



# The Montag

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Supported by the College of Liberal Arts and the Core Humanities Program at the University of Nevada, Reno, The Montag seeks to publish accessibly written, high quality work by undergraduate students that showcases the value of a liberal arts education and thoughtfully engages with the issues confronting humanity in the twenty-first century. The journal is edited and produced by an undergraduate editorial staff and published in the spring semester of each academic year.

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# Genesis

Kate Torres

When Eve bit the apple  
Mother nature sighed.  
Here is where being a woman in what was thought to be a man's  
world  
Would end up punishing her more than she could ever know.  
Now she sighs as she feels the bodies become one with dirt brown  
soil clenching fistfolds of  
Our remains.  
Being a woman in a man's world  
Is the same thing as being consistently blamed for centuries  
For trusting another man to tell the truth.  
I am sorry you had to pay for this with grenades, coughing up the  
smoky air of our exploitation of your body  
You did not consent to  
Becoming the ransacked graveyard as the graverobbers heard your  
pleas  
But did not hear  
Skinned and burned now all you do is  
Listen to our screams muffled underneath  
Remembering the way you had told Eve to say no  
-*Genesis*

# The Philosophy of Heraclitus and the Gradient Vector

Lisa Soule

Many people would disagree that mathematics and philosophy are closely related. They believe that math is rigid and concrete while philosophy is airy and inexact. They picture serious mathematicians locked away scribbling strange symbols in chalk across entire rooms while philosophers sit near streams talking about feelings and ideas and sex and politics. What they fail to realize is that both studies aim at the same goal: they attempt to describe the world around us in a relational manner. Philosophy opines the ways in which we relate to other people, how we feel as individuals and how we work together as a community. There are many schools of thought and they each consider an angle and a measure. Mathematics in the same way is a philosophy of relations. In fact, we invented math to describe the world around us. We measure in numbers and look at different angles and relations of different entities. There are variables like  $x$  and  $y$  whose identities are anonymous at first, but through a series of functional steps their values become illuminated. They relate to each other differently in different cases. In two dimensions things are done to  $x$  to describe  $y$  and vice versa. In three dimensions  $x$  and  $y$  work together to describe the measure coming off of the paper and out into the third dimension as  $z$ .

One example of a mathematical concept and a philosophical

belief that walk down the same path is the gradient vector paired with the philosophy of the ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus. The gradient vector is used in multivariable calculus to find the direction of the greatest increase on any point of a plane. Conversely, finding the negative value gives the direction of greatest decrease. A vector is a line segment with direction and magnitude. It can be thought of as being like the hand of a compass, except if it broke out of its cage and could point in any direction. The gradient vector is used as a directional tool that points in the direction of greatest increase from any point. If you were skiing on a mountain and your skis were the gradient vector, they would be pointing straight up the mountain in the direction of greatest increase of slope. On a contour map, the gradient vector would point perpendicularly into the contour that is above the measuring point.

Applications, however, are not merely limited to contours as gradient vectors have a wide range of implications. They are used in engineering to detect temperature changes on surfaces and by atmospheric scientists to detect pressure changes that result in wind. What is interesting is how the gradient vector is calculated. The gradient operator collects the partial derivatives from all of the independent variables and attaches them to a unit vector for a one unit directional step toward the steepest slope. Partial derivatives are each variable's relative position in the function, such as  $x$  and  $y$  with their respect to  $z$ . In this example  $z$  is the dependent variable so  $x$  and  $y$  affect it, and the partial derivatives of  $x$  and  $y$  are how each relates to  $z$  in its own direction and slope. Each independent variable has its own personal relation to the entire function as a partial derivative. These relative measurements and angles combined with a directional vector give birth to the ever-useful gradient vector.

The ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus believed that harmonic tensions appeared in everything. Forces or qualities that were “opposites” could be found by incremental measure to be connected and contained within the same object or being; thus, “the path up and down is one and the same” (Heraclitus 111). He believed that there was a steady measure that brought one thing and its opposite into harmony. His idea of Logos reflected a proportionate and methodological arrangement of all things under the sun brought into unity by the great organizing force that had a structured plan for both the individual and the whole of creation. He stated, “things taken together are whole and not whole, something which is being brought together and brought apart, which is in tune and out of tune; out of all things there comes a unity, and out of a unity all things” (Heraclitus 10). He believed that Logos created the dichotomy of tensions in things with a proportional balance that made all things one. He also believed there was no coming apart without coming together. Opposite tensions could not exist on their own and one complimented the other as if it were woven into the fabric of existence, “they really do not apprehend how being at variance it agrees with itself... there is a back-stretched connexion, as in the bow and the lyre” (Heraclitus 51). Opposing natures held each other up in the whole of all things.

From the philosophy of Heraclitus to the mechanisms of the gradient vector, there is a weaving of similar natures. When Heraclitus said that the road up and down was the same he was saying that no matter if it looked up from one’s perspective and down from another’s, it was in fact the same road. The same holds true on a contour plot. When measuring from a lower elevation the gradient vector will point up. When measuring from the high point the negative of the gradient vector will point down. They are on the same

road but with different directions. Partial derivatives measure tiny rates of change from a relative perspective. When taken from many points on a contour there is a steady, measured and almost undetectable change between opposites from one point to the next, much like Heraclitus' philosophy. When he spoke of the back-stretched connection of the bow and the lyre there was an understanding of the interconnectedness of the tensions holding all things together much like the partial derivatives of the gradient operator. All of the independent variables measure their relation to the entire function from a different angle relative to their place in the plane, but ultimately they all contribute in opposing measure to the entire surface. Math imitates life and life imitates math.

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# In The River Valley

John Simonsen

There was once a river which flowed between two tall mountains. The eastern side of the river was blessed with massive trees that covered the village with a pleasant shade, where the sunlight from the brutal sun above was filtered by the leaves and turned into pleasant rays of light which kept the people warm and comfortable. Here lived the rich and healthy, where their guts were big and their worries were small and unimportant. The western side of the river was desolate except for right by the river's edge where only small ferns and berries grew. Here lived the beaten-down, poverty ridden people who had to endure the full strength of the scorching sun and were burnt, scaly and drained of all energy to a point of stillness as though, if they were to move only slightly, their skin would shatter like glass.

There was one small tree on the desolate side of the river. Under this tree lived a man, Ansel, and his three sons, Kali, Myles and Pekko. Ansel was a respected man. When he was young, he provided for the village when no one else could. He would give away all his food to feed the hungry families and in the winter months, when the temperatures dropped, he would collect as much fuel for the fires as he could and would give it all away to families with children. He then would tell the children stories around the fires to keep their spirits up. He was the image of selflessness in the western village and was loved deeply by all.

Kali, the oldest son, was fit and healthy, for he knew how to fish the river and although he occasionally shared with his family and neighbors, most of the time he would keep whole fish to himself in secret. The village, however, knew of this secret and hated him for it.

“How can he be so selfish?” the village people would discuss over their dinner of small berries and tufts of grass. “Can he not see that we are starving?”

Kali knew how people felt about him, but he did not care. He felt he was above his community and if they wanted fish, they could fish for themselves, though nobody knew how.

Myles, the middle son, was very insecure and because of this, he lacked a personality of his own. Instead, he would mirror the personalities of the people around him in an effort to blend in. Because he spent most of his time with his older brother, over time he became a duplicate version of Kali, although just below the surface, Myles was simply a lost mind clinging to another like the shadow of a man.

The youngest son, Pekko, who was plenty of years younger than his brothers, was pure of mind, and seemed to see everything good and special in the world. He spent most of his time basking in the sun, being thankful for the heat it brings. His skin was neither burned nor cracked, but was tanned and glowing, as if the sun rewarded his appreciation.

Kali would often look to the eastern side of the river and would long to be a part of their life. He thought of this so often, eventually all he could think of and speak of was life on the eastern side and how he hated his life in the dirt. His father cautioned him of the dangers that accompanied longing for something unattainable,

and advised him to find happiness in the life he lived here on this side, but Kali was too stubborn to listen and he thought of his father a lazy fool.

That night, Kali crept away to the river's edge. All night he sat in the darkness and gazed at the lights across the river. He became lost in his own imagination of the other side. The thought infested his mind and planted an idea, and this idea grew throughout the night into a plan. In the morning, just as the sun rose over the eastern mountains, Kali walked into his family's camp just as they were rising with the light.

"I am to cross the river today. I will have a better life," he announced to which his father replied as expected.

"You will find nothing but destruction, my son. The answers you seek do not exist across the river, and your desires will not be fulfilled, but fueled, by life on the other side. If you follow this path, you will never be satisfied. You must learn to find happiness within yourself."

"You speak as though you are wise but you are just a lazy fool who has never left the shade of your tree. What do you know of the world? How can you speak of what will happen if you have no experience? I will cross the river and I will take my brothers so their lives will be better too. I will save us from this wasteland."

Kali looked to his brothers. "Will you join me across the river?" he asked.

"I certainly will not!" Pekko replied. "What is over there that is not here? And how could I leave father and all our people I love so much? I wouldn't be able to bear it."

"What will you do for food? Nobody else can fish the river."

"I will learn and I will feed everyone and give an equal share. I've

seen how you fish and I think I can do it. Perhaps we will be better off without your selfishness.”

All the while, Myles remained silent. He was considering his options. “Who am I without Kali? I love him so dearly and I trust his judgement. If he thinks we can make it across the river, then we can, no question. What about Pekko and father? Pekko would be fine without us, but father would never be the same. Kali feeds me, Kali is kind to me. What has father ever done for me? No Myles, do not think poorly of father, he is a good man and has been good to you, but Kali is better.” Myles had placed his faith and trust in Kali long ago and felt that without his brother, he would be lost and this terrified him.

“I will go,” he said, and a large grin appeared on Kali’s face. Myles went to Pekko and placed a teal gemstone in his hand.

“I was very sick just before you were born, Pekko, and I felt myself slipping away from this life. When I fell to the ground in what seemed like my last moments, before my eyes was this stone, and when I placed it in my hand, I could feel life flowing from it and it gave me strength. It gave me life. I want you to have it. I hope it gives you what it gave to me.” Then Myles embraced his father with love. Kali gave a nod in Ansel’s direction and the brothers disappeared into the brush.

The time was early spring and the waters of the river raged with the snowmelt from the mountains. The previous winter had been blessed with heavy snowfall and the river was treacherous. Nobody had ever made it across alive in late summer when the water was calm. It was too wide and the flow was too great. Even if a man did have the strength to make it across, he would find himself miles downstream and would not have the strength remaining to make it

into the eastern village, but the brothers were stronger than anyone who had ever attempted. Kali was driven through desperation and therefore Myles was driven through admiration. If anyone had a chance, it was them. The brothers waded into the water.

“The water is too cold,” Myles stated. “We will freeze.”

“Your body can take it, just don’t stop swimming. Hurry up now.”

“I don’t want to go, I won’t make it!”

“Yes you will, don’t you want a change from this madness? This isn’t all life has to offer. The other side has possibility, opportunity. Don’t you want to be better? We stand before greatness with only one obstacle in our way. Join me brother. We will be alright.”  
“What about Pekko? He is our brother too. I want to be with family. Our whole family, you and everyone else.”

“That can no longer be, for I am already on the other side in my mind and there is no turning back. Before, I asked what you would do and you chose to go, now come!”

The river became very deep very quickly and soon the brothers could no longer touch the bottom and began to flow downstream. The race then began, and with heads down they swam as fast as they could to the other side, but in different directions. Kali swam perpendicular to the river bank and allowed himself to drift downstream while Myles swam at an angle so he would end up right in the village. The brothers, after a few short minutes, were separated by a substantial distance. Kali, drifting downstream, was halfway across when he lifted his head to search for Myles, but he was nowhere in sight. Kali thought his brother was right behind him, but there was no time to waste searching further. He knew if he had any chance of seeing Myles again it would be on shore. Meanwhile, Myles was

nowhere close to halfway when exhaustion set in. When he lifted his head and saw the distance left to swim, he knew he was a dead man. This realization made his mind clear and he could see through the fog of his insecurities. He regretted putting his faith in his brother. He realized now that he never even wanted to live on the eastern side. With the last of his strength he turned back home. The freeing waters of the river began to slow his movements and little by little, the brother who foolishly put blind faith into a greedy man slipped away downstream, frozen in the mighty flow.

