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# A Hermeneutic Exploration of the Literature of Technology: Prometheus Bound, Frankenstein and Battlestar Galactica

William Blais

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A HERMENEUTIC EXPLORATION  
OF THE LITERATURE OF TECHNOLOGY:  
PROMETHEUS BOUND, FRANKENSTEIN AND  
BATTLESTAR GALACTICA

A Dissertation

Submitted to the McAnulty College and  
Graduate School of Liberal Arts

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By

William P. Blais

December 2009

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William P. Blais

2009

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William P. Blais

Approved November 17, 2009

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## ABSTRACT

A HERMENEUTIC EXPLORATION  
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By

William P. Blais

December 2009

Dissertation supervised by Michael Sipiora

There are few phenomena in contemporary culture that are more dynamic and impactful than technology. That said the understanding of technology held by most therapists is overly simple or, at best, based on one-dimensional critiques of technological life. The present study endeavors to build a broader understanding of technology that allows for both a robust critique and a more accepting recognition of its potential contributions. The present study explores the archetypally invariant structure of technology as well as the more culturally and historically contingent elements of several of its historically specific expressions. It engages this material through a series of three exceptional artistic works: Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound*, Mary Shelly's *Frankenstein*, and Ronald Moore's *Battlestar Galactica*. Furthermore, in order to broaden the exploration, the present work takes as a forestructure the late work of philosopher Martin Heidegger, the Freudian-

Marxist and aesthetic sensibilities of Herbert Marcuse, and the metabolic analysis of psychologist Robert Romanyshyn. By bringing the thinking of these three into the analysis, the work claims a breadth that exceeds a simple literary analysis.

Each of the literary sources of this work represents concerns about technology as well as its ongoing promise. For instance, the myth of Prometheus as it is represented in *Prometheus Bound* reflects technology as a force that supports humankind in an ongoing struggle against the harshness of the world as well as the need to maintain sensitivity to the broader natural world to engage in the full range of human possibilities. In contrast, *Frankenstein* struggles explicitly with the issues of control and a modernistic agenda of narcissistic control over the natural world. Finally, *Battlestar Galactica* captures a postmodern world and attends in particular to issues of fluid identity, plurivocality, and the integration of difference. Common areas of concern, including the place of hope, the role of community, the narcissistic structure of technology, and the relationship to figures of the maternal and the feminine are key to each piece of literature and reflect archetypal dimensions of the phenomenon. In contrast, the specific content and attitude reflected in each work varies, showing the gradual progress of technology from its balanced position with respect to broader meanings in the Ancient world, toward a program of command and control in the Modern milieu and finally toward a recognition and integration of multiplicity and aesthetic richness in the post-modern context.

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## Chapter 1: The Soul of Technology

### *Prologue*

What does our great historical hunger signify, our clutching about us of countless other cultures, our consuming desire for knowledge, if not the loss of myth, of a mythic home, a mythic womb? (Nietzsche, 1956, p. 137)

Technology has always been, for me, a matter of great fascination. When confronted with a difficulty, I often am drawn into a problem-solving style of engagement involving fixes, tools, automation, and a kind of mechanical logic. At the same time, however, I am attracted to the wonderfully nuanced, subtle and wonderful world of broader meanings that is the proper domain of literature, art, and psychotherapy. I suspect that I am not alone in this ambivalence. The disjunction between the realm of the technological and the poetic is a primary issue at the heart of contemporary life. We perennially look to rational and technical methods to solve problems. In reaching for these solutions, we all too often cover over the wealth of meaning underlying the world, the poetic basis of the world and mind that Hillman (1976) describes, and thereby lose contact with the depths and the ground of meaningful living. For all of its power, the techno-rational approach to the world forecloses alternative modes of relatedness, an insight eloquently captured in the work of Heidegger (1954), Marcuse (1964) and others. In relying on technical approaches, we end up struggling to cope with immediate problems and remain painfully oblivious to our estrangement from the soulful, poetic depth of our existence.

The intent of this work is to contribute to dis-covering the hidden, soulful aspects of technology. I aim to approach the rational-technical with the kind of openness and

appreciation of soulful ambiguity that is exemplified in phenomenological, hermeneutic and depth psychologies. Specifically, I will explore the sense of technology that appears in three works of mythological literature, hoping to bring the technological back into contact with Nietzsche's mythical "womb," and thereby restore a soulful depth to our contemporary experience of technology.

### *A Literary Exploration of Technology*

We encounter technology as a ubiquitous part of our lifeworld, from the moment our digital alarm clocks wake us before the sun to the last email we send out in the evening. However, each of us approaches and is approached by it in a distinct manner. My intent in this work is to excavate elements of common meaning that underlie these diverse experiences by reflecting on the archetypal structure of the technological, while at the same time remaining attentive to the historically contingent aspects of technology.

First, however, it is worth noting that the exploration of technology cannot limit itself to an analysis of the nature of technical artifacts. Rather, it must pay attention to the psychological dimensions that are inextricably bound up with the construction and use of such artifacts. These dimensions constitute a particular technological-rational posture toward the world, which is the actual object of examination here. As a mode of access to these dimensions, I will be engaging in a hermeneutic examination, with particular attention to archetypal and depth-psychological dimensions of meaning. The object of this examination will be three works of mythological literature: *Prometheus Bound* by Aeschylus, *Frankenstein: A Modern Prometheus*, by Mary Shelly and Ronald Moore's contemporary space epic, *Battlestar Galactica*. I will explore the thesis that these texts

are not simply concerned with the same general themes, but rather all attempt to come to grips with (among other things) a common archetypal concern: humankind's changing relationship with technology.

While the present work resonates strongly with a variety of notable philosophical explorations, there are important ways in which it is, properly speaking, a psychological venture. Our explicit experience of technology includes a sense of control and comfort as well as a faith in the bedrock of rationality. Yet, our experience of technology is not simply a set of thematized beliefs held cognitively, rationally or even consciously. Rather, the experience of technology co-exists at a pre-thematic level of fantasy and dream and as a part of our everyday experience. Technology is part of our lifeworld even more deeply than is suggested by its ubiquity. It is psychological in the sense that it informs the way we live our lives. Like all psychological reality, it is, as psychologist Robert Romanyshyn (1982/2001) writes, "reflected in the way in which an age builds its buildings, paints its paintings, and creates its works of art" (p. 6). A technological spirit moves us to repair our relationships and our children as well as our automobiles. The same spirit influences us to frame depression and grief as physiological phenomena.

One concrete example of the psychological dimension of technology can be seen in how it shapes our expectations, and creates an atmosphere of tension and busy-ness. We expect that having automobiles, not to mention computers, pagers, cell phones, PDAs, and any number of other technological devices, will allow us to save time and to be more productive. The ostensible goal of this productivity is time to do what we want to do on our own, or to have unregulated time. Alternately, we may feel that technological devices will allow us to have better contact with friends and family. Yet the

promises which technology makes, all too often, are broken. Jeremy Rifkin (1987) notes, "It is ironic that in a culture so committed to saving time we feel increasingly deprived of the very thing we value" (p. 18). We find in the end that we are only more rushed. The greater efficiency that technology makes possible does not make good on the promise of leisure and unrestricted contact, but eliminates it. Technological accessories like the pager and the cell phone allow and persuade us to be constantly busy. Modern idioms such as to be "on-call" or "on-task" make it clear that we are always simply "on." Even our time away from projects might be described with the idiom "downtime," which resonates with the care of computers. Contemporary technologies make it difficult for us to draw the line between the projects of the workplace and projects that we more readily adopt on our own. They make it difficult to be in a state of *reverie*, a contemplative condition in which there is no particular task that stands before us. Without these moments of aimless presence and contemplation, we cannot connect with the deep dimensions of our existence through which personal meaning becomes possible.

There are many methodological stances that might be well employed in examining this phenomenon. Romanyshyn (1989) offers a compelling account of the deep psychological dimensions of technology. His exploration proceeds primarily from works of art, rather than the "first principles" or historical documents which so often are the basis of historical and philosophical approaches to technology. On his unusual approach, he notes,

I begin this way, therefore, because I mean to approach technology from the side of its depths, from the images of the events and happenings which comprise the technological world. It is not a philosophy of technology which I offer here, nor a

history. Rather I offer a study of technology as a psychological reality, a study of technology as the creation, the making, the working out, of a shared cultural dream. (p. 10)

As Romanyshyn plumbed the depths, I too wish to turn a hermeneutical eye toward the depths of our cultural experience and thematically explicate the relationship with technology in which we are always-already caught up. I also aim to explore the socially contingent aspects of these depths as they unfold historically. The intention of this work is not simply to come to a better understanding for its own sake. Rather, through coming to a fuller thematization of our experience of technology and the meaning of this experience, we allow for the creation of a greater freedom from the constraints of a solely technological outlook. We also create for ourselves a freedom for relating to the world through other ways of sense-making such as the political and the mythological. If we fail to take the time to understand the ubiquitous techno-rational approach, we are likely to be captured by it. Technology contributes to a habitual lifestyle and limits the genuine and authentic possibilities to which we might otherwise be receptive. Through an understanding of technology, I hope to contribute to the effort begun by Heidegger, Hillman, Romanyshyn and others to reclaim, or at least to be more aware of, broader human possibilities in the contemporary world.

### *Theoretical Context*

Of course, the experience and meaning of technology has been studied by many others in the past. The work of these philosophical and psychological thinkers has defined the field of ideas in which I hope to work, drawing attention to the multiple dimensions of meaning entangled in the technological world. Their works operate as fence posts,

laying out the perimeter of the field and exposing aspects of technology which are in need of attention. Another way in which these other efforts impacts the current work is as a forestructure, the knowledge and sense of a text or phenomenon that provides the foundation upon which any effort toward understanding must be erected (Kvale, 1996). In a reiteration of Radnitzky's (1970) exposition of hermeneutic method, Kvale points out the necessity of a tradition of understanding which any investigator brings with him or her, and the importance in any hermeneutic inquiry of making these presuppositions as clear as possible.

Of the many thinkers who have written on these issues, I will be limiting my exposition to Martin Heidegger's later work phenomenologically explicating technology as *enframing*, Herbert Marcuse's post-Marxist critique of technology, and Robert Romanyshyn's imaginistic psychology, which is informed by James Hillman and more generally proceeding from the tradition of depth psychology. These thinkers, in their respective ways, demonstrate many meaningful dimensions of technology along with its pernicious elements.

### *Martin Heidegger*

Among the contemporary philosophers of technology, Martin Heidegger's analysis (1954) is among the most influential, setting the terms in which those who followed him work and the questions with which they would concern themselves. His powerful and poetic account, *On the Question Concerning Technology*, describes technology as a form of *revealing*. That is, through technology, humans apprehend elements of the world or *beings*. As a form of revealing, technology is similar in essence to poetry or other artistic human endeavors, which also are means through which the

beings of the world are disclosed. However, as opposed to the poetic quality of the revealing of art, which he designates *poesis*, the revealing of technology is a *challenging* of Being (i.e. that which discloses beings) which calls it forth in a commanding voice. This challenging voice of technology aims to command and control. It is in this way that the demanding and intrusive quality of nuclear power and strip mining is of a qualitatively different character than the windmill, which carries a kind of humility in the face of the Being (Vesser, 2002). Heidegger further describes modern technology as an *enframing*, a particular kind of revealing which further casts all beings into the form of *standing-reserve*. Standing-reserve is Heidegger's term for beings which have been configured by technology and are present only as resources to be used. The entities so recast include even the very kind of beings that humans are, and which he designates as *Dasein*. That is, through technology, human beings come to see themselves as standing-reserve. For Heidegger, contemporary technology is, at its very heart, a pernicious *destining* of humankind. It is a revealing which claims all as its own and closes off alternatives for all beings, including *Dasein*.

Heidegger further describes how modern technology, as a way of revealing, fails to capture two central aspects of Being. First, it does not recognize that the revealing of Being, *per se*, is not to be controlled. Although *Dasein* is the site of the disclosure of Being, its appearance is entirely independent of our wishes and demands. Being shows itself or withdraws. This first failure leads to the second. When Being is revealed to us in terms of technology, *Dasein* sees all beings as to be challenged, and pressed for control, including ourselves. The danger of this enframing is that, on one hand, it casts all beings, including the human variety, as "standing reserve" - resources to be controlled- and on

the other hand forecloses the possibility of further revealings by, for example, a poetic mode of revealing. Enframing threatens a kind of flat, one-dimensional way of disclosing Being. Furthermore, enframing forecloses any richer mode of revealing and, since we are the revealers, enframing forecloses human possibilities, making us into a limited kind of being which orders standing reserve.

Heidegger's (1954) perspective is not entirely dark, however. He recalls the lines of the poet, Holderlin, "But where danger is, grows / The saving power also" (p. 310),

Therefore, in search of our salvation, Heidegger looks more closely into the danger that enframing holds. He writes, "The granting that sends one way or another into revealing is as such the saving power. For the saving power lets man see and enter into the highest dignity of his essence" (p. 313). In this way, he calls us to an appreciation of technology which is not directed at technology's particular applications, since looking at technology as an instrument simply leads us back into a technological way of viewing technology itself as standing-reserve. Rather, he exhorts us to look at the essence of technology, "holding always before our eyes the extreme power" (p. 315). By looking closely at the essentially *revealing* character of technology, we come to understand ourselves as essentially revealers, and thus come into more intimate contact with our "highest dignity."

The recognition of technology as revealing is not, however, sufficient. He goes on to describe another kind of revealing, the poetic exercise of art. Heidegger understands art (*poiesis*) as a *tekhne*, that is, as a form of revealing. He writes, "The poetical thoroughly pervades every art, every revealing of coming to presence into the beautiful" (p. 316). Although, as discussed by Rojcewicz (2006), when art is taken up by humanism

as aesthetics, it becomes a form of technology insofar as we look to see what we can "get out of it" (p. 187). Yet, for the Greeks, art was a manifestation of Being. In either case, art is a kind of destining which reveals everything exclusively in its own terms, in terms of the beautiful instead of standing reserve. In the end, it is the very questioning concerning essences that saves us from the exclusive quality of both technology and art, and allows for us to see our essence in the questioning and the openness to the revelations of Being itself. It is through this questioning that we find our "highest dignity," in the act of revealing *per se*.

*Herbert Marcuse*

On the subject of the pernicious effects of technology, Heidegger writes, "The outstanding feature of modern technology lies in the fact that it is not at all any longer merely 'means' and no longer merely stands in 'service' to others, but instead [in the fact] that it itself unfolds a specific character of domination" (quoted in Zimmerman, 1990, p. 214). Although Heidegger generally avoids the language of political domination, preferring instead to frame issues in terms of the existential and ontological, this quotation allows us to see a similarity between Heidegger's thought and that of a more explicitly political writer. Herbert Marcuse, a student of Heidegger's, discusses the question of the politically oppressive potential of technology particularly fully in his *One-Dimensional Man* (1964).

Like Heidegger, Marcuse makes a careful point of rejecting the argument that technology is intrinsically neutral. He writes, "Technology as such cannot be isolated from the use to which it is put: the technological society is a system of domination which operates already in the concept and construction of techniques" (p. xvi). Again, the

problematic aspect of technology is not a particular technological artifact but is the technical approach more generally. Also in keeping with Heidegger, he describes the project of technology as "the experience, transformation, and organization of nature as the mere stuff of domination," and as a system in which "culture, politics, and the economy merge into an omnipresent system which swallows up or repulses all alternatives" (ibid.). Given these nefarious qualities of technology, one understands how it is possible for it to continue unabated.

A key aspect of the impact of technological rationality is the "comfortable, smooth, reasonable, democratic unfreedom" (p. 1), which appears in contemporary industrialized societies and which serves as a token of technical progress. The operation of technology is, first and foremost, the very embodiment of rationality. If it is given that the basic function of systems in society is the fulfillment of human needs, opposition to the techno-rational approach cannot help but seem irrational and arbitrary. While it is indubitable that technology wins for us a certain liberty from the brute facts of life, the liberty that our systems strive for can indeed be made into the most potent form of domination, since these systems determine and limit what can meaningfully be chosen.

Marcuse further notes another sense in which the contemporary scientific view of the world portrays technology as having no inherent values. He writes, "The quantification of nature, which led to its explication in terms of mathematical structures, separated reality from all inherent ends and, consequently, separated the true from the good, science from ethics" (p. 146). Thus, from the perspective of modern technological rationalism, all ends are equally valid, or are rather only distinguishable in terms of mere personal preferences. However, since technology has no inherent direction, it serves to

perpetuate the *status quo*, to inform contemporary institutions and practices and thereby to provide the means for the continuation of existing oppressive structures, including an exploitative relationship with nature. In this sense, technological rationality, in its default mode, is fundamentally conservative. It tends always to align itself with current institutions and practices.

Marcuse leaves some hope, however. He describes a "reversal of the traditional relationship between science and metaphysics" in which "the scientific project itself would be free for trans-utilitarian ends, and free for the 'art of living' beyond the necessities and luxuries of domination," (p. 231) Given this potential, the project of rational understanding can be seen as carrying with it the seeds of its own transcendence. This alteration promises to allow for technology to serve as a liberatory force which facilitates the realization of human potentials.

Marcuse's sense that the nature of instrumentality might be changed differentiates his theory from the ontological criticism we read in Heidegger. There is also, however, a substantial parallel between their respective approaches. As noted above, our hope against the dehumanizing effect of technology in Heidegger's thought arises partially from our careful attendance to technology in its essential form as a mode of revealing. Heidegger, however, emphasizes the importance of the artistic as a mode of revealing the world. Like technology, the artistic mode is an exclusive mode of revealing, a "destining," through which the aesthetic dimensions of beings are revealed. For Marcuse, as well, the aesthetic dimension is critical to the way we must address the danger of technology.

Feenberg (1998) describes Marcuse's work as invoking a neo-classical understanding of *tekhne*. In this view, the technical can serve as a power of liberation by assisting in the development of the inherent potentials of both subjects and nature. He details how Marcuse avoids an understanding of *tekhne* defined solely by use, instead cleaving to an understanding reconfigured in terms of *eros* and the good, an understanding of the role of technology guided by an intimate and appreciative understanding of people and things.

In order for this change in the nature of technology to occur, however, technology must be reconceptualized in a way that avoids the insistence that it is value-neutral and merely facilitates goals derived from human preferences. Marcuse recognized that simply changing the defined goals of technological innovation would only create a new set of goals for technological rationality, which is, itself, the problem. Therefore, Marcuse reconceived technology in a way that "responds to the internal tensions in reality with technical solutions guided by aesthetic experience" (Feenberg, 1998, p. 6). Aesthetics provides the lens through which technology is able to escape its oppressive potentials.

The form of this application of aesthetics is referred to by Marcuse (1964) as an "aesthetic reduction." Marcuse here refers to the case in which one "succeeds in linking mastery and liberation, directing mastery toward liberation" (p. 240). As art provides for Heidegger an alternate form of revealing, it provides for Marcuse a kind of alternate model of instrumentality. In both cases, the aesthetic provides an alternative to technological rationality. In summary, Heidegger describes the ontological structure of technology and how it threatens to undermine the very being of human beings. Marcuse, for his part, focuses more on the danger of technological rationality as it underlies

contemporary institutions and practices. The third perspective on technology to be explored is that of Robert Romanyshyn.

*Robert Romanyshyn*

Romanyshyn's work comes out of a phenomenological psychology, particularly that of J.H. van den Berg, who in turn was greatly influenced by Heidegger. As noted earlier, Romanyshyn's work is also informed by the tradition of depth psychology, in particular the work of Carl Jung and the archetypal psychology of James Hillman. Romanyshyn (1989) writes compellingly about the dimension of depth in technology. He looks to the technological events in the world as image, the *imaginal* surfaces of a technological reality. Hillman sharply distinguishes this imaginal dimension from the imaginary, which is merely fantasy. In contrast, the imaginal is a dimension of existence which is "neither literal nor abstract and yet is utterly real, with its own laws and purposes" (Moore, 1989, p. 4).

