilities for redress in the masculine Promethean.[53] Aldiss draws on the thalidomide scandal in a way that foregrounds women's bodies as the sites of medico-scientific experimentation.[54] Where Prometheanism did harm to Dart *in utero*, so his own Promethean project takes place *in utero*, through genetic engineering, the female body providing the space for continued Promethean ambition.

Technology, then, occupies a godlike relevance and control over attitudes and behaviour in the novel, and this is also true of guns and other firearms. When Calvert asks Hans whether George speaks English, Hans tells him that 'what he savvies best' is the threat of the gun.[55] It is through the gun, a violent, pseudo-phallic technological presence, that Hans speaks to and controls George; like Moreau's whip, it becomes both a method of control and a means of communication and understanding across the boundary between human and animal. Dart understands this very well. Later, when he argues with Calvert, he notes that Calvert is speaking with a finger pointed at him and shouts 'Take a look at yourself! You are instinctively aiming a gun at me now, only all you have is a finger. So watch it, because I am armed, remember!'[56] He aims his gun at Calvert, who sneers that 'only when you've got that thing in your claw can you be on equal terms with another man'.[57] When Hans drowns in the lagoon, Dart becomes desperate to ensure that the Beast People are not able to retrieve his riot gun. Authority

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[51] R. W. Connell, *Masculinities*, 2nd edn (Polity, 2005), pp. 54–55.
[52] Here, the Promethean determination to use animals as resources has, albeit tacitly, restated the similarities between humans and non-human species, resulting in a catastrophic Promethean failure where the differences between human and non-human have fatally undermined the science.
[53] Aldiss, *Moreau's Other Island*, p. 38.
[54] This was a truth that was not overlooked by women's resistance to Promethean technoscience at the time. This is discussed in more detail later.
[55] Aldiss, *Moreau's Other Island,* p. 13.
[56] Ibid., p. 79.
[57] Ibid., p. 79.

on the island proves to be highly dependent on who or what is in possession of technology in general, and a gun in particular: of Promethean 'fire' and technology in the form of weaponry. The phallic nature of the gun as instrument of control is also overt: a replacement for the more traditional expression of masculinity through brute strength.[58]

Later in the narrative, the seizure or rejection of Promethean tools which also characterises both *Frankenstein* and *The Island of Doctor Moreau* becomes a central focus. Foxy, the leader of the rampaging Beast People, has acquired Hans' missing gun and, when Calvert encounters him near the end of novel, he is carrying fire: 'Foxy me you no longer more afraid of flame like all Beast People. Me shoot shoot-gun, kill George, kill anybody people, you savvy, hero? Me man same you, use flame, savvy?'[59] Thus Foxy now possesses the Promethean element in its most mythological, literal form. What is more, it is clear that he understands its significance. In his broken English he tells Calvert of his plan to burn the laboratory, to kill Dart and to become Master of the island, a new Prometheus of literal form seeking to destroy the Promethean in its scientific iteration and begin again. Calvert must confront the fact that the firearm, that symbol of Promethean power, is now in the hands of the Beast People, and this results in an enormous shift in the power dynamic, both literal and metaphorical, on the island. The change in ownership of this one symbol heralds an irreversible change, even if Dart's cerebral Stand-by Replacement Sub-Race is, ultimately, a far greater Promethean proposition, and a departure from the failed and monstrous counterparts of Shelley and Wells.

Making Meat of Men

The meaning and significance of meat in Aldiss' novel is also a departure from the meanings and significances afforded by the previous two texts, and this is just as much a reflection of the changing nature of meat, masculinity and consumability during the

[58] Gagnon, 'Physical Strength, Once of Significance', pp. 141–42. Gagnon points out that the fist fight of the American western 'is a reaction against the equalizing influence of the portable gun: morality requires that older "man-to-man" codes of conduct be affirmed and older methods of creating hierarchy between men be retained'. The firearm is certainly an 'equalizing' force between the disabled scientist Dart and the militarised government man Calvert here.
[59] Aldiss, *Moreau's Other Island,* p. 157.

period from which the text hails. After the *fin de siècle*, the First and Second World Wars, with their shattering death tolls, brought about a very literal, and very bloody, mass destruction and consumption of male bodies by the military industrial machine in the first half of the twentieth century.[60] The result was multi-faceted; while the male body had been glorified as an instrument of war, the idea of the superiority of the white, Western male body was simultaneously undermined and its vulnerability and status as flesh emphasised.[61] Joanna Bourke, in her study of masculinity and the First World War, makes many salient observations about masculinity before, during and immediately after the conflict, including the ways in which male dismemberment, dehumanisation and depersonalisation became normalised even while disability itself remained taboo. This is in striking contrast to Promethean ideas of the ideal man as transcendent of his own fleshly embodiment and animality, and it emphasises the First World War as a rupture in the trajectory of masculinity: a sudden, violent reminder of the fleshiness of male bodies. This, says Bourke, led to attempts to reconstitute masculinity through nostalgia, a gazing backwards towards a perceived golden age of masculinity. The machine of war, Promethean in its increasing reliance upon technoscience, was bringing about the figuring of the Western man as flesh: penetrable, dismemberable and consumable.

The momentum of capitalist industrialisation in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had laid the foundations for figurations of male bodies as resources to be maximised in their efficiency in the conflicts that would follow. Daniel Pick's *War Machine: The Rationalisation of Slaughter in the Modern Age* (1993) remains the most detailed study of war as natural science, offering an analysis of early twentieth-century conflict as a descendant of the rationalisation of slaughterhouses.[62] This

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[60] Simultaneously, the concentration camps of the Holocaust were becoming the site of one of history's most infamous mass dehumanisations, where the human/animal boundary was taken to be malleable and moved in such a way as to enable certain groups of people to be animalised as a justification for, and rationalisation of, their mass extermination.

[61] Joanna Bourke, *Dismembering the Male: Men's Bodies, Britain and the Great War* (Reaktion Books, 1996). Bourke's is one of the most in-depth and revealing studies of masculinity and the First World War.

[62] Daniel Pick, *The Rationalisation of Slaughter in the Modern Age* (Yale University Press, 1996). Pick highlights that the assembly line of capitalist mass production that flourished in Edwardian workplaces was not original to the factory-based mass production of Henry Ford's automobiles, but was, in fact, adapted from the methods used to speed up production in slaughterhouses. Such processes inevitably de-individualised factory workers. The fact that assembly line workplaces were the descendants of abattoirs remained an unavoidable and damning reminder of the practical rather than theoretical

assembly line paradigm was easily translated to the machine of war, which further emphasised the ontologically alarming notion of the male body as an anonymous, expendable resource in pursuit of national interests and human lack of resilience to technological developments where these were often outpacing intellectual and philosophical responses to their consequences. In short, conceptions of men as embodied flesh, with all the consumability and vulnerabilities attendant upon that embodiment, were proliferating against the backdrop of a technoscience that was curtailing human behaviour even as humans created it.

The momentum towards vegetarianism and meat-avoidance during the nineteenth century, as detailed in previous chapters, had also continued into the twentieth. Despite the privations of two world wars, the ethical question of whether animals ought to be consumed as resources persisted. Indeed, the ethical avoidance of meat alone had expanded into a more organised consideration of animal consumption to such an extent that the Vegan Society was founded in 1944, its objective to campaign for the avoidance of animal exploitation in all its forms as far as possible. As it had in the past, meat came to be figured as a symbol of security and a reassurance against the idea that masculinity was waning in the comparatively easy post-war era. Unlike Shelley's and Wells' earlier texts, meat avoidance features very little in *Moreau's Other Island*. Rather there is a shift from the question of what meat-eating and meat avoidance mean for human and masculine identity to a more direct examination of man's own fleshiness and edibility.