After a very long while and with almost no strength left, Kali made it to the other side of the river. As he crawled onto shore he was frantically worried about Myles. He turned toward the river and scanned the waters. He prayed and prayed his brother was safe and then, there he was, face down, still as a statue, flowing downstream never to be seen again. Kali then fell to the ground and saw the lush green leaves of the trees fade away until there was nothing but black.

#

Kali awoke in a house. The ceiling was tall and gold with trim around the edges that were sculpted with divine detail. On the walls, there were large tapestries and prestigious portraits with gold frames. He was lying on a satin couch and was covered by a soft fur. His muscles ached and he couldn't help but moan from the pain. Upon hearing his agony, a woman came to his bedside and for the first time, Kali saw a woman who was truly beautiful. Her blonde hair glowed in the sunlight that came in through the window and when she spoke, Kali could not hear her words, only the sweet, smooth sound of her voice. For a long time, Kali did not speak. He only looked deep into her bright blue eyes. She looked back into his, and they stayed this way, without a word spoken for so long Kali had lost

all sense of time passing. His memory was hazy and he had many questions. Where was he? What had happened? Who was this woman? Where was Myles? But all these questions faded away and he felt nothing but the light of the woman before him. She offered a slight smile and he couldn't help but smile back and she sat him up gently. Suddenly, a voice boomed throughout the room and it hurt Kali's ears.

"Son, you are a lucky man. Well, lucky enough to have my daughter stumble onto you out in the middle of the woods. What were you doing out there? When she brought you in, you looked as if you had just outran a grizzly!"

"My brother, have you seen my brother?"

"You mean there were two of you out there? Pearl, did you see his brother?"

"It was just him," Pearl replied.

Just then, a pain started to grow in Kali's head, like someone had a knife to his brain. "I can't remember. Why can't I remember? Where are you Myles?"

"What you mean you can't remember, and who is Myles?" Pearl asked.

"Myles is my brother. He must have turned back. He has to have turned back. Last thing I remember I was crawling up onto shore barely able to move, and I turned my head back towards the river and then, well, I don't know."

"You mean to tell me you swam the river?"

"Yes, I did."

"I can't say I blame you. The western village doesn't look too pleasant. It's an impressive thing you did. Bold too. I can offer you a room if you would like, I mean, if you have no place to go. In

exchange you can help me out with my business. I could use a man who's bold."

"What do you do?"

"I run the lumber yard. Now rest up. You start tomorrow. Come down to the yard in the morning and ask for Mr. Plutus"

#

Meanwhile, Pekko was quickly mastering the art of fishing. He had watched Kali before and now, putting his years of notes to practice, he found he was quite good at it. Before long, Pekko had caught enough fish to feed every family, though he did not eat himself. He worked all day in the river, catching enough fish daily where every family had fish every night, but still he did not eat.

Over time, Pekko started to look frail and his bones were visible beneath his skin.

"Please eat, my son!" Ansel pleaded to his son when he looked his worst. "You have done everything for our people, you deserve to eat!"

"I have Myles' stone to give me strength. I can feel the life inside it. I can feel its power. Do not worry father. I have big plans for us."

That afternoon, Pekko went out into a field of dirt and began to dig. He dug long ditches, row after row. The people of the village took notice but did not question him. They simply helped him and soon the field was plowed to completion. Pekko then, without rest, went to the river, picked up water with his hands and carried it to the field and went back again, and the people of the village followed. When the dirt in the field was damp, Pekko went to the berry bushes and picked as many berries as he could carry, placed them in the ditches and buried them beneath the damp earth. Why Pekko



was doing any of this, the people of the village did not know. They only knew that they trusted Pekko and maybe after all this was done, Pekko would finally eat. They worked tirelessly developing the land. They gathered water for hours, and planted every seed they could find and they did all of this for Pekko. Weeks went by and every day the village watered their fields not knowing why.

It had been months now that Pekko went without food, and the vultures began to circle above him. He could no longer move and his speech came out as small puffs of air from his shallow breaths. He looked toward the mountains and mumbled, then he looked to the river and mumbled again. Finally he looked to the sun, raised his hands to the sky, took as deep a breath as he could and said in a clear voice “I give myself to you” and he passed away beneath the shade of the tree. The next morning, the village awoke to their fields filled with tall grasses and huge bushes filled with large, plump berries, and squirrels and birds and rabbits and mice rummaging around in the new life blessed upon the land, but beneath the tree, where Pekko had rested his head for the last time, the only thing to be found was the teal gemstone turned to grey.

#

After many months of living among the prosperous people of the eastern village, Kali found himself at the top of the community. He had influence over all of the local businesses and many businessmen went to him for advice, but Kali wanted more. He was still under Mr. Plutus’ authority and hated working beneath someone, especially when he knew he was a better businessman than his boss.

Kali had his own mansion now and had taken Pearl as his wife. The day was cloudy and Kali was in an exceptionally bad mood. Over the last few weeks, Kali had worked tirelessly to close a

deal with the biggest building business in the eastern village, and Mr. Plutus had paid no notice to his hard work. When the deal closed, Kali was sure he would get praised for all the work he had done, but when he told Mr. Plutus about the deal, he was far from satisfied.

“That’s the deal you negotiated? Why didn’t you just give them the lumber? You need to learn to negotiate, young one. Don’t let them get the best of you. You are always letting people get the best of you.”

“This is the biggest deal we had ever made sir, what more do you want?”

“More, much more.”

“Sorry sir. Why don’t I make it up to you? How’d you like to come over tonight for dinner and drinks? Visit with me and your little one.”

“That would be fine. It is about time you did something for me after all I’ve done for you.”

That night, Mr. Plutus arrived early and let himself inside. He settled himself in the parlor and waited for his hosts to notice he was there. Kali came down the stairs and saw Mr. Plutus sitting square in his seat.

“I hadn’t noticed your arrival sir. I’m so sorry to have kept you waiting like this. Would you care for a drink?” Kali asked.

“Yes I would. A large pour of liquor and a splash of water. And don’t be apologetic. A top man never apologizes.”

“Yes sir.”

Kali went to the bar and made the drink. A large pour of liquor and a splash of water. He then took from his pocket a vial of glowing green liquid, uncorked the top and let a drop fall into the drink for his boss. When the drop plunged into the drink, it sizzled

for a moment and disappeared without a trace.

“Your drink, sir” Kali said as he handed it to Mr. Plutus. Mr. Plutus took the drink and guzzled it until not a drop was left. Then, Pearl called the pair in the parlor for dinner. Mr. Plutus stood up from his seat and delayed a moment. He stood tall at first, then the man began to teeter. His eyes became droopy and his knees began to wobble. He sat back down and tried to breathe but he could not.

Kali went to him and whispered into his ear “Don’t let them get the best of you old man” and the life in Mr. Plutus’ eyes faded slowly into nothingness.

#

Kali now had complete control of the lumber yard, and business was better than ever. He had increased supply and was dealing lumber at a rapid pace. The village’s economy, under Kali’s close supervision, was better than ever and the eastern village was booming. However, as the village became bigger, and as Kali continued to cut down trees, the eastern village that was once green and lush became hot and arid in climate. Then, one day, a storm rolled in over the eastern mountains. Heavy rains flooded the streets and harsh winds tore down homes and businesses, and it stayed this way for several long months. By the end of autumn, the village was in ruins. When winter came, snow fell for the first time on the eastern village and it buried the once picturesque village under ice. Newly homeless people had no escape from the cold and many lives were lost to the brutal winter weather. The people of the east looked to Kali for help, but there was nothing he could do. Even the most powerful of men cannot interrupt the natural order, and so Kali and all the people of his community suffered in their new reality.

Kali himself was reminded of the winters from his childhood, where he, Pekko and Myles would lay side by side trying desperately to stay warm, but now, lying alone in the snow, Kali found himself missing his brothers and a sharp pain grew in his head. He looked up and saw a body buried in a snowbank. Kali frantically removed the snow from the body and moments later he uncovered a familiar lifeless face.

“Myles? Is that you? How can this be? What happened to you? I remember looking for you when I swam ashore but, but... what did I see? What did I see? I saw you! Oh Myles, I saw you! I remember Myles. I remember!” And the image of Myles’s frozen body floating down the river broke free from the deepest parts of Kali’s memory and he wept uncontrollably until he could no longer see through the tears. A flash of light filled the sky followed by a loud boom. Moments later, the smell of smoke filled the air and a haze was seen over the vast forest and ash fell from the sky like rain. Kali wiped the tears from his eyes and his vision returned. He looked to the body in the snow, but it was gone. The eastern side of the river burned for two weeks until all the trees that were once the eastern village’s greatest treasure had burned to black, and then the sun came out.

#

Kali went down to the river’s edge and looked to the west towards his old home. Pearl approached behind him and sat by his side.

“Sure looks nice over there, doesn’t it?” Pearl said.

“Yes.”

“Do you miss it?”

Kali was silent for a long time before he spoke again.

“I have a brother. He was a sweet boy when I knew him. He used to lie out in the sun even though our family had the shade of a tree. He seemed to glow in the sunlight. He seemed so happy to be there. I wonder how he is doing now?”

“My father once told me a story about a friend of his from a long time ago. They were kids then. My father wanted to own the world even as a young man and his friend was the same way. They started my father’s company together, you know. Anyway, my father and his friend began to cut down trees to sell and even from the beginning, they knew they were going to be the richest men the eastern side had ever seen. About a month after the first tree came down, my father’s friend started to have horrific dreams. In these dreams, he saw the forest in all its beauty, then sweat would start to drip down his temple and he would become very, very hot. The leaves of the trees would turn white, then red, then the trees would fall onto him and just as they were about to crush him, the trees turned to black dust. Every night for a month he had this dream. He begged my father to shut down the new business, but my father refused. Said his friend was crazy and was cracking under the pressures of big business. Then one day, he was gone. Left a note to my father saying he had crossed the river to escape the inevitable. Nobody ever heard from him again. I guess he was right.”

“What was his name?”

“I believe it was Ansel. Did you ever know him?”

“I thought I did.”

# The Legacies of Spanish Civil

## War Veterans

Aydin Gundogan

“I’m hoping to get hit... I’ve been wanting a nice little blighty for some time now”. These were the words of Frank Stout moments before a mortar shell struck down on his position. As the dust settled, the young volunteer from Reno was elated to feel a sharp pain in his stomach. To his disappointment it was only a rock that hit him, rather than the sought-after shrapnel. Though he managed to escape this incident unharmed, he would later be disemboweled before returning home. Why was he willing to spill blood on Spanish soil at a time when much of the world ignored the ongoing Civil War in the late ‘30s?

Art inspired by the conflict conjures up romantic notions of idealistic volunteers fighting and dying in a doomed conflict that is not theirs. The real men, however, were more than literary devices to be used in a book. They were individuals, each with a personal history that in one way or another led them against fascism, willing to risk death to fight it. Fascism is a term that even today is notoriously hard to pin down, though any number of textbook definitions may suffice in academic discussion. However, in the context of why Americans were motivated to illegally risk their lives in a foreign army, in truly understanding what drove people to the frontlines, they are inadequate.

Varying degrees of educational, theoretical, and practical experience gave each man his own definition of “fascism” that eventually led to their paths coinciding on Spanish soil. Robert Merriman, Frank Stout, and James Yates each had wildly different backgrounds, which provided different motivations for fighting as well as unique legacies that persist to this day.

### **Robert Merriman**

The road that led Merriman to Spain is long and winding, and begins at the University of Nevada, Reno in the late ‘20s. His wife’s memoir *American Commander in Spain* details this journey. He spent four years in Reno studying economics and participating in the school’s ROTC program, through which he obtained a commission in reserve forces as a 2nd lieutenant. During the depression, he and his wife moved to Berkley, where Robert would begin to pursue his master’s degree in economics. It was there that he became interested in alternative forms of economic distribution, as the Soviet Union was seemingly unaffected by the economic devastation characteristic of depression-era California. When the United States officially recognized the USSR, Merriman took the opportunity to continue his studies there.

While never officially joining any Communist party, Merriman was nevertheless enamored by what he saw in Russia. In the mid ‘30s, collective farming was still something of a novelty. Its long-term efficacy still awaited to be demonstrated, although to the young economist, it provided an alternative to a system he felt was not working in California. Considering the unique circumstances that surrounded both the Soviet Union and his home state, it is understandable why such an alternative might have seemed viable at the time.

A contemporary critique of the American agriculture industry was inefficiency resulting from private ownership of large swathes of land, something popularized in particular by Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath*. For a variety of reasons, the Soviet Union continued growth rapid growth during the economic downturn of the '30s, and its use of a command economy to allocate goods seemed to be the answer to many.