Romanyshyn (1989) grants to art objects the role of creating an "imaginal lining" (p. 6) for events, and giving us a glimpse into the depth of these realities. In his book, *Ways of the Heart*, Romanyshyn writes, "For imaginal psychology every event is ensorcelled by a dream, every fact nourished by a fantasy" (2002, p. xx). His work struggles to uncover these fantasies in order better to understand the psychological dimensions of the technological world in which we live. Romanyshyn grants the image a central role as the means by which we access the depths. The centrality of the aesthetic as a methodological consideration for Romanyshyn recalls its importance in both Heidegger and Marcuse. For Romanyshyn, however, the actual content uncovered is somewhat more fully articulated and nuanced.

Taking up the image of the atomic explosion, the space shuttle, as well as two pieces of art - Paul van Hoeydonck's *Little Cosmonaut* and Alex Grey's *Kissing* -

Romanyshyn perceives the thematic persistence of issues of embodiment. He notes,

The body is central in technology and the shared cultural dream which guides our creation of a technological world is in many respects a record of our continuing debate with the fact of our incarnation and the limits it imposes, not the least of which, of course, is the fact of death. (p. 11)

Romanyshyn's explorations proceed from this simple initial insight. From it, he explores the fantasies of leaving the body behind. He recalls this fantasy in several forms including the scientifically objectified body typified by Harvey's reconceptualizing of the heart as a mechanical pump, and the space-age fantasy of leaving the disposable body of the earth for extraterrestrial possibilities.

Romanyshyn speaks of these images as a cultural dream and therefore also as "cultural symptom" (p. 13). He speaks of symptoms as "soliciting" us. They say, "not only that something is wrong, but also how that something can be made right" (p. 13). Thus, just as technology is associated with fantasies of leaving the earth or of disassociating ourselves from our body, there are other fantasies and dreams of homecoming and the recovery of association. These fantasies of homecoming are the shadows of technology. As technology distances and disassociates us from the body, the earth and the world of things, Romanyshyn points out ways in which we find our way back through psychoanalysis, feminism, impressionism, and other means.

### *Common Ground*

Although these three theoreticians approach their common subject matter from quite different angles, they also hold much in common. It is particularly illuminating to consider their respective stances on the role of technology with respect to oppression, the aesthetic, and the potential for change and redemption. As noted, Heidegger conceives of oppression not in explicitly political terms but in terms of the infringements on Dasein's freedom and breadth. The exclusivity of the technological mode of revealing constitutes Dasein in a very limited way. The revelation of art is then developed as an alternative mode of revealing, also potentially limiting to Dasein. The potential of redemption arises only from an appreciation of both technology and art as modes of disclosing, and thereby revealing Dasein as the occasion of this revealing.

In his turn, Marcuse understands oppression as the concrete practices and institutions which are necessarily supported by a "value-free" technological rationality. To avoid this oppressive technological rationality, Marcuse reconceives it as a harmonious meeting of technological rationality and aesthetics or eros. This newly conceived form of technology is thereby enabled to assist in the realization of the inherent potentials of subjects and things.

Finally, in the work of Romanyshyn, the aesthetic plays a more complex role. The concrete images, which he uses to access to imaginal depths, serve to provide a methodological grip and ingress. In addition, the particular aesthetic sensibility of impressionism also serves as a "path of return," that is, a path which operates in opposition to the distancing which he claims characterizes modernity. I will be

particularly interested in the ways in which these themes may appear in the literary works chosen for examination.

### *A Literary Hermeneutic Investigation*

Romanyshyn's work employs art objects as a means of accessing the depths of our psychological relationship with technology. They are well suited to the task. Art objects are able to represent our implicit understanding of their subject matter and the wider world in a way that is difficult for a more literal, expository means of expression. The present exploration aims to consider technology through the lens of literature. Just as in the philosophical sources which serve to provide a forestructure, the hermeneutic approach to literary sources attempts to come to an understanding of technology through aesthetic creations. Through the use of literature I hope to capture both the archetypal dimensions of technology and its culturally and historically contingent aspects, that is those aspects of the meaning of technology that vary over time and cultural contexts.

Literature is able to convey the archetypal dimension of meaning due to its close relationship with the mythical. The stories told in literature exist in a framework of meaning that finds its roots in the primordial activity of myth-making or *mythopoesis*. Myth has a privileged place in the appreciation of the world because archetypal process governs the structure of the psyche as well as the myths through which psyche knows itself. Although archetypal patterns are most obvious in certain typical situations, such as birth, death, dawn, etc., in a certain looser sense, all of our beliefs and systems of thought are colored by the mythical. In his rich text on the mythological nature of psyche, Michael Vannoy Adams (2001) quotes one of Freud's letters to Einstein, "It may perhaps seem to you as though our theories are a kind of mythology... But does not every science

come in the end to a kind of mythology like this" (p. 4)? Jung (1963), looking for an even more central role for myth, refers to the "mythopoeic imagination" which has been largely repressed in the modern world but which still "exists everywhere" (p. 188). Thus, in Jungian influenced thought, mythopoesis is the central activity of the psyche. It is through mythopoesis that we take in the world in terms of archetypally structured meanings.

The use of myths to make poignant suggestions and often to shed considerable light on contemporary problems is not limited to Jungian analysts. Adams (2001) discusses T.S. Elliot's notion of "parallel process." Elliot describes, in turn, Joyce's powerful use of *The Odyssey* in his *Ulysses* as "manipulating a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity" (p. 17). Adams goes on to draw out the similarity between the literary method of parallel process and Jung's method of amplification, which he describes as, "the comparative method... to establish parallels with ancient myths, and, on that basis, to interpret modern dreams and fantasies" (p. 21).

Thus, on one hand, literature calls upon the mythic to describe those parts of human experience which are informed by largely invariant archetypes. On another hand, pieces of literature exist as cultural artifacts which carry the assumptions, hopes and concerns of the cultural and historical milieu from which they arise. So, the two aspects of literature together constitute a complex portrait of the meaning, both as it exists in a particular time and place, and as it persistently appears and reappears over time.

This dissertation focuses upon a three pieces of artistic expression: *Prometheus Bound*, *Frankenstein* and *Battlestar Galactica*. Each of these works represents the beliefs, concerns, and worldview of a distinguishable period in time, specifically the

ancient, modern, and postmodern world. These works have also been chosen because of their specific relevance to the phenomenon of technology itself, in particular with the dramatic change in the *rate* of developing technology. While it has always been the case that we are surrounded by technology, never before has the magnitude of change in the growth of technology, objectively conceived in terms of its artifacts, been so central a concern. It seems to be the case, in fact, that the *rate* of technological growth itself increases, leading to an exponentially great change as we approach the present moment, an essential truism of technological idealism. This statement, usually expressed with starry eyed wonder, promises no end in sight to the technological juggernaut.

The expansion of technology is the result of a typically modern scientific and technical way of looking at the world. Before the scientific worldview ascended to its current hegemonic position, the Western European forbears of contemporary society understood the world in a radically different mode. They saw themselves as involved in the world as participants. Berman (1981) describes this as a shift from a world in which we participate as a steward or governor, to one in which we strive to stand outside an objective world and *control* it. He describes in detail how the shift arose during the sixteenth century from the work of a series of philosophers including Rene Descartes, Galileo Galilei, and Francis Bacon. These thinkers themselves arose and broke from the well established scholarly traditions of the Church and Aristotelian thought (Berman, 1981). The formative influence of these thinkers implies that the particular relationship we now have with technology arose predominantly in the post-Enlightenment West.

Coming to an understanding of technology in the West necessarily involves tracing back the experience of technology to its roots, which make an early appearance in

Greek thought and more particularly in the mythology of the Greeks. Here we find my first source, the story of Prometheus. This myth, recorded first by Hesiod and then formalized dramatically by Aeschylus, addresses themes relevant to technology. The myth represents one of the first efforts to reflect on the experience and meaning of technology, including the sacrifice or exchange that we enter into when we adopt technology, and the intimate relationship between technologies and other aspects of human civilization such as theater or war. In addition to the ancient roots and compelling nature of the myth, it also offers us a distinguished collection of successors.

Mary Shelly's 1818 version of *Frankenstein*, subtitled "*The New Prometheus*," captures a dramatically more modern time and looks to the future. Still more contemporary, the made-for-television series, *Battlestar Galactica* presents a vision of a complex technological world in which human concerns and those of technology itself are blurred with one another. These texts have spawned much critical attention and, in the case of the first two literary works, numerous adaptations in literature, poetry, opera, and, of course, film. Yet, it is primarily to these specific presentations that I will look to find the mythical backdrop of our changing relationship with technology.

These three texts, I argue, are all clearly influenced by the prototype myth of Prometheus, and can be taken as constituting a larger narrative structure. They express a set of archetypal concerns and narrate the story of technology in human experience in a meaningful way. In each story, an artist comes to grips with issues of technology, again reflecting the entwining of technology and the aesthetic experience which was noted in the philosophical precedents. As a set, they provide a composite narrative of technology and capture a psychological reality, an archetypal process that has been unfolding over

the history of Western culture. The claim made here is not that technology has some invariant essence. Rather, as Hillman (1970) points out, the archetypal quality of things reveals the many voices, fantasies and dreams which speak through a story. It is the business of the archetypal psychologist to reveal the plurivocality of the world. Thus, the exploration of these stories is necessarily an amplification of the sometimes subtle meanings that run through them.

In addition to the archetypal process in all its complexity, these stories also each exist as cultural artifacts and, as such, are structured in terms of historical contingencies. To capture the significance of these stories as representative of their own time, I will be particularly attuned to the differences in themes between the stories. These idiosyncrasies point to changes in the human experience of technology over three distinct historical periods. So, for example: Aeschylus represents an ancient view of the world, whereas *Frankenstein* might capture the rapidly changing worldview of the Early Modern period along with the cultural dimension of Christianity. Finally, *Battlestar Galactica* is a still more recent work which represents a contemporary worldview in which technological rationality is simultaneously both held suspect and looked to for improving meaningful human activity.

### *Approach and Method*

The first step in preparing the ground for a depth-analytical hermeneutic approach to the chosen artistic works is to come to an understanding of some of the thinkers that have preceded me in this vein. Thus, the first section of each chapter of this work will necessarily be dedicated to reviewing voices in the depth-analytic tradition that are relevant to the work, as well as other sources that might be useful in the process of

exposition. In particular, I will examine the ideas of Romanyshyn (1989) on *Frankenstein*, and Kerényi (1997) on the Prometheus myth. In addition, Robert Romanyshyn's (1989) depth-oriented work on technology, and other analytically oriented works on technology will be reviewed at relevant points during the research.

Although my approach to technology is primarily hermeneutic, the posture I aim to take toward the texts shares key elements with a phenomenological approach. The stance that is most appropriate to the proposed dissertation is the general attitude of *listening* as related by Sardello in his introduction to Romanyshyn's (2002) book, *Ways of the Heart*. There, Sardello notes, "Perhaps the most important of disciplines for this work is phenomenology because it assures that the inner qualities of the things of the world speak for themselves. The fundamental tenet ... is that we are here to learn to listen" (p. xii).

While "listening" is not, in itself, a description of a research methodology, it is consistent with Husserl's (1921) general dictum, "To the things, themselves" (p.15)! That is, the goal of the phenomenological attitude is to allow for the phenomenon, or the text in the current case, to speak with its own voice(s). The aim is to avoid the interference which can result from attitudes brought from the observer's common sense or her more elaborated philosophical frameworks. The attitude of listening conveys a sensibility in which the research addresses the phenomenon directly and flexibly, rather than shaping our observations to a preset, static method. It is important to remember that,

In its best sense, i.e., in its 'retrieved' Heideggerian sense, method is the suppleness by which thinking is able to pursue the matter at hand; it is an acuity

which knows its way about, even and especially when the way cannot be laid out beforehand, when it cannot be formulated in explicit rules. (Caputo, 1987, p. 213).

Particularly in the case of the myth, we do our best service to the phenomenon when we allow for it to speak its own message.

If one way to consider method is as a listening, another is as a kind of hospitality. In the evocative article by Wolfgang Giegerich (1984), "Hospitality Toward the Gods in an Ungodly Age: Philemon – Faust – Jung," the author expands on the essential quality of openness that is the basic characteristic of both phenomenological and hermeneutic research. Giegerich models his notion of hospitality on the story of Philemon and Baucis. This old married couple, found in Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, was the sole representative of humanity to warmly welcome the gods Zeus and Hermes as they visited the earth. Giegerich points out that the myth's use of these two gods invokes, on one hand, the ancient code of hospitality toward strangers which is traditionally associated with Zeus, as well as the aspects of exchange and communication typically associated with Hermes. It is, no doubt, also worth noting that Hermes is the god of the hermeneut, of interpretation and the discovery of meaning.

The virtue of Philemon and Baucis is their "total devotion to the shape of the moment." Giegerich notes:

... [they] willingly spent or even wasted the little they had, without reserve, in response to [the moment's] uniqueness. Because they lovingly surrendered to the present and allowed what they had to be consumed, the present could be consummated in return and flow over and reveal its own immanent archetypal or divine face. The moment of hospitality began to shine, to speak. (p. 64)

Hermeneutic inquiry is not only characterized by the openness of listening, but is also a giving of oneself to the moment of interpretation. For Giegerich, the very qualities that typify modernity also stand in opposition to hospitality. He writes, "...the essence of the modern style of being is inhospitality" (p. 72). This sense is also echoed by James Hillman (1993) who writes:

One of the great difficulties in our American life is that we don't have places for entertaining ideas. And that is precisely what we're supposed to do with an idea: entertain it. This means having respect for ideas themselves: letting them come and go without demanding too much from them at first, like their origins, their popularity, [or] their logic. (p.143)

Hospitality toward being is not simply a matter of being aware, or attentive to the contents of consciousness. Hospitality toward the poetic truths of the world makes "personal demands" of us, "[as] happens whenever and wherever there is an awareness of psychological reality" (Giegerich, p. 62). Thus, coming to a deeper understanding of technology necessarily changes our lived relationship to it. Like Giegerich, and Jung before him, my own desire to explore the meaning of technology through this method aims to create a change. As Giegerich writes, "I too want to look at the Faust-Philemon story with a psychological eye, by which I mean that it is *our* story, *we are in it*, and it shapes our lives, demanding of us payment of debts that were incurred long ago" (ibid.). Although it is not immediately clear what debts may have been incurred through the foreclosure of possibilities that technology entails, I explore this question in the course of the present research.

While a posture of listening and the attitude of hospitality toward the text will characterize my readings, my personality, interests, history and education will also influence that reading. The relationship between the text and the reader is intrinsic to the process of reading and is reciprocally informing. For instance, on one hand I may recognize in Prometheus' being fixed to a boulder something similar to my own relentless hurriedness. Prometheus is unable to apply his craft and foresight to freeing himself just as I feel unable to gain freedom from projects by applying technology. We are both apparently trapped. Through my own experience, I understand and identify with the character of Prometheus. On another hand, I may be particularly struck by Prometheus' being anchored to a boulder. This image strikes me immediately as poignantly thematic and I find it relevant to my understanding of the relationship between humanity and the earth, and so borrow the image of Prometheus for use in my own self-understandings; the image of Prometheus sheds light on my experience. In this way, self-understanding and experience illuminate the reading of a text, and the understanding of the self is always influenced and informed by the (other) texts that one might read. Much of the research in which I engaged involved coming to an understanding of these texts through the glosses and expositions of others. Yet, where these external sources turn their focus away from my particular interests, my understanding is a kind of dialectical communion between the texts and my own experience.

### *Outline of the Dissertation*

A fundamental characteristic of interpretive work is that one cannot know, with certainty, how it will unfold. With that in mind, I approached the present dissertation with a general outline in mind, both in terms of how the project is divided and, to a lesser

degree, the expected contents of each section. As the project unfolded, however, I encountered, uncovered themes that were not initially obvious, and discovered important secondary sources that eluded me during my initial evaluation of the project.

The second through fourth chapters each largely corresponds to one of the primary texts that I will be exploring: *Prometheus Bound*, *Frankenstein*, and *Battlestar Galactica*. In the second chapter, I briefly discuss Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound* in the context of other versions of the Prometheus myth which we have from Hesiod and from fragments of the other two plays of Aeschylus' trilogy, which have been synthesized in a scholarly vein by Graves (1992). As noted, *Prometheus Bound* is my primary source, and my analysis relies on a close reading done in the scholarly and depth-oriented work of Kerényi (1997). His portrayal of Prometheus as a representation of human existence provides a critical substratum to the analysis of the archetypal dimension of these stories. I have also made use of a series of interdisciplinary articles from the faculty of the Dallas Institute of Humanities and Culture as well as key notions from the philosopher, Gaston Bachelard's phenomenological analyses of fire.

Having reviewed the principle thematic material of the Prometheus myth to be found in secondary texts, I perform my own close reading for technologically relevant themes including the meaning of fire within the context of the myth and the forbidden quality of the gifts of Prometheus. In addition, though, it is difficult to discuss the proscribed nature of fire without exploring the relationship between Prometheus and the might of Zeus, the very source of kingly power. I also discuss the important notion of sacrifice and its relevance to technology.

In the third chapter of the dissertation, I explore Shelly's *Frankenstein*. As with the previous two chapters, I look at important scholarly perspectives on the text. My initial encounter with the criticism of *Frankenstein* reveals a broad collection of viewpoints on the text. The first and perhaps most important of these is the psychoanalytic approach which makes much of the lack of a maternal presence for Frankenstein's creature. This can be closely conjoined with a more feminist reading which gives much weight to this fundamental lack, and suggests that technology itself is saturated by "masculine values," which themselves cause all manner of alienation. I look to Adams' (2001) insightful essay on the subject to elaborate the issue of choice in reference to the text issues.

The exploration of *Frankenstein* is shaped and guided by the preceding exploration of *Prometheus Bound*. As *Frankenstein*'s chronological and philosophical precedent, *Prometheus Bound* lays out the ground for the archetypal dimension of *Frankenstein*. At the same time, *Frankenstein* is a typical work from the Romantic period, and contains themes of narcissism that would have been out of place in an Ancient work such as *Prometheus Bound*. At the end of the third chapter, I will also explore some of the cultural dimensions that shaped the differences between *Prometheus Bound* and *Frankenstein*. This aspect of the investigation speaks to the need to articulate the archetypal dimensions of the myth, and enables a reading of the themes in terms of the broader Western culture, as well as considering the key points that may differentiate each work and connect it to its own unique historical setting. Furthermore, I attend to the tension and interplay of story elements and common themes. I discuss some of the

themes that were common, including creation, identity, and the cost of technology to the life of the *psyche*.

The last chapter of the work will focus on the made-for-television series, *Battlestar Galactica*, and in particular the “reimagined” version of the science fiction space epic that was initially televised between 2003 and 2009. As in the previous chapter, however, I briefly discuss the various other versions of the story to present some context for the development of the work. To ground the examination of *Battlestar Galactica*, I rely on a variety of texts and articles from literary criticism and contemporary philosophical writers.

To recapitulate the general methodological structure of this work, I engage in a thematic analysis of technology across these three separate expressions in order to elucidate some of the general archetypal structures that characterize technology and which describe the dynamic of human relationship to the technological. These are, in short, those aspects of the thematic descriptions that seem archetypal across all three moments in time. At the same time, however, I suggest that the differences between the three descriptions are likely to speak to the specific character of the epochs from which they arose: the Ancient world of Prometheus, the modern context of Victor Frankenstein, and the post-modern matrix of *Battlestar Galactica*. By examining both the aspects of technology that are most profoundly contingent upon culture and historical context, and those that are relatively invariant, archetypal dynamic structures, this work attempts to provide a more robust understanding of the phenomenon.

While the analysis includes literary and philosophical observations, the understanding reached is relevant to psychology precisely because it maps out a track of

meaning in a journey of the psyche. The relevance of each point along this historical trajectory is, therefore, not simply an observation of abstract historical interest. Rather, each represents a potential lived relationship with technology. I do not suggest here that these observations represent “preferred” alternatives for which we might exchange our current one. Rather, they represent a palette of human experience that deepens and challenges the constriction of particular, specific historical contexts.