Calvert's narrative begins with an invocation of the male body as flesh, subject to all the vulnerabilities entailed in embodiment, located directly alongside an animal commandeered for military action. In a mirror of Prendick in the *Lady Vain*, Calvert finds himself floating in the ocean, one of three survivors of a space shuttle crash. Eight days into his ordeal, a 'naval dolphin' appears, with 'stars and stripes embedded in its tail'.[63] However, it transpires that this dolphin has been armed with explosives.

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principles of man as part of a machine of (dis)assembly perhaps most graphically illustrated, and juxtaposed with animal suffering, in Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* (1906). See Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle* (Clydesdale, 2016).

[63] Aldiss, *Moreau's Other Island*, p. 4. Thus, the naval dolphin in question is clearly of US origin, and may be an early example of Promethean technology over which control has been lost. This may have seemed fanciful to Aldiss' readers in 1980, but in 2025 it is utterly conceivable. For example, in 2019, a tame beluga whale dubbed 'Hvaldimir' was discovered by fishermen off the coast of Norway, wearing what appeared to be a camera harness. Initially thought to be a Russian 'spy whale', marine expert Dr

It ignites, killing both itself and Calvert's two fellow survivors. Calvert's, then, is a world in which animals are used as weapons of war in a nuclear age. He notes that an 'ordinary dolphin' would seek out its own species for protection if injured, while this specimen, alienated from its fellows by the scientific and technological interventions of man, is 'loaded with death', and 'had had to travel alone to the last'.[64] The centrality of animal bodies in experimentation in *Moreau's Other Island* is thus marked out from the start. The alienation of this dolphin is brought about by the transition from natural to adapted form. It both foretells what is to come in the novel and echoes analogous examples in *Frankenstein* and *The Island of Doctor Moreau.* These are organic, sentient beings which, because of the ontological disruptions brought about by the Promethean application of science and technology, resist taxonomical identification and become doubly othered as both unnatural and animal. After the explosion, Calvert describes how 'limbs and flesh lay in the ocean about me, trailing tentacles of red which were dispersed among the waters',[65] in a noteworthy early image of male bodies as dismembered and literalised as meat, presumably indistinguishable from the meat of the dismembered dolphin. As he floats away from the scene of the explosion on a scrap of canopy, 'two sharks began to circle the area […] I watched many triangular fins, circling the bloodied area at speed.[66] Thus, what remains of his fellow male passengers is eaten by sharks, forcing his gaze to both the fleshiness and the edibility of male bodies in a violent inversion of anthropocentric ideas about the food chain. So begins Calvert's struggle with animality.

Later in the narrative, after the Beast People have rebelled against their creator and rampage on the island, giving chase to the human inhabitants, they eventually break into Warren's compound where they kill and dismember him and eat his flesh. Calvert describes how 'they began to tear his body apart, to rip his clothes and his limbs away from his body'.[67] A short time later, 'A vile creature with bloody visage stood there, swaying slightly and waving some sort of weapon in his right hand. He

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Olga Shpak now suggests Hvaldimir fled having been trained to guard a naval base in the Arctic Circle. See Jonah Fisher and Oksana Kundirenko, 'Runaway "Spy Whale" Fled Russian Military Training Says Marine Scientist', *BBC News*, 13 November 2024 <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c1ml3n1x4zro.amp> [accessed 14 November 2024].

[64] Aldiss, *Moreau's Other Island*, p. 6.

[65] Ibid., p. 5.

[66] Ibid., p. 5.

[67] Ibid., p. 114.

had been eating from it. The unsteady light was sufficient to illumine one of Jed Warren's forearms'.[68] Just as he had watched while his fellow shuttle crash survivors had been rendered into literalised flesh by sharks at the beginning of the novel, so Calvert now witnesses Warren being torn apart in the moonlight, being made into parts from something that he can only conceive of as being whole. Calvert is frozen with fear that he will soon meet Warren's fate: 'I was human quarry, by my very shape marked out as one of the enemy. They would tear me apart […] they would rend my flesh and eat my tenderest parts'.[69] He is agonisingly aware of his own vulnerability at this point and knows only the animal instinct to escape with his life. He is also conscious that it is his shape, and not himself as a person in any way transcendent of the fleshly, that makes him a target for the wrath of the Beast People. It is his shape, his status as 'four legs long', that makes him vulnerable. Calvert, of course, has based nearly every one of his perceptions of the Beast People on their shape. As such, this is a wry subversion.

Bodily shape, then, is figured as inextricably tied to identity throughout the novel, from Dart's disability to the rendering of bodies as flesh. Earlier, in another echo of Wells' earlier text, Calvert witnessed Dart's 'Master in the Sky' sermon at Hans' graveside. The purpose of this mantra is much the same as that of Moreau's Law: to maintain control over the Beast People by means of fear of an unseen, but ever watchful, overlord. As previously noted, Dart describes death to the Beast People as a loss of shape. When Calvert comes to witness the killing of Warren, and to face the prospect of his own dismemberment, he has a very clear anxiety focused on a loss of shape and wholeness that echoes the cautions of Dart's pseudo-religious hymn. If this wholeness, clearly demarcated individuality, impenetrability and, ultimately, inedibility are key tenets of Cold War masculine thinking, then this is a dark night of Calvert's masculine soul. It is also a moment which hinges on the fear of literal emasculation; a reference to his 'tenderest parts' reveals the terror of his genitals being eaten and a repetition of the castration complex observed in his earlier exchange with Dart during which he learned that the latter has no penis. It is only in an especially gory moment, when 'some small torn thing struck the window and slid down it' that

[68] Ibid., p. 117.
[69] Ibid., p. 117–18.

he breaks out of his funk and begins to consider how he can escape.[70]

Thus the terror associated with this moment is not limited to a terror of being dismembered, but also a terror of being emasculated and eaten. Calvert at once fears the dismemberment and consumption that would mark him out as animal, and the castration which would mark him out as feminised. This particularly significant moment in the narrative brings together the several key meanings of men as meat in the text. As on Wells' island, the edibility of man obliterates his exceptionalism and, in this case, that edibility is pronounced and enacted by Beast People who are the result of the Promethean project on the island, in a key example of Prometheanism as destructive and self-defeating. Both forms of masculinity, the Promethean and the military, are engaged in analogous confrontations with their own animality and embodiment, and the ever-present threat of that reduction in status that is always a measure of masculinity or its lack — feminisation.