In Moscow, the couple mixed with an eclectic group of individuals, including veterans of the Russian Revolution who had fought to establish worker control. Despite the fact that Stalin's purges were currently underway, and the nation still languished in many areas, many still believed things to be better than they were under the Tsar. From an objective standpoint, this did appear to be true. Though many Russians still lived in relative poverty, the country had also begun to industrialize very rapidly seemingly from nothing.

Ultimately, a visit to Vienna while touring central Europe proved to be a watershed moment for Robert. They noted that the atmosphere of Austria was gloom, with a general anxiety universal among the population. Generally, the scene was so dire that Merriman was inspired to travel to Spain once Franco's uprising broke out, much to the chagrin of his wife and peers. Many tried to dissuade him with the argument that he could provide more good to the world as an educated economist, rather than a soldier. In the end though, what he saw in Austria seemed to convince the young student that to prevent fascism, and potentially even another world war- people like him had to volunteer to stop it.

His personal experience with fascism is what sets Robert apart from most other American volunteers, who had only second-hand knowledge of the events transpiring in Europe. Combined with



his time spent in the Soviet Union and academic perspective, he had one of the most direct links to the stakes that were at hand. Fascism was widely seen as antithetical to communism, something that appeared to not only be a viable economic system, but perhaps even a more egalitarian one. After he was wounded in combat at Jarama valley, his wife Marion joined him in Spain. She noted that the environment of war was so unique that University Professors had resorted to broadcasting their courses over the radio for mobilized students to listen to.

For years, Merriman's exact fate was unclear. All that was known was that he somehow disappeared during the mass retreats in 1938. One of the more reliable accounts of what happened to him actually comes from a Spanish Conscript named Fausto Villar Esteban, one of the many native Spaniards who supplemented the decimated international forces. According to Esteban, Merriman was gunned down by a machine gunner while leading a small contingent of forces through enemy territory, the rest of whom survived by hiding until nightfall. A number of competing reports exist, given the chaos that permeated the Lincoln Battalion towards the end of the war. Regardless of which report one chooses to believe, it's evident that somehow Merriman lost his life in Spain.

Without his wife's exhaustive memoir of his time in the war, it's likely that Merriman would have been reduced to something of a side character within the historical record. Upon its original publication by the University of Nevada, Reno in 1986, the book sold approximately 5000 copies and immediately became part of the canon for those who sought to understand the conflict. It resonated to such an extent that in September of 2020, the University of Nevada press rereleased the book in a paperback format. Speaking about this

republication, Warren Lerude, who coauthored the original work, stated that “our book, *American Commander in Spain*, salutes the courage of all who fought for freedom then, as well as those who stand for it in today’s dangerously eruptive world”. It’s clear that despite his story being nearly 80 years old, that volunteers like Merriman still inspire some on the left today, rather than simply being relegated to the annals of history. Regardless of the veracity of this claim, the book was republished, in part, as a response to “resurgence in fascist ideas across the globe”.

### **Frank Stout**

If there was ever a “traditional” volunteer for the International Brigades, a manmen like Frank Stout would certainly fit the bill. Originally born in Georgia, Frank spent his youth in Reno, often mentioned in local newspapers for being part of theater productions in high schoolHigh School. In Spain, records exist of him mention his mentioning activity in labor organizing prior to volunteering. A February 1938 publication of the *Reno Evening Gazette* is the first local mention of his departure. After attending the University of Nevada for a year, he made a brief move to Stanford to study journalism. While there, Frank, several classmates, and a university professor all volunteered to join the International Brigades. It is also mentioned that he would regularly receive a copy of the local newspaper while in Spain. This publication in a relatively obscure corner of the world managed to find its way overseas, where other volunteers would hear about the local happenings in Reno from Frank.

The next mention of him is two months later, during the disastrous retreats of early 1938. While reporting on the unknown fate of Robert Merriman, the *Evening Gazette* mentions that Stout Frank was recovering in the hospital after a bout with Pneumonia.

It is unclear how long he was in the hospital for, however he reappears in *Men in Battle* during the later Ebro offensive in late July. It is here that the anecdote regarding his cavalier attitude towards originates.

Conflicting reports exist regarding exactly how StoutFrank was injured. *Comrades and Commissars* is a comprehensive overview of the Lincoln battalion, and in it Eby claims that he was wounded by shellfire four days later. However, he only cites Bessie's account in *Men in Battle*, which mentions the near-miss incident, but is completely silent on any later injuries.

Records confirm that he survived the war, and an obituary mentioning his service in Spain was published in 1993. However, there was no mention of whether or not he was actually wounded in the conflict. Considering the significance of this detail, it demanded further investigation. A second obscure obituary in *The Dispatcher*, a Union newsletter, shed more light on the subject. Frank was involved in labor activism after the war and was elected President of the San Francisco Longshoremen's Union in 1974. This document describes his activity organizing Cannery workers in California before the war and claims that he was shot in the stomach while fighting. Also mentioned in the newsletter was a fellow union member named Richard Austin, who worked closely with Frank in the '70s.

Online research revealed that Mr. Austin currently resides in the Seattle area and is President of ILWU local 19, representing approximately 850 dockworkers in the Puget sound region. After sending him some research regarding StoutFrank, he was willing to shed some light on the subject. Speaking via email, the influence this former Reno youth had on local labor activism was highlighted. He said the following regarding his mentor: "Frank represented the

membership... He was never afraid of being voted out of office and would therefore not compromise his principle in order to remain an officer”. He also corroborated that Frank was somehow wounded in the stomach, although the exact details are still hazy. Interestingly, he was not the only veteran of the Spanish Civil War to be involved with the ILWU after returning home.

Experiences in Spain certainly influenced both the men themselves and the unions they were a part of. In the words of Mr. Austin, “The ILWU is a bottom-up Union. Officers are answerable to the membership. It is an example of democracy”. Considering that he explicitly names Frank as one of several “mentors” during his early career, it’s not hard to imagine Mr. Austin inheriting some of his passion for organized labor from him; despite the fact that he was not even born at the time of the conflict. In this way, Frank and other similarly minded veterans left a legacy on local organized labor groups that still persists decades after their deaths.

### **James Yates**

Men like James Yates add another layer of complexity to the reason they volunteered, given his African American heritage. This added lens of intersectionality gave many volunteers a radically different background, despite being recruited through similar channels. Born in Mississippi during the height of the Jim Crow era, he compares his flight to the North to that of slaves during the Civil War, as well as exiled Spanish republicans and Jews from fascist states. This analogy between fascist repression and racism at home is a common theme he pursues in his memoir, which gives a detailed account of his entire life until returning from Spain in 1938. After immigrating to Chicago and later New York City, Yates became involved in leftist activism when organizing railroad waiters in the

early '30s. At this time he also met several prominent leftists including Oliver Law, who would later become famous for becoming the first African American to command an integrated military unit.

Perhaps what set African American volunteers like Yates apart most from many of their contemporaries was the significance of Mussolini's invasion of Ethiopia. For many volunteers, the Spanish Civil War was an extension of that conflict, and the next best thing to volunteer for since Ethiopia fell before aid could be organized. By fighting against Franco, they were attempting to indirectly take a stand against Mussolini. This echoes the more well-known history of Jewish volunteers viewing the war as a way to rebuke Hitler, as in the case of Milton Wolff, the final commander of the Lincoln battalion. The Italian conquest of an independent African country was deeply personal and solidified many African American activists as committed anti-fascists. Fascism was seen as yet another method of oppressing people of color, and Yates himself explicitly compares fascists to the Ku Klux Klan.

Yates ended up traveling to Spain in his thirties, going through the same CPUSA pipeline that the vast majority of other volunteers also utilized. Initially he had trouble obtaining a passport, as the state of Mississippi did not keep scrupulous records of birth for black citizens at the time. After arriving in Spain and becoming a driver, he expressed shock that he would receive pay from the Spanish Republic. In memoirs of veterans, this surprise is nearly universal, as there was no mention of any form of wage until after already arriving in the country. While 10 pesetas a day from the Republican government was hardly enough to make one wealthy, such anecdotes demonstrate the ideological commitment of many volunteers. Many went abroad to fight fascism without even

inquiring whether they'd be paid for such an endeavor.

While in Spain, Yates ended up being assigned as a driver for the German Thaelmann battalion, despite not speaking any German whatsoever. Over the course of his service, he chronicled a vision of the conflict not seen in many other memoirs. Given the nature of his job, Yates was very mobile, frequently driving back and forth across republican territory. He also personally met both Ernest Hemingway and Langston Hughes. After being wounded while driving, he was sent home early, where he later volunteered for the Second World War. Approximately half of all American veterans of the Spanish Civil War served in some capacity during World War 2.

On his first night at home, Yates was shocked to be refused a hotel room on the basis of his race. Much like the veterans of other European wars, he had grown accustomed to a level of respect he'd not experienced at home when passing through France and fighting in Spain. In later life, like many other African American veterans, Yates became involved in the civil rights movement. He eventually was elected head of the Chelsea-Village NAACP branch in New York City, as well as an active member of the railroad porter union he had helped organize years prior. His unique background provides an excellent case study into African American volunteers, with his experiences in Spain inspiring activism dedicated to racial equality.

The eclectic motivations within the American forces is a microcosm of both the International Brigades themselves, as well as the convoluted alliances that formed both the Nationalist and Republican factions. The 15th brigade alone drew from French, Yugoslav, British, Canadian, and American volunteers. The republican government as a whole was divided and made up of an uneasy alliance between left leaning liberals, social democrats, communists, anarchists

Trotskyists, and everything else in between. Internal tensions would eventually lead to infighting nearly amounting to a civil war within the wider war. This ideological schism is significant to the IBs because they were organized entirely by the Soviet-backed Comintern. Efforts within the United States to organize a rival socialist “Eugene V. Debs” column to fight in Spain were pursued, but ultimately failed. While this communist bias is important to remember, the units themselves were still remarkably diverse.

In summary, those who volunteered to fight in the Spanish Civil War were not a monolith and should be studied in light of this fact. Despite largely coming from communist backgrounds, a myriad of factors gave each volunteer a unique perception of fascism, and why its defeat was necessary. This difference in motivations has contributed to several unique legacies that continued for decades, even into the modern day. In the case of Robert Merriman, his story continues to provide inspiration for left-leaning intellectuals. For men like Frank Stout, a more practical involvement with union politics led to many younger workers adopting their ideals. And for African American volunteers like James Yates, being a part of an integrated fighting force provided a vision that precipitated involvement in civil rights activism. Despite losing the war, many of these men continued to advocate for their beliefs at home in a country that was oftentimes openly hostile to left-wing thought. These echoes of this hostile past still haunt the present and show no sign of fading away.

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# Blinker

A. S. Kidd

When I heard Leiman had been taken to the hospital, I felt sick enough to punch someone. My roommate Kyle delivered the news, and for a moment I was afraid I'd attack him, though he was smaller than me and wasn't the type to fight back. Something in the fleeting glimpse of his face I got as I slammed the door told me that he'd understood the look. When I got to hospital and was able to hear the story from a battered but conscious Leiman, that a car crash had put him there after a woman had swerved head-on into his lane at 80 miles per hour, I almost cried with relief.

"Jesus, you're lucky you're alive," I said when he finished telling it.

I was cold all over.

"Ha." He lay back, eyes closed, sunken into the pillows of his hospital bed like gravity was overcompensating after neglecting him for a few seconds on the highway. He had cuts all over from the glass of two windshields crushing in on him, but apparently the worst of his injuries were a broken leg and a few fractured ribs. His breathing was shallow beneath the bruises.

"Who was the woman?" I said.

He shrugged.

"They never told me. I don't know if they've identified her. She's dead now. Bled to death all over the road." His sentences came short and clipped, his breathing growing more ragged just from the

short reply. I upped the dose on his PCA pump, and after a moment he relaxed.

Leiman stared up at the ceiling. It was a similar look as he had during economics exams, back when we both still took classes: pensive and unsure. He was always unsure of himself—he, who always got the top grade and ruined the curve for the rest of us. I could never understand how he wasn't the arrogant prick that he deserved to be.

Slurred and half-asleep from the pain meds, Leiman began to talk the way he spoke during a poetry reading, or after a night so long that he could watch the sunrise. He liked that literary-romantic shit.