On a parallel track, I will be considering each of the three literary works in terms of the three theoreticians that form the foundation of the present work. In particular, Martin Heidegger’s phenomenological hermeneutic provides a philosophical background. Heidegger describes technology as the specific form of the presencing of beings in terms of standing reserve (enframing), and in so doing sets the stage for the agenda of command and control which is implicit in this view. Marcuse, in his turn, provides a Marxist reading of Heidegger’s ontological view of technology by developing the context of the community and its aesthetic potentials. Marcuse’s claim that technology serves the *status quo* suggests that it is implicitly oppressive, but by holding out hope for a “mastery toward liberation,” he holds out the possibility of reversing the priorities of metaphysics and science, and putting technology to work in expanding human aesthetic possibilities. Finally, Romanyshyn’s analysis gives us a historical (metabletic) and depth psychological perspective by outlining technology as a cultural dream described in the imaginal lining of technological things. He develops specific implications for the way in which human beings experience embodiment and the manner in which these experiences have changed, including the broader consequences of this distancing for humans and their environment, and the ways in which these images solicit us as symptoms. The tradition

of understanding represented by these three perspectives provides a hermeneutic forestructure that serves as a foundation for my own considerations and a background against which my own thoughts are positioned. I will reflect briefly upon each element of this forestructure in each chapter. As all three of these thinkers bring aesthetics to the foreground in their considerations, it is not surprising that, in the end, the questions around technology and soul lead us to the consideration of the aesthetic dimension of technology.

The aesthetic, in turn, is central to answering the question of how we might integrate technology in a positive way. As Romanyshyn (1989) speaks of paths of return, I hope to come to speculate upon what technology means in the archetypal sense and what it now comes to mean in the context of our human relatedness with ourselves, others, and things in the technological world. In a sense, what I finally hope to successfully convey is a better appreciation of the soulful credits and debts, in Giegerich's way of speaking, we are now tendered or bound to repay in our technological dwelling as we move out of a modernistic and narcissistic prison.

## Chapter 2: The Qualities and Limitations of Promethean Technology

*Might:* This is the world's limit that we have come to: this is the Scythian country, an untrodden desolation. Hephaestus, it is you that must heed the commands the Father laid upon you to nail this malefactor to the high craggy rocks in fetters unbreakable of adamantine chain. For it was your flower, the brightness of fire that devises all, that he stole and gave to mortal men; this is the sin for which he must pay the Gods the penalty – that he must learn to endure and like the sovereignty of Zeus and quit his man-loving disposition. (Aeschylus, 1992, ln. 1-7)

Of the many fascinating characters that populate classical Greek mythology, the figure of Prometheus is exceptional in its ambiguity. As a divine being, Prometheus' experience is beyond the ken of humankind. His suffering persists for ages and, in places, when he speaks of his salvation, it is in the context of cosmological events no less modest than the fall of the ultimate paternal figure, Zeus. That said, his experience also speaks with unusual force to the mortal hearers of his tale and recalls human suffering in a particularly poignant manner. Pinioned to a craggy cliff in a desolate location, he suffers from profound isolation as well as from the physical pain of having his liver torn out at the end of each day. The fact that Prometheus suffers at the hands of apparently irresistible power speaks to and inspires pity in all, down to the lowliest of the oppressed.

In this chapter, I explore the Prometheus myth. Although I focus primarily upon Aeschylus' version of the myth, I also recall to its evolution from the earlier version by Hesiod and in the context of the original Aeschylean trilogy as elaborated by scholar Carl Kerényi (1963/1997). While Kerényi explores Prometheus as an archetypal image of the

vagaries of human existence, another description from the depth analytic tradition suggest that Prometheus' predicament is an appropriate model to describe the general phenomenon of that most complex of human struggles, psychopathological suffering (Hillman 1980/1991). I examine the thematic context as elaborated by Stroud (2002), Cowan (1988), and Allums (2009).

After providing the broadened textual context given in these glosses, I will turn more directly to Aeschylus' text. Although clearly informed by the more general thematic explorations of Kerényi and others, the subsequent section expands upon the thematic strands of the story that are most relevant to the technological focus of this dissertation. Kerényi's robust treatment of Prometheus is instrumental in founding the ongoing analysis of the archetypal dimension of the story. However, whereas Kerényi's analysis attends to the sacrifice of Prometheus and his position between man and the gods, the present work is more concerned with the role of Prometheus' technological character and how this aspect, in particular, speaks specifically to the condition and concerns of technological culture and the human condition.

### *Mythic Context*

There are two primary sources from the ancient world to which we look for the Prometheus myth: Hesiod and Aeschylus. Historically, the prior source is Hesiod's collections of mythological tales, primarily his *Theogony*, although there is also some material in his *Works and Days*. These works from the seventh century BCE vie with the Homeric epics for priority as a source of mythic materials. It is, however, the work of the Greek tragedian, Aeschylus, some two centuries later that we find a more philosophically developed but still poetic perspective. In the latter poet's *Prometheus Bound*, as well as

in fragments of incomplete Aeschylean texts, we encounter the title character in terms that are identifiably human. The scholarly analysis provided by Kerényi brings to light, a variety of ideas that will aid in providing further robustness to the myth.

Most of the sources agree on the primary points of the Promethean myth. Prometheus is one of the immortal beings, the Titans, who ruled over the world before the Olympian gods. Although he was instrumental in Zeus' rise to power over his brother Titans, he subsequently stole fire from his new peers and bestowed it upon mankind, raising the ire of the new king of the gods. Zeus punished Prometheus by binding him to an eternal cliff-side, bare to the elements, where each day an eagle claws at his liver. The Aeschylean sources take this mythic material as a foundation, elaborating it both in terms of specific dramatic content and thematic material.

The essential aspects of the play, provided in the only wholly complete Aeschylean text, *Prometheus Bound*, Prometheus is entirely silent in the first scene. We witness him brought to a desolate landscape by *Kratos* (Might/Strength) and mute *Bia* (Force/Violence). Hephaestus, the "smith of the gods," whose domain includes the creation of artifacts, is then compelled by Force and Might, to fasten Prometheus to a rock, which he does with reluctance. Might taunts Hephaestus and Prometheus while Force is silent throughout. After they leave, Prometheus describes the actions for which he is being punished.

Throughout the remainder of the drama, Prometheus receives a series of visitors. First come the daughters of Okeanos, the spirits of streams and rivers, who become the compassionate and understanding chorus. It is these spirits who provide the most consistent connection to an alternate voice of understanding for Prometheus. Later,

Okeanos himself arrives, who is reluctant to speak against Zeus. After Okeanos departs, Io arrives. Another victim of the gods, Io was loved by Zeus, but then turned into a heifer by the lord of the gods in order to prevent his wife from discovering his partner in infidelity. Hera, having her suspicions, forces Io to wander the earth, continuously followed by a torturous, stinging gadfly. In Io's brief discussion with Prometheus, he gives her renewed hope by foretelling the need for her to continue on, and the eventual positive effects of her fated actions. The fly then returns, driving Io onward. The final visitor is the god, Hermes. The young god, who is a messenger of Zeus, the new power in heaven, serves by reiterating and intensifying the punishment decreed by Zeus.

*Prometheus: A figure of immortal suffering*

Coming to a fuller understanding of the meaning of the Aeschylean drama requires a foundational exploration of Prometheus' place in the cosmos, both with respect to his Titanic kin, and human beings. On the side of humanity, there is a peculiar identity between Prometheus and human beings. His punishment is one of physical suffering in a way that we rarely see among the divine beings. As noted in Kerényi's text, physical suffering is a salient aspect of human existence. He notes that the general view of human existence in Greek literature has us as poor, tormented and wretched and that this was particularly obvious when taken relative to the "lightly living gods"(p. 19) who are typically portrayed as relatively removed from the various travails of the mortal condition.

Yet, while the lot of humanity is wretched, the Greeks did not generally see human beings as isolated. "Isolation as a common fate – this modern contradiction – was not part of the Greek image of man" (ibid.). In contrast to the common contemporary

complaint of separation from others and from the broader community, for the Greeks, this was an extraordinary aspect of Prometheus' punishment. The very first words of Aeschylus' dramatic portrayal of the myth reflect the importance of this aspect: "This is the world's limit that we have come to: this is the Scythian country, an untrodden desolation" (Aeschylus, ln. 1).

The isolation of Prometheus is ironically intensified by his place in the world. The punishment that has been meted out to him, degrading and ignominious as it would be to a mortal, is almost incomprehensibly degrading and horrific to an immortal being who would otherwise be a peer to Zeus. As the eons pass, he is to remain fixed in place, weathering the passage of hours, days and years. While, in some sense, this dimension of his penalty seems comprehensible in light of contemporary human existence, from the Greek perspective, it is nearly unspeakable.

In the logic of the gods and the myth, Prometheus' punishment must be metaphorically matched to the nature of the crime; just as his punishment is qualitatively different from those of his brothers, so is his offence. In a significant revelation, Prometheus describes the difference between his approach and those of his kin. He notes, "I then with the best counsel tried to win / the Titans, sons of Ouranos and Earth, / but failed. They would have none of crafty schemes (*techne*) / and in their savage arrogance of spirit / thought they would lord it easily by force" (l. 210).

This hubris illustrates what Kerényi refers to as the fundamental characteristics of the Titans, "boundless pride and violence," a combination that is more generally encompassed in "excessive virility" (Kerényi, 1963, p. 23). The pride of the Titans and the rough treatment they gave to their offspring was specifically characterized by a lack

of thoughtfulness and foresight, and it is on this count that Prometheus seems to differ dramatically from the others. The reluctance of the Titans to recognize the value of Prometheus' cunning artfulness sets him apart from his kind. Of course, it is also the case that Prometheus shows a particular focus on human well-being and, in particular, acts as an energetic advocate of human interests. In this sense, too, there is a degree of gregariousness and affability associated with his character that is not shared by the other Titans, or gods.

Prometheus' placement at the ends of the earth isolates him from the civilization of humanity that he was instrumental in creating. As Kerényi points out, most of the remaining Titans become the *hypotartarioi* (the subterranean), after being cast into "the deepest maw of the earth, under Tartaros, where no cult could meet them" (Kerényi, p. 25). It is of considerable interest, however, that Prometheus remains above the ground, in a geographical location. Among all of the Titans, only Atlas, a strongman amongst his kind, is fixed in place beneath the heavens at the Western edge of the world, supporting its weight in the same way that Prometheus is made into a fixture at the Eastern end (Schefold, et al., 1992). Between the two, the human world unfolds and, as "images of hardship and suffering, these two supply a frame to the sphere of temporal human existence" (Kerényi, p. 38). Although he is a divine figure, Prometheus is specifically relevant to the travails and trials of human existence. It remains for us to listen closely for the specific place of *techne*, which is the area of Prometheus' realm that is most relevant to his relationship with humankind.

Isolation is a key theme of the Prometheus' punishment, and is in particular the aspect of his punishment that impacts Prometheus as a social entity. Kerényi further

elaborates the social dimension of the myth in his exposition of passages related to fire, drawing on the text of other Aeschylean fragments. One section, most likely drawn from *Prometheus, the Fire Kindler*, refers to a satyr who is so taken with the beauty and implicit fascination of fire, and so ignorant of the hazard of it, that he wishes to embrace and kiss it. He is warned by Prometheus, “Like the goat, you’ll mourn for your beard, you will” (Kerényi, 1963/1997)!

Through this brief passage, Kerényi suggests other dimensions or tropes inherent in Prometheus’ fire. On one hand, fire is hazardous. Although it is fire that allows for our food to be made palatable, it also represents a threat which can singe our hair and blacken our skin, and of which we must be constantly aware. “Playing with fire” is dangerous, but as children, we are not necessarily aware of this danger without being warned or burned a first time. The warning that Prometheus gives is yet another indication of his good will and paternal care, and lends further credibility to his claims of being motivated by mercy for humankind.

Prometheus’ warning to stay away from fire seems contrary to the nature of fire itself. It is the satyr’s impulse, as well as our own, to move toward the fire. Just as senseless, photophillic moths move toward a candle flame, Prometheus’ colorful gift draws us closer with its dynamism and transformative potential. The fascination with fire has specific implications for the social dimension of our existence. In other fragments, references to the resounding song of brass as well as “bubbling fumes” suggest that the first metallurgical kiln has been build by Prometheus. The social dimensions are hinted at by Kerényi who, in a quotation from Karen Blixen’s *Out of Africa*:

... the Native world was drawn to the forge by its song. The treble, sprightly, monotonous, and surprising rhythm of the blacksmith's work has a mythical force. It is so virile that it appalls and melts women's hearts, it is straight and unaffected and tells the truth and nothing but the truth. Sometimes it is very outspoken. It has an excess of strength and is gay as well as strong; it is obliging to you and does great things for you, willingly, as in play. The Natives, who love rhythm, collected by Pooran Singh's hut and felt at their ease. According to an ancient Nordic law, a man was not held responsible for what he said in a forge. The tongues were loosened in Africa as well in the blacksmith's shop, and the talk flowed freely; audacious fancies were set forth to the inspiring hammer-song. In Pooran Singh's blacksmith's shop the hammer sang to you what you wanted to hear, as if it was giving voice to your own heart. (Kerényi, p. 74)

The section from Blixen's classic novel speaks to several dimensions of the forge. She speaks of the loosening of women's hearts, as well as the tongues of all. On one hand, while this implies that the words spoken around a fire are free and without inhibition, it is equally the case that what is said around a fire would be inappropriate or dangerous in other contexts. Fire "gives a voice to the heart," saying what it is that you most want to hear, and "giv[ing] rise to audacious fancies." Among other things, the forge creates a social place and stage where possibilities can be, and are, created, but these potentials are slightly tinged with danger as well.

The forge is an extension of the campfire – a venue with which most people are more familiar. When we sit around a campfire in the midst of a natural environment, what do we speak of? Perhaps we speak of the past. We talk about things that we do not

talk about in other situations, unless perhaps it is around hot chocolate. We talk about our long-term hopes, our embarrassing moments and things that are hard to bring up in the midst of the busy day. We tell stories about ghosts. The stories we tell around a fire play around the edges of possibility. There is fire at the center of discourse and social space which facilitates the gregarious aspect of human society, but more than that, it encourages an openness to new possibilities.

### *Might and Power*

*Might* is the first character to speak in Aeschylus' play. It is also, however, the context of the play. The introduction of fire is a direct response on Prometheus' part to Zeus' domineering use of *Might* to squelch humanities' potential threats to his authority. Although Aeschylus specifically references *Might* as a character, it is also the embodiment of an elemental and archetypal force which constrains and is fundamentally opposed to Promethean craft. Kerényi refers to *Might* as the hardness of the world, and in particular as brutish force wielded by political power. *Might*'s presence on the stage suggests the ruffian, and is in sharp contrast to both the general good will of Prometheus, the relatively empathetic natural beings upon whom Prometheus calls, and the congenial elemental deity, Hephaestus. (It is noteworthy that Aeschylus refer to the heart of Hephaestus as being made of wax, whereas the heart of Zeus is iron.) Kerényi writes, "This is not a mere spectacle devised to entertain an audience with shivers of horror but a significant picture of the order (*nomos*) introduced by Zeus, in which the old elements are governed by new laws" (p. 85).

The new laws introduced by the young gods represent an entire new world order. It is an order that was brought into being through the cunning/*techne* of Prometheus, but

which has not maintained the allegiance of this creative force. Whereas in the contemporary context, Marcuse (1964) notes that technological rationality always serves the *status quo* and the current structures of power and domination, Aeschylus seems to imply that, for the Greeks, technological creativity is broader in its functions. While technology in Marcuse's view "divorces reality from the world of ends" (p. 146), the divinity representing technological creativity is more closely aligned with values that transcend the present political power. If Might is the hardness of the world, then Prometheus' invention of the kiln, in addition to its role in generating a social world, mitigates Might's brutishness. With the creation of a kiln, humans gain the ability to manufacture pottery, horseshoes, weapons and other equally significant technology. The presence of a kiln implies a different kind of society in which valuable material things might be accumulated and the world might be made a progressively easier place to dwell.

As a poet, Aeschylus recognizes that suffering is the fundamental and unalterable aspect of human existence under Zeus' rule and Prometheus becomes the illustration of this suffering. Prometheus' describes the lot of humanity before fire as beastlike. The gift of fire changes humans, however, and "creates false hopes," or a sense of opposition and liberation. While humans continue to be vulnerable to suffering, they no longer accept it. It is, in fact, this very lack of acceptance, which is itself a result of fire, that creates the possibility of the rule of Zeus being unjust.

Prometheus himself is a figurehead for humanity. His existence as a god, and a peer to the king of gods, intensifies the disgrace and injustice of his doom. Furthermore, his substantial insight seems not to serve him here or save him from a long tenure of horrible suffering. Kerényi (1963/1997) writes, "His knowledge of Fate is powerless

against the fundamental facts of human existence which he, the prototype, is first to suffer: bondage, pain, and the smart of injustice” (p. 91). The figure of Prometheus serves to illustrate the necessity of human suffering in the world of the gods. Like the animals, humankind experiences bodily pain (*dolor*), yet for humankind, the possibility of redemption from this pain, through unspecified technological efforts or at some indeterminate point in the future, makes pain a source of a pervasive sense of disgrace and injustice as well. In that sense, the gift of Prometheus ennobles humans, but also is a root cause of suffering.

### *Demonic Hope*

The poignant discrepancy between Prometheus’ deific grandeur and his mortal suffering is reflected in a distinct and parallel gulf between descriptions of his dolorous, foreboding melancholy and a contrastingly grandiose, prideful confidence (Stroud, 2002). In spite of the clear differences between Prometheus and his kindred Titans, he still manifests a quintessential Titanic quality, boundless pride (Kerényi, p. 28). As a result, although Prometheus continues to receive warnings throughout the play, they generally fall on deaf ears. First his jailers, then his peer, Okeanos, and later, Hermes, the messenger of Zeus, all suggest that Prometheus’ future may be dire. They all suggest, with varying degrees of subtlety, that a more circumspect attitude toward the gods may be prudent and better serve his self-interest. Typically, however, Prometheus hears these messages with skepticism and pride rooted in his explicit confidence that his insight into the future is superior to that of the gods. At other times, however, his words reflect a resignation to his wretched fate.

While Prometheus' name literally denotes perceptiveness about the future, he also seems to have an intermittent, but substantial, deficit in his sense of the implications of his actions. He delivers his initial monolog with a degree of self-pity which suggests that, in spite of his insight, he may not have fully understood the punishment he was likely to receive. When asked by the daughters of Okeanos whether he understood that he had erred, he replies:

Wrong? I accept the word. I willed, willed to be wrong!

And helping humans I found trouble for myself.

Yet I did not expect such punishment as this –

To be assigned an uninhabited desert peak,

Fastened in mid-air to this crag, and left to rot! (Aeschylus, ln. 268)

Prometheus continually looks forward and has privileged access to insights about fate. Yet, he does not always seem to be able to use his understanding to serve his own needs. At times, he seems to dismiss the power of the gods, and this lack of recognition and respectful piety is key to his misfortune. At these moments, he maintains a confident faith in his fate, and seemingly mocks the gods with references to the specific secret that he holds. He notes, "My lot / is to win freedom only after countless pains. / Cunning is feebleness beside Necessity" (ln. 512).

The character of Prometheus is distinguished by a fundamental tension between confident and inflated overstatement of the positive dimensions of his situation and a contrasting, depressed, deflationary state of resignation. In her article, "The Promethean Paradox," (2002) scholar Joanne Stroud perceptively suggests that Prometheus' name itself ("Foresight") captures this discrepancy. The foresight that is his most intrinsic

attribute necessarily involves a discord between, on the one hand, creativity and inventiveness, and on the other hand, the inflation of desires and the unavoidable disappointment. She writes, “When not in the euphoric mode of Promethean inflation, one experiences the alternate feeling, the counter sensation of being chained permanently to a rock with no vision of any foreseeable future, hopes dashed cruelly” (Stroud, p. 2). She further notes that this demonic version of self-delusory hope is a feature of our contemporary society, which she refers to, following Bachelard, as being embedded in a complex founded on the Promethean archetype.