Feminist Resistance

The composite impact of Prometheanism and military masculinity was a subject of concern for feminist theorists of the day, not least because of the ways in which it continued a historical abjection of women. By the time that Françoise d'Eaubonne coined the term 'ecofeminism' in 1974, animals and nature were becoming established tenets of social justice movements and the approaches they took to connected systems of oppression.[71] Seminal ecofeminist texts of the second-wave feminist period, including Susan Griffin's *Woman and Nature* (1978), Carolyn Merchant's *The Death of Nature* (1980) and Carol J. Adams' *The Sexual Politics of Meat* (1990), emphasised attention to animal bodies as a crucial factor in anti-oppressive ecological theory and practice.[72] Vegetarianism, veganism, and opposition to animal testing were all prominent causes at the Greenham Common Peace Camp and at the Greenham Common Protests which began in 1981. This protest movement made visible feminist

[70] Ibid., pp. 114–15.
[71] Françoise d'Eaubonne, *Feminism or Death,* ed. and trans. by Ruth Hottell (Verso, 2022).
[72] Susan Griffin, *Woman and Nature: The Roaring Inside Her* (Women's Press, 1984); Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution* (Harper, 1990); Carol J. Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory* (Bloomsbury, 2015).

resistance to the Promethean scientific nuclear endeavour, catalysing ecofeminism-in-action against nuclear weapons. The presence and absence of animal bodies in ecological debate would find what remains their most visible convergence in this moment of protest.[73] However, the continued association of these animal-focused positions with the kinds of protest and non-conformism that threatened to undermine normative, patriarchal socio-cultural structures compounded the notion that they were symptomatic of hysterical women who were at best ridiculous and, at worst, actively dangerous. The intersection of feminist protests for peace, autonomy and animal rights recalled that noted by Coral Lansbury in relation to women's rights and anti-vivisection at the *fin de siècle*; this demonstrated that women recognised their own oppression in that of the more-than-human world, and resisted accordingly.[74] This shored up the gender divide in meat-eating, vegetarianism and animal rights, restating the location of women on the side of nature and men on the side of culture, the latter occupying a superior space that transcended the physical but required constant re-emphasis and defence from perceived antagonistic forces.

As previously discussed, two world wars had resulted in a mobilisation of the female workforce on an unprecedented scale. After 1945, frantic scrambling to return to traditional roles by means of the nuclear family ensued, but the fit, particularly for women, was often a poor one: a fact which helped to fuel the rise of second-wave feminism. After the Second World War, consumer technology entered its heyday, with the widespread use of hire purchase to acquire labour-saving goods, ostensibly to lighten the housewife's load. The scientific developments of these latter decades of the twentieth century had a personal impact for women, particularly in the medicalisation of their mental and reproductive health including, but by no means limited to, the thalidomide scandal described previously. As earlier chapters have shown, the medicalisation of women's negative responses to the confines of marriage and family life and their socio-political and socio-cultural positions was nothing new; the catch-all diagnosis of 'hysteria' had, in the past, associated any medical complaint with

[73] In September 1981, a group of women marched from Wales to RAF Greenham Common in Berkshire to protest the storage of cruise missiles on the site. The initial march would turn into an occupation and the foundation of a peace camp that would operate for nearly twenty years.
[74] Coral Lansbury, *The Old Brown Dog: Women, Workers, and Vivisection in Edwardian England* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), p. 128.

gynaecological problems that were simply inherent in the female body. However, the sudden proliferation of anti-depressant medication, and uptake of this by women, from the 1950s onwards was symptomatic not of some equally sudden and inexplicable epidemic of mental illness among one half of the population, but of the crushing limitations imposed by the nuclear family project and the techniques used by the male-dominated medical field to ensure compliance. Along with the development of the contraceptive pill came advances in *in vitro* fertilisation (IVF) and genetic therapies that made human intervention in conception, pregnancy and birth easier than ever before. This, too, fostered a tension between the potential benefits of these processes for women and the Promethean ambitions of the men who controlled access to them and how they were performed. Just as they had done at the start of the century, women began to recognise themselves in the more-than-human victims of the Promethean project.

The stultifying effect of the nuclear family, and the medicalisation of women's resistance, became the focus of a great deal of second-wave feminist literature during the Cold War period. This comprised both theoretical calls to action and fictionalised critical responses to the socio-cultural moment. For example, in her seminal call for feminist revolution, *The Dialectic of Sex* (1970), Shulamith Firestone asserted that it was the sexual dialectic, and by extension the construction of the nuclear family, that was the primary site of oppression of women and children. She advocated instead a cybernetic communism which employs the technoscientific advances of the twentieth century to remove the burdens of production and reproduction, leading to universal emancipation and equality.[75] Firestone's vision is ostensibly of technological and scientific progress that is not Promethean in its conception, but instead focused on ending oppression rather than shoring up existing power structures. However, as subsequent decades proved, the notion of a non-Promethean scientific future was a radical one indeed, and a vision over which the feminist movement was frequently both sceptical and fundamentally divided.

Gena Corea, in her theoretical work on the risks of reproductive technologies *The Mother Machine* (1985), painted a less utopian, more realistic, picture of the

[75] Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution* (Verso, 2015).

direction that the technological advances of the late twentieth century actually took.[76] Responding to technologies such as the development of IVF in the late 1970s, the genetic selection of gametes and foetuses and the extension of surrogacy, Corea pointed out that this was leading desperate women to undergo dangerous procedures, and that many of the technologies were becoming the acceptable face of eugenics and the commodification of the female body, especially in the developing world. Corea's was not the first feminist voice to express reservations about these technologies. In September 1975, an article written by the Women and Science Collective, a group of scientifically educated feminist women, appeared in the feminist magazine *Spare Rib*.[77] The article referenced Firestone, but the authors were less inclined to share her optimism about the future of technoscience, emphasising that scientific control over reproduction, in the wrong hands, could too easily become yet another tool by which a patriarchal society might control women rather than liberating them.[78] The Collective noted that science was dominated by men who were too often falsely credited with pure objectivity, rationalism and altruism: in other words, the Promethean man. They decried the use of exclusionary jargon that created a sense of scientific authority which was then put to use not for the good of humanity but in order to make money in a capitalist system to which even supposedly objective science must apparently bow. In their caution against the uncritical entrusting of women's health to a science that is possessed of its own biases and motives, they echoed in 1975 many of Mary Shelley's concerns in 1818.

Spare Rib continued to provide a platform for feminist commentators to raise awareness about the state of technoscience in a period where capitalism and the military-industrial complex set the geopolitical and socio-cultural agenda. In December 1985, the year Corea published *The Mother Machine* and ten years after the

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[76] Gena Corea, *The Mother Machine: Reproductive Technologies from Artificial Insemination to Artificial Wombs* (Women's Press, 1988).

[77] Women and Science Collective, 'Seeing Through Science', *Spare Rib*, 39 (1975), p. 14.

[78] Firestone is frequently guilty of idealism and a conviction that technoscience and the mastery of nature, when removed from their current patriarchal caretakers, would be inherently positive. She is not opposed to human control over nature *per se*, and does not connect the oppression of women to the oppression of nature in an intersectional way. However, the risks of technoscience while it remains in the hands of Promethean men are something that Firestone addresses several times in *The Dialectic of Sex*, rather than being a pitfall that she has overlooked completely as might be inferred from the Women and Science Collective's reflections on her work. The Collective also takes exception to Firestone's contention that childbearing is, by definition, oppressive, and questions the need for universal artificial reproduction at all.

Collective used the magazine to issue their call for greater critical thinking, and more feminist voices, in social dialogues with technoscience, Renate Duelli Klein, Gena Corea and Ruth Hubbard published an account of their experiences at 'Frauen gegen Gentechnik und Reproduktionstechnik' ('Women Against Genetic Technology and Reproductive Technology'). This congress, a key moment in the configuration of a movement against the Promethean project, was co-organised by the Sozialwissenschaftliche Forschung und Praxis fur Frauen (the Feminist Social Science Association) and the Women's Section of the Green Party, and was held in Bonn, Germany, in April of that year.[79] The authors condemned the '"Big Brotherhood" of scientists, businessmen and politicians', and the use of technoscience to make profit and to produce biological and other weapons that further endangered women and children. Klein pointed out that, despite its protestations of objectivity and humanistic altruism, science was being used to address the perceived 'imperfections' of women's bodies, using them as 'living laboratories' to achieve a closer approximation of the male ideal, and referred to a 'technopatriarchy', a concept somewhat analogous with the structural system under which, as this thesis demonstrates, Prometheanism takes place.[80] That the event they summarised was attended by two thousand women from around the world demonstrates the scale of concern about the development of reproductive technologies at the time. The article also referenced the 1984 formation of FINNRET (the Feminist International Network on the New Reproductive Technologies), a collective of women set up to challenge what they saw as the patriarchal function of emergent reproductive technologies. FINNRET later changed its name to FINRRAGE (the Feminist International Network of Resistance to Reproductive and Genetic Engineering), making explicit their radical opposition to what they perceived as an existential threat to women.