“It was raining,” he said. “It was raining and it was beautiful. The water from the lake came right up to the road like it sometimes does, but so high I thought it might spill over.” His mouth barely moved with his words. “I could see the different storms coming across the valley one right after the next, separated by moats of light where the earth was dry and warm. I was so distracted I thought at first I had swerved into her lane by accident, or the wind had blown me over or something. Then I thought the same thing happened to her, and I honked like crazy. But it wasn't a mistake. I saw her eyes. She looked right at me.”

He was verging into the realm I wasn't used to, where he got all distant and poetic and impossible to reach. The muscles in my chest got all tense, like an iron band was squeezing me out of a place I didn't belong, into a smaller space where I did. If I said the wrong thing at a time like this, it would cause damage. But I always said the wrong thing anyway, because there was no right thing, and silence was worse.

“Why didn’t you ever become a writer?” I said. “You’ve got so much potential.”

He smiled sadly. “So you keep telling me.”

It was painful and wrong to sit there and do nothing, but I didn’t want to seem like I was ignoring him, and I also wanted to run outside to where his wrongness couldn’t bother me. I picked at the scab on my knuckle and waited for him to go on.

“You know what I don’t get?” he said after a minute.

“What?”

“That woman whose brain is now splattered across Washoe Valley—she put on her blinker. She actually put on her blinker before she swerved across the yellow stripes at me. Why would she do a thing like that?”

“I don’t know. Maybe she wanted to warn you out of the way.”

“She made eye contact.”

“Then I don’t know.”

There was no rain coming down anymore, and the Reno autumn heat had scorched away any sign of the storm. That was how storms here went. They boiled up out of the southwest, gave the city ten minutes of violent rain, and then dissolved so quickly it was like they’d never existed. Except the evidence was there: the broken bodies, the twisted metal. Why did a goddamn blinker matter?

All of a sudden I needed to be outside.

“I’m going to get a cup of coffee,” I said. “You want anything?”

“Hm?” My movement to stand seemed to snap him out of a reverie. “Oh. No, I’m good.”

I walked back to the elevators, ignoring the kind smiles of

the nurses at their desks. The elevators for visitors were different from the elevators for staff, and I saw the doors open a couple times before there was one I could get on. I heard somewhere that they didn't want visitors riding with dead bodies when their own family members were so close to snuffing it.

The coffee and the outside air helped a bit. Ambulance exhaust was better than that sickly, sterile hospital smell, and I breathed the brown heat into the deepest part of my lungs. I wanted to believe that the edge in Leiman's voice when he was talking about the dead woman was pity, but the reverence in his tone, the quiet wonder, made me want to vomit. How often had I heard Leiman deflect questions about himself? How often had I listened to him speak with awe about the poets he admired, all of whom had killed themselves with bullets or pills or alcoholism?

I returned to the visitors' elevators to head back up to Leiman's room, the sweat that I didn't notice in the heat sending chills around my chest.

When I arrived back in Leiman's room, his friend Grant Bower was sitting in the guest chair. We'd known Grant since high school—one of those GMOs-will-kill-you-and-your-entire-family hippies who do too many whippets. Leiman was telling him about the blinker.

"It's social conditioning, bro," Grant said. His drawl was always absurd, but worse when I knew that Leiman didn't have a choice but to hear it for as long as Grant felt like staying. "I'm telling you. The system programs these little reflexes and you can't break them even when you're about to kill yourself. It's screwed."

"Would you shut up with the conspiracy theories?" I asked. I meant for my words to be ironically civil—I'd known Grant for

years, after all, and I should be able to make a little fun of him—but I couldn't stop the edge from coming out. I looked out the window to avoid Leiman's gaze. After a moment Grant laughed doofishly. "Do you really think so?" Leiman said quietly, ignoring me. He spoke as if he was the one visiting a sick friend, not us. "I wasn't so sure. She was so—I don't know—intent on what she was doing. It doesn't seem like a time when reflex would take hold. It's not like swerving into an oncoming car is instinctive."

"You're proving my point, though," said Grant. "The government has us on a leash. Their programming goes deeper than instinct even." Grant looked awed at himself for the audacity of his discovery.

Grant stayed for what felt like ages. He elaborated on his blinker theory to a degree that even Leiman, I felt sure, grew skeptical of, and then he insisted on tracking down all of Leiman's favorite foods and sneaking them into his room. By the time he left for good, the sun had dropped low enough in the sky that it turned all the windows on the building opposite to gold.

"You think Grant had a point? About the lady's blinker?"

"I rarely think Grant has a point about anything. C'mon Leiman, why do you hang out with that tool?"

"Don't call him that, he's a good guy. And he'll talk to me about his theories, which is more than I can say for you."

He shifted himself in the bed and winced, but was settled again by the time I could reach his pillows. "You should get going. Don't you have work tomorrow?"

I didn't want to leave Leiman to contemplate Grant's words all night. "Yeah, you're right. Bright and early at fuck-all in the morning." I gave the PCA pump another tap before I left, and the

tension was gone from around his eyes before I walked out the door.

#

Kyle was home when I arrived back. He was sitting in the living room playing Call of Duty, but he turned it off when I came in and grabbed a beer from the fridge. He popped one open for me too.

“How’s Leiman?” he said. “I thought about visiting too but I figured he probably had enough visitors.”

He avoided my gaze as he moved around in the kitchen and I didn’t know why. It was irritating, like he had an embarrassing thought that he was too cowardly to tell me. Like he was wrong about something and didn’t want to have it put straight.

“It was just me for most of the day. Grant dropped in for a minute.”

“How was he?”

“Leiman? As good as he can be, I guess. The woman who hit him is dead.”

“Jesus.”

Kyle tapped out a rapid staccato on his knee, then took a giant swig—the look of a guy whose mortality had jumped into his throat and lodged there. Kyle was younger than the rest of us—he’d gotten through school on his parents’ money so it was easier for him to finish fast, but it meant he hadn’t been in our same high school class, didn’t know any of the people who’d been finished off already, too young, from overdose or carbon monoxide or whatever. His grandparents were probably all still alive.

But then he looked at me sideways, and the expression there wasn’t fear.

“How are you?”

“I’m not in a fucking hospital bed.”

“C’mon, man. Seriously.”

“I’m fine. I don’t know. I should probably get to bed.”

I still had most of the beer left. I took a big gulp to try to lessen the time I’d have to sit beneath his scrutiny. Kyle leaned forward.

“Look,” he said. “We’ve been friends for a long time now. I know that you and Leiman went through some shit together as kids. If you’d just tell me—”

“Christ, Kyle, I told you I’m fine.”

The words came out quick and mean before I could give a thought to tempering them. I got up to throw out my beer—still only half empty—and caught a glimpse of the same expression on Kyle’s face that I’d seen leaving the house that morning. A weight struck against the inside of my ribs. “Man, look,” I said. “I’m sorry. It’s just—it’s been a long day.”

He swallowed and nodded, without looking up from the bottle in his hands. I went to bed wishing it wasn’t so easy to injure.

It took two weeks for Leiman to get out of the hospital, and in that time Kyle’s solicitousness became exhausting. There were moments when I saw him watching me, and I suspected that he was careful to keep the volume down when his friends came over. I did my best to ignore it.

I visited Leiman in the hospital most every day. Sometimes Grant and Kyle came too, and Leiman got to talk about the woman from the crash. When Leiman was finally discharged, he was wheeled out of the hospital by a nurse with a faded infinity tattoo on her neck who I’d once overheard calling Leiman a “poor kid,” though she couldn’t have been any older than him.

#



Music thrummed through the room like a physical being, bouncing against the walls and the bottles and my aching temples. Whoever had last fed the jukebox had abused the privilege, and the EDM that issued from the speakers was turning my brain slowly to pulp. Yet for Leiman's sake I was determined to have a good time, so I went to the counter for some more whiskey to dull the ache.

The accident was three months ago, and Leiman was mostly recovered by now. He'd gotten his cast off earlier in the afternoon and we'd gone out to celebrate—me, Leiman, Grant, Kyle, and some of our mutual friends. A couple long scars were all that was left to tell of Leiman's week in the hospital, but even they had been closed by a professional—some clean-cut plastic surgeon—into nothing but thin, shiny lines. From here, across a room full of dancing lights, the scars on his face could have been nothing but a trick of the shadows.

“Penny for your thoughts?” Dina, whose connection to the group had been lost on me sometime throughout the night (a friend of Grant's maybe?) appeared at my elbow. Flushed from drinking and dancing, she looked small and floaty like a balloon about to pop.

“Sorry,” she said, shaking her head a little. “It's a lame thing to say, but I did wonder.”

I cast around for something to say. “Mm, I was wondering whether anyone's confiscated Grant's car keys yet.”

She laughed, and we both looked at our table across the room, where Grant's body leaned forward, arms waving as he gesticulated loudly. As we watched, he knocked a beer glass off the table and hit his head diving down for it. I coughed into my glass.

“Someone should do it soon,” she said. She cocked her head to the side, surveying Grant with clinical indifference. “Guess it's my job, since he was supposed to be my ride. You know, safety first.”

She got up off her stool, straightened her skirt, and weaved her way back to the table with a prim deliberateness that meant she was more drunk than I'd realized. She hovered next to Grant's chair for a moment, laughing at his joke, and when she came back she had his keys in her hand.

"Here," she said, handing them to me. "I'll lose them."

I pocketed the keys. The extra drinks had covered the headache with a film of wooziness, so that I now felt dizzy as well as ill.

When she didn't leave, I said, "So you're a friend of Grant's, huh?"

She shrugged. "Not really. He's dating my roommate. It was her idea that I come out tonight, but I think what she really wanted was for me to keep an eye on him. She's in Kentucky for her cousin's wedding." She took a sip of her drink. "She's out of his league but he treats her real well."

There must have been something in my face betraying skepticism, because she laughed again.

"I felt the same way, but it's true," she said. "Anyway, what's your connection?"

"We've all been friends for years. I've known Leiman since we were kids."

"And?" she said.

"What?"

"Anyone could tell your history goes deeper than that."

Her attitude was irritating. Her biggest burdens were probably friends' birthday parties or what outfit to wear on a night out, and here she stood, explaining her assumptions like they were facts in a room full of people who cared only about getting laid. But fine. If she wanted to be shocked, I could shock her.

“We were in a car crash together when we were young. Eight or nine. We didn’t know each other well, but our families went to the same church so we carpooled sometimes when his parents were working. My dad was a drunk, and one day he ran a light.”

“What happened?” I’d expected her to show awkward pity, to change the subject at the next opportunity. Instead, she looked at me across the top of her glass, unruffled and serious.

“Why do you care?” I asked, the words sounding harsh even beneath the abrasive cacophony of voices and music.

She shrugged, and for the first time I noticed the pinch of weariness around her eyes, though she masked it well with boldness. This couldn’t have been her idea of a fun night, babysitting her roommate’s boyfriend, the outsider in a group whose every word must be tinged with years of history.

“We both got badly injured,” I said, relieved that my voice sounded softer again.

She looked up at my change in tone and smiled ever so slightly, correctly interpreting my invitation to keep talking.

“And your dad?”

“Who cares? He’s not dead, if that’s what you mean.”

“Huh.” She played absently with her necklace, a little hourglass that she flipped around and around. Sweat formed ribbons with the little hairs at the base of her neck. “I thought it might have been something like that. I mean, I didn’t know the details, but the way you care about him—” She let the hourglass fall to her chest and grabbed her drink again. “Well, it made me think you had history.”

There was a calmness, a frankness about her that I couldn’t figure. When was the last time someone had taken that story in stride?

“Do you feel responsible?” she asked.

“What? Of course not,” I said. “It’s not like I was the reason my dad was so fucked up. I know that.”

“It’s easy to know it. It’s harder to feel it.”

#

Later, after Grant had gotten belligerently drunk and started yelling about his missing keys, Dina closed his tab and packed him into an Uber. That left Dina, a friend of hers, Leiman, and me alone in the parking lot, the lights of the bar creeping out of the windows as if timidly imploring us to stay. The night was over, though: the door was locked and snow was spinning in the streetlamps, failing to keep the secret of a white morning away from those of us who’d trespassed on the late, late night. Dina shivered, tucking the collar of her jacket more firmly around her neck.

“You getting an Uber?” Dina said.

“Thought I’d walk. I live about a mile north of here—not too far.”

“Oh cool!” she said. Snowflakes caught on her collar, melting down beneath her cheek. “Hey Kathy! These guys are going the same way we are.”

I’d half hoped the girls were going to get an Uber home. They were under-dressed enough that it seemed implausible that they’d want to walk, but it seemed that the alcohol in their blood was providing a barrier against the cold. Leiman and I followed their footprints, like mutant animal tracks from their tiny club shoes, down the street.