In addition to the apparent influence of the Promethean archetype on contemporary culture overall, it may have a targeted and specific influence on individuals. In particular, consider individuals diagnosed with bipolar disorders. These increasingly commonly diagnosed disorders, while they are generally thought to be causally founded in neurophysiology, might be illuminated by Promethean archetypal process. The situation of Prometheus, after all, parallels the modern situation in a number of ways. While Prometheus is the very origin of a wide range of cultural and technological innovations, in the end he is in some way made helpless. The theme of his helplessness is further amplified by the description of human beings as engaging in false hope as they struggle against suffering but remain unable to change the mortal quality of their condition. The balance of the joy and confidence associated with innovation against the ultimate helplessness of human beings provides the backdrop against which all humans struggle, and perhaps is more keenly felt by individuals diagnosed with bipolar disorders.

It is critical to keep in mind that this archetype may not always be manifested in the form of pathology. Indeed, both extremes of the “bipolar” Promethean influence, in more moderated and well-integrated forms, offer potential contributions to human existence. The emotional experience of the positive influence, for instance, can be experienced as invigorating inspiration. This form of the “Promethean” supports creative endeavors and can be a potent source of meaning as well as the foundation of beneficial innovation. Similarly, the depressive pole can make a positive contribution. Romanyshyn (1989) states that depression is one “path of return” from the isolating and disembodied influences of technology. He writes, “Depression, then, is a matter of home, of coming home or trying to, of being called home. It is not a illness to be cured. It is the cure” (p. 227.)

While Stroud’s point follows from the character of Prometheus, *per se*, it is worth noting further that it is coherent with Prometheus’ own account of his gift to human beings. When asked specifically about the gifts that he gave to humankind, Prometheus describes a range of items. The first gift, however, is Prometheus’ removal of the human expectation of its own mortality through dim or false hopes (ln. 250). It is through the more recognized gift of fire that this gift is delivered. Through fire and its associated gifts, humans are enabled to struggle against the basic suffering of human being. The quality of this struggle leads us to a false hope for the dissolution of the human mortality itself.

In addition to the blindness around mortality, Promethean inspiration can also blind us in a more general way. Stroud, speaking of these “blind hopes” which Prometheus inculcates within us, notes:

A general miasma is induced, a failure to accept the limits of being human.

Under the influence of the Promethean Complex, we find ourselves blinded by *hybris*, unable to foresee boundaries or the perilous repercussions of our foolhardy actions. (p. 3)

In addition to our poor insight into the impact of our actions, there is an anesthetic quality to our efforts. Both as a society and as individuals, we are easily caught-up in hopeful and continuous strivings that sometimes cause us to be insensitive to the broader implications of our situation. Most notably, in the end, we necessarily face the fundamental limitations of human being, including bodily pain and death.

In the cosmogonic sources, including Hesiod, Prometheus stands out as a representative of intelligence among the Titans as they oppose the new race of gods. The Titans are overly willing to rest on their brute strength to deliver success and to ensure their continued reign, and so they refuse to employ Prometheus' strength of guile. In this way, his talents come to serve the interests of the new gods, and lead to their victory in the *Titanomachia*. Prometheus' bright creativity and understanding is the more positive dimension of his character. The same creative independence that served the needs of the gods, however, goes on to serve the needs of humankind. It is a deeply held aspect of Prometheus' character.

While there are a variety of potential motives that could be used to explain Prometheus' act of giving the forbidden fire to humans, as a figure of the psyche, the rebellion signifies a willingness and desire to exceed one's current lot that sometimes flies in the face of propriety. In spite of the surface righteousness of Prometheus' act, the gift of fire is founded in a theft; fire is a gift that was not Prometheus' to give. His

independence and his lack of gratitude inform the reluctance of people to recognize that all endeavors of human creativity rely on a divine spark of inspiration. As physicist and educator Donald Cowan (1988) notes, “The Promethean fire is imagination, not simply skills, or reason; and imagination is the power from a divine source whereby matter is permeated with spirit” (p. 168). Prometheus’ refusal to see humankind destroyed and his willingness to steal the fire of Hephaestus against Zeus’ imperatives has broad consequences for both Prometheus and humanity. Cowan further notes, “...the theft of so mighty a power, even though man did not himself do the deed, allows the human race to declare its independence from divine order, and through imagination and inventiveness, elevate the human lot” (p. 22).

There is a fundamental conflict with the gods that is implied by the nature of Prometheus’ gift. Promethean fire facilitates the human ability to adapt through technology, the spark of culture and consciousness. Yet, in the view of the mythographer, the foundational act that delivered fire to humankind is a theft from the gods. As Bachelard (1990) notes:

The best and highest possession humankind is able to acquire is obtained by sacrilege and must be paid for with consequences involving the whole flood of sufferings and sorrows with which the offended divinities have afflicted the nobly aspiring races of humanity. (p. 89)

The elevation of the human lot, therefore, is a mixed blessing. As noted in Kerényi’s analysis, the gift of fire and its effect of false hope change the mortal pain that humans experience into the suffering of injustice. Through fire and the other crafts of Prometheus, humans are equipped to question the gods and are enabled to exercise power

over the world in order to mitigate suffering. Yet, this Promethean gift is divorced from a need to humbly express gratitude to the powers that underlie our efforts. While this encourages humans to be independent, it also encourages a secular attitude. It is, therefore, clear why Zeus would be motivated to punish Prometheus. Through his gift, Prometheus has increased the importance of the choices that humankind must now make, and serves to found a society that is based on individual will and choice, composed of individuals who are necessarily more self-aware and responsible for outcomes.

The shadow side of this freedom is still present, however. Prometheus is the god who is always striving for improvement, is always looking toward the future, yet is insensitive to the debts he is accumulating and the implications of his actions. When we are under the influence of the Promethean complex, the future is all about opportunities to exceed limits without restraint. In the contemporary world, whether this is about “irrational exuberance” or “mutually assured destruction,” the Promethean effect and its dangers are clear.

Bachelard (1964) expressed this dangerous state of affairs in terms of a “will to intellectuality.” The Promethean complex, in his words is comprised of, “all those tendencies which impel us to *know* as much as our fathers, more than our fathers, as much as our teachers, more than our teachers” (p. 12). This desire to outstrip the other, whomever that other might be, and to do so without regard for the consequences, is highly characteristic of technological development. The desire for power, engineering, and constant improvement is taken to be an end in itself, but without the full awareness of potential implications.

What are these broader implications? What do we *not* hear when we are busy outstripping our fathers and teachers. In part, the unilinear, upwardly mobile focus on innovatively resolving issues “better than our fathers did” challenges humans in only a very specialized manner. If we seek only to know “more” in an objective sense, we do not necessarily come to know more holistically, broadly or wisely, or with a better understanding of to what we owe our knowledge. The challenge to the Promethean is to move beyond simply being better at technology; we must become better at the imaginative and soulful relationship to technology that makes it a truly human endeavor.

Another cost of the Promethean will to intellectuality is the way in which it encourages a persistent forgetfulness. From the moment that fire is delivered, Prometheus moves on to the next challenge. Similarly, a humankind focused on fire attends exclusively to its tangible results. In a response to Stroud, Larry Allums writes, “Once having been given the fire and been eased in some way by its both real and metaphorical warmth, do we necessarily forget the conditions that brought forth the pity and the gift” (Allums, p. 2)? When we have entered into Heideggerian *enframing*, we forget the forest for the lumber and the River Rhine as the subject of poetry once it has been dammed. Once we have addressed an issue technologically, we lose its initial wonder and meaning.

### *Technological Themes*

The ideas already reviewed reveal Aeschylus’ play as complex and even contradictory. Aeschylus’ story, like all myths, speaks the language of the soul. The contradictory character is a suggestion of this depth. These few initial tensions demand not answers but elaboration and exploration. Any simple resolution would diminish the

important questions with which we are presented. What is demanded of us is rather an abiding presence with contradiction and an attendance to what arises. The material of this myth, even when largely limited to a single rendering, is overwhelming in its richness. For that reason, I will organize my observations around themes such as the nature of Prometheus' gift, the character of his punishment, and the social dimensions of his gift.

The image of Prometheus, bound and hanging, itself implies a paradox. Among the gods, Prometheus is, perhaps, the most noteworthy rebel. He is sensitive to the oppressive dimension of power, and willing to confront it with all of his substantial guile. The association with technology is clear here; through gifts of fire and crafts, the Promethean influence enables humankind to adapt to its harsh situations. As a mythical figure, however, Prometheus' associations with fire, crafts, invention, and adaptation all speak to a level of dynamism and motion that collides with the characteristic of being held in place.

Prometheus also is a human writ large. He is a character that shares enough with humanity to encourage humans to identify with him; he has made choices and suffers consequences at the cosmic scale. Because of the similarity, we can have the particular experience of "suffering and experiencing alongside" or com-passion for Prometheus. At the most basic level, it is this possibility of sharing in the experience of suffering that underlies the compelling nature of the Prometheus myth.

### *The Gift of Fire*

Let us turn now to the exploration of the mythopoeic structure and content of technology, particularly in terms of the specific gift that Prometheus gives to humankind.

Although in Aeschylus' version of the myth, Prometheus claims to have given much of what distinguishes humanity from beasts, in earlier versions such as that which we find in Hesiod, the gift is simply fire. What, then, is this fire that expands to encompass so much of what we now take for granted as human endeavors? What is it that presents itself so simply, so sparsely, as a basic element of the world not able to be broken down further, yet when viewed from the poetic vantage of Aeschylus expands so broadly? What is fire itself?

In *The Psychoanalysis of Fire*, Bachelard (1964) recalls for us the phenomenon of fire as we encounter it primally, around a bonfire or campfire, or perhaps as we might have encountered it as a child. Bachelard's flame is the flame that brings us into the state of reverie. This reverie arises because of the peculiar resistance of fire to being fixed and comprehended. The flicker of fire eludes the sharpness of mind. Bachelard notes in his introduction that the scientific mind, when queried concerning fire, often retracts into a kind of hand-waving, "vague and tautological responses" or "the most ancient and fanciful philosophical themes" (p. 3). Indeed, he asserts, "*Fire is no longer a reality for science.*" With tremendous phenomenological precision, Bachelard eloquently describes:

Fire is the ultra-living element. It is intimate and it is universal. It lives in our heart. It lives in the sky. It rises from the depths of the substance and offers itself with the warmth of love. Or it can go back down in the substance and hide there, latent and pent-up, like hate and vengeance. Among all phenomena, it is really the only one to which there can be so definitely attributed the opposing values of good and evil. It shines in Paradise. It burns in Hell. It is gentleness and torture. It is cookery and it is apocalypse. It is a pleasure for the good child sitting prudently

by the hearth; yet it punishes any disobedience when the child wishes to play too close to its flames. It is well-being and it is respect. It is a tutelary and a terrible divinity, both good and bad. (p. 77)

The contradiction which is bound up in fire is also captured in the circle of deities. Although in *Prometheus Bound*, Mighit criticizes Hephaestus' reluctance, pointing out that it is Hephaestus' very gift that was taken, it is quite clear that the smithy god is not the only deity with a vested interest here! The voice of fire is plurivocal. Apollo, of course, is closely associated with fire through his function as the charioteer of the sun. It is this god that shows us the aspect of fire through which we are enlightened, and also the dark side of this illumination which we see in the stories of Icarus and Phaethon as well as in the imagery of *Sol Niger*, the black sun archetype that is important in the alchemical opus. Zeus, too, makes a claim upon fire in the form of his most terrible weapon, the thunderbolt. The flame of Zeus is the flame of anger and political power but also of justice. It is the fire that is beyond the ken of humankind, of which both the positive and negative dimensions are represented in the figure of the king in alchemical work. Both of these possibilities have been very fully explored in the work of Moore and Gillette (1990), Edinger (1985), and Marlan (2005).

Hestia is yet a third Olympian deity associated with fire. As goddess of the hearth, she oversees fire in its associations with cookery, domesticity, and hospitality. Just as Prometheus is particularly willing to rebel from authority, so Hestia is correspondingly less likely to stand against power. In one noteworthy story of heavenly conflict, all of the Olympian deities, tired of Zeus' pride, conspired to bind him, and threatened to remove him from power; all of the deities, that is, except for Hestia (Graves, 1992, p. 53). She is

the most stable of the goddesses, and is the “only god about whom no myths were created” (Harris, Pletzner, 1998, p. 128). Yet, in spite of that, Hillman notes that her focus on inclusion, focus, and place is key to the process of analysis (Hillman, 1998/2007).

While all of these are divine potentials of fire, they serve to make the role of Prometheus even more key. It is Prometheus that makes these associations possible for humans. Kerényi develops the strand of myth in which Prometheus is implicated in the founding of sacrificial rites and the burning of fat and bones, showing the critical role of the Promethean archetype in providing a relationship to the divine. In Aeschylus’ play, Prometheus further describes his own role in the fate of humankind in blatantly Messianic terms. He claims that his contribution sheds light upon a previously paltry existence in which people had no knowledge of their own fate at all, and little control. In the world before Prometheus’ gift, humans are animals, scraping a bare subsistence from the world.

In contrast, after the gifts of Prometheus are given, humanity is modified in its most fundamental character. Fire is associated with a broad range of the most essential dimensions of human existence, such as cookery and nourishment, artificial lighting, arts related to the creation of crafts such as smelting and forging, and countless other technological applications. It would not be an understatement to say that these instances are among the primary contributors to the understanding that humans have of themselves and their place in the world.

In addition to the everyday, but essential, role of fire in human life, the spark of Prometheus also stands for the inventive and creative aspect of human being.

“Promethean” as an adjective connotes the most revolutionary and innovative contributions to human understanding. This is the sense of the word we use when we refer to those who bring the most brilliant products of rational ingenuity to their communities, thereby aligning the fiery gift of Prometheus with technological mastery and innovation. Perhaps finally, Promethean fire allows for reading, and is implicated in a broader consciousness. After Prometheus, humans are able to look ahead of themselves, to plan, to capture what they see in writing, and so challenge the gods’ exclusive grip on immortality.

Psychologically, fire connotes the dynamism of human being. Having been given fire, humans are willing and able to face the challenges of their intrinsic limitations. Associated with the technological willingness to face limitations, fire also represents a principle of psychological transformation. A great deal can be said, and has been said, about the ability of fire to purify and modify. The aspect of Promethean fire that is associated with the birth of consciousness, discussed earlier, reflects the willingness to seize this ability in terms of self-transformation. Within the alchemical tradition elaborated in the depth psychological tradition, fire facilitates psycho-spiritual change, and is indeed the transformative principle itself. If the contents of psyche are represented in the contents of the hermetic vessel, fire is the principle that brings them into new possibilities.

Each such transformation, however, also reflects a corresponding loss. Reflecting Heidegger’s observations, the revealing that fire allows comes with a corresponding concealing. Whether speaking in technological terms or of more specifically psychological situations, when change occurs, the previous situation is left behind.

Attributing a blanket judgment that a change is positive or negative is, therefore, somewhat problematized in this view. Fire changes and always destroys in the process. When we exchange a tree for warmth, we must be willing to accept deforestation. When we accept the increased initiative associated with Prometheus, we must be willing to accept the accompanying de-prioritizing of the past and the gods.

What does it mean for Prometheus to give this gift to humankind? That is, in what sense is the Promethean legacy a *gift*? While there are other examples of gods giving specific gifts to humans, it is extraordinarily unusual for a gift to be given that so radically changes the human situation, virtually recreating humankind as a new genus. The very idea of a gift can be problematized. In a critique of the idea of gifts (in particular, the metaphysical, unfounded first principle), the philosopher, Jacques Derrida (1997) notes:

If there is gift, the *given* of the gift (*that which* one gives, *that which* is given, the gift as given thing or as act of donation) must not come back to the giving (let us not already say to the subject, to the donor). It must not circulate, it must not be exchanged, it must not in any case be exhausted, as a gift, by the process of exchange, by the movement of circulation of the circle in the form of return to the point of departure. If the figure of the circle is essential to economics, the gift must remain *aneconomic*. Not that it remains foreign to the circle, but it must *keep* a relationship of foreignness to the circle, a relation without relation to familiar foreignness. It is perhaps in this sense that the gift is the impossible. (p. 124)

The sensibility that the “gift is the impossible,” and undermined at an ontological level, elevates the question of what this gift might mean. After all, if we assume it is not

a gift, but an exchange, there are very few benefits to Prometheus for his act of apparent compassion, (unless perhaps he is interested in taking revenge on the paternal figurehead, Zeus, which is a possibility not apparent in the text). What might be Prometheus' interest in relieving the misery of humankind?

One possibility suggests itself immediately from the text. That is, Prometheus looks to mankind to create his own savior, the hero Hercules. When asked, Prometheus first refuses to describe his redemption. When pressed by Io's suffering, he eventually concedes, revealing that his own redemption will come at the end of Zeus' reign, and that it will be at the hands of a descendent of hers, an offspring of mortal and god. However, regardless of whether or not Prometheus expects to be rescued by a mortal, it was not necessary for him to steal the fire and thereby incur the wrath of Zeus in order to obtain this rescue. From the perspective of the narrative, it was only necessary for the mortal to rescue Prometheus after the fact of the theft. Allowing man to continue in his miserable state would have been sufficient to protect Prometheus from his eternal torment.

Another seeming unnecessary gift is Prometheus' revelation of the source of his rescuer to Io, yet another act which brings down the wrath of the gods. This prophecy is not a mere revelation of information, however, and Prometheus' choosing to tell it was neither simple nor foolish. The most important function of the prophecy is to serve as motivation for Io, who had been considering ending her suffering by ending her life. The prophecy ties her own fate together with the suffering god, and with the hopes of both of them.

Derrida's point, in effect, relies upon a way of thinking of Prometheus as simply another being with whom we have commerce. Prometheus, however, is not the kind of

simple being which we might encounter in the world. As a mythical figure, he represents aspects of our own being or the being of the world. The gods deal in a different currency, and their values and motivations are incommensurable with ours. By approaching the myth in terms of Derrida's critique, we open up the possibility of our relationship with Prometheus being more profound than the relationship one might have with another being, and the accompanying questions of what this relationship might be.

In his book *The Inner Meaning of Greek Religion* (1994), Edward Edinger describes the gods of the Greek pantheon with a metaphorical sensibility. In the view that he articulates, which is arguably a view common to most branches of analytical psychology, mythology is "the self representation of the archetypal psyche" (p. 2) and the gods represent aspects of the psyche, and in particular the primordial forces that together constitute the Self. The balanced respect for the diverse gods supports the process of individuation in this view, and in that sense, humans in the Aeschylean drama represent the arising ego of humankind. Prometheus, then, serves a specific function as an internal advocate between gods and humans, the Self and ego, and is instrumental in the rise of egoic consciousness.

Given this position, Prometheus is more refined than the terrifying pre-psycho forces of the other Titans. Whereas, as Kerényi notes, the Titans are defined by their violence and pride, Prometheus does not seem to possess these failings to the same degree. Although the chorus asserts, "Your heart is too bold" (ln. 178), Prometheus expresses a willingness to work with the Titans when the new gods arise, and is capable of re-aligning himself rather than standing on his strength. (Recall that the other Titans "plotted violence and thought to gain an easy mastery by force," much to their chagrin.)

Prometheus' gifts arise primarily from his shrewdness (*techne*), which is the specific attribute which was refused by the Titans, and which is instrumental in the new gods coming to power. It is the same quality, too, that enables him to steal the spark of fire from the forge of Hephaestus in a yarrow-stalk. Prometheus adapts to situations in order to gain advantages, and supplies a function of creative adaptability to the psyche. As an internal advocate between the ego (humankind) and the self (the gods), though, this guile has the potential to subvert a healthy relationship. It is by tricking the gods and the Titans that Prometheus achieves his goals, but such trickery may be more of a mixed blessing in terms of creating a dynamic between Self and ego that honors both.

#### *Hope/False Hopes*

A broader understanding of the issue of hope in *Prometheus Bound* can be gained through a more detailed look at the specific language used by the playwright. In particular, the notion of hope in *Prometheus Bound* is closely related to two aspects of predestination. Prometheus' name itself reflects an intimacy with these notions, being derived from *pro*, indicating a motion forward, and *metheus*, a form of *manthano*, which generally connotes learning as well as perception (Liddell-Scott, 1989); the conjunction of the two designates a fore-sight or in-sight directed toward the future. This form of insight, projected into the future is, however, limited. This limitation is captured by Aeschylus in Prometheus' varying relationships between two different forms of destiny: *moira* (*Μοῖρα*) and *ananke* (*Ἀνάγκη*).