Maria Mies, a prominent voice in ecofeminist discourse, was also present at the congress, her remarks apparently disputing Firestone's own contention that the new technoscience would necessarily be benign if only it were removed from patriarchal hands. Mies used the congress to argue that 'technological processes are never neutral',

[79] Renate Duelli Klein, Gena Corea and Ruth Hubbard, 'Talking down the Technodocs', *Spare Rib*, 161 (1985).
[80] Duelli Klein, Corea and Hubbard, 'Talking down the Technodocs'. The 'technopatriarchy' is analogous to the 'new priesthood' of the previous chapter.

and that their desire to dissect nature and reconstruct it in a prejudiced and biased image is inherent.[81] Having more women working under a male model of science, the ideas of which are 'biologistic, racist and fascist' and ignore that oppression stems from socio-cultural causes would, said Mies, offer little benefit to women and nature generally.[82] The congress finally resolved that 'gene and reproductive technologies' represent:

> the latest attempt of international big businesses, science, politics and the military to re-activate the world economy by creating new markets. The new 'territories' that are dissected, appropriated and subjugated to total control are plant, animal and human life […] a declaration of war against women, the ecosystem and Third World people.[83]

Thus, such technologies were, as was the case in the wake of Darwinism, a species of colonisation, and male scientists engaged in what they regarded as the 'burden' of bringing the previously unknown, uncontrollable aspects of female bodies under Promethean control. The congress' resolution appealed to scientists 'to end the unholy alliance between a mechanistic science and business interests' which threatened the safety of women and nature.[84] This discrepancy between the vision and the reality highlights a vitally important tenet of the critique of Prometheanism, and a theme now recognisable across literary Prometheanisms: that Prometheanism is not analogous with science in a general sense, but is a masculinist and exclusionary form of science that harms by means of why and how it is practiced. Crucially, Mies' reflections also stressed the importance of a radical rejection of Promethean values in the theory and practice of science, and not simply an exchange of ownership from the male to the female.

While a burgeoning feminist and ecofeminist movement rose up to oppose a technoscience that they believed disempowered women, some feminists felt that FINNRET/FINRRAGE and those who agreed with their position were too hasty in

[81] Ibid.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Ibid.

their disavowal of the technoscientific revolution of the late twentieth century. For example, Marge Berer argued that FINRRAGE was guilty of dismissing the new technologies out of hand as a 'male conspiracy', rather than considering each in turn. Berer characterised commentators such as Corea and Duelli Klein as conspiracy theorists and fantasists, too reliant on science fiction narratives and images of what might conceivably happen, rather than what was actually happening at the time. Berer's disdain for science fiction as a legitimate means of articulating the risks of technoscience to women and the more-than-human world is arresting in itself, given the body of timely and compelling work by women writers that was emerging at the time to do precisely that.[85] In her defence of technoscience, and particularly medical technoscience as it related to women, Berer took the strikingly masculinist position that a lack of scientific expertise renders any sociological analysis of technoscience lacking, while condemning Corea and Duelli Klein for blaming science for socio-cultural oppressions. However, Berer was herself guilty of understating the affiliations between technoscience and business interests, rather naively characterising them as minimal where she mentioned them at all. Nevertheless, opinions like Berer's are relevant to an analysis of Prometheanism, and movements against it, around the time that Aldiss was writing, because they typify the claims of excessive emotion and ignorance that had been levelled at those who stood against unchecked technoscience in the past. Heated exchanges such as this encapsulate some of the key fracture points in feminist discussion about technoscience at this time. While some voices called for more caution in technoscientific development, others were unable or unwilling to countenance the possibility that such advances may be dangerous, characterising any dissent from technoscientific hegemony as essentialist, hysterical ignorance. Those who did not take an anti-science stance *per se*, but who still wished for critical debate about the trajectory of masculinist science, were thus still frequently dismissed as paranoid hysterics, just as they had been throughout the two preceding centuries and beyond.[86]

This context of debate and challenge is crucial to a reading of *Moreau's Other Island*, because Aldiss' Dart realises so precisely the fears of figures like Corea and

[85] This body of work is discussed in more detail later.
[86] See Marge Berer, 'Breeding Conspiracies: Feminist and the New Reproductive Technologies', *Trouble and Strife*, 9 (1986), pp. 29–35.

Duelli Klein. He is at once the creator and the result of the kind of Prometheanism ecofeminists and feminist scientists were critiquing so thoroughly at this time. He is the survivor of a Promethean wound inflicted in the womb and, imbued with that self-destructive arrogance that only the Promethean can fix a problem the Promethean caused, has become the Promethean intellectual who insinuates himself into *in utero* development. The monster, in Promethean terms, has thus become the Promethean scientist, and the feminist critiques discussed are concerned with defending the female body from continuing to be used to produce and reproduce this Promethean cycle.

Conclusion

Aldiss' sequel to the work of Wells and Shelley has both similarities to, and differences from, the earlier narratives, reflecting as it does the shifting of Promethean masculine priorities and focuses from the beginning and end of the nineteenth century to the end of the twentieth. *Moreau's Other Island* locates the Promethean masculine endeavour in the Cold War context using narrative techniques earlier employed by Wells to locate that same endeavour in the post-Darwinian moment. Where Moreau insisted that he could transcend physical pain, Dart gestures towards transhumanist ideas of the cyborg, having developed mechanical body parts and prostheses in order to conceal his severe phocomelia, the result of maternal thalidomide use while he was *in utero*. The vivisectional experiments of Moreau and the multi-species compositions of Frankenstein give way to Dart's experiments in genetics, reflecting the changed scientific developments that separate the two narratives and their contexts. Yet the intention remains similar: to develop a superior, transcendent species that can survive the existential threat of the time, whether that threat is the Darwinian blurring of the human/animal boundary or the spectre of nuclear conflict. Crucially, Promethean self-consciousness, in all three texts, centres on the ontological separation of man from animal, and the vexed question of human fleshiness and consumability.

As has already been demonstrated in previous chapters, the acts of these Promethean scientists also result in their own alienation and isolation from humanity, both as a social collective and an ethical concept. This proves to be no less true of Mortimer Dart than it is of Victor Frankenstein or Moreau. The brutalising effect of

the experimental acts performed and witnessed by the Promethean man of science is made clear in all three texts. While Frankenstein is alone in lacking an 'assistant', and in fact goes to great lengths to ensure his own absolute isolation in his experiments, both Montgomery and Hans become alienated from their humanity by what they witness being done by Moreau and Dart respectively, existing as externalisations of what both Moreau and Dart regard as the human weaknesses in themselves.[87] Aldiss' sequel to the Wells classic is, therefore, a vital text for understanding the evolution of Promethean masculinity, and its failure to think beyond the Promethean gaze.