“Have a good night?” I said. Leiman’s shoulders were hunched against the cold. His biggest scar, the one that cut temple-to-chin down the right side of his face, peeked out from beneath his

face, peeked out from beneath his collar. Melted drops of snow adhered to the little hairs on either side of it.

“Yeah, pretty good. I think Grant over-indulged.” He half-glanced at me, as if expecting me to go off on a rant about Grant’s habits.

I wasn’t in the mood to talk about Grant.

“Feel good to be walking again?”

“Yeah, I suppose.”

The girls skipped ahead of us. Kathy stumbled and Dina caught her clumsily, letting out a guttural laugh at the same time. Leiman smiled thoughtfully.

After a moment he said, “I’ve never been as sad as that woman, you know. The one who crunched me. I wouldn’t do a thing like that.”

He looked at me sideways. I tried to focus on the feeling of the snow melting through my shoes. My toes were the kind of cold beyond numb, where a stubbed toe would be agony and also no pain at all.

“It’s just—I was talking to Kyle tonight and thought you’d like to know.”

I thought Kyle might have tried to pull something like that. All the solicitousness of the past few months, all the cautious consideration of my moods. He was the youngest of us, but in some ways he was also the wisest.

“Yeah.”

Pain washed beneath my skin, surging up in waves and floating away, in time with the gentle flurries of snow. The pain took with it a weight that I didn’t realize I’d been carrying.

The snow glowed blue in isolated bulbs around each street

lamp as if only existing within reach of the light. It was kind of beautiful.

The snow gradually let up, and after a while stars broke through the blackness in little bunches. Dina let out an almighty sigh that we could hear from yards behind and flopped down in the middle of the street. Kathy joined her, the two friends half obscured by the fresh fallen snow.

When we drew level with them, they were holding hands and pointing out constellations.

“Out of the way!” Dina said to me. “You’re blocking my stars!”

“Aren’t you guys cold?” Leiman asked.

“Never,” Dina said. She turned to Kathy. “Think they should join us?”

“Absolutely.”

The girls surged up out of the snow with surprising agility and pulled the two of us down. I fell clumsily, my head ending up somewhere between Dina’s hair and Kathy’s knee. Kathy’s tights were soaked through, and I could see her kneecap dancing violently with the shivers.

“Watch the sky,” Dina said. “I heard there was a meteor shower tonight, or—” she brushed some water away from her neck “—it might have been last week, I’m not sure.” She pointed at a gap between two clouds. “I’ll bet you the next one will be through there.” The minutes stretched on as water soaked through my jeans. I pulled the collar of my jacket tighter around my neck and concentrated on not shaking.

“Ha!” Dina said. “Blink and you’d miss it! I told you it would be there.”

I hadn't seen the star. The part of Leiman that I could see beneath Kathy's upturned knees, a piece of jaw and ear, looked fevered—red and damp. But he laughed, and I realized I hadn't heard the sound in a long time.

"Bet you the next one will be over there," Leiman said, pointing.

"You're on," said Dina.

We watched the stars for what felt like a long time, the cold reaching into our bones without the power to hurt us. I saw the next star, and the one after that, and the one after that.

Leiman's hands were blue when we finally got up, and Dina made him wrap them in her scarf, with a half-glance at me and an understanding smile, before touching my elbow and guiding us, once again, up the street. We all walked together now, fast, to burn away some of the ache.

We said goodnight to Dina and Kathy outside a chain-link gate with snow balanced precariously in little crescents along each wire. Kathy made Leiman unwrap his hand so she could scrawl a number across his palm. The rest of the walk home was cold and quiet: no distant sirens or train whistles to romanticize the gap before dawn. I thought about the rainstorm last September, about screeching tires and the crunch of metal. About the moment of inevitability, when you see the silver truck coming and it hasn't yet crushed in the passenger door, but there's peace in the fact that there's nothing you can do to stop it.

"I think the woman wanted you to see her," I said. "That's why she put her turn signal on. She wanted one last person to look, really look at her before she went."

Leiman smiled, and there was so much pain and hope and

understanding in it that I almost cracked open.

“That’s what I thought too.”



# Sara

## Brittany Wiehe

I know I am a freak, “different” my mom and Maisy say, but those kids made my differences seem infectious. I constantly felt like I stuck out but in the worst way. They were my greatest obstacle for many years, little do those close minded yet mouthy kids know. Were they uneducated, unaware, or just cruel. Who’s to blame? What I know for sure is that they hadn’t encountered someone like me. The difference between them and I is rare, especially for kids who have only been on this earth for about 13 years. Who is to blame? Their parents? Their teachers? I wouldn’t blame our teachers at that school, especially Ms. Henry. Ms. Henry was so fragile, wrinkled yet lively, and as sweet as the smell of her perfume. That I know for sure, my sense of smell is strong. Probably because of the lack of another. Ms. Henry was accommodating for the freak that I still am. She didn’t see me as useless, disabled, or a fish out of water, unlike my classmates. Heck the entire school. The kid’s constant staring and then dodging any interaction with me, it was impossible to connect with or befriend anyone there. The faculty even struggled sometimes, but at least they tried. They were somewhat aware, they understood they could talk to me and I’d understand. I have a knack for reading lips. The faculty were the closest thing I had to “friends” at that place. I don’t count my interpreter, Maisy, even though she cares for me as a close friend. She stuck up for me when the cruel kids would prank me. That’s a nice way of putting it.

One day I spent an unusual amount of time in the bathroom at school. It was a random Wednesday in March. Maisy thought I was feeling unwell or ate something bad for breakfast that caused the lengthy trips to the bathroom. The bathroom was the only place I went by myself, without Maisy. I don't know if she thought my eyes were always puffy and red but she didn't seem to notice. Thankfully, she didn't bring it up. I practically cried all the water out I drank that day. She knew how much I despised being there and with those other kids. That day, especially, my hatred for being there escalated. It was Daniel. You'd think you would get used to an immature kid and his antics but that day I realized I wasn't. It would never be okay the things he'd do. Maisy was running late that morning so I waited out-side my classroom for her. Daniel had noticed me, vulnerable with-out Maisy. I saw him smirk to himself and whimsically walked over to me with a plan. I had never felt more helpless but I made sure to keep a settled face. He got closer and closer. I just stared out to the parking lot, hoped Maisy would turn the corner any minute. I didn't make eye contact with Daniel until he got really close to my face. I froze, feeling more uncomfortable and vulnerable than before. His face, right in front of mine, with his mouth opened wide, and eyes so big. I could see the veins in his neck pulsing. It was like he had forgot I wasn't blind. He was teasing me. Taunting me. I turned my head away as he bobbed his head back and forth towards mine, mouth still opened wide. He caught the attention of other students passing by so he obviously wasn't quiet in his tormenting. That explained the bulging and pulsing of the veins in his neck. I tried stepping away but he followed me, corralling me. He laughed and mouthed "where's your body guard now" in an immaturely expressed way. I felt my eyes starting to leak so my head jolted down. I didn't want Daniel to

think his taunting got to me because it wasn't that. I always knew he was uneducated and just someone who lived life for attention, whether it was good or bad. It was the fact that he reminded me how useless I was and an easy target. I was far from normal and couldn't fend for myself. Whether I admitted it or not, Daniel was right, Maisy was my security guard not a friend. Even worse, the several kids who heard what Daniel did just kept walking. As if I deserved it. Maybe I did. Maisy finally arrived and she immediately thought I was that upset about it. I wasn't it but we didn't talk about it after she apologized. That day was a horrible day. It was all I could think about that day thus explaining the trips to the bathroom, the only place I was capable of being alone and not tormented.

My body guard, Maisy, made it very apparent I was different. She was strikingly older and more developed. Her height and princess like blonde hair with piercing light eyes didn't help either. At first, people thought I brought my young hot mom to school. We resemble each other a bit. I'm not as tall and not nearly attractive though. Classmates, especially boys, who were unfamiliar of me would go up to her and try to get to know her, if you know what I mean. I soon got used to the fact that kids who went up to her weren't there to get to know me, let alone meet me. I stopped getting excited. It's not her fault she was cool, older, and prettier. However, after going to that place every day since I could remember, people definitely knew she was my voice. She rarely needed to be my voice though. Maisy had the easiest job being my interpreter considering she didn't have to translate much outside of classroom participation. Maisy would give me the look. The look that doesn't need any signing or gesturing for me to know that I should probably chime in. The look came when participation points were on the line. She knew

I didn't like school, not the education, but the actually place and being there. I am so glad to be out of that place. I hope high school is different.

I felt some sort of hope or excitement, emotions that seemed foreign to me by now, entering my new school, high school. At this new place, everyone looks the same. The girls wear plaid pleated red skirts with white oxford shirts tucked in, white ankle socks, and all black shoes. There were no boys at this school. This school is entirely different from my last. This school is the reason why my dad is taking so long to learn to communicate with me. Growing up, he was always gone and away at work. He'd work overtime, weekends sometimes, and leave before I was up and come home around dinner time. He'd always be exhausted, every day, so mom would never bother teaching him. My mom took ASL classes in college and then when she found out I was deaf it only took her a bit to dust off the old cob webs. She ended up quitting her dream job of helping sick animals to help her me. Although, I am grateful because it has made us so close. So close that I almost feel guilty when I see my dad. Even though I don't see him often and mom always has to be there for our brief conversations, he shows me he loves me through his actions. According to mom, he worked so much to pay for people like Maisy who has now been with me for about 6 years and any other help I need. Although, all the long-worked hours were originally to pay for an uncomfortable thing that they tried putting in my ear way back when. I didn't like it, it did more harm than good for me. Though I knew it really upset my parents, especially my dad. What upset them even more was that they could tell I was so excluded from life at school. They saw my spirits decline as the years went on. That's why they found this place, BA or Brighten Academy. It's as expensive as it

sounds. Apparently, the girls are supposed to be nice and more open minded here. I think that was my mom's nice way of saying that they would accept me when she first told me about this place. She said I'd have a better chance of being friends with people my age. I think the principal really sold it to my parents, my dad should've taken notes on her selling tactics and maybe he wouldn't have to work so much. Anyway, there's a lot of pressure on me liking BA. It reminds me of how I felt when I went to the ear place. I just hope there is not a girl version of Daniel at this school.

Today is the day. My ironed shirt is tucked into my skirt that is two inches above the knee.....the handbook said it could be 3 but mom wanted to play it safe.... along with my ankle socks and all black shoes.

Mom: \*signs "Are you excited for your first day?" as I make eye contact with her while I start to walk down the stairs. I feel like those girls in the movies, all dressed up about to go to prom, walking elegantly down the stairs with their parents gazing in awe. In this case, it was my mom proudly watching. She is standing in the kitchen, hands on the counter with nothing but a coffee mug on the island, anxiously waiting to take me to my first day of high school. Her foot is gently yet rapidly tapping the spotless white tiles. The striking and pungent smell of citrus glass cleaner filled the air. Mom probably stayed up late last night stress cleaning and trying to pass the time. I could tell she was just as nervous and excited as me, maybe more. My eyes scan the rest of the room and look to my right, past the front door to the living room.

I look at mom with a confused expression on my face.

I sign "Where is Maisy?"

As she takes a sip of her coffee and her tapping foot comes

to a halt, Mom signs “She’s not going with you to your new school”

My nerves suddenly turned into a sickness. I thought I was going to vomit all over my new perfectly plaid pleated skirt. I know I didn’t exactly enjoy Maisy or use her like I could’ve but how was I expected to go to a brand-new school if I couldn’t at least tell the teacher my name.

Mom: \*signs “You don’t need Maisy at this new school”

Me: \*frantically signs “How? Why is everyone deaf? Does everyone know ASL?”