On one hand, *moira* connotes fate in the sense that is generally associated with the Greek cosmology; it is the designated span of life and lot for all beings including the gods themselves. On the other hand, there is *ananke*, which is often translated as *necessity*,

and is the form of fate specifically concerned with the contingent quality of every event in the world. *Ananke* is the way in which the future arises from the current situation, and encompasses mechanistic necessity or the motive cause of Aristotle. *Moirai*, in contrast, is the fate of an individual, such as a tragic hero, which is set in advance and is often closely tied with the most inherent characteristics of the person. *Ananke* describes the fate of the falling water and the flying arrow but also is used by Aeschylus to describe the way in which Zeus' actions will, one day, lead to his downfall, which is also specified by the *moira* of Zeus. In this sense, *ananke* and *moira* are bound together. In the Greek world, causality is conceived of more broadly than simple material causation; characteristics that we might attribute to personality are contributing factors that allow for one's *moira* to be fulfilled through the forces of *ananke*.

Hillman (1988/1991) describes *ananke* as a narrowing and repetition that is paradigmatic of psychopathology. He notes the common roots between *ananke* and words such as anxiety, angst, and angina, and the general association of the term with a narrowing of possibilities. Particularly in the case of Prometheus, he notes that Prometheus is brought to the world's limits by the Force (*Bia*) of Necessity. He writes, "Only Necessity can limit the Promethean fantasy, and necessity is experienced by that fantasy as an anguish" (p. 8).

Humankind is pitifully configured in the context of two forms of fate. Prometheus finds early humans pathetically living in darkness and dread, and refers to them with the memorable phrase: "creatures of a day." Their state is pathetic, not simply because of their lack of capacities, but also because they see their own fate. While the

primary gift Prometheus gives is fire/*techne*, he also gives what might be a greater gift: hope. In the following passage, he discusses the gift with the daughters of Oceanus:

Prometheus: Through me, the race of mortals turned their eyes from death.

Chorus: What remedy did you devise against that spell.

Prometheus: Dim (alt: blind) hopes, a tribe I brought to settle in their hearts. (ln. 248-250)

As noted by Stroud and others, there is a necessary connection between the hope which Prometheus gives and the other gifts which we more traditionally attribute to him, including the crafts and sciences and, of course, fire. Given the gift of fire and the other antecedent fruits of civilization, humans come to relate to their existence with hope for the future. They consider their impact in terms of a legacy, now that they are capable of both creating new artifacts and writing.

In terms of predestination, the gift to humankind is further qualified. In the above passage, the word hope is modified by a term that implies either dimness or, more distinctly, falseness. The human ability to create our own fire, and to shape the world using technology, seems to ameliorate our helplessness in the face of *ananke*. Through technology, humans become more of a force in the chain of causation that can affect outcomes. In the context of contemporary culture's attribution of necessity entirely to material causality, technology substantially liberates humankind from its prison. Hillman sensitively positions *techne* against *ananke*, implying that *ananke* is unmovable in the face of *technical* effort. In truth, however, it is the relationship between *techne* and *moira* that is characterized by this total inflexibility. The force of *techne* is specifically aimed at the aspect of material causality represented in *ananke*, however, the helpless position of

humankind with respect to *moira*, their end-fate, remains the same. While fire and the sciences which flow from it allay the suffering of necessity (*ananke*), when it comes to the final hope of being freed from mortality, they give only a false promise.<sup>1</sup>

The understanding of *moira* requires a broader understanding of the world. It is specifically Prometheus' understanding or knowledge of *moira* which, he claims, Zeus lacks. Throughout the play, there are references to Zeus' reign as new, and implications of the inexperienced tyranny of this new power. The deficit of which Prometheus speaks is in keeping with the attitude implied. The new king seems to over-rely on his personal power, holding force over the head of his once-ally. His words are never portrayed as diplomatic, or open to possibility. Importantly, whereas Prometheus is shown in friendly and open conversation with other powers, Zeus only commands others. He seems to be unable, or at least reluctant, to fully embrace all aspects of *psyche*, as represented in the other gods. This limiting blindness is similar to that of human beings when they rely only upon *techne*.

Prometheus' access to an understanding and prescience of *moira* is not based on the same arts and attributes that he has given to humankind. In Aeschylus' play, when Prometheus describes insights into *moira*, he refers to his mother:

Such was the prophecy which ancient Themis,  
  
My Titan mother, opened up to me;

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<sup>1</sup> Romanyshyn (1989) discusses these fantasies of liberation in greater detail. The author compellingly shows how the prison of the body, as well as the earth, is the subject of a variety of technological escape fantasies.

But how and by what means it shall come true

Would take too long to tell, and if you heard

The knowledge would not profit you. (ln. 874-878)

There are dimensions of Prometheus that might be interpreted as signifying masculinity, such as his insistence on the value of knowledge, or his blindness about the implications of the search for mastery. He sometimes shows, however, an openness to alternative understandings. It is telling that, after remaining silent at the start of the play, Prometheus' words upon being left at the end of the first scene call upon the bright winds, numberless springs (who form his chorus in the persons of Okeanos' daughters), the all-seeing sun, and the all-mother, Themis, the earth. He calls upon them to witness his suffering, and confesses to his hubristic theft of fire. Prometheus later recounts the need for *techne* in the conflict between Kronos and Zeus, but his knowledge of this *moira* is, again, from Themis. Prometheus' understanding and openness to the wisdom personified in the earth is a chief discrepancy between him and the gods as well as the other Titans.

The relationship with hope is further elaborated in the episode with Io. After sending off the less than sympathetic god, Okeanos, Prometheus is visited by an unfortunate woman who was seduced by Zeus, changed by the king of the gods into a cow to hide his infidelity from Hera, his jealous wife. Although the meeting of any two in such a barren wasteland is extremely striking, for Io to happen upon Prometheus is exceptionally auspicious. Through the actions of Hera, Io has been pursued by a stinging gadfly across the classical world. Io serves as a specific instance of humankind's lost hope. Her now random and peripatetic wanderings seem designed to isolate her in the

same way as his being fixed in place. In the end, though, their meeting has interesting ramifications for Prometheus himself and presents him with an opportunity to display compassion again.

This opportunity, like that presented to Philemon and Baucis, is an opening for listening as well as telling. Prometheus is able to hear her suffering and, in response, to reveal to Io the end of her travels, and her role in bringing a line into the world that will serve to liberate Prometheus and potentially bring about the end of Zeus' reign. This secret of fate has served to bolster Prometheus' hope; it is this knowledge of Zeus' potential end that supports his spirit. However, his revelation to Io simultaneously provides her hope that a good result will be come from her suffering, and throws Prometheus' own hope into question. Just as Prometheus' gift of fire to humankind leads to his punishment, so his gift of hope to Io further intensifies his suffering and calls into question his own fate at the hands of the gods.

### *The Place of Prometheus*

Prometheus and Io make a perplexing pair. While they have both turned against the will of the gods in their own ways, one has been chained to the mountainside for the indefinite future whereas the other, in seeming contrast, is forced never to stay in a single place. Ironically, the more dynamic character of the two, Prometheus, who is traditionally viewed as an agent of change and liberation, is held in place. Io, who has been made into an icon of the agricultural aspect of human existence, a human tradition of staying in place, tied to the unmoving land, has earned as her punishment a drive to continue to move, to wander as a cow to the ends of the earth, or at least the Bosphorus.

The strange rootedness of Prometheus suggests that a more detailed investigation of his relationship to the land is in order.

As noted, Prometheus remains silent during the entire first scene of Aeschylus' play, as he is pinioned to a craggy cliff and concretely exiled from the community of gods, titans and humans. He holds his tongue, abiding the taunts of his jailors, and maintains silence until they leave the stage. He leaves it for Might to make observations on the poignant landscape, "This is the world's limit that we have come to; this is the Scythian / country, an untrodden desolation" (ln. 1-2). Through Might's words, even with the literal silence of Prometheus, the *place* of Prometheus speaks. The desolate, craggy form of the landscape is pointedly described in the first lines of the play as "untrodden." Just as in Romanyshyn's description of the African plain the silence of the landscape "speaks an absence, the absence of culture and the absence of *us*" (Romanyshyn, 1989, p. 2). In addition to the terrible bodily pain which Prometheus experiences, his punishment entails an isolation from the world of humans, gods, and the titans. The place of Prometheus' internment evokes a degree of isolation that is of particular poignancy when it is considered in the context of Prometheus' compassion for humankind. His affability intensifies the pathos of his situation.

The locale which is referred to as the "Scythian country," designates the far reaches of the contemporary state of Russia and the central Asian plains. The connotations of a place such as this include the distance from the cultures of humanity as well as a place of harsh environmental extremes. In addition to being generally harsh, the location of Prometheus' rock is removed both from human habitation and, perhaps more importantly, context. The extreme removal of this "place," however, and the indefinitely

extended character of Prometheus' punishment there also suggest another meaning, that is that Prometheus is not in any place in particular. He is, rather, at a *site* to borrow the term of Edward Casey (Casey, 1982).

In his essay, "Getting Placed: Soul in Space," philosopher Edward Casey approaches the universal quality of the archetypes with a meticulous inquiry into their location. Not surprisingly, the discussion goes into some detail around the kind of thing that a place is, and the connection of *topology* to ontology, based on the central Aristotelian notion that sees *place* as the necessary containers for all *beings*. Casey points out the important Aristotelian concern with place as a container for all beings. He notes, "What is somewhere is itself something" (Casey, 1991/2004, p. 291) and therefore, the concern with the being of things is necessarily a concern for their place.

Place and being are quite naturally connected for Aristotle, given that in his *Physics*, the place of a thing determines some of the forces acting upon it. Yet, in the context of the West after the Enlightenment, they are strangely divorced. Casey quotes Descartes powerfully on this point: "In reality, the extension in length, breadth, and depth that constitutes the space is absolutely the same as that which constitutes the body" (p. 292). Following in the Cartesian footprints, Newton extends the thought. As Casey notes, "Place has been dissipated in space defined as ... how things find themselves merely side-by-side in space" (p. 292).

Casey goes on, however, to point out that from an experiential and phenomenological perspective, place is quite different from this Cartesian dream. As also explored in Romanyshyn (1989), place, "as it is experienced by human beings, is very much a moving force; it changes the character and direction of our lives" (p. 294).

In a manner that is reminiscent of Romanyshyn's (1989) discussion of Harvey's heart, Casey describes the way in which San Francisco is the kind of *place* that one can leave one's heart in. To designate the Cartesian dream, Casey uses the term *site*. A site is a neutralized place. It is, he writes, a modified place which is created by "razing them, making them indifferently planar, so that horizontally comes to count for more than verticality." Site is the modification of place that removes depth.

The place of Prometheus seems to be of this latter kind. It is a place that has been flattened and which has lost its depth and meaning. What does it mean, however, for this particularly archetypal image to be held in this way? The Greeks, perhaps, saw Prometheus as being divorced from locale, and community. As a representation or a messenger of *techne*, Prometheus transcends community, or is exclusive of community.

#### *Thematic Overview*

The goal of the present chapter has been to elaborate those aspects of *Prometheus Bound* that are particularly relevant to the human relationship to technology. While certain specifically designated themes have arisen, they are not necessarily consistent with one another. In the manner of all myth, they represent the multiple polarities and directions of archetypal realities. To summarize these, I return to the underlying method of the present work which promised to bring out the archetypal and the historically contingent dimensions of each story. While, at this stage, there is insufficient context to speak to either of these questions directly, there are distinct aspects of technology that have been uncovered.

For instance, the theme of hope and false hopes is explored in the context of the struggle against material necessity and the mortal aspect of human being. We have

observed hubristic elements within Prometheus' character. His willingness to steal the technological fire from the gods suggests that technology is associated with a form of Titanic inflation that is further characterized by a "will to intellectuality" which can drive innovation at a ferocious pace. At the same time, however, fire serves as a symbol of heightened consciousness and personal transformation as well as a cornerstone for community. These positive potentials are associated by Aeschylus with Prometheus' openness to the wisdom of others, as suggested by his close relationship with the elements, the spirits of Nature, and his mother, Themis/the Earth. Uniting the elements of inflation together with consciousness and openness in one mythical figure suggests that the Greeks saw them as closely interrelated. This relationship is not part of our contemporary prejudices about technology and, indeed, is not highlighted in many of the commentators concerned with Prometheus. It speaks to a balanced awareness of the natural world and the technological challenge to oppressive political power as well as the suffering that is inherent in the lot of humankind.

From the Heideggerian perspective, Aeschylus' examination of technology might be limited to primordial *techne*, which is a kind of revealing and *poiesis* that circumscribes craftsmanship. The technology of the ancient world, in this view, is in greater harmony with the natural world and is not generally the target of Heidegger's critique of modern technological innovations. Yet, in the present analysis, it does seem that this revealing still conceals and, in particular, leads to a somewhat problematized relationship with other divinities, and an absence of gratitude.

Romanyshyn's analysis of technology as based in a fantasy of escape and disembodiment is particularly at odds with the Aeschylean vision. Prometheus, indeed, is

an image that is characterized by fixedness rather than escape. His actions allow for the escape of humans from their necessity but as a mythical figure, Prometheus is bound to the Earth and his hopes for redemption do not lie in fire or other figures of his own technological ingenuity. Simultaneously, though, Prometheus is not in a particular place, and is removed from the support and sensibilities of any particular community. In this sense, he is homeless yet irrevocably bound to the requirements and limitations of the natural world.

The preceding exposition of Prometheus is similarly confounding of Marcuse's view. The Marcusean critique of contemporary technology problematizes the sense that technological rationality is a neutral tool that can equally be taken up by any interests. He notes that such undirected technology, however, will serve to support the *status quo* rather than other, liberatory possibilities. Aeschylus' vision of Prometheus suggests his role in undermining the seat of juridical power in the person of Zeus not only in his theft of fire, but also in his support of Io. Although at times Marcuse (1955/1966) describes Promethean culture-heroes as personifications of productivity, his analysis seems systematically to exclude dimensions of the myth that qualify the contributions of technological rationale and Prometheus' own openness to *alternatives* to productivity. Indeed, the rebellious aspects of Prometheus speak directly to the potential for Promethean openness and even the gift of fire in opposition to oppressive power. Prometheus offers the potential for liberation from material difficulties, but equally speaks to the openness to alternate sources of wisdom, and the willingness to make sacrifices to oppose those who, like Zeus, might use the fire of technology in a more destructive or autocratic manner.

### Chapter 3: The Abiding Image of the Frankenstein Creature

Although the myth of Frankenstein arises from a dramatically different cultural context than that of Prometheus, it is no less a myth. The tale has come to imply a degree of skepticism about technology and the scientific attitude more broadly, and the creature has become a virtual synonym for Pandora's box. Just as in the story of Pandora, the creation of Frankenstein's daemon has been associated with an extraordinarily broad variety of malignancies. Scholar Susan Hitchcock (2007), notes that even a casual perusal reveals issues and cultural entities availing themselves of the Frankenstein creature as a metaphor include the Crimean war, human cloning, both Black and Irish workers in the United States, Tsar Nicholas, genetically altered food, irresponsibly derived financial instruments and the current economic crisis. The creature of Mary Shelly's story is, indeed, spectacularly fecund.

However, before moving forward into an examination of various perspectives that have been expressed on this creature, let us stop to consider the propriety of casting *Frankenstein* as a text with gravity and weight comparable to that of *Prometheus Bound*. Is the story's fertility, by itself, sufficient to put it in the company of classical mythology? To play for a moment the devil's advocate, the author of Frankenstein was hardly an elder of our culture. On the initial writing of the novel, Mary Shelly was merely 18 years old. Furthermore, as noted by Feminist critic Anne Mellor, the dominant opinion of this text for many years held that it was a mere children's book (Mellor, 1988, p. 44), and Joyce Carol Oates notes that the book is "one of the most self-consciously literary 'novels' ever written," and refers to its epistolary Gothic form as "awkward" (Oates, 1984, p. 30). The sheer sensationalism of *Frankenstein*, not to mention its offshoots,

suggests that it might more clearly be conceived as a contribution to the literature of science fiction, melodrama and pulp horror than a truly substantial work of literature, much less a contemporary myth.

One immediate point to make in the tale's defense is that the depth of the story is not fully reflected in the commonly held conception of *Frankenstein*. The name "Frankenstein" has come to denote a horrific, moaning creature that dominates others by brute strength. This behemoth wreaks havoc on society and its creator, and serves as a warning to any who would seek to surpass intrinsic human limitations, in particular the creation of life. In popular renditions, "Frankenstein" is the creature that terrorizes children. This version of the story, however, mis-takes the original story. In the popularized understanding, the creature is reduced to his simplest elements, in particular his horrific visage, his tremendous size, and his destructive potential. One cost of this overly schematic and highly caricatured version of Mary Shelly's original story is that we substantially compromise a deeper understanding. The creature of Mary Shelly's story, while he has a monstrous quality, is also highly articulate and sympathetic. His empathy for others often exceeds that of his creator, Victor Frankenstein, and it is perhaps this sensitivity more than any other element that creates the irrevocable response that leads to tragedy. As we attend to *Frankenstein* as a myth, we must remain close to the original version in order to fully understand the power of the story.

In part, the significance of this work also rests on its impressive originality in terms of content. Although *Frankenstein* belongs to a long tradition of creation stories, and is arguably retrospective in terms of its Gothic style (O'Flynn, 1983, p. 21), the central placement of an individual human creator, generating a living being without

recourse to a feminine “other,” is unique. Even in the case of the golem story in the Judaic tradition captured in the Haggadic Midrash, a feminine principle is introduced that emphasizes a critical difference from the Frankenstein story (Mellor, 1988, 43).

Of course, the attribution of significance to this work partly rests on its sheer longevity and the pervasiveness of its influence. At the time of its publication it was well-received by the public, even though most critical attention was negative, particularly when it became generally known that the author was a woman of 18. Since the original publication in 1818, hundreds of versions of the story have been released, including children’s retellings, graphic novels, audio-books and e-texts. More than five hundred editions of the novel are in print. In *Frankenstein: A Cultural History* (1988), scholar Susan Hitchcock notes:

Fifty thousand or more copies of the novel, in its various adaptations and editions, sell in the United States in a given year, not to mention foreign sales in English and other languages, of which over five hundred are in print today. (p. 7)

While such considerations as longevity and thematic creativity are enough to suggest that this story needs to be taken seriously, there is yet further reason for us to consider Frankenstein as a psychologically serious work.

#### *Reverie as a Method and Source*

What is the source of the compelling nature of this story? What supplies the power that has driven its prolonged success both in the market and in the imaginations of people? From the perspective of an imaginal psychologist, it is of particular interest and relevance that this work was created by or through Mary Shelly in a state of *reverie*.

While the story was inspired by a competitive game among friends that also resulted in

John Polidori's (1819/2008) visionary foray into the vampire, Mary Shelley's story was not a simple result of her efforts in this contest. Rather, she found herself unable to create the ghost story that was being requested of her, despite her efforts. Eight days after the start of the contest, while listening to Polidori, Lord Byron and Percy Shelley discussing galvanic response and the principle of life, she fell into a "waking dream." The vision that arose within her integrated not only the manifest content of her consciousness, but equally her personal fantasy life, in particular around her own role as a mother and as a woman who was grieving for substantial recent losses, including of her own child. Furthermore, however, she "tapped into" an even broader layer of meaning that, while significant at the moment, has become only more salient over time. This moment of reverie allowed for the conception of a mythological expression that suggests a direct connection with a powerfully archetypal and poetic reality.

It is for this reason that, in the same way that the classical Greek myths invoke powerful images that speak to contemporary situations with startling clarity, *Frankenstein: A New Prometheus* calls up feelings of horror and pity in the modern reader. Without doubt, and in spite of having been written almost 200 years ago by a woman from a highly privileged social class, *Frankenstein* continues to convey a message and a meaning that is broadly compelling, even today. As Anne Mellor (1988) notes, "It can claim the status of a myth, so profoundly resonant in its implications for our comprehension of our selves and our place in the world that it has become, at least in its barest outline, a trope of everyday life" (p. 43). The story provides a deep analysis of the cultural psyche, calling to us as powerfully now as it ever has.