By the time *Moreau's Other Island* was published in 1980, the socio-cultural and socio-political landscape of the Western world had been shaped by two world wars, the advent of the nuclear age and a burgeoning feminist response to issues including warfare and the sanctity of women's bodies. A little over eighty years separates the post-Darwinian moment of Wells' *The Island of Doctor Moreau* from the Cold War context of Aldiss' *Moreau's Other Island*. *Frankenstein* had furnished a narrative of the Romantic rejection of divine and monarchical power and the rise of a scientific masculinity that interrogated the relationship between man and god epitomised by Enlightenment scientific advances and the French Revolution. A shift was thus instigated in the way in which Prometheanism operated, as it strayed from a patriarchy built on the religious certainties of previous centuries to one that was more humanistic and scientific. As the previous chapter shows, Darwinism advanced and consolidated these secular scientific ideas, heralding a period when the overarching preoccupation of science was in understanding the human position in the animal world and reckoning with a shifting boundary between human and animal. It was this context in which Wells wrote *The Island of Doctor Moreau*: an elaboration on the ideas originally set forth by Shelley. Aldiss furnishes the next stage in this Promethean imagination. The focus of twentieth-century technoscience was on re-establishing that problematised boundary, enhancing the human condition to maximise control over the natural world while minimising the kind of reliance upon it that threatened to make the species vulnerable.

[87] Many later film adaptations of *Frankenstein* create an assistant or dogsbody character for dramatic effect, where none exists in the original text. Both Prendick and Calvert observe brutal elements in Montgomery and Hans respectively, and a general closer proximity to the Beast Folk and Beast People. It is also possible to view Calvert and Prendick as the superego of the respective scientists, or an externalised moral voice.

It is this focus that drives Aldiss' own response to Moreau. While the greater part of two centuries separates Shelley's intervention from Aldiss', then, their common ideas, threaded through Wells at the *fin de siècle*, are unmistakable; all three reveal the ways in which Promethean responses to scientific advancement, in all three historical contexts, centred on the idea of Promethean man as transcendent of animality. The science changed, but the Promethean determination to state and restate its own pinnacular positioning remained the same, whether that positioning was articulated by religious means or scientific.

Aldiss' text responds in ways significant to the moment in which these many changes and advances culminated. Calvert epitomises the bureaucrat who serves a militarised masculinity which, as a result of his own military service, Aldiss is likely to have encountered first hand. This form of militarism, as Calvert's characterisation shows, drew from the resources produced by Prometheanism in order to shore up its hegemonic status, while simultaneously harbouring ambivalent attitudes to those resources and huge internal conflict between science and a resurgent religio-nationalistic patriarchy. Throughout the text, there are signs of the interpersonal becoming impersonal within the human world; audio-visual communication technology is well established, and the threatened war will clearly be waged remotely, with nuclear weapons and 'suicide' animals, rather than using the hand-to-hand methods that, mere decades ago, made the bloodiness and fleshiness of battle so literal and visceral. The way in which this confrontation of the flesh is being outsourced to computers and other technologies mirrors the ways in which the purely vivisectional nature of Moreau's experiments has shifted, in Dart's hands, to a process of genetic engineering which seems cleaner and less barbaric, even if the suffering which results is of a very similar type. Both technological mediations reflect similar mediations happening in the real world in which Aldiss was writing, in which the threat of nuclear conflict and the arms race had long superseded that of battlefield combat in the Western political mind, and in which vivisection had become known, far more euphemistically, as 'animal research'. In Dart, too, Aldiss characterises, albeit in extremely problematic terms, the catastrophic results of reliance on animal testing most dramatically exemplified by the thalidomide scandal of the late 1950s and early 1960s. The hackneyed portrayal of Dart as the vengeful and embittered disabled person

notwithstanding, he is the means by which Aldiss fictionalises the reality of thalidomide-related deformity. What is clear, too, is that Aldiss is responding to a reality in which motivations for scientific intervention are dubious, and not in the spirit of female emancipation urged by feminist theorists of the time. The goal of science in the novel is transhumanism; the objective is to create a species which is at the mercy of none of the mortal, fleshly vulnerabilities of the human creators. The Cold War Prometheus has created nuclear weapons, and now must create for himself some means of surviving his creation. How he will then outlive that second creation remains to be seen, but what is clear is that, in true Frankensteinian and Moreauvian style, he has invented his own destroyer.

Conclusion

2018 marked the bicentenary of the original publication of *Frankenstein*. In those two hundred years, the themes of the original novel have proven resilient. This thesis has focused on just two of the multitude of retellings and responses that have emerged since 1818. Film, TV, literature and theatre are all rich with other examples, and the story has found a seemingly permanent place in popular culture. Twenty-first century examples include a 2004 episode of the surrealist comedy programme *The Mighty Boosh*, titled 'Mutants', in which arrogant zoo owner Dixon Bainbridge splices zoo animals with humans to create hybrids, and 'Hybrid Creatures' (2023), an episode of the dark vampire comedy *What We Do in the Shadows* that involves vampire Laszlo Cravensworth experimenting with the creation of animal versions of beleaguered familiar Guillermo.[1] In 2023, Yorgos Lanthimos' film adaptation of Alasdair Gray's 1992 novel *Poor Things* brought to the screen the tale of Bella Baxter, a once-dead woman who has the brain of her unborn baby transplanted into her body by Dr Godwin Baxter.[2] 2025 will see yet another film adaptation of the story with the release of Guillermo del Toro's *Frankenstein*, which will feature another scientist attempting to track down the Creature in order to resume Victor's work.[3] In literature, Jeanette Winterson's *Frankisstein* (2019) addresses the themes of the original novel to the future of transhumanism, sex dolls and artificial intelligence in post-Brexit Britain.[4] It is precisely the resonance of its themes — animality, humanity, science, flesh — as well as the macabre appeal of its terror and horror, that has ensured the longevity of the story itself. As has been demonstrated, retellings emerge at certain times, in response to socio-cultural and socio-political events and shifts of which the themes of *Frankenstein* are illuminating and even instructive.

Myth, and story in general, furnishes archetypes and lessons relating to perennial questions of what it means to be human — and even what it means to be animal. To be

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[1] 'Mutants', *The Mighty Boosh* (BBC Three/Baby Cow Productions, 2003–07), 25 May 2004; 'Hybrid Creatures', *What We Do in the Shadows* (FX Networks, 2019–24), 17 August 2023. Coincidentally, both Bainbridge and Cravensworth are played by the same British actor, Matt Berry.

[2] *Poor Things*, dir. by Yorgos Lanthimos (Ireland/UK/USA/Hungary, 2023); Alasdair Gray, *Poor Things: Episodes from the Early Life of Archibald McCandless M. D. Scottish Public Health Officer,* ed. by Alasdair Gray (Bloomsbury, 2002).

[3] *Frankenstein*, dir. by Guillermo del Toro (Mexico/USA, 2025) (forthcoming).