Mom: “No, not everyone but there is an interpreter in your classes to help you”

I turn around and storm back up the stairs, not once looking back to see what else my mom wanted to say. How does she expect me to make friends? Does she even want me to have friends? My hope and excitement for this new school has completely vanished. I don’t even want to go to this stupid school anymore. I should be home schooled. Maisy or my mom could teach me. I can do it with my dad. Yea, that’s a way better idea. Then the money won’t go to waste and dad could work less. I can’t believe this snobby place has an interpreter just for me. I would be, yet again, so completely different and excluded from the other girls. They probably won’t have any other choice but to stare. I can envision it now. The interpreter signing to me to “sign my name to introduce myself” as if everyone can read ASL and understand. I’d have to put on my brave face, the same one I used practically every day at my old school. Me, just standing or sitting there like everyone else, as if my world was the exact same. I would have an expression on my face as if I understood everything the teacher was saying and that I didn’t have to keep glancing at an interpreter. My brave face, showing that

everything was right in the world and I was so grateful to be part of it. Constantly questioning if I am even part of society. The cruel kids at my old school weren't uneducated, they were right. They must've been. I am useless, incompetent, and unsociable without my interpreter. I always stare back at people staring at me, trying to grasp their intentions but failing to get anywhere. We can never past the fact that they just don't understand me. Better yet, how to interact and be around me. Maybe I'm the foolish one that thinks I can actively participate and be useful in this world, that I am capable of having friends. What is life without being able to communicate and build relationships with the people around you. Constantly being excluded all my life and having no way in. My only glimpse of a way in is Maisy and now she's gone. It's mentally exhausting. The worst part is I am slowly starting to feel the way I did when I was alone outside of class that one day waiting for Maisy. Daniel exposed my vulnerability and inability to be fully independent that day.

I see my bedroom door open from the corner of my eye as I lay on my bed with my cheeks feeling tight from the dried tears that rolled down my face. So many thoughts are still racing in my head. Mom comes and sits at the end of my bed. She taps my leg for me to look at her.

She signs "This place is different, will be different from the last. After today and tomorrow, if you still feel this way we will look at other options"

She waits, studies me knowing I am expressive with my face and mannerisms. I know she does this all the time. I look down at the grey sheet that lies below me, covering my bed. I'm thinking, thinking of all the possible worse outcomes that will come of going to school for two days. I guess going to two days of this school my

parents think so highly of would get them off my case. I hate disappointing them. I still remember their faces after they saw the way I reacted to the ear things when I was little. I would like to say I still have hope for this new school but that would just be a lie. My brave face will come in handy these next two days.

I sit up and face my mom. Her face is starting to fill with hope. It's like she knows what I am about to tell her. I sign to her "Okay, I will go to this school today and tomorrow. But if it is even just a little like my last school, I want to be homeschooled"

This was the first time I really ever spoke about how I truly felt about my last school. Although, my mom definitely knew I despised going there. I'm sure Maisy told her some details or instances of Daniel at school. When I had more horrible days than usual at my old school, my mom would do something special for dinner. It would be one of my favorites, taco night or breakfast for dinner. Those were the nights my dad would sit down and color with me after he came home from work and had dinner. I should probably get a new coloring book for this new school.

My mom smiles and nods yes.

This will be a long two days.

I hate being in the car. I have more memories of going to that place with the cruel kids more than I have of going to a good place. Good places being the grocery store, getting ice cream, and mostly running errands with mom. If being in the car couldn't get worse.... it just did. This drive is much longer than my last school, probably because it's not a normal school. It's an "academy". I still feel sick from before. I thought I would be used to being nervous by now, especially in this car. Although, I've learned nerves never go away.



20 minutes of staring out the window later and we're finally here. This school is much nicer than the last one I must admit and boy is it hectic. Another reason I hate being at school, especially the first day. Everyone is smiling, rushing and hugging their friends. A lot of these kids look like they drove here. These girls look way older. Even though we all have the same uniform, I still manage to stand out. I'm the only one who looks like they are actually following the 3 inches above the knee rule. A lot of these girls also wear makeup like they actually know what they're doing, unlike some girls in 7th and 8th grade classes at my old school. Those girls made me wish that I will never have to wear that stuff in my life. These girls, however, actually make me curious and interested in what I would like with their kind of makeup. I always thought my skin was too fair to wear it, but I've seen girls with almost every skin tone wearing it here and looking good.

Mom finally found parking. She's walking me to class. I don't see anyone walking with their parents to class. I can feel my face getting red. If things couldn't get worse, people are all crowded around outside, socializing, and not in classrooms yet. This makes me and my mom walking through the crowd the main event. Here come all the stares again, little do they know I am used to it. I look down and prepare my brave face. My mom keeps looking at me and soft smiling, as if she's not equally as nervous as me. I can tell I got my brave face from her.

This school is an outdoor campus, with red brick and grey roofs that match my plaid pleated skirt. There are big, long, tree-like green bushes that fill some of the sides of the buildings. The buildings are big with enough space in between for people to socialize and hang out with friends. One area has tons of red tables, I'm assuming

for break or lunch. My eyes have never been so overwhelmed, looking around, and everything being new. I forgot what stepping into a new place was like. Being at the same school from kindergarten through 8th grade can make the small details like color of a door or smell of a room disappear. My strong sense of smell has never been so activated. We walked in and out of one building. I smelt coffee seeping through one beige door we passed that had “Lounge” plated on it, probably for the faculty. There are many beige doors and lockers that are a faded grey. Some of them have locks, black and red, on them. We are walking pretty fast, probably the nerves. I don’t mind it though. It makes me feel less visible as we walk by more groups of girls socializing in circles. They somehow always turn around, right as we pass. At least, it is only a few moments of fright and embarrassment since we have quite the good pace going as we walk. It’s almost as if we are late. I am glad mom knows her way around. Knowing her, she probably made flashcards to study this place like how she makes ASL vocabulary cards for my dad. We go through another building that looks similar to the last with the same type of lockers and doors. This building had a big block letter “C 100-200” on the top of it. The hallway is a bit wider I think. Maybe it’s because there are less groups of girls in crowding by the lockers and doors of the classrooms. The classrooms have numbers on them. I see my mom wave at a lady at the end of the hall next to a beige door that is open with a light shining outside the hall. Maybe it’s my new teacher. The pace of our steps gets a bit faster. I feel like my heart is going to beat out of my chest. I’m sure my mom’s is too with our pace and those shoes she has on. I’m surprised she’s not sweating.

My mom exchanges a hug with her. She is tall with straight black hair that touches the top of her shoulders and is wearing

similar shoes as my mom. Her boots are a medium brown though, they match her skin and her long business-like coat. She doesn't look like a teacher. Maybe she is my interpreter. My mom glances at me as she is smiling so very big. The lady and my mom are talking. My mom put her hand on my shoulder, she is introducing me. The lady bends her knees and leans over a bit with a soft smile. Her face is not brave, it is real and kind. She signs "Hello my name is Jill, it is nice to finally meet you. Your mom has told me great things." This must be the class interpreter. I sign back "It is nice to meet you too". Short and sweet but mostly short is what I aim for. I look at the door. It has "C 103" engraved on it. My mom and Jill talk for a bit longer as I look at the light from the classroom funneling into the hall. I can't see through the door just yet. Jill then points to inside the class and my mom nods with an "Oh is that her" moving about her lips. Who is her? My mom turns around and motions me to follow her. Jill is leading my mom and I into the classroom. The class is a typical classroom size. It has about 20-30 grey-blue desks with steel legs that fill the room. Along one side of the class room is it a long and large cabinet with a counter and windows above them. The blinds are open, explain the light shining through the hallway. It is organized and smells like a similar glass cleaner my mom uses, citrus. The floors are white with blue specks, they look clean. There are two white boards at the front of the class, to the right when you enter the door. There is one big brown desk with a nice black swivel chair and a brown podium right in front of the white boards. The white board closest to the desk has "Mrs. Turner" written on it in black marker. Under is the name "Ms. Joyce" written smaller but also in black marker. I wonder which last name belongs to Jill.

There is another girl just a hair taller than me, dressed

exactly like me. Her skirt lies a couple inches above the knee just like mine. She is facing two other ladies that are standing right by the brown podium. The two ladies make eye contact with me, smiling ear to ear. The girl now turns around and makes eye contact with me. She has similar toned skin like Jill but has very long wavy hair. Her dark eyes are staring at me. She seems nervous like me. My mom and Jill both fan out, glancing at the girl and then back at me. Now I think my heart is actually going to beat out of my chest. My mom looks almost teary eyed at this point. This is not her brave face like earlier. This is an expression I have never seen before. One of the ladies by the podium steps forward, next to the dark eyed girl. The petite brown-haired lady who has bangs that flutter when she blinks signs “My name is Ms. Joyce. I am delighted to meet you”. Ms. Joyce then raises her eyebrows while smiling as she looks at the dark eyed girl. The dark eyed girl looks at the ground at first. I feel as if there is a mirror and I’m looking at a dark-haired and dark eyed version of myself. Her dark eyes return and meet mine. She raises her hand, just below her chin and near her right shoulder. She is right hand like me. Her nails are plain and short, like she has a habit of biting them. She then signs “My name is Sara and I am deaf”. My mom and Jill start wiping their eyes . Ms. Joyce has a beaming smile directed towards me. I touch my face. It is no longer my brave face. I am smiling and with teeth, in disbelief of meeting another creature that seems to share the same exhibit like me. A possible friend and someone my age. I shake my hand, hoping I won’t embarrass myself with shaky fingers as I lift my right hand to sign, just in front of my right shoulder. I look at Sara. I swallow the nerves as if I’m about to speak. I sign “My name is Isabelle but you can call me Izzy. Nice to meet you.”

# Chinese Died

## Angelica Reams

Chinese – died February 11, 1992. The hyphen held the knife. The chalk outline still clings to the Hangzhou pavement. People's Republic of China cried. The body was carried West with hopes to be laid to rest. The investigators are still at work rebuilding the original crime scene, piecing the Chinese back together. The foreign coroner attempts to breathe stars & stripes back into the cold body. This crime was personal. As if painting a scene from a clouded memory, the attempt looks equally hazy. Bend down, dust for fingerprints. Partial. Test fibers for foreign ghosts. Inconclusive. The slide shatters from the dying echo of a guqin. Who was she? HUA DOE.

# The Soured Eye

Gabe Covington

Eyes that see without sight,  
Minds that reason without rationale  
Knowing the universe as a  
Latitude unconstrained.  
In edifices of lined stone,  
where the men go,  
the screams follow,  
binding history, blinding history  
We build on, miles of grey and black  
Ourselves bound by ourselves  
With care, we steady our folly,  
In pursuit of an end to an end.  
It is only the hapless, the  
Sightless that see in color.  
It is a world of boundless green,  
Unimpeded, without dismissal of  
the inherent.  
An axiom say the others,  
but they are blind.  
Blind  
La realidad corta, escondida en  
seguridad. El desarrollo de la  
mente sin color. Bloques por la

invención de verdad.

No puedo ver.

We wait to wait,  
Yearning, earning, burning  
Existing to plague our perfection,  
Our blueprints of time

Creation stands laughing,  
In wait for the end, a tumultuous  
victory for the nature of  
Nature

# Frankenstein's Man, Monster, and Mythic Woman

Hannah Padua

As one of the most well-known women writers of the Romantic era, Mary Shelley undeniably revolutionized the period, with her writing setting a precedent for science fiction and horror. Challenging the very notion of what it meant to be a woman in the 1800s simply by engaging in the act of writing, it is unsurprising that Shelley employed a feminist lens critical of the cisheteronormative world that controlled nineteenth century Europe. Within Frankenstein in particular, through her portrayal of the tragic deaths of women characters, Victor Frankenstein's botched attempt at creating life, and the subsequent ostracization of the Monster, Shelley demonstrates how women are barred from opportunities to participate in the nineteenth century social contract. As a result, they are reduced to passive outliers in a deeply patriarchal and misogynistic society where their fates are dependent on the actions of men, and they are rendered insignificant by the male appropriation of duties traditionally ascribed to women.

Frankenstein's women are denied agency, with their destinies contingent on the behaviors of the men around them, namely, the behaviors of Victor Frankenstein. Anne K. Mellor writes, "Victor Frankenstein identifies nature as female – 'I pursued nature to her hiding places' – he participates in a gendered construction of the universe whose ramifications are everywhere apparent in Frankenstein"



(355). To begin, the immediate distinction that is drawn between feminine nature and masculine science already paints Victor, who is characterized by his intrigue in scientific inquiry, at the forefront of masculinity in the novel. Thus, his attempts to cheat and abuse nature's order of life and death are symbolic of the harm he poses to the women around him.