As reverie is the source of this work, it seems also to be a uniquely qualified mode of inquiry. Romanyshyn (2007) writes:

Reverie is the mode of the poetics of the research process, and, as such, it is a paradoxical way of knowing the world, whose mood is neither oneiric nor rational. In reverie, we are in that middle place between waking and dreaming, and, in that landscape, the borders and edges of a work become less rigid and distinct... In reverie, the work takes on a symbolic character and is freed of its literal and factual density. The work becomes many-layered and is laden with numerous meanings, which require interpretation. It is laden with possibilities, which require understanding. (p. 87)

While I explore the broad concerns raised in the scholarly literature, I also strive to maintain the stance of hospitality, openness and sensitivity advocated in Romanyshyn's work as well as that of Giegerich (1984). In so doing, I will maintain access not only to the literary dimensions of *Frankenstein*, but also to the mythical nuances and archetypal concerns.

#### *Frankenstein: A Summary of Critical Incidents*

To effectively explore the story of Frankenstein, I will recapitulate some of the principles episodes in the story. The oddly displaced starting point of the story is with the character of Robert Watson, an intrepid explorer attempting to find a route to the pole. The ship happens upon Victor Frankenstein in poor condition and strained state of mind, pursuing the Creature. They take him in and, in the process of caring for him, Victor relates his story.

Victor starts his story early in his life by introducing Robert to his mother and adopted sister, Elizabeth, and describing his childhood in idealized terms. He tells the story of his mother's death after childbirth, and her request that Elizabeth and Victor be married. Shortly after his mother's death, Victor matriculates as a university student in Ingolstadt. He finds that much of what has been of interest to him is considered obsolete and, with dramatic energy and focus, starts to experiment with the basic components of life, submerging himself in labors designed to re-animate the flesh of dead bodies. Eventually, he creates his Creature, but immediately is filled with horror at what he has done, and runs off.

The next time that they encounter one another, the Creature has educated himself. The Creature articulately tells the story of his coming into consciousness, his observations of a rural family, and his discovery of reading. The culmination of the Creature's tale is his unsuccessful attempt to reveal himself to the family he has been living near, and his subsequent discovery of Victor's journal, and the realization of the horror with which his own creator viewed him. He sets out to find Victor, happens upon Victor's young brother, and kills him, perhaps accidentally.

After relating all of this, the Creature pleads with Victor to create a female partner for him, and threatens to be present on Victor's wedding night should he fail. When Victor destroys the nearly complete mate of his Creature, the Creature kills Victor's best friend, and eventually Victor's bride, Elizabeth. Victor, enraged and focused on revenge, pursues the Creature across Russia and toward the pole, where he happens upon Walton, tells his own story, and perishes. Finally, the Creature confronts Walton and in the end leaves Walton behind as he goes further North, promising to immolate himself.

### *Narcissism in Frankenstein*

The sage Teiresias told Leirope ... ‘Narcissus will live to a ripe old age provided he never knows himself.’ (Graves, 286)

The most superficial reading of *Frankenstein* would appreciate the fundamentally self-serving dimension of Victor’s character. Throughout the novel, Victor primarily focuses on his own needs and anxieties. For instance, although he often has opportunities to share his predicaments with those supposedly nearest to him; his best friend, Henry Clerval, his family and Elizabeth, his sister/fiancé; he never takes these chances. Even after the creature starts to take lives, Victor’s continued reluctance to step out of his own worries and personal shame implicates him in yet more deaths.

In addition to the “self-centered” quality of Victor’s actions, we also witness an equally sharp self-critique. After creating the Creature, Victor alternates between guilt at the terrible aspects of his actions and hubristic pride, most obviously captured by his conviction that he can destroy the Creature by himself and without external aid. He notes:

From my infancy I was imbued with high hopes and a lofty ambition; but how am I sunk? Oh! My friend, if you had known me as I once was, you would not recognize me in this state of degradation. (Shelly, 1818/1996, p.147).

The extremes of his self-hate and his self-appreciation of his astounding capacity and genius are, at times, almost comical in their disparity.

Within his self-considerations, Victor splits himself between the valiant hero and the degraded wretch. As Vaknin (2003) describes, the narcissist, “directs their love

(libido) to other people's impressions of him. ... The narcissist maintains this projected image and invests resources and energy in it" (p. 28). The ego is split into a "True self" and a "False self" or self-image that is marked with a kind of grandiosity. The grandiosity services to protect the True self from a critical or sadistic super-ego (ibid. 190) and in that sense narcissistic megalomania serves an important function. This state of affairs is not, however, easily sustained.

The narcissist is portrayed as a monster, a ruthless and exploitative person. Yet, inside, the narcissist suffers from a chronic lack of confidence and is fundamentally dissatisfied. On the outside, his is a vicissitudinal nature. This is far from reflecting the barren landscape of misery and fears that constitutes his soul. His tumultuous behaviour covers up for a submissive, depressive interior. (ibid. p. 32)

In this sense, perhaps, Victor is not guilty of being self-serving, or of excess self-love. Rather, he likely experiences his "True self" as a fundamental sense of lack or emptiness.

Victor's apparent self-serving actions are, in fact, a symptom of a broader narcissistic psychological structure. Freud's position, as described by Samuels (1986/2005), splits narcissism into two varieties:

...primary narcissism was a love for oneself, or an investment of one's own body with libido which preceded the capacity to relate to and love others. *Secondary* narcissism is the gathering into the self of the entire object world, or a failure to recognize the separateness of self and objects from each other. (p. 97)

The narcissist's inability to direct libido toward external objects is critical. The result of this lack of libido investment of the world of others is that, "every time he gets close to

another person, he gets scared and has to run away” (Sennet , 1977, p. 71-72, quoted in Kerstner, p. 68). The terror that is an intrinsic aspect of connecting with other human beings is not capable of being overcome, and so the person afflicted with secondary narcissism is unable to make real connections. Rather, he experiences boredom or unfeeling neutrality in such situations.

The inability to engage with others leads further to a sense of duplicity or illegitimacy. The narcissist understands that there is something apparently lacking in his experience, and as a result feels the most dead and illegitimate in situations when being recognized by another, the very situation which should result in feelings of being valued. In fact, “...the person caught in this bind feels that those who try to get close to him are violating him, giving him no room to breathe; and so he flees, on to the next person who is idealized as perfect until he or she begins to care” (ibid).

The flight described above is compellingly captured in the classical myth of Narcissus. In a groundbreaking essay by Gerard Genette (1966), the author makes the crucial point that the structure that the narcissist relies upon for stability is fundamentally fluid:

In this image of himself over which he bends, Narcissus does not discover in its resemblance a sufficient security... it is a fleeing image, an image in *flight*, because the element which carries it and constitutes it is consecrated in essence to vanishing. Water is the place of all the treacheries and all the inconstancies: in the reflection which faces him, Narcissus can neither identify himself without anxiety nor love without danger. (p. 21-22, quoted in Kerstner, p. 70)

The dynamic quality of water here matches the lightness of flight. While the healthy ego is characterized by a relatively fixed identity, the reliance of the narcissist on the opinions of others to constantly feed his external image undermines that sense of stability.

It is here that the most obvious thematic observations can be made with regard to Victor. The storyline of the novel describes a series of pursuits and flights. The opening scenes involve Robert Walton's ill-fated search for a route to the pole of the earth. Victor's scientific search for truth as well as for applications to improve the human lot are similarly proud pursuits which culminate in tragedy. The motif of flight takes its gothic turn with the creature, who both pursues and is pursued by Victor. Despite Victor's close connections with a friend, Henry Clerval and his engagement to his childhood friend, Elizabeth, Victor strives to create another that establishes what he lacks and, for that reason, is attractive. Like Narcissus, gazing into the waters of a river, Victor longs for an Other or a "*double*, that is to say at the same time an *other* and a *same*" (Kestner, p. 69).

There is a further level of complexity to the narcissism captured in this story. As Genette notes of the myth of Narcissus, "The Self is confirmed, but under the species of the Other: the mirror image is a perfect symbol of alienation" (p. 71). Kestner outlines the way in which the very structure of the myth further elaborates the themes of narcissism by showing how the *image speculaire*, or narcissistic double, is rendered structurally in a *mis en abyme* ("to throw into an abyss"), or structure of enclosed narratives.

The nested narratives of *Frankenstein* are all enclosed in the form of an epistolary novel, which starts with the explorer Robert Walton as he writes back to his sister from

near the pole. Walton happens upon Victor on foot, and convinces him to tell his tale. In the midst of the telling, Victor relates how he was confronted by the Creature on the sea of ice, and hears from the Creature the story of all that happened since they were separated. After the meeting between Victor and the creature concludes, Victor's tale continues where the Creature's leaves off, ending eventually when Victor dies on Walton's ship, and the Creature makes it's way farther North to immolate himself, leaving Walton to return to England, defeated by the poles and the loss of his friend, Victor.

In this way, the writing of Walton, edited in part by Victor, encloses all of Victor's narrative. Victor's story, in turn, almost entirely encloses the life of the Creature. With very few exceptions that seem almost to prove the general case, the frame narrative structure is maintained throughout the work. The nested structure allows for a sense of depth. Shelly creates multiple levels of her story, each looking to the others, simultaneously conveying the split nature of narcissism. By setting these narratives within one another, Shelly creates the potential for a level of compensatory grandiosity looking in upon insufficiency, or a "True self" and a self-image, in Vaknin's way of speaking. The structure further allows for the sense of reflection and mutual seeking that is central to narcissistic experience. Genette notes, "Narcissus contemplates in the water another Narcissus who is more Narcissus than himself, and this other is an abyss" (p. 21).

In support of the mirroring, nested structure, we also see substantial commonalities between Walton, Victor and the Creature. They are, all three, terribly isolated and lonely men. Walton strives to hold his sailors to his own purpose, and sets himself apart as an isolated executive over the group. Victor, obviously, engages his

egoistic purposes alone, and conspicuously remains solitary in the pursuit of the Creature, even setting himself apart on his wedding night. The Creature's own isolation, perhaps the most poignant for not being self-imposed, is the constant source of his own anguish.

Each of the men, further, engages more often and deeply with books and is often portrayed as a reader. The Creature, for his part, gains his substantial insight from a very deliberately selected set of texts: *Paradise Lost*, *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, and Plutarch's *Lives*. As Joyce Carol Oates notes, "He reads Milton's great epic as if it were a 'true history' giving the picture of an omnipotent God warring with His creatures; he identifies himself with Adam, except so far as Adam had come forth from God a 'perfect creature, happy and prosperous'" (Oates, 1984, p.30). His over-identification with the text implies a level of grandiosity and a willingness to see himself on a cosmic stage, but equally suggests a radical form of isolation, in which there are no humans who would find his company acceptable. Victor's fascination with "out of fashion", alchemical authors and texts, in turn, sets the groundwork for his elitism and self-isolation. Each also fails in his opportunities to love another, instead expending his energies on his own directions, investing his self-images with all available libidinal energies. In conjunction with the nested structure, these similarities secure the sense of mutual mirroring; each serves as an Other and a double.

Kerstner's work further suggests the connections between these individuals in a homoerotic vein. While Walton reiterates the attractiveness of Victor in the letter to his sister, Victor pointedly chooses features for his Creature based (in part) on beauty. We see much of Victor's affection for Walton, in turn, as he encourages and opens up to his friend in his period of decline in Walton's cabin. More important to Kerstner's argument,

the homoerotic quality here is an intrinsic dimension of the narcissistic structure. Each character represents, in part, the desired object/desirable self-image of the other, and receives the appropriate libidinal interest.

In particular, the intimate connection to the Creature is very clearly elaborated and represented in a dramatic dream sequence:

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; a shroud enveloped her form, and I saw grave-worms crawling in the folds of the flannel. I started from my sleep with horror; a cold dew covered my forehead, my teeth chattered, and every limb became convulsed; when, by the dim yellow light of the moon, as it forced its way through the window shutters, I beheld the wretch - the miserable monster that I had created. (Shelley, 1818/1996, p. 35)

This passage, which has much to offer, perfectly captures the mixed attraction of the Other. The image of sister/wife, mother and monster are here all combined in a powerfully poetic and miasmatic dream event. Elizabeth is imagined in “the bloom of health,” in sharp contrast to the Creature whose yellowing skin and watery eyes necessarily recall charnel grounds. The contrast, though, is a portrayal of Victor’s internal state, torn between an idealized and a debased Other that is, in truth, himself. In addition, the transformation of Elizabeth into Victor’s dead mother suggests that Elizabeth serves as a stand-in for the maternal figure. As Freud noted, the narcissist with homoerotic tendencies has “taken as a model not [his] mother but [his] own self”

(Kerstner, 1981, p. 79) and so the final appearance of the Creature in the oneiric chain of signifiers suggests that he is Victor's ultimate narcissistic Other and object of desire.

The night of Victor's wedding serves as the culmination of the story's horror, and solidifies the narcissistic analysis. Elizabeth and Victor's nuptials, set in place years earlier at the behest of his dying mother, had been consistently deferred in favor of his studies first, then his work and his efforts to address the demands of the Creature. In spite of this long delay, however, Victor is unable to be present to his wife. He is full of foreboding, recollecting the promise of the Creature, "Remember, I will be with you on your wedding night" (Shelly, 1818/1996, p. 116), and fearing that the Creature will appear to take his own life. His inability to conceive that the Creature's promise or curse might not be related to him leads to Elizabeth's untimely death.

Kerstner makes the point that this incident represents Victor's unconscious desire for Elizabeth to be dead, to prevent her from interfering with fuller consummation of his self-desire. Further, her death at the hands of the narcissistic Other/Creature represents the abortion of a potentially healthy separation of the ego-libido and object-libido. That is, Elizabeth's death forecloses the possibility of Victor creating a human connection, and ensures that the dance that Victor and the Creature are engaged in can continue unabated.

While Elizabeth's death implies the lost hope for Victor's extraction from the narcissistic complex or abyss (*abyme*), the turning point in the overall narrative is more closely connected to the Creature's self-recognition. After discovering and reading his creator's journal, the Being (a gentler designation for the Creature) is poignantly horrified at his own physical appearance. He rages against the creator that doomed him to his life:

God, in pity made man beautiful and alluring, after his own image; but my form is a filthy type of yours, more horrid even from the very resemblance... I cherished hope, it is true; but it vanished when I beheld my person reflected in the water. (Shelly, 1831, p. 157).

It is at this moment that the Creature is most fully revealed as miserable and pathetic, and equally revealed that Victor has taken the role of an unjust god, having done such an injustice to his creation. One imagines that this moment, too, created an impression on Walton as he sat listening to the tale and perhaps gave him pause in terms of his own dangerously aggrandizing mission. This moment, which is the height of the first meeting between the articulate Creature and his maker, finalizes the *mis en abyme*, which collapses outward, revealing to each participant their miserable status. This moment represents the end of each participant's false hopes.

Shelly's great novel arguably "constitutes one of the greatest explorations of pathological narcissism" (Kerstner, 1981, p. 69), and represents a broad range of narcissistic themes both in its content and structure. The text explores themes of both grandiosity and insufficiency, flight, the instability of reflections and identity, and relational difficulties. These themes speak in a way that is not only dramatically compelling, but philosophically robust and poetically rich. The mirror image, an ideal symbol of intrapersonal and interpersonal alienation, serves structurally to reinforce these ideas. The psychoanalytic analysis of *Frankenstein*, particularly focusing on the narcissistic images and themes, provides a solid foundation for understanding what Shelly is implying about technology. In particular, it shows the manner in which

technological innovation, as an act of creation, has the potential to suffer from a narcissistic sensibility and a lack of a grounding feminine principle.

*Daemonic Choices*

“Victor: There is something at work in my soul that I do not understand.”

(Branagh, 1994)

The analyses undertaken by Kerstner, Sennett, Genette, and others who utilize psychoanalytically oriented literary analysis, reveal a rich array of insights into the interplay of psyches and characters. This style of analysis adroitly uncovers the unconscious dynamics that drive the action in *Frankenstein*, as well as suggesting ways of understanding the implications for our primary topic, the lived meaning of technology. However, this psychoanalytic approach tends also to suggest a level of passivity. Rather than conceiving of the action as related to the character’s choices, a psychoanalytic understanding gives a sense that there is little that the characters might have done differently. Said another way, the psychoanalytic approach may confuse the inflexible fate of *moira* with the more malleable *ananke*. In contrast, a more depth psychological and existentially oriented approach informed by writers such as Adams (2001), frame issues more in terms of opportunities for change.

The basis of Adams’ exploration is that Mary Shelly’s *demon* can be more completely understood not as that negative spirit of Christian theology, but rather as a *daimon*. As described by Hillman (1989), *daimones* are guardian spirits. They are far more neutral than the negatively aligned demons with whom they can be confused. Hillman notes in particular that *daimones* can be articulated through images, and when

fully realized, they can have the status of a *psychopomp* or “a figure which guides the soul in times of initiation or transition” (Samuels, 1986/2005, p. 122).

As a guide, however, Shelly’s daimon is neither entirely in service to Victor’s ego, nor is it somehow acting in a way that is independent of Victor. Rather, the daimon is informed by the fundamental psychoanalytic notion of the “return of the repressed.” Just as symptoms, jokes, dreams, or parapraxes might be taken by Freud to be representations of unaddressed conflicts or disassociated and disowned psychic contents, the daimon in Mary Shelly’s story comes to Victor, and to us, in order to convey a message that needs to be heard. It represents an opportunity to listen to the soul and to move forward, not in the sense of fulfilling an egoistic agenda, but rather in the sense of filling out the fullness of lived experience.

There are psychic experiences that are unpleasant, such as grief and grief or the sense of insufficiency. Yet, they are experiences that, in a manner of speaking, want to be had. To fulfill that end, if they are not initially accepted, they persist, returning over and over until their message is received and integrated. In the process, they can create much misery; a variety of manifestations of the repressed can be excruciating and persistent to a degree that we categorize them as mental “illness” or psychopathology, such as depression. In the same way, Frankenstein’s Creature is unwilling to let Victor be. He persistently seizes opportunities to visit his creator, resistant to Victor’s demands that he desist.

Adams (2001) quotes the existential psychologist, Rollo May, “The daimonic is potentially creative and destructive at the same time” (p. 62). The daimon represents a magnitude of psychic energy as well as a tendency, but how we take it up is an ongoing

matter of choice. It is, “a force that must be conquered in order that it can become one’s ally, but which, if it is not conquered, becomes a scary monster” (Dooling, 1981, p. 86). In the end, however, the daimon’s message will be heard, or it will create further suffering to convey its meaning. The daimon can therefore be seen as an opportunity to integrate and benefit from repressed energies and, welcome or not, for us to meet the needs we are called to face.

The daimonic nature of the Creature is directly related to his troubling, uncanny quality. He has a tendency to suddenly appear, shocking and terrifying his creator, particularly in moments where he has been most forgotten. Freud describes the sense of uncanniness as occurring when something is “nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old – established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression” (Freud, 1955, p. 220). The Creature in its role as the uncanny reminds Victor of what he has forgotten and cannot face, including disowned components of his *psyche* and past experiences. These aspects include his struggles with the dramatic loss of his mother, his inability to grieve, and his isolation from others.

In the end, however, much of the psychological suffering that the Creature represents, and the psychological suffering that he is most literally intended to address, is the ever-present potential for death. Similarly, Heidegger (1953/1996) notes, “This uncanniness constantly pursues *Dasein* and threatens its everyday lostness in the they” (p. 189). As with Heidegger’s idea of thrownness, Victor disowns the possibility of death by allowing himself to be possessed by the cultural dream of immortality and narcissistic megalomania. In this way, he also loses sight of the possibility for authentic and deliberate ethical choices with regard to the Creature. The persisting visits by the

Creature serve to remind him in no uncertain terms of both of these possibilities, although Victor puts all of his efforts into escaping from the reminder, and eventually doing away with it.