[4] Jeanette Winterson, *Frankisstein: A Love Story* (Jonathan Cape, 2019).

resonant, though, a myth must lend itself to adaptation. In tracing the trajectory marked out by the three texts discussed in this thesis, it becomes clear that the myth of Prometheus is nothing if not malleable and amorphous. The very lack of one universally accepted canonical version of the myth, even from antiquity, speaks to the way in which a range of meanings have been inferred from it depending on context and intention. As a means of understanding and articulating the progress of a kind of hegemonic masculinity rooted in the theory and practice of technoscience, the story of Prometheus extends thematically to consider creation at its very core; the idea that Epimetheus created animals and Prometheus created humans establishes the human/animal boundary, and human difference and exceptionalism, at the level of myth. The image of Prometheus forming man out of clay also forms the concept of the human shape being a fundamental characteristic of what it means to be human, and this is an idea that presents ontological and taxonomical problems when some humans, like thalidomide survivor Mortimer Dart, occupy physical bodies that deviate from the norm. The Trick at Mekone uses story to give mythical basis to the inception of meat-eating, and a formative rupture between man and god that marks the end of a golden age to which man will always strive, unsuccessfully, to return. The theft of fire is perhaps the most emblematic aspect of the whole myth, with both literal and metaphorical relevance. The fire that cooks meat is also symbolic of the spark of human knowledge and curiosity and, crucially, is an element the possession of which is another marker of a fundamental difference between man and the rest of the animal kingdom. When Prometheus is fated to have his liver eaten out of his body by an eagle every day, he becomes the edible titan who confronts man with the notion of his own edibility and fleshiness. Pandora's role as punishment, too, embeds in myth ideas about the radical separation of man from woman, and the latter's untrustworthiness and burdensome nature. Promethean masculinity, then, is formed of mythical strands that set out Promethean man's exceptionalism and dominion: his privilege coded into his very flesh, his dominion over women and the more-than-human world, and his right to access them as resources to sate his curiosity, sanctioned by a recognisable and resonant patriarchal foundation myth.[5]

[5] Recent feminist literary adaptations of myth, including Carol Ann Duffy's *The World's Wife* (Picador, 1999), Margaret Atwood's *The Penelopiad* (Canongate, 2006), Ursula K. Le Guin's *Lavinia* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2010), Natalie Haynes' *The Children of Jocasta* (Picador, 2018), Madeline

Such themes are, of course, ripe for conjuring in fiction, and particularly in a science fiction genre in which the horizons of what is possible are broader and the potential consequences of Promethean science fact easier to explore in human terms. Mary Shelley wrote the original text of *Frankenstein* in a context of intellectual and political radicalism, when Romantic ideology was responding to a foregoing Enlightenment and Scientific Revolution that privileged rationalism, empiricism and the scientific method. In a world that was still in flux because of the French Revolution, Shelley presented the reader with an archetypical Enlightenment Promethean in Victor, making vivid the potential consequences of Enlightenment Prometheanism for him and those around him. As discussed in the first chapter, it is too great a generalisation to suggest that the advent of the Romantic period brought about an uncomplicated about turn in intellectualism and philosophy from the rational to the emotional, aesthetic and natural. Rather, it was a period marked by intellectual enquiry into how the advances in knowledge and civilisation brought about by the Enlightenment could be reconciled with a more aesthetic existence. The Romantics began to reckon with the question of how man was to ensure his civilisation. To return to the words of Percy Bysshe Shelley:

> How can the advantages of intellect and civilisation be reconciled with the liberty and pure pleasures of natural life? How can we take the benefits and reject the evils of the system which is now interwoven with all the fibres of our being? I believe that abstinence from animal food and spirituous liquors would in a great measure capacitate us for the solution of this important question.[6]

Vegetarianism, then, was Percy Shelley's solution. Like the question posed by her husband, Shelley's Promethean tale was an exercise in interrogating the dualisms, exclusions and destruction that characterised both the Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment, and possibilities for reconciliation with what they perceived as a purer

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Miller's *Circe* (Bloomsbury, 2019), and Pat Barker's *The Silence of the Girls* (Penguin, 2019) and *The Women of Troy* (Hamish Hamilton, 2021) capture a moment of twenty-first century raised consciousness of the patriarchal anchoring points of myth in its classical form, and express ideas about how it can be repurposed to tell new stories.

[6] Percy Bysshe Shelley, *A Vindication of Natural Diet: Being One in a Series of Notes to Queen Mab (a Philosophical Poem)*, 2nd edn (Shelley Society, 1886), p. 10.

way of living. Promethean man, she showed, pursued isolation and rejected fellowship and the female principle at his peril. In telling the story of a Promethean man who fashioned a creature out of disparate body parts both animal and human which eventually resulted in his death, she exposed Prometheanism as a project which is always already engaged in its own destruction, destroying even as it creates because it cannot resist the urge to over-reach. She envisaged the Creature as espousing that purity of vegetarianism advocated by many of those of her acquaintance, rather than the arrogant Enlightenment Promethean, making the former emblematic of some of the more positive attributes of Romanticism.

That this story emerged from the pen of the daughter of the author of *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, and in the context of a movement which, while it offered some counter to the hyper-rationalisms of the Enlightenment, continued largely to marginalise female voices, is not trivial. Shelley observed the scientific advances that were continuing apace around her, and acknowledged the ghost of Baconian philosophy, the dualisms and the destructive ideologies, in the way in which this science was being carried out. She recognised that science was still a masculine, penetrative endeavour, often framed as adversarial to female-coded nature and the female principle in general. Furthermore, she saw that the abstracted Promethean project had real consequences for those towards whom it cast its curious, investigative and penetrative eye: those who were, for the most part, already disenfranchised in the world. Her novel came to be a modern urtext for this Promethean phenomenon, a literary caution against the abjection of women and the more-than-human world, and the self-destruction always attendant on the Promethean project.

When H. G. Wells came to revisit the Promethean story in 1896, it was in the context of the Darwinian shock to human exceptionalism and radical separation from the more-than-human world. Despite his own commitment to a scientific socialism that privileged the scientific intellect, Wells' *The Island of Doctor Moreau* conjured a figure of horror in his Promethean Moreau, whose ambitions for an anthropoid species so evolved as to no longer require the evolutionary defence of pain is all-consuming, and unhesitating in its cruelty to the animals vivisected in its pursuit. Where Frankenstein was engaged in the reanimation of deceased life, Moreau focuses on ideas of plasticity emerging from the Darwinian moment, altering life to interfere in

the evolutionary process to excise that most emasculating sensation, pain. Moreau's Beast Folk have none of the intellectual curiosity, or purity of vegetarianism, that characterised Frankenstein's Creature. He creates a number of 'monsters' and is eventually killed by a puma vivisected into a shape approximating a human woman. Perhaps the most discomfiting aspect of this narrative, written by a man with a robust scientific education, is the credibility of the science being presented. The novel is terrible precisely because it is *not* incredible. Wells was writing at a time when gender roles and the rights of women were subjects of febrile debate, and the co-incidence of the first wave of feminism and the suffrage movement with an increased awareness of the horrors of vivisection led many women to draw comparisons between themselves and the unfortunate animals who came under the knife. It had become apparent to many women that the Promethean project had long confined them to the same abjected category as animals, and that their bodies had been identified as sites for medico-scientific discovery in the same way that the bodies of their non-human counterparts had been. Against the backdrop of the political shift towards women's suffrage, and the revelations of sexual selection that had emerged from Darwinism, agency and subjectivity became central to campaigns for both women's and animal rights. Wells was not anti-scientific, and yet his example of Promethean man racing headlong towards his own destruction is a convincing and resilient one.