Alongside nature and science, another dichotomy that is drawn is that of the public, masculine sphere versus the domestic, feminine sphere. This gendered separation which is created, encouraged, and perpetuated by men, "causes the destruction of many women in the novel" (Mellor 357). For example, Victor's mother, Caroline Beaufort, succumbs to illness after nursing Elizabeth to health, in typical, motherly fashion. Consequently, Caroline "incarnates a patriarchal ideal of female self-sacrifice" (Mellor 357). It is also this feminine self-sacrifice that initiates the story and serves as the starting point of Victor's character arc, as her death inspires him to find a way to prolong life. For Victor, a woman must thus die and cease to exist in order for a man to undergo a journey of growth, change, and development, even if this journey is tragic. Or, alternatively, it is a woman who is responsible for the downfall of a man as a consequence of her self-sacrifice. This feminine self-sacrifice is also seen in the character of Justine Moritz, who willingly takes the blame for the murder of William Frankenstein, while the man who is truly guilty, Victor, remains silent. Justine's sacrifice then inspires a mirrored self-sacrifice in Elizabeth, who mourns, "I wish...that I were to die with you; I cannot live in this world of misery" (Shelley 59).

Mellor also explains that the dichotomy between the public man and the private woman leads to women's inability to "function effectively in the public realm" (357). This is seen once again in

Justine's trial. Out in the world of business, commerce, and exchange, she is unable to convince her executioners of her innocence. Elizabeth is also unable to save her, and later on, is unable to save herself from her own demise. The push from men to remain in the domestic sphere renders women passive, lacking credibility and authority. Should Victor, a wealthy educated man, have spoken up and taken accountability for his crimes, both Justine and Elizabeth would have been spared. In contrast to the credibility he has attained from his schooling and wealth, Elizabeth "regret[s] that she had not the same opportunities of enlarging her experience and cultivating her understanding" via travel and education (Shelley 110). Justine is further barred from such opportunities, as she is a servant girl for the Frankensteins, ranking below Elizabeth in the social hierarchy.

Expanding on the effects of Victor's inability to take accountability for his actions, Mary Poovey writes, "William Frankenstein, Justine Moritz, Henry Clerval, even Elizabeth Lavenza are, as it were, literally possessed by this creature; but as Frankenstein knows all too well, its victims are by extension his own: Justine is his 'unhappy victim' (p. 80); he has murdered Clerval (p. 174); and the creature consummates his deadly desire on 'its bridal bier' (p. 193)" (Poovey 349). In the midst of Justine's trial prior to her execution, Victor is wracked with extreme, incapacitating guilt. He explains, "Thus the poor sufferer tried to comfort others and herself...But I, the true murderer, felt the never-dying worm alive in my bosom, which allowed no hope of consolation...Anguish and despair had penetrated into the core of my heart; I bore a hell within me, which nothing could extinguish" (Shelley 59). Despite this guilt however, he simply watches as Justine struggles to console others and herself, still refusing to speak up about his hand in the murder and opting

instead to save his own skin while the fate of an innocent girl he has known since childhood is wrongfully decided by his silence.

Alongside Victor's actions however, there are minor male characters who also play a significant role in determining the fates of the women characters in their circles. For example, after Felix helps Safie's father escape from prison, Agatha and De Lacey are imprisoned. Felix's "blind and aged father, and his gentle sister, lay in a noisome dungeon, while he enjoyed the free air, [before they are] deprived...of their fortune and condemned...to a perpetual exile from their native country" (Shelley 87). In this case, patriarchal society punishes Agatha, as well as her father, for Felix's actions. One man's actions condemn the lives of others once again, as was the case in Justine's trial. Alongside the story of the De Lacey family, patriarchal control can also be seen in the dynamic between Safie and her father. When Felix first meets Safie's father in prison, her father "quickly perceived the impression that his daughter had made on the heart of Felix, and endeavoured to secure him more entirely in his interests by the promise of her hand in marriage" (Shelley 85). While Safie and Felix were actually in love, this transactional exchange at the surface-level nevertheless still demonstrates a clear example of one man's decision completely altering the life of a woman, who has no say in the matter, silencing her participation in the social contract.

Alongside the actions of men speaking for women in the novel, men – especially Victor Frankenstein – write women out of the social contract by appropriating the feminine roles that had given women their sense of purpose. Touching on Shelley's own life for a moment, her struggles with pregnancy exemplify the gender roles and expectations of the nineteenth century, wherein women's worth was based on the children they produced. Detailing this, Ellen Moers

recounts that Shelley was “[p]regnant at sixteen, and almost constantly pregnant throughout the following five years; yet not a secure mother, for she lost most of her babies soon after they were born; and not a lawful mother, for she was not married” (319). Due to the immense trauma these events must have evoked, it is then no surprise that Shelley would author a work critiquing this very system that reduces women to biological imperatives of female reproduction.

In Shelley’s suffocatingly cisheteronormative era, wom-en’s roles were already characterized by distinct rigidity and de-humanization. Due to Victor’s appropriation and bastardization of this expectation of reproduction and motherhood however, women in *Frankenstein* are not even allowed this small semblance of significance, writing them out of the narrative completely. In other words, women were not allowed to inhabit the male public sphere, though at the same time they were also barred from existing in the oppressive spaces men placed them in to begin with: the domestic sphere of childrearing and family-making. Emphasizing this, Moers writes that although *Frankenstein* “brought a new sophistication to literary terror...it did so without a heroine, without even an important female victim” (319). In a similar line of thought, Peter Brooks focuses on the absence of mothers in Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, writing, “The novel is notable for the absence of living mothers: Felix and Agatha’s mother is dead...so is Safie’s, Madame Frankenstein dies after contracting scarlet fever from her adopted daughter, Elizabeth – Frankenstein’s intended bride – and the Monster of course has no mother, only a ‘father’” (378).

As mentioned previously, it is Victor’s loss of his own mother that drives the plot of *Frankenstein*. Shaken by the death of his mother, Victor becomes a corrupted sort of “mother” himself, through the botched birthing of his Monster. After Caroline’s death, Victor explains, “Life and death appeared to me ideal bounds, which I should first break through ...[I]f I could bestow animation upon lifeless matter, I might in the process of time...renew life

where death had apparently devoted the body to corruption” (Shelley 33). As a result, Victor “[steals] the female’s control over reproduction...[and] eliminate[s] the female’s primary biological function and source of cultural power...[with the] implicit goal of creating a society for men only” (Mellor 355). By “deny[ing]...women any role in the conception of children” (Poovey 347), Victor consequently denies women any role in the social contract wherein men inhabit the public sphere while women are forced to remain in the domestic sphere, with their main – if not their only – legacy and contributions being the children they bear.

Through Victor’s attempts to be a “mother” of his own via his artificial creation of life, he ironically brings death and destruction instead, with his actions being the cause of the deaths of a majority of the women in this novel, alongside a handful of male characters as well. In regard to the women characters of Frankenstein, they are not only socially dead as the power of their potential motherhoods is stripped from them, but they are also rendered literally, physically dead at the reckless hands of Victor Frankenstein. Demonstrating this, immediately after the Monster is born, Victor has a nightmare in which he claims, “I thought I saw Elizabeth, in the bloom of health, walking in the streets of Ingolstadt. Delighted and surprised, I embraced her; but as I imprinted the first kiss on her lips, they became livid with the hue of death; her features appeared to change, and I thought that I held the corpse of my dead mother in my arms” (Shelley 36). This nightmare, of course, foreshadows Elizabeth’s untimely demise on her wedding night, where she and Victor are unable to consummate their union and she is denied motherhood twofold, firstly in a symbolic sense because of Victor’s appropriation of the mother role, and secondly in a very literal sense as Victor’s

“child,” the Monster, kills her. Ultimately through his parody of the mother figure and childbirth, represented by the monstrous vision of a dead Caroline Beaufort, Victor is confronted with a jarring view of how his reckless actions harm the women around him, firstly by rendering them culturally insignificant in the eyes of a patriarchal society for their inability to create life, and lastly by rendering the women lifeless themselves.

Alongside the ramifications Frankenstein’s women are subjected to as a result of Victor’s actions and his appropriation of motherhood, Shelley also underscores the struggles of women in nineteenth century Europe by drawing parallels between the Monster and women, highlighting their shared marginalization under a social contract that bars them both from participation. In his essay on Frankenstein, Peter Brooks cites film critic Laura Mulvey and her concept of the “male gaze” which “defines both the place of the female and the codes for looking and defining her – and also the very genres that stage that looking” (388). Similar to how women are unable to define and shape their own identities because the male gaze and patriarchal society already dictates these for them, the Monster can also be subjected to his own “gaze” of sorts by the able-bodied society that shuns him for his grotesqueness. Internalizing this mortification, the Monster laments, “I was, besides, endowed with a figure hideously deformed and loathsome...Was I then a monster, a blot upon the earth, from which all men fled, and whom all men disowned? I cannot describe to you the agony that [my] reflections inflicted upon me” (Shelley 83).

In this internalization of society’s disgust, Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar explain that the Monster comes to identify with Eve from Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, which the Monster reads as

he learns to use language and contemplate philosophical questions about life, essentially rendering himself more human than monster in the process. Gilbert and Gubar describe the Monster's identification with "Eve's discovery not that she must fall but, that having been created female, she is fallen, femaleness and fallenness being essentially synonymous" (337). As a result, by highlighting this shared ostracization between the Monster and women in *Frankenstein*, Shelley demonstrates how marginalized individuals are interpellated by society – they have no say in defining themselves, as society does this for them. Or as James Rieger puts it, cited by Gilbert and Gubar, women and the Monster have "have unique knowledge of what it is like to be born free of history" (341). Consequently, identity-formation is not a process of "self-assertion, confrontation, freedom, and faith in the individualistic imaginative act" (Poovey 350), but rather one that silences the forming identity in question, as it is formed by others and denied a chance of self-directed actualization.

On the subject of women's marginalization in particular, Gilbert and Gubar write, "Women have seen themselves (because they have been seen [by society]) as monstrous, vile, degraded creatures, [and] second-comers" (343). This is undeniably reminiscent of the Monster's view of himself through his internalization of society's gaze, being "not even of the same nature as man" (Shelley 83). Ultimately, the parallels between women and the Monster culminate in the fact that "Eve's moral deformity is symbolized by the monster's physical malformation...[his] physical ugliness represent[ing] his social illegitimacy, his bastardy, his namelessness" (Gilbert and Gubar 344). The Monster's ostracization and abandoned state render him "as nameless as a woman is in patriarchal society, as nameless as unmarried illegitimately pregnant Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin may

have felt herself to be at the time she wrote *Frankenstein*” (Gilbert and Gubar 344).

The Monster ponders his lack of identity and namelessness, question-ing, “Who was I? What was I? Whence did I come? What was my destination? These questions continually recurred, but I was unable to solve them” (Shelley 89). This inability to answer such questions coincides with marginalized people’s lack of self-formed history, discussed by Rieger above. Regarding women, their lack of voice manifests itself in the woman’s assignment to the private domestic sphere, women’s passive, involuntary subjection to the actions of men, and women’s reduction to insignificance through the appropri-ation of their expected duty of motherhood. In terms of the Monster, his namelessness and the concept of being unable to define or speak for oneself is demonstrated quite literally, as he is unable to speak or read when he is first born. It is then this non-verbal, primal primi-tiveness that leads larger society to ostracize him. Eventually howev-er, the Monster does learn to communicate, explaining, “I found that these people possessed a method of communicating their experience and feelings to one another...This was indeed a godlike science, and I ardently desired to become acquainted with it” (Shelley 77). In spite of his initial namelessness, Brooks argues that the Monster attempts to “deconstruct the defining and classifying power of the gaze...[by] assert[ing] in its place the potential of affected created in interlocutory language” (389), which he gains by observing the De Lacey family.

The De Lacey family, according to Mellor, “represents an alternative ideology: a vision of a social group based on justice, equality, and mutual affection” (358). In comparison to the larger patriarchal society that permeates this novel, the De Laceys provide a bit of reprieve. While patriarchal undertones are not completely



eradicated – once again, they have been forced into this community-centered unit as a result of Felix’s crimes, after all – they are not as overt as in the Frankenstein household. Instead of the division between Victor and the university and Elizabeth and the home, for example, Agatha and Felix De Lacey both carry out their share of housework and yardwork to provide for themselves and for their father. Perhaps it is in the marginalization the De Laceys are subjected to in their poverty and in their father’s old age and disability, that they foster an environment of equality and support. On the other hand, the Frankensteins are defined by great privilege and wealth, perpetuating the patriarchal and capitalistic system that defines their lives. In place of the nurturing, community-oriented De Laceys, the Frankensteins “[embody] a masculine ethic of justice in which the rights of the individual are privileged: [Victor] pursues his own interests in alchemy and chemistry, cheerfully ignoring his family obligations” (Mellor 367).