As Hillman (1989) notes when discussing black, urban dream figures, “anxiety, as we have known ever since Freud, signals the return of the repressed. . . . They represent death; the repressed is death. And death dignifies them” (p. 262). Clearly, the threat of personal destruction, existential challenges to our sense of self and our belief systems, and the mortality of all of our loved ones are tremendously frightening and anxiety producing. Threats such as these serve as the foundation for the complex maladaptiveness of psychological pathology. Yet, as Adams points out, they also represent tremendous potential for change, transformation, and more specifically, re-integration.

In the case of Victor, however, these potentials remain unactualized. The degree of repression that he exhibits is dramatic. Unlike the monster that appears in most film recreations, the Creature is profound, articulate, and emotionally compelling. Even at birth, he reaches out for his creator in a gesture that is easy to imagine is tender and needy as an infant, but Victor experiences that reach as demanding and constraining. Later, after having gained language, the Creature again confronts Victor, and here he is philosophically sophisticated, compassionate, and clear. Yet, he continues to be invisible to Victor. “The monster’s complete invisibility at the close suggests the degree to which Victor’s own inner world remains unspeakable” (Zimmerman, 2003, p. 227). In spite of his many words, Victor never speaks of his deepest pains including, most poignantly, the death of his mother.

Instead, Victor strenuously denies death. He intellectualizes the dying process, pridefully noting that he had no fear of charnel grounds and saw no significance in the materials that they contained. He notes, “Life and death appeared to me ideal bounds, which I should first break through to pour a torrent of light into our dark world” (Shelly, 1818/1996, p. 32). He further “deadens himself” by dedicating himself solely to the project, first of study, then of the creation of life. Even before the Creature is revived, Victor experiences the daemonic in this relentless force driving him to confront death in a literal form over and over. Treating himself as a machine, he labors without sleep, processing the flesh of the recently dead.

My cheek had grown pale with study and my person had become emaciated with confinement. . . . Who shall conceive the horrors of my secret toil, as I dabbled among the unhallowed damp of the grave, or tortured the living animal to animate the lifeless clay. (p. 32)

We never see Victor truly grieving; he jumps almost immediately to raging at death, rationalizing it, attempting to systematically circumvent and repair it, but never taking the grief to heart. In a very tangible way, he *daemonizes* death, creating his creature from the dead limbs of others. While he dis-members himself symbolically, he re-members a corpse (Romanyshyn, 1989, p. 162), creating a living memory of death that literally follows and haunts him.

While Victor persists in his spirited (but not *soulful*) path forward, we do not need to look far for an alternate model. Mary Shelly, herself, wrote *Frankenstein* in the context of great loss. Her own mother died giving birth, and her half-sister, Fanny, as well Percy Shelly’s wife, Harriet, both committed suicide. Mary’s relationship with

Shelly may have had much to do with both suicides, and about all three deaths, Mary felt terrible guilt. Further, Mary Shelly's first child died when Mary was 17 years old. These deaths all occurred before the writing of *Frankenstein*, when Mary was 18 years old. Incidentally, between the two publications of the book, she also lost her second and third children, her husband and nearly lost her own life in a miscarriage. Without doubt, loss was a central feature of Shelly's early life. Yet, as Adams points out, she makes much of mourning. As Victor makes use of literal body parts, Mary Shelly makes use of her pen and the *memento mori*, to create a tale that, in fact, serves others. "Frankenstein is a beautiful example of the immense human potential for resiliency, sublimation, creativity and healing" (Adams, p. 74). While Victor remains an object of the "blind push" of a hypomanic defense, Shelly sublimates her guilt, grief and anguish into art.

#### *Technological Themes*

The driven, relentless pace of Victor's efforts sharply recall the primary purpose of the current work. Like the turbines of the imminent industrial revolution, Victor is "driven." He notes, "Unless I had been animated by an almost supernatural enthusiasm, my application to the study would have been... almost intolerable" (Shelly, 1818/1996, p. 30). Yet, as a scientist, Victor is distinguished by more than simply being driven. He also espouses and is initially dedicated to unusual scientific theories. Shelly, in fact, makes a particular point of Victor's anachronistic alchemical orientation. On first meeting Professor Krempe, his new instructor quips:

In what desert land have you lived, where no one was kind enough to inform you that these fancies ... are a thousand years old, and as musty as they are ancient? I

little expected in this enlightened and scientific age to find a disciple of Albertus Magnus and Paracelsus. (p. 26)

While Victor seems accepting of these criticisms, they do unmoor him, setting him afloat in a sea of new possibilities. Victor notes, “The ambition of the inquirer now seemed to limit itself to the annihilation of those visions on which my interest in science was chiefly founded. I was required to exchange chimeras of boundless grandeur for realities of little worth” (p. 27). As if to reiterate the ungrieved loss of his mother, his new situation at university in Ingolstadt seems determined to take from his passion, and the theories in which he is most invested. Indeed, for a brief time, Victor has also lost the grounding of his narcissistic grandiosity in the grandeur of alchemy’s arcane vision.

The absence, however, is quickly filled. On meeting the substantially more charismatic Professor Waldman, Victor receives a new vision, which I will quote at some length, given its centrality to Victor’s new direction:

The ancient teachers of this science... promised impossibilities and performed nothing. The modern masters promise very little; they know that metals cannot be transmuted, and that the elixir of life is a chimera. But these philosophers, whose hands seem only made to dabble in dirt, and their eyes to pour over the microscope or crucible, have indeed performed miracles. They penetrate into the recesses of nature, and shew how she works in her hiding places. They ascent into the heavens; they have discovered how the blood circulates, and the nature of the air we breathe. They have acquired new and almost unlimited powers; they can command the thunder of heaven, mimic the earthquake, and even mock the invisible world with its own shadow. (p. 28)

Waldman's words are embraced enthusiastically by Victor and engage all of the energy of his daimonic motivations.

These words are deeply reminiscent also of Francis Bacon who, in the seventeenth century, founded the epistemology of a new world-view on the detailed observation of nature, and the operations of technology. The powerful connection between Victor and Bacon is made even more clear when Shelly describes his nocturnal studies: "One secret which I alone possessed was the hope to which I had dedicated myself, and the moon gazed on my midnight labours, while, with unrelaxed and breathless eagerness, I pursued nature to her hiding places"(p. 32). This description of a seduction of nature, or her rape, is startlingly reminiscent of infamous sections of Bacon's *New Organon* which refer to the need to vex, prod and torture Nature into confessing her secrets" (Roszak, 2001, p. 143). Victor's change of direction is consistent with and, indeed, emblematic of the shift in the application and understanding of the role of technology in terms of an agenda of control and domination of the natural world.

While the seduction of Nature is the stated mode of Baconian science, at times it seems that the scientist himself is seduced or dominated. As Adams points out Victor seems to be totally engrossed or obsessed with arriving at a technological solution to his pain, distress, and the more general "problem" of death. As noted, his focus on finding a solution is particularly dangerous in that it precludes coming to terms with the condition of being human, and the mortality of those he loves. As he commences work on his great project, he reveals his physicalist biases, noting "a church-yard was to me merely the receptacle of bodies deprived of life, which, from being the seat of beauty and strength, had become food for the worm" (1818/1896, p. 31).

In the film, *Mary Shelly's Frankenstein* (1994), the director and actor Kenneth Branagh delivers a line not in the original text, but which captures this tendency. When asked by the Creature of what men he is comprised, he answers, "Just materials" (Branagh, 1994). On one hand, this recalls the Romantic poet, William Wordsworth, who wrote of a physicalist acquaintance:

In vain through every changeful year  
Did Nature lead him as before  
A primrose by the river's brim  
A yellow primrose was to him  
and it was nothing more. (Wordsworth, 1819/2009)

This brief verse captures the substantial error in reducing an object to its genus and species; in doing so one removes the thing from its relationships and the webs of signification which make it *meaningful*. In a more contemporary vein, the neutrality of Victor's response in the film also suggests the idea of "standing reserve," in Heidegger's "The Question Concerning Technology" (1954/1977). Although this thought would be anachronistic as if attributed to Shelly, Branagh's modification adroitly captures a philosophically sensible result and is coherent with the spirit of Victor's view.

Victor makes statements about the meaninglessness of the body that transcend merely being socially unconventional. They speak to an understanding of the world and a fundamental epistemology that is characteristic of technological rationality in which matter is merely empty matter. At the same time, however, he shows other attitudes which differ from the rationality that we stereotypically attribute to scientists. For

instance, in one of his last discussions with Walton, Victor notes, “But this thought [of his youthful glory], which supported me in the commencement of my career, now serves only to plunge me lower in the dust. All my speculations and hopes are as nothing, and like the archangel who aspired to omnipotence, I am chained in an eternal hell. . . . Even now, I cannot recollect without passion my reveries while the work was incomplete. I trod heaven in my thoughts, now exulting in my powers, now burning with the ideas of their effects” (Shelly, 1818/1936, p. 147). His reference to the heavens is revealing. Even after the suffering that he has created through his creation, as well as his personal suffering, he is drawn into the compelling grandeur of his narcissistic vision. Although the statements at the start of the quotations indicate his current misery, they, too, are superhuman in their magnitude. His reference to the archangel who aspired to omnipotence, recalling Lucifer’s fall in *Paradise Lost*, is equally descriptive of Prometheus, his spiritual ancestor.

The deific quality that Victor attributes to his existence becomes increasingly evident as the story moves forward. Notions of seeking out arcane powers, however, are present quite early on. In Kerstner’s (1981) view, the “magic” that is implicated in the alchemical writings of Albertus Magnus, Paracelsus and other alchemical writers, is a form of megalomania that is a clear indication of the narcissistic character structure. Similarly, after the death of Elizabeth and Victor’s father, before leaving Geneva on his three-year pursuit of vengeance, Victor visits the graveyard, kneels, kisses the dirt, and swears:

By the sacred earth on which I kneel, by the shades that wander near me, by the deep and eternal grief that I feel, I swear and by thee, O Night, and by the spirits

that preside over thee, I swear to pursue the daemon, who caused this misery, until he or I shall perish. . . . And I call on you, spirits of the dead; and on you, wandering ministers of vengeance, to aid and conduct me on my way. (p. 140)

His further notes that the solemnity of his prayers are choked by rage and that “the furies possessed me.”

Especially when considered in contrast to Victor’s earlier statements specifically denying the existence of spirits, this passage is dramatic. Adams refers to it as a moment of psychotic defensiveness. While it may be that Victor resorts to magical thinking in response to his pain and in this way symbolically brings his loved ones back. This is not, however, an opening to a broader world of meaning or, even less, an integration of grief. It is only now that his dearest ones are dead that he can share his thoughts with them. Victor’s perception that they approve of his direction is an ego-syntonic reinforcement of his continued egoistic direction.

Romanyshyn (1989) suggests that the fantasy of technology is, in fact, not the only available path. In his own work, he suggests a variety of “paths of return,” including the artistic style of impressionism and a broader appreciation of depression. Shelly, herself, gives hints around the areas which might serve to partially redeem Victor. These are points where Victor might have re-evaluated his direction, or attended to his experience with greater sensitivity. By extension, these moments might also serve as shelters from a perspective on the world that is dominated by technological rationality.

#### *Missed Opportunities for Redemption*

From the perspective of technology, the greatest shift in Victor’s direction is not when he chooses to create life so much as when he becomes focused in a direction that is

more positivistic and consistent with contemporary science. Prior to this time, his fascination is with the exploration of alchemical thinkers. Shelly conspicuously suggests that Victor's interests are anomalistic. As pointed out by the instructors, Victor has "burdened his memory with exploded systems and useless names" (1831, p. 70), and has spent his time pitifully exploring systems of science that are obsolete.

While Victor does set aside his alchemical explorations at that moment, he is marked by those studies. He remains attracted to his questionable understanding of their goals of immortality and power, and his reticence around the new material sciences is founded in his sense of their limitations with regard to the same goals. Inspired by the paeon of Professor Krempe, Victor's project brings together the spirit and aspiration of an alchemical work with the new methodological discipline of positivistic science. Shelly may be suggesting that, while the combination of these two worldviews are what brings about Victor's eventual doom, that the alchemical vision supplies the vision and grandiose desire that turn the power of science to horror.

Alternately, Shelly may have been pointing to the specific and predominant role of material science in the ensuing horror. When Victor embraces scientific materialism, he literalizes the alchemical work and goals. A contemporary, Jungian interpretation of the alchemical project would eschew this kind of literality. As noted by psychologist and analyst Stanton Marlan (2006):

Jung concluded that the alchemists were speaking in symbols about the human soul and were working as much with the imagination as with the literal materials of their art. The gold that they were trying to produce was not the common or

vulgar gold but an *aurum non vulgi*... They were concerned with both the creation of the higher man and the perfection of nature. (p. 263)

Attributing the thoughts of contemporary Jungians to Shelly may be anomalistic in its own way. She may not have understood the alchemical project in terms of projection, the process of individuation, fields of relatedness or the phenomenal description of *psyche* (ibid). However, especially given Goethe's detailed elaboration of an alchemical journey as soul-work in *Faust, Part I* just ten years earlier, Shelly would at least have been aware of the poetic potential of the field. In any case, as we consider the potential alternatives to Victor's single-minded and overly literal approach to technology, perhaps a more nuanced and flexible ontology would be helpful in maintaining balance. Alchemy as a contemporary psychological and soulful pursuit could serve as a centerpiece for such an approach.

Just as Victor's overly literal scientific world-view precludes a poetic or metaphorical understanding of alchemical goals, it also suggests a utilitarian attitude toward the natural world. As noted earlier, Victor almost certainly would embrace the Baconian approach to science, with all that implies about the mute, neutral character of Nature itself. Supporting this point, Adams (2001) quotes Heidegger (1952/1977), "The world changes into an object. In this revolutionary objectifying of everything that is, the earth... itself can sow itself only as the object of assault. ... Nature appears everywhere... as the object of technology" (p. 84).

Even for Victor, however, the world is broader than implied in this science. On numerous occasions, as Victor travels with Clerval, or as he pursues the Creature, he

soliloquizes on the beauty of the natural world, and takes comfort in it in the manner of a Romantic poet. Even near the end of his life, Watson observes:

Even broken in spirit as he is, no one can feel more deeply than he does the beauties of nature. The starry sky, the sea, and every sight afforded by these wonderful regions, seems still to have the power of elevating his soul from earth. Such a man has a double existence: he may suffer misery and be overwhelmed by disappointments; yet when he has retired into himself, he will be like a celestial spirit, that has a halo around him, within whose circle no grief or fully ventures. (Shelly, 1831, p. 48)

At these times, it seems that in addition to providing Victor with materials, (Branagh's 'Just materials'), the natural world also provides him with a comfort. It is worth noting as well, though, that Victor's self-torture and comfort constitute a rather extreme polarity. Victor is either underground, or elevated into the clouds. He does not retire with others, but "into himself." When Victor takes refuge in Nature, he is not deeply engaged with the natural world, with his feet on the ground, so much as he is viewing it from a removed and elevated perspective. Hillman (1978) describes the difference between the spiritual attitude and that of the psyche in terms of the spiritually rarified, abstract and concentrated dimension of peaks, as opposed to the concrete and multiple realm of the psyche. Victor's experience of Nature, described as "the elevation of his soul from the earth, is strongly aligned with the spiritual dimension. This telling metaphor recalls the fantasies of escape in Romanyshyn (1989) as well as the struggle of narcissistic disconnection.

Another area of potential redemption is surprisingly secreted within a previously examined idea. In particular, while the notion of narcissistic character structure has been saddled with much of the blame for Victor's folly, there is an opening for positive dimensions arising from it as well. As noted in Samuels (1986/2005), narcissism has been "recognized by many psychoanalysts as a condition which persists throughout life and which may take on a healthy or unhealthy tone depending on the circumstances" (p. 87). As noted, narcissism is characterized by a strong sense of isolation, and a toxic internal conflict between grandiosity and melancholia. However, it is equally true that narcissism often provides a level of function and, in that sense, a support for the process of psychic individuation. In support of this positive potential, Samuels notes that the self-psychology developed by the analyst Heinz Kohut relies upon an idea of the Self that is similar in some ways to that of Jung's analytic psychology. To be clear, these two notions of the Self are structurally and functionally differentiated. For instance, Jung's incorporates the external influence of archetypes, whereas Kohut's is a largely internalized but consistent sense of one's own experience. They are, however, both overarching structures which guide the maturation processes through which humans come into themselves. The independent theoretical derivation of Jung's sense of Self, in Samuel's view, suggests that narcissistic states may credibly fill a role in a healthy developmental path by providing a structural connection to transpersonal sources of meaning.

*Common Themes in Prometheus Bound and Frankenstein*

*Creation and unintended consequences.*

Of the themes that are relevant to the myth of Prometheus, there are some that are also clearly appropriate to this “New Prometheus.” For instance, the idea of the “creation of man (sic)” is a theme that runs through both stories. In the case of Prometheus, while there are other legends that connect him with the literal creation of humankind, the myth that we have been exploring has him radically changing the lot of humankind in such a way that a new race is created. The means and concerns of this new race are substantively different than those of the pathetic creature Prometheus first found.

Victor Frankenstein’s creation of a race is more obviously problematized. In a moment of particular grandiosity, Victor notes:

Life and death appeared to me ideal bounds, which I should first break through and pour a torrent of light into our dark world. A new species would bless me as its creator and source; many happy and excellent natures would owe their being to me. No father could claim the gratitude of his child so completely as I should deserve theirs. (Shelley, 1818/1996, p. 80)

This desire to be both the father and mother of a new race is somewhere between the high-handed principles of Prometheus, and a more base motivation such as Shakespeare’s Caliban, who desired to “people this isle with Calibans” (Shakespeare, 1974, p. 1616). Victor’s own conception of an improved human, safe from the ravages of death, is further mirrored in his own relentless self-demands; Victor treats himself as a productive machine. He also approaches the creation of his creature as if it were a machine, created of components, with little consideration of the implications of creating a conscious soul.

In both cases, the heroic motivation to improve the lot of humankind is somehow twisted. Prometheus is benevolent, although at times it seems that his motivation is more around confronting the powers that be. The result of his gift, in addition to the very real benefits of technology, is the suffering that accompanies false hope. Victor's gift goes awry through his own failings in a more obvious manner, serving as a warning against quite so egoistic a motivation. In both cases, too, these side effects might be unintended consequences, which is surely one of the most distinct disadvantages of much technical innovation.

There is little reason to think that technological innovation is malignant in its motivation. The inventors of the processes that produce greenhouse gases, or carcinogenic food additives were, most likely, not intentionally creating products that were hazardous, much less ones that would change the climate of the planet or contribute to the deaths of numerous people. Like Victor, in particular, their basic motivations were, taken abstractly, admirable. Perhaps, then, it is more the fundamental mode of Promethean inquiry which forever leads us into false hopes. The idea of "unintended consequences" speaks sharply to the idea of Prometheus' foresight. While Prometheus sees the future, he rushes into actions without fully appreciating potential implications. In the same way, technological innovation can "turn on us," and create negative effects that we do not expect.

It is worth noting that Victor's struggle to create life using himself as a kind of first principle and creator is a response to concerns that are so basic and ancient as to be archetypal. The desire not to be alone, to in some way offset death, and to exercise creative power in order to fulfill these desires provides the fundamental motivation for

such basic human functions as parenthood and religion. Even Jungian psychological thought, in its own way, attempts to reveal human meaning in a way that exceeds the domain of any individual person and in so doing, to expand the range of individual possibilities. What is it that occurs in this specific piece of literature that suggests that this archetypal search is in some way distorted in this case?

It is virtually an article of faith in Victor's world that progress is a virtuous end, but that this dream of Frankenstein to create immortality is false. The story has come to be viewed as a fundamentally pathological attempt to overreach what is appropriate to human strivings. There is something facile as well as tautological, however, about stating that Victor's efforts are pathological or, alternately, sinful, simply because they are hubristic. If, instead, we assume that the technical challenge of immortality is not in fact out of practical reach, would we still have grounds to condemn Victor's efforts?