Aldiss' contribution to the descent of the Promethean tale came at a point in history where the Promethean project had placed the world on a dire trajectory from which it could never fully escape. By the time Aldiss is conjuring with the myth, Prometheanism has gone from making gods of its creators to making them of the creations themselves. The development of nuclear weapons shifted the paradigm of geopolitics, placing international relations under the threat of mutual destruction. A crisis in masculinity emerged in the post-war period, fuelled by fears that men were becoming weaker, coupled with preoccupations with national security. The female workforce mobilised during the two World Wars compounded this, and the structure of the nuclear family became a useful means of re-affirming gender roles in the family, home and workplace. Both the nuclear family and the nuclear threat met with resistance from second-wave feminists who recognised the injustice in the attempted re-confinement of women to the home and the geopolitical dangers at the meeting

point between the Promethean masculine scientific project and the militarised masculine that had begun to draw upon it for strength. However, women were also forced to fight on another front, as reproductive and associated technologies emerged that once again placed them in the role of experimental subject. IVF and the prospect of embryonic genetic engineering attracted a great deal of critique and criticism, but it was the thalidomide scandal that illustrated most catastrophically what many of these women feared: that Promethean technoscience was not being done for them, but *to* them. Mortimer Dart, Aldiss' Prometheus figure, responds to his own thalidomide-related disability by entrenching himself in Prometheanism in the hope of re-stating his own masculinity through technoscience; he has been made by Prometheanism, and he makes Prometheanism. He adopts cyborg body parts and uses genetic engineering to attempt to create a species that can survive the impending nuclear war. He spends the entire novel in complete denial that it was Prometheanism that caused his condition: that the complacent insistence that test animals and women were analogous was what brought about the thalidomide scandal. Meanwhile, the narrative is focalised through Calvert, a government man who typifies militarised Cold War masculinity and is, in fact, complicit in the very Promethean project that brings about in himself a crisis both of masculinity and of humanity. Aldiss' text marks a circularity: a return to the kind of religiously reinforced masculinity that had been replaced by Prometheanism in the Enlightenment and Darwinian periods. By the Cold War period, Promethean and militarised, nationalistic, religious masculinity had become co-constitutive in their pursuit of social, cultural, economic and geopolitical security. Where these two forms of masculinity signally failed to perceive of symbiosis with the more-than-human world, they were able to collaborate in pursuit of what motivated both — cultural and political power.

The framework of ecofeminist, posthumanist and critical animal studies theory explored at the start of this thesis supports a critical understanding of the scope of damage done to women and the more-than-human world by Promethean philosophy. These theoretical interventions began to emerge in earnest from the 1960s, in response to environmental degradation, nuclearisation and food insecurity resulting from the capitalist disregard for traditional foodways, particularly in the global south. While not naming it as such, it was against the Promethean philosophy and tradition that these

often previously ignored voices began to be heard. While their historical moment was characterised by mid to late twentieth-century concerns, their interventions into discussions about technoscience and its consequences offered opportunities to investigate past examples of where Prometheanism had emerged and with what result. With the benefit of this theoretical framework, it is possible to view *Frankenstein* as what we might call a proto-ecofeminist intervention. This is not to suggest that Shelley, or even her contemporaries, would have characterised it in this way. Nevertheless, it deals thematically with the question of a technoscience that proceeds monomaniacally, with little regard for anyone or anything outside of the individualised Promethean self, and the damage done as a result. *Frankenstein* demonstrates the power of science fiction to take the Promethean 'prick tale' and break it down into its constituent parts in a way that reveals something meaningful about the practice of Promethean science in a given historical moment.[7] Thus any descendants of the text, whatever their media, deal to some extent with this issue, which remains an ecofeminist concern. Indeed, as well as inspiring textual responses from H. G. Wells and Brian Aldiss respectively, the descent of *Frankenstein* can be observed in science fiction which is patently feminist in its ideas and imagery.

During the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s and indeed beyond, a body of such ecofeminist science fiction has emerged that has interrogated technoscience where it stands, problematising it at the very borders of what is conceivable and possible in a given moment. Thus, it is possible to read such texts as legitimate descendants of *Frankenstein.* It is useful, at this point, to return to Ursula K. Le Guin's words in her *The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction* (1988) to explore this:

> If science fiction is the mythology of modern technology, then its myth is tragic. 'Technology' or 'modern science' (using the words as they are usually used, in an unexamined shorthand standing for the 'hard' sciences and high technology founded upon continuous economic growth), is a heroic undertaking, Herculean, Promethean, conceived as triumph, hence ultimately as tragedy. The fiction embodying this myth will be, and has been, triumphant

[7] The 'prick tale', as described by Donna Haraway. See Donna J. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Duke University Press, 2016), p. 39.

> (Man conquers earth, space, aliens, death, the future, etc.) and tragic (apocalypse, holocaust, then or now).
>
> If, however, one avoids the linear, progressive, Time's-(killing)-arrow mode of the Techno-Heroic, and redefines technology and science as primarily cultural carrier bag rather than weapon of domination, one pleasant side effect is that science fiction can be seen as a far less rigid, narrow field, not necessarily Promethean or apocalyptic at all, and in fact less a mythological genre than a realistic one.[8]

Le Guin's is a useful lens through which to gaze back at the flourishing of women's science fiction of the post-war period that peaked during the 1960s and 1970s. Her reflections on the Promethean domination both of technology and of science fiction speak aptly to the work of women writers in the genre during this time, as well as to the scientific and technological backdrop of their work: a vista of conflict, environmental degradation and invasive scientific experimentation. Le Guin hints at the animalisation of women in her essay, too. Describing a culture which has been falsely defined as 'originating from and elaborating upon the use of long, hard objects for sticking, bashing and killing', she says of the dominant patriarchal voice, what we might call the Promethean principle, that 'the civilisation they were talking about […] was evidently theirs; they owned it, they liked it; they were human, fully human, bashing, sticking, thrusting, killing'.[9] Of her own response to this, she adds:

> Wanting to be human too, I sought for evidence that I was; but if that's what it took, to make a weapon and kill with it, then evidently I was either extremely defective as a human being, or not human at all.
>
> That's right, they said. What you are is a woman. Possibly not human at all, certainly defective. Now be quiet while we go on telling the Story of the Ascent of Man the Hero.[10]

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[8] Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction* (Ignota Books, 2019), p. 36.
[9] Ibid., p. 30.
[10] Ibid., pp. 31–32.

Here Le Guin challenges the expectation that legitimacy, both in the technological sphere and in the genre of fiction that deals most intensively with its potentialities, should be measured by these Promethean standards. The novel, she says, is better thought of as a bag that holds words and meanings, rather than an arrow which hits its mark: it is a continuous thing, of which conflict is only one feature and not the main objective.[11] The wealth of women's science fiction that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, then, furnished the genre with many examples of anti-Promethean reconfigurations of stories that, as Le Guin puts it, had once been 'pressed into service in the tale of the Hero', instead emphasising 'the container for the thing contained' rather than the wombless, 'thrusting' metaphors of the dominant science fiction narrative.[12] There will be resistance, however: 'it's clear that the Hero does not look well in this bag. He needs a stage or a pedestal or a pinnacle. You put him in a bag and he looks like a rabbit, like a potato'.[13]

Examples of such carrier bag science fiction by women might include Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time* (1976).[14] In Piercy's novel, Connie Ramos is falsely imprisoned in a mental hospital after defending her niece from her pimp who is trying to force her into an illegal abortion. During her imprisonment, Connie has 'episodes' where she is able to communicate with a woman from the future called Luciente. Luciente is from a commune called Mattapoisett in the year 2137, which is portrayed as quasi-utopian, with most of the inequalities contested during the 1960s and 1970s resolved and, crucially, environmental degradation minimised and science and technology used for the common good. Babies are gestated in external 'brooders' rather than in the womb, and both sexes can breastfeed. This, rather than being a Promethean, or Frankensteinian, endeavour intended to cause the redundancy of the female body, is figured as a means of freedom and a way to ensure that parenting responsibilities are shared between the sexes. Connie also sees an alternative, dystopian future where capitalist practices have resulted in the hoarding of technology by the wealthy and the deeper entrenching of the objectification of women. The novel,

[11] Ibid., pp. 34–35.
[12] Ibid., p. 28.
[13] Ibid., p. 35.
[14] Marge Piercy, *Woman on the Edge of Time* (Del Rey, 2016).

as well as presenting conflicting possibilities for futures where technology and science are applied in very different ways and with very different results, is set against the backdrop of the medicalisation of women's emotions in the post-war period, and in particular the interpretation of women's resistance to the nuclear family as a symptom of mental illness. Perhaps most saliently for Le Guin's theory, the ending of the novel is open; Connie fights against her oppressors for the version of the future that she most yearns for, but it's never clear whether that future comes to pass. Piercy's, then, is a carrier bag of ideas, of speculations on possibilities rather than predictions. Piercy thus juxtaposes two contrasting and, in retrospect, entirely conceivable possibilities, the outcome depending on whether technoscience remains the Promethean 'arrow' or the Le Guinian 'carrier bag'.