As a marginalized being himself, the Monster attempts to befriend the De Laceys, though he is ultimately rejected and shunned even further. Instead, Gilbert and Gubar cite Marc A. Rubenstein in stating that in Frankenstein, “the act of observation, passive in one sense, becomes covertly and symbolically active in another: the observed scene becomes an enclosing, even womb-like container in which a story is variously developed, preserved, and passed on. Storytelling becomes a vicarious pregnancy” (332). In equating pregnancy to the act of listening to stories, this then gives listening a feminine quality in its passivity. The Monster must watch the De Laceys from the sidelines and will never join in their small utopia of equality. Similarly, women must watch men from the sidelines and will never join in their free participation in the public sphere or

or in their interpellation, defining, and shaping of women under the male gaze. In concluding thoughts regarding the Monster and his similarities to women, Brooks argues, “The monster would thus be a woman, but a woman who would answer Freud’s infamous question ‘What does a woman want?’ with the ostensible reply: to be a male” (389). Put differently, the Monster simply wishes for the respect that accompanies being a man. The same could be said for marginalized women, though they may not necessarily wish to become male, rather instead to claim the agency that allows for participation within the social contract that has exclusively been available to men.

However, at the close of this novel, we learn that this desire for equality remains unfulfilled. The novel culminates in Victor’s reluctance to make a female mate for the Monster, for fear of “an independent female will...[female] desires and opinions that cannot be controlled by [Victor’s] male creature,” and the possibility that “[I] like Rousseau’s natural man, she might refuse to comply with a social contract made before her birth by another person; she might assert her own integrity and the revolutionary right to determine her own existence” (Mellor 360). For a man whose motivations revolve around his obsession with taming feminine nature with masculine science, it is startlingly clear why the liberation of a woman – especially a monstrous woman who is the result of an experiment gone awry – would be a nightmare. And for a patriarchal, cisheteronormative society that shaped this eponymous character’s views, it is not difficult to see why women were barred from forming and participating in the social contract at hand, both in the fictional novel and in the reality of Mary Shelley’s nineteenth century Europe.

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**1:43 a.m.**

Hannah Potts

We're a tender species  
For all of our violence  
I think  
When tea turns in the microwave  
Late in the night  
And "Blue in Green"  
Plays  
Melancholy and marvelous  
In my headphones  
Surely we must be tender  
To have made music  
And tea  
And stood outlined in windows  
Thinking of past loves  
And to be afraid of the dark  
Then I rush to the microwave  
Slam the button  
Two seconds  
Avoiding its beeping  
For I am a member  
Of a tender violent species  
And I don't want to wake the house

# Yvette

## Henri Vatinel

The following is a question and answer between my French grandmother Yvette and me. (Special thanks to my father, Herve Vatinel, for translating these responses.) Yvette Vatinel Maindret was born in France in 1934 and lived under Nazi occupation as a young child. Today, she lives in Clichy, a suburb of Paris, near many of her family. I wanted this section to take place before anything else to provide some context as to why I chose to report on concentration camps, with an emphasis on Buchenwald. It is not my intention to make invidious comparisons, undermine, outrank, or belittle the experiences of those who have entered Buchenwald in the past. My goal is to provide my family's history, so I can contribute a small part to the immense collective memory of the Holocaust.

### **Q & A with My Grandmother, Yvette Vatinel Maindret**

**What do you remember about the day the Nazi's occupied Paris?**

*Yvette: J'avais 5 ans à la déclaration de la guerre en 1939 et 11 ans le 8 mai 1945 lorsque la guerre fût terminée. Malgré mon jeune âge, je me souviens clairement de l'occupation, particulièrement quand nous sommes revenue à Clamart (Paris) ou je peux encore entendre le bruit des bottes des patrouilles allemande sur le paver dans la rue.*

[I was only 5 when the war started in 1939 and 11 on May 8, 1945 when the war officially ended with the German capitulation. Despite my young age I clearly remember the time of the German

occupation, particularly when we returned to Paris. I can still hear the distinct noise made by the boots of the German soldiers patrolling the streets.]

**Where were you ? What did you see, hear, and feel ?**

*Yvette: En 1939 (déclaration de la guerre) nous étions à Triguères (près d'Orléans) dans le château de la tante de ma mère, en vacances. De Triguère nous sommes partis à Brantôme au sud de la France dans la zone libre. Ensuite, de Brantôme nous sommes revenues à Clamart près de Paris pour rejoindre mon père. Mon père, après son service militaire, a été affecté chez Citroën où il était chargé de déménager les machines de fabrication dans la zone libre au sud du pays.*

[In 1939 my mom, my sister and I were vacationing at one of my great aunts' chateau at Triguere, a small town near the City of Orleans. When the Germans started to occupy the country, we moved South to Brantome in the Free Zone. After a while we decided to go back to our home in Clamart, near Paris in the Occupied Zone to be with my father. My Dad after serving in the military was back working for Citroen, his old employer. He was put in charge of moving the car-making equipment to the Free Zone so the Germans could not get their hands on it.]

**Were you old enough to have a grasp on the situation? What was life like?**

*Yvette: Oui je comprenais et surtout j'ai beaucoup entendu ma mère en parler pendant mais aussi surtout après la guerre. Peux-tu décrire ta vie (l'école, la nourriture, les jeux, etc.) et la vie de tes proches pendant cette période (à Paris, et à Triguère) La vie était difficile, manque de nourriture, il fallait éteindre les lumières le soir, à cause des bombardements. Lorsque nous étions à Triguères nous avions une*

*gouvernante au château. A Clamart (Paris), nous allions à l'école communale et lorsqu'il y avait des alertes, nous descendions aux abris; j'avais peur car je n'avais pas ma maman avec moi.*

[You grow up fast in these circumstances; I understood everything around me. I have vivid memories of this time and I heard my mother and father speak about it long after the war was over. This was a defining period for them, for me and my sister as well as all the French people who lived through it. Life was difficult, we lacked food, we needed to turn off the light at night because of the regular bombing. When we stayed at the chateau in Triguere we had a tutor but in Paris my sister and I attended public school. During the bomb alerts all the students were moved to the underground shelters; I remember being very afraid as my mom was not with me.]

**Can you recall any vivid memories, experiences, or comments made?**

*Yvette: Je me souviens de ma mère me disant de rester silencieuse dans la rue à cause de la gestapo qui se cachait partout, espionnant les gens et ce qu'ils disaient. Je me souviens un jour qu'un Inspecteur de Police de Vanne est venu à la maison pour demander à ma sœur Mimi d'aller chez une de ses copines de classe pour prévenir un groupe de parachutistes canadiens et leur dire de partir tout de suite.*

[I remember my mother telling my sister and I to stay silent while walking outside. She was very afraid of the Gestapo (German Police) spying on people and arresting those who said negative things about the Germans. I also remember a French police inspector coming to our apartment one afternoon and asking my sister, Mimi, to go to one of her school friends home, whose parents work with the resistance, and warn a group of Canadian paratroopers to leave

right away because the “Boshs” had discovered where they were hiding and were coming to arrest them.]

**What news or information did you receive regarding the state of war?**

*Yvette: Le soir à Clamart nous écoutions très doucement la BBC à la radio. (C'était illégal). Je me souviens écouter les messages coder a la résistance.*

[In the evening we gathered around the radio with my mom and dad and listened to the BBC. The volume had to be kept very low as listening to the BBC could get you in real trouble with the Germans if they caught you listening to it. (The Free France led by De Gaulle would pass coded messages to the French Resistance through the BBC.)]

**What did your family think about the war? What did they say and what did they believe in?**

*Yvette: Mes parents étaient malheureux du fait du manque de nourriture et de liberté. Ils avaient peur des bombardements ou V1 sur une maison à Clamart. Ils désiraient que la guerre se termine le plus vite possible, il y avait beaucoup de morts et de blessés. Les Allemands étaient dans notre pays et nous n'avions plus la liberté.*

[My parents were very unhappy for not being able to provide enough food for us but also because of the total lack of freedom during the occupation. Bombings were frequent and they were constantly afraid that a bomb or a V1 would land on their building. We lived like that for nearly 4 years, my parents wanted the war to end and the “Boschs” out of France.]

**What can you recall on the day of liberation?**

*Yvette: Bien sûr 25 août 1944 J'étais avec ma mere sur Avenue Schneider à Clamart et un char avec une grosse croix*



*blanche descendait l'avenue, quelqu'un a crié "c'est un russe", Tout le monde s'est précipité dans les immeubles alentours et nous sommes ressorties tout desuite. C'était un char américain accompagné d'un char français de la compagnie du General Leclerc de Hauteclouque. De Gaulle avait exigé que ce soit un char français qui entre le premier dans Paris. Il fallait faire très attention aux franc-tireur allemand qui tiraient sur les foules se réunissant dans les rues pour accueillir les car Franco-Américains.*

[On August 25, 1944 my mother and I were standing on Avenue Schneider in Clamart waiting for our US and French liberators. All of the sudden a tank with a white star came down the Avenue. Someone in the crowd cried out "It's the Russians!" and the crowd scattered in the nearby buildings in fear only to reappear a few minutes later. It was in fact a US tank accompanied by a French tank from General Leclerc's 2nd armored French division. De Gaulle had negotiated on behalf of the Free French with General Eisenhower for a French Tank division ("La colone Leclerc") to liberate the capital. We all screamed and embraced each other on the street full of joy to have recovered our country and our freedom. However we had to be extremely careful as for a few days German and collaborators "franc-tireurs" (snipers) would still shoot at the joyful crowds on the streets.]

**What can you tell me about Hortense Legrand? Who was she?**

**What can you say regarding her life, her character, and her story at Buchenwald? What does her legacy mean to you?**

*Yvette: Hortense Legrand est ton arrière-arrière grand-mère; elle est la mère de Lucienne qui était mariée avec Emile Vatinel, ils ont eu 3 enfants Marcel (ton grand-père), Jacques, et Gisèle. Le couple ne marchait pas, il était très jaloux et Lucienne était une tres belle femme, (ton père avait ses yeux). Par vengeance, Emile a dénoncé*

*Lucienne en disant qu'elle possédait une arme chez elle. Elle a été arrêtée et de-vait partir en camp. Hortense très courageusement a demandé à partir à sa place étant donné que Lucienne avait 3 enfants à charge. Les "Bochs" ont accepté et la pauvre Hortense est partie à AUSCHWITZ où elle n'a pas été trop mal traitée, elle y a travaillé en cuisine pour les officiers. Elle a été transférée dans un autre camp, Buchenwald. Elle avait quand même perdu 30 kg à son retour. Entre-temps Lucienne, ton arrière-arrière grand-mère, est décédée et à son retour des camp Hortense a demandé à s'occuper de Marcel et Gisèle, Jacques vivant chez une de ses tantes. Lorsqu'elle s'est arrêtée de travailler, elle avait 76 ans. J'ai donc fait les démarches pour qu'elle ait une pension, car elle était sans ressources, inutile de te dire qu'il ne fallait pas lui parler de son gendre !! A son enterrement une petite délégation des déportés de Clichy était présente avec le drapeau français. Je me suis occupée d'elle jusqu'à ses derniers moments, j'allais la voir à Beaujon où elle est décédée. Tu dois te rappeler d'elle, elle t'aimait beaucoup.*

[Hortense Legrand is your Great-Great Grand-Mother. She was the mother of Lucienne who was married to Emile Vatinel. Together they had 3 children, Marcel (Your Grandfather), Jacques, and Gisele. Emile and Lucienne did not get along and ended up getting a divorce. Apparently, Lucienne was a very beautiful woman and did not wait too long before moving on with her life. Revengeful, Emile denounced Lucienne to the local Kommandatur for illegally keeping a gun and Lucienne was arrested. She was ready to be shipped out to camp, but Hortense stepped in and convinced the Germans to send her instead. Hortense was initially sent to Auschwitz and later was transferred to Buchenwald. Hortense was a cook by trade and was assigned to the Officers' Mess at the camp; compared to the other camp prisoners, she was relatively well treated but still lost 40-50

pounds while interned there.

The story of Hortense is that she managed to pass some food out to the other prisoners, but Hortense always refused to talk about this period of her life. When back from the camp she took care of Marcel and Gisele, as their mother, Lucienne, had died giving birth during the occupation. I really liked Hortense; she was a simple but incredibly brave woman. Needless to say, she hated her ex-son-in-law who she held responsible for her deportation. I made the necessary formalities for her to get a pension when she retired (she was 76 then) and took care of her until her death. A small local delegation representing the deported was present at her funeral. Herve: “As a child I remember her climbing the 5 flights of stairs of my parents building to give me 5 Francs, I remember her smile and her perfume, I called her Mémé.”]