Angela Carter's *The Passion of New Eve* (1977) is also illuminating, combining an assemblage of possible meanings within a story that is uniquely subversive of the Promethean principle.[15] Influenced by the myth of Tiresias, the novel tells the story of Evelyn, a misogynistic professor who is captured by Mother, a fertility goddess and figurehead of the exclusively female, subterranean city of Beulah. Mother is the Frankenstein figure of Carter's novel, who operates on Evelyn to turn him from a man into Eve, an idealised and archetypal woman. Mother also extracts Evelyn's sperm before transforming him, so that she can impregnate Eve with Evelyn's own baby: a new messiah. At the start of the novel, Evelyn displays many key characteristics of masculinity in a toxic form; he is privileged, with an education and a job that reflects that privilege, and uses vulnerable women to fulfil his sexual desires regardless of any consequences. It is only through pain, and the horrific process of being experimented upon — in effect, vivisected — and turned into a woman that he becomes able to see things in attentive and entangled ways. It is, of course, possible to make a number of readings of Carter's text. Mother is clearly a matriarchal figure of dominance and control, and her treatment of Evelyn echoes the vivisection of animals and experimentation on female bodies discussed in this thesis. If Carter intended Mother as a rejection of the idea that Prometheanism is uniquely masculine, and that women scientists can be Promethean too, it is perhaps helpful to recall Prometheanism as a philosophy and practice, in addition to a characteristic of individual men engaged in

[15] Angela Carter, *The Passion of New Eve* (Virago, 1982).

technoscience. R. W. Connell explained the functions of hegemonic masculinity in general in terms of the hegemon, the complicit, the marginalised and so on.[16] Prometheanism functions in the same way; it is possible for a female Frankenstein figure to aspire to Promethean status by performing Promethean acts, but her complicity in the philosophy will not be enough to grant her entry into this very exclusive sphere. In a way perhaps most analogous with Aldiss' Mortimer Dart, whose disability forecloses Prometheanism in its ideal form, Mother's femaleness, emphasised by her divinity and multi-breasted form, forecloses the same. Carter's narrative also serves the purpose of transferring the objectification from the female body to the male, inviting a resonance which was of relevance in the decades after the thalidomide scandal and the introduction of IVF.

Donna J. Haraway, too, has turned to science fiction to imagine futures that are collaborative and mutually constitutive in the spirit of Le Guin's carrier bag. Her Camille Stories, an 'ongoing speculative fabulation', were born out of a process of co-writing with filmmaker Fabrizio Terranova and philosopher Vinciane Despret in 2016.[17] They tell the stories of five 'Camilles' who themselves mark the story of the passage of five human generations. The story of the five Camilles is a story of life which flourishes because it is co-constitutive and radically mindful of its dependence on other forms of life for survival. The 'Children of Compost', as Haraway terms them, are decolonial and not preoccupied with undoing what has come previously and building anew.[18] Their awareness of their connection to, and dependence on, one another beyond the boundaries of species results in better understanding, and rejection of the nuclear family unit in the spirit of both Shulamith Firestone and Marge Piercy means that 'kin' takes on particular significance as families can organise in accordance with their will, as opposed to prescribed structures which fail to meet the needs of either individuals or units.[19] The central point of Haraway's Camilles is that they demonstrate the sustainability of the lives they lead. The reader traces their lives from the birth of Camille 1 in 2025 to the death of Camille 5 in 2425. In that time, the human

[16] R.W. Connell, *Masculinities,* 2nd edn (Polity, 2005).
[17] Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble,* pp. 134–68, p. 134.
[18] Ibid., p. 138–9.
[19] See Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution* (Verso, 2015); Piercy, *Woman on the Edge of Time*; Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, p. 138.

population decreases from 8 billion to 3 billion, with people continuing to develop in symbiosis with animal 'syms', promoting cross-species responsibility and understanding. Absent from Haraway's vision is the 'arrow' of Prometheanism; progress is not egotistic or founded on notions of human exceptionalism or incentivised by financial reward. The features of Prometheanism simply don't fit in the world imagined this way; as Le Guin put it: 'it's clear that the Hero does not look well in this bag.'.[20]

The rejection of the self-destruction of Promethean science comes full circle through the work of female writers. Where Shelley furnished the urtext, so the story of the Promethean curse which is always inevitably lurking in the shadow of its blessings has been taken up by female writers, particularly in speculative and science fiction, well into the twenty-first century. Of all the three main texts examined in this thesis, Shelley's is the only one to offer a meaningful insight into the internal life of a Creature who is intellectually promising, articulate and sensitive to the natural world so celebrated by Romanticism. Wells' Beast Folk and Aldiss' Beast People do not focalise in their respective texts; their thoughts, feelings and consciousnesses are guessed at by male characters each consumed by their own battles with their masculinities. While this is perhaps not enough to dismiss Wells' and Aldiss' works as 'prick tales' in the absolute sense, as they are far too cautionary for such an assertion, it is clear that Shelley's narrative 'bag' has room enough in it for the subjectivity of the Creature as well as the creator. Neither Wells nor Aldiss celebrate their Prometheus as a hero, but there can be no question that they dominate their respective narratives in a way that recreates rather than subverts the realities of Promethean philosophy. Shelley's utilisation of myth proves it to be neither inherently 'arrow' nor 'bag', but a language of knowing that can be used to articulate either the prick tale of the individual man or the carrier bag of co-existences. The myth of Prometheus can be called into the service of philosophies such as Promethean masculinity to shore up its exclusions and perceived exceptionalisms, but it can also be subverted to furnish a cautionary tale, or to provide visions of what not to be.

In the third decade of the twenty-first century, existential threats such as the climate emergency and the poverty and suffering that result are frequently overlooked

[20] Le Guin, *Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction*, p. 35.

by Promethean men of means who look instead to such status-driven projects as the race to Mars. The technoscientific landscape has proven to be more akin to Connie Ramos' vision of science and technology hoarded by the wealthy and the powerful than some Mattapoisettian utopia. Artificial intelligence, which might be applied to freeing the average person from manual labour so that they might engage in creativity, is instead being applied to create literature and art mechanistically. What can be observed about current Promethean technoscience is that it is not democratic and, in true Promethean style, its blessings hide curses, including for its creators. Promethean man continues to be self-consuming, even as he consumes others in pursuit of his Promethean self-image. However, the disciplines of ecofeminism, animal studies and, more recently, vegan studies continue to suggest theoretical, practical and activist intervention into a dominant narrative that worships growth above all else. Reimagining previously held ideas about who or what matters for survival, they foreground previously ignored subjectivities in the more-than-human world to imagine futures which do not rely upon perceived limitations and inevitabilities in order to shore up inequality and injustice. This thesis suggests that there are alternative approaches to technoscience which reject the Promethean in favour of the carrier bag envisaged by Le Guin; a technoscience which promotes the access of information and understanding, and whose practice does not replicate and thus promote the notion of some forms of life as resources for others.

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