The search for solutions to the fundamental human concern of mortality is not, in itself, problematic. The concern raised by this work is not the goal of immortality itself, but rather the attitude from which it is approached. The technological approach that Victor takes to the threat of death is simply unbalanced. Like the myth of the Tower of Babel, the human goal is cast in overly simple terms. The concentrated effort to achieve a specific goal, whether it is new life or a tower to the heavens, misses the broader meaning of the endeavor. The focus on creating a specific, concrete result in some way blinds the creator to alternatives and broader implications.

The critical question, then, is one of depth. Efforts to engage with questions of human meaning, life, and death are best thought of as broadenings of the question. The technological approach, instead, assumes that the answer is to be found in surmounting a

specific technical challenge, and all of the energies of the investigator are focused on the single point. A religious or psychological approach aims instead to expand the question and to put it into the context of other aspects of human life. In Victor's case, it is noteworthy that he struggles with the technical problem alone and indeed against the sanctions of the scientific community itself. Victor bends his will to the technological problem and leaves the implicit motives and drivers hidden beneath the surface. It is these unthematized considerations that would be the object of religious or psychological attention. When under the influence of the spirit of technology as an inflation as opposed to as a broader archetype, these other elements remain hidden.

*False hopes and gratitude.*

In a closely related set of themes, the ideas of gratitude and false hopes are central in each story. The idea of gratitude, and the desire for gratitude, colors situations in both works and is closely associated with the idea of the gift. Yet, as with the gift, the idea of gratitude is often tainted or undermined by the presence of false hopes. An example might serve to clarify. As noted in the previous passage, Victor imagines his creation of a new kind of being as virtuous, and deserving of immense, godlike gratitude. The creature, however, has a different perspective on the gift. On seeing his own image, he notes that the hopes he held for a life in community have been shattered. Without a doubt, Victor, too, felt horrible disappointment and the deflation of his own grand hopes on first seeing the Creature alive. Even Walton, on giving up his hopes of reaching the pole, shows false hopes.

In *Prometheus Bound* as well, the idea of hope appears in several places. Most obviously, false hope is an aspect of Prometheus' primary gift to humankind. More

concretely, Prometheus gives a kind of mixed message of hope to Io. In her case, he gives hope that she will one day give rise to a great power that will unseat Zeus, however the hope is colored by the need for her first to persist through years of continuous suffering. Prometheus own fate, when taken in light of his crucial service to Zeus, is another likely instance of hope gone awry, as he surely expected to be better rewarded. The trope of shattered hope and false hope run through both stories.

The various instances of false hope noted stand to modify or disrupt possibilities for gratitude. In the absence of hope, the Creature is unable to be the kind and grateful citizen of Victor's new race. Victor's own lost hope in his ability to create a beautiful creature leads to his obsession with violent retribution. Even Prometheus' lack of gratitude toward the gods, in particular to the source of the fire that he gives humankind, leads to his own confinement and remorse. The lack of gratitude in both circumstances suggest that gratitude around issues of technology may be a broader theme.

Stroud and Bachelard both hint that the Prometheus complex offsets the possibility of gratitude. Promethean innovation is always looking at the next challenge to conquer, and so rarely takes the time to stop in gratitude for what is already present. The future orientation of technology that is inspired by Prometheus at least partially precludes the possibility of a more open and receptive attitude to the present. This recalls Heidegger's (1953/1996) description of the structure of Dasein as care.

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger describes the tripartite structure of Dasein. While, in general, this structure is not clearly thematized, at moments and, in particular, in a state of anxiety, Dasein can be seen as constituted by facticity, existentiality and fallenness. The thrownness of Dasein, which constitutes the character of facticity, circumscribes

Dasein in terms of its ultimate end. The ultimate anxiety associated with the very structure and quality of Dasein, then, leads to fallenness, which is the manner in which Dasein loses itself in the projects and chatter of the they-self. Of these projects, perhaps the most compelling is the project of evading mortality which can preclude an authentic relationship with objects or with Dasein itself (Heidegger, 1953/1996.) The perpetual distraction of Dasein in this way can structurally preclude the possibility of pausing in gratitude, which requires a pause in the chatter, which Heidegger refers to as *reticence* (p. 154,) and a moment in which Dasein authentically appreciates itself as a revealing.

*The loss of the feminine/maternal.*

As noted previously, the wisdom of Prometheus and, in particular, his understanding of *moira*/fate is based on his receptivity to the feminine wisdom and insight of Themis, his mother. Prometheus' relationship with female figures is further expanded by his openness to the understanding nature-spirits associated with minor waterways, the daughters of Oceanus, and again in his relationship with the tortured and needy mother-figure, Io. Just as Prometheus is associated with an openness to a variety of feminine figures, so Victor excludes a range of similar figures. He is unable to maintain an authentic connection with the feelings he holds for his mother after she dies, and eschews the acceptance of grief. Similarly, he rejects ongoing connections with Elizabeth in spite of his avowal of love for her. Both Prometheus and Victor relate to the feminine in a manner that is generalized rather than particular.

The strong influence of these feminine figures suggests that Prometheus and Victor may be relating more to archetypes than to individuals. As analyst Erich Neumann (1963/1972) suggests, "This dynamic component (i.e. the archetype) of the

unconscious has a compelling character for the individual who is directed by it, and it is always accompanied by a strong emotional component” (p. 4.) Yet the actual emotional component that underlies the archetypal dynamic varies. While it is simple to group these very different feminine characters together, Bolen (1984) describes the participation of women in the archetype as “a theory based on observing the *diversity* of normal variation among women” (p. 2.) Even the basic polarity of these different archetypes of the feminine vary. Hillman (1990) notes, “The signs of positive and negative that we might attribute to the kindly or terrible mother, in fact, are placed there by the fantasy of the ego... To declare a complex negative is to freeze it in hell” (p. 167.) It is, for these reasons, critical to avoid reifying the feminine into a single monolithic character and instead to continually remind ourselves of the dynamic nature of the archetypal formulations.

Yet, in spite of the diversity of figures, the principle characters seem to relate to the variety of feminine figures in a highly similar manner. Victor’s relationship with the feminine figures is, for instance, broadly problematic and distancing. The death of his mother early in life provides an impetus for the development of his obsessive fascinations. Like a bubble bursting, the end of Victor’s mother’s life creates a void, into which rush his narcissistic ambitions. He devotes his energy to the obsessions that feed his personal image, and his strenuous efforts to create this Creature that is a fantasy of immortality. Prometheus, in contrast, is largely positive in his attitude and actions in relation to these female characters. For that reason, I will be using the term feminine loosely to refer to the variety of characteristics associated with the female in these myths. In general, the characteristics of procreativity, wisdom, inclusivity, warmth, a connection

with others as well as an urge to support them, and dialog, for example, are generally attributed to female characters.

As noted in the exploration of narcissism, the Creature is a mirror in the context of Victor's narcissism. In that sense, Victor's fascination with the Creature's creation, and eventually with its destruction, that is his libidinal fascination and focus on the Creature, is masturbatory in nature. Furthermore, the constant motion that is also characteristic of narcissism matches the sense of constant, driven innovation that is so central to the technological *zeitgeist*. Finally, as suggested by the depth of the *image speculaire*, Victor is pulled into a dialog only with his own internal structure, as reflected in his mirror images. All of these characteristics, however, interfere with Victor's ability to connect with potential maternal figures, to commune with or integrate the feminine figures in his own life, or to mourn the loss mother of his youth.

From a technological perspective, the myth of Frankenstein speaks to the issue of the separation of the technologist both in terms of structure and content. The persistent pulling away from others, and self-absorption of technical fascination closes off the possibilities of relatedness that might otherwise exist. A true Other cannot be seen in the context of this narcissistic structure, and dialog cannot exist if the only partner visible is the internally held, narcissistically false image of the technical master.

*Role of the natural world.*

It is also possible to look at *Frankenstein* as a myth about the relationship to the Earth considered as a metaphorical mother. Take as an instance the placement of the entire nested narrative in the context of Walton's attempt to visit the pole. Although, as Kestner (1981) noted, the poles can be seen as the unitary goal of the narcissist as he

homo-erotically seeks out the prime phallic signifier to justify and support his singular focus. Another dimension of the same observation, though, is that the poles are the harshest environments on the planet, and a fitting metaphor for a mother that rejects. In the context of this observation, the need for technological innovation seems desirable; it is a techno-rational mindset that allows for humankind to continue to exist in spite of the harshness of Nature. Shelly sets the story in the harshest environments on the planet in order to maintain the notion that technological innovation might have its place.

Victor tracks the Creature to the pole, and serves as a reminder of the single-mindedness of the pursuit of the technical. Romanyshyn (2008) notes, “Victor Frankenstein... is an exemplar of the Spectator Mind” (p. 101), and calls out in particular his relationship to death, guilt, and the role of the feminine in creation. Romanyshyn further notes that the Creature is, “the shadow [and image] of the Spectator Mind” (ibid.), Victor’s inability to sustain his impassioned search for vengeance leaves the Creature alone at the pole. As Romanyshyn astutely suggests, the Creature’s continued presence at the pole after the story’s end provides a poignant image which illuminates the ongoing destruction of the poles through the imprudent (and impious) drive for ever more technical mastery of the planet’s resources. He writes:

And so this symptomatic personification of the Spectator Mind still lingers there in the frozen Polar Regions, at the farthest boundaries of the world, at the extreme edges of consciousness. The fire of self-immolation is still burning, and it is this fire in the unconscious of the Spectator Mind that is haunting us now in the form of the melting ice, in particular, and the global crisis of climate change, in general. (Romanyshyn, 2008, p. 103)

The setting of the first and last scenes in the book brilliantly capture an ambivalent attitude toward technology that becomes increasingly critical moving into the future.

*Conclusion to the Analysis of Frankenstein*

The Aeschylean drama, *Prometheus Bound*, can be interpreted in a way that illuminates the archetypal characteristics of innovation and the relationship with the gods. In a similar way, Shelly's *Frankenstein* portrays a more modernistic attitude toward technology and the world more broadly. A number of themes, including the role of technology in creating hope and dashed hopes, the role of gratitude, the process of creation and unintended consequences, and the relationship implied toward the feminine and to the natural world all appear in some form in both works. These aspects seem to be invariant across the two works, suggesting the potential that they are archetypal dynamics.

Shelly's work, through both its content and structure, introduces the culturally specific additional critical element of narcissism and shows the potential role of narcissistic grandeur and inflation in generating technological solutions as well as unforeseen consequences. In addition, the narcissistic dimensions of the story seem to preclude more positive possibilities for its characters. While the Creature can be seen as a daemonic messenger of the psyche, the nature of Victor's driving need for mastery seems to interfere with his ability to integrate alternatives, or alter his single-minded path forward. This dimension of the character of technology is analogous to the Titanic hubris that Prometheus displays, however it goes further by isolating the subject and is in this sense a particularly modern aspect.

Before moving forward, I would also like briefly to revisit some of the conclusions and observations of this chapter in terms of Heidegger, Marcuse and Romanyshyn. Of the three literary texts under examination, it is in *Frankenstein* that the significant observations of these thinkers are most clearly pronounced and exemplified. Even in relation to the most negative aspects of technological thinking in *Prometheus Bound*, the modern scientific paradigm that Victor Frankenstein takes as a creed is noteworthy. The creature is literally constructed from meaningful bodies reconfigured as “parts,” that is to say, resources and Heideggerian standing reserve.

Furthermore, while Aeschylus poignantly seems to recognize the hopes for immortality that go along with the gifts of technology, he also call out explicitly that the hopes are false, thereby putting a strict limit on the potential for immortality. In contrast, Victor’s efforts explicitly challenge the premise that mortality is a fundamentally human characteristic. The narcissistic character of his efforts, however, speaks to the way in which this challenge undermines his human relatedness. Heidegger designates the manner in which Dasein is delivered into the specific kind of being it is, including its mortal character, as thrownness. Thrownness is a primordial aspect and ontological quality of Dasein which renders unavoidable the complex relationship between human meaning and the ever-present possibility of death. By attempting to sidestep this limitation, Victor effectively also steps out of human relatedness.

With respect to Marcuse, *Frankenstein* further serves as an exemplar of the manner in which technological rationality is an instrumental component of programs of control and domination. In spite of Victor’s “good intentions” in terms of the service to which he considers his efforts to be directed, the technological product primarily

actualizes only its destructive potentials. In part, this occurs because Victor's relationship with the creature is never characterized by the desire for the Creature's benefit or even an interest in the Creature *per se*. The erotic connection, to the degree that it exists at all, is narcissistic and divorced from the needs of the Other. The work, furthermore, is thoroughly instrumental. For instance, Victor deliberately chooses means by which the construction of the creature is technically facilitated by the use of gigantic components, but in so doing, steps away from the aesthetically positive possibilities in no uncertain terms. His efforts are engaged in isolation also from the broader community and even from the community of scientists. Just as Victor is distanced from human relatedness through his rejection of Heideggerian thrownness, so he is distanced from community considerations and the erotic connection to life.

Romanyshyn, in turn, displays a specific interest in this story both in *Technology as Symptom and Dream* and then extended and elaborated in his more recent essay, "The Melting Polar Ice." Victor's efforts, on one hand, are efforts to escape the embodiment of human being in his seeking after immortality. Romanyshyn further shows how the "spectator eye" of modernity is further implicated in the loss of a meaningful relationship with the natural environment. The creature literally solicits Victor just as we are called upon by the environmental crisis, but in Victor's case there is no capacity to hear this solicitation or to respond in a manner that recognizes and respects the human need for deep relationships with one another and the broader world.

While in one sense the Creature is a shadow of the modernistic ideal, referred to by Romanyshyn as the Spectator Mind, he also represents a potential for fuller integration of positive potentials for creation that Victor seems unable to hear. For instance, whereas

for Prometheus, the feminine provides a key source of wisdom, particularly around the ultimate limitations of mortality, Shelly's character, Victor, fairly broadly eschews the feminine in the process of creation. The Creature's need for an accepting parental figure, or a mate, are both opportunities for Victor to adopt a more nourishing approach to the Creature, but in both cases these opportunities are rejected. This lack of adopting the feminine by Victor can further be formulated as a techno-rational attitude toward the natural world. To complete the analogy, the exclusively technological perspective is equally unable to adopt attitudes toward the natural world that are alternatives to the dominant, instrumental view of modernity.

In the following chapter, I explore a contemporary analog to the Prometheus/Frankenstein mythic cluster, the television series, *Battlestar Galactica* (Moore, 2003). Before moving to this explanation, however, I wish to explore some of the cultural elements that distinguish the Classical and Modern approaches to technology that have already been elaborated in the first two analyses.

#### *Cultural Difference: Ancient and Romantic Worldviews*

While the similarities between *Prometheus Bound* and *Frankenstein* are noteworthy, their differences are even more telling. If we assume that these works represent, among other things, the way in which humankind relates to innovation and technology, then the differences between *Prometheus Bound* and *Frankenstein* reflect the modifications that the social and cultural settings impress upon them through their authors. While the society of the Victorian era in which Mary Shelly lived and wrote was influenced by classical Greek culture, there are also very substantial differences. Berman (1981) notes that Rene Descartes and Francis Bacon, who are two philosophical thinkers

that contributed most heavily to the foundation that Romantic writers are both reacting to and working from, are “marked off quite sharply from both the world of the Greeks and that of the Middle Ages” (p. 24).

One point of difference is in their approach to the natural world and the understanding of Nature that each presupposes. While the Romantics embraced the natural world, their enthusiasm was for an idealized view of it. The poets of the Romantic movement painted pictures of words to capture what they saw as the transcendental and trans-human beauty of Nature. At the same time, however, the world around them was becoming increasingly industrialized, and the beautiful vistas of which they wrote were becoming smoky.

As noted above, the science and industry of this age was strongly influenced by the philosophies of Bacon and Descartes. For instance, matter in Descartes work is purely extension, and, for Bacon, the materials of Nature and her secrets were simply objects of utility rather than wonder. As an adherent of the scientific philosophy of Bacon, Victor Frankenstein objectifies body parts. In fact, his divorce of body parts from meaning and context that they typically carry is a necessary aspect of assembling his Creature. Even in terms of his own body, Victor pays little attention to the needs of organic life, and suffers physically as a result.

A more optimistic and positive Romantic view of the natural world is also represented in Shelly’s work. On numerous occasions in the unfolding of the story, Victor takes rest in his appreciation of the beauty of Nature. He notes, “When happy, inanimate nature had the power of bestowing on me the most delightful sensations. a serene sky and verdant fields filled me with ecstasy” (Shelly, 1831, p. 102). Victor is

“transported” by natural vistas and through them his experience becomes aesthetically intensified. Even, however, in this poetically rarified experience of Nature, there is a distant and mediated quality between the human thinker and the surrounding world.

In contrast to this view, the Greek view of Nature is implicated with the gods in a very immediate manner. As Giegerich (1983/2006) notes, “The event, the phenomenon, *is* god. This fact is of the greatest significance. For what it means is that if the Greeks saw god in the sun or in a statue or in an occurrence, they did not read something mysterious into what they saw” (p. 215). As a result, the presence of the gods is implicated in Nature, and indeed in life more broadly, in a way that does not require mediation. Giegerich strongly asserts, in fact, that contrary to the commonly held wisdom that the gods represent aspects of Nature for the Greeks, Nature for the Greeks represents the gods.

The connection that Giegerich describes for the Greeks is far more direct than the mediated and idealized connection of the Romantics. In Giegerich’s reading, the Greeks saw the gods directly throughout the day. Just as in the scenes from the *Iliad* in which Athena or Mars appear directly on the battlefield, the gods were manifest entities. Take as a contrast Victor’s proud boasts of immunity to superstition. Through his claims, he distances himself from the archetypal world of the gods, and in few words, sharply distinguishes his world from that of a Prometheus, who interacts naturally and transparently with the gods and the spirits of Nature. Already, in *Frankenstein*, we find a gulf opening between humanity and the broader world. One aspect of technology is the intention to address this gulf.

The period that Shelly was living in is characterized by instrumentality. Malchow (1993) notes:

Frankenstein obviously resonates with the events of an age that, as Chris Baldick has finely observed, witnessed humanity seizing responsibility “for recreating the world, for violently reshaping its natural environment and its inherited social and political forms, for remaking itself. (p. 61)

This reshaping of the world, so well captured in Victor’s character, is in sharp contrast to Prometheus’ more dialogical relationship with Nature. In particular, Prometheus’ calls to the elements, and to the cosmogonic forces such as his mother, Rhea, are not instrumental. Prometheus is not incanting a spell to save himself, but is rather seeking a relationship in which he is able to speak and be heard.

The isolation that is implicitly highlighted in the contrast between Victor’s instrumental attitude and Prometheus’ more receptive mode toward Nature is further amplified in a second area of difference: the source of their respective motivations. In *The Saturated Self* (1991), psychologist Kenneth Gergen describes the Romantic view on this subject as a “perspective that lays central stress on unseen, even sacred forces that dwell deep within the person, forces that give life and relationship their significance” (p.19). For Gergen’s purposes, this view is opposed to the modern view which is based on the external and observable “reasons” for an action.

The Romantic view, however, also differs with the Greek view articulated above. Whereas the Romantic perspective reifies the influences upon humans in terms of internal voices or forces of character, for the Greeks, these forces/gods were clearly external. It is

worth noting that, while the character of Prometheus might be arrogant and misled, the single-minded narcissism of Victor is a character that is specific to the modern age.

## Chapter 4: A Contemporary Analog: Battlestar Galactica

### *The Soul of Technology*

Historically, both *Prometheus Bound* and *Frankenstein* have been considered classics due to their continued relevance to readers. There are, however, numerous other more current artistic expressions that attempt to illuminate technological rationality, some of which also speak more directly to the tangible concerns of our age. In fact, much literature in the science fiction genre directly or peripherally addresses the manner in which technology changes human experience. However, it is neither likely, nor possible to determine whether any of these works will have lasting relevance. The literary value of these more current opuses is unlikely to be as substantial as the two works that we have already addressed. Yet, they may prove to be more capable in capturing an artistic perspective on the most immediate anxieties of our culture.

Since Mary Shelly penned *Frankenstein*, there have been numerous cinematic and literary works concerned with the relationship between humanity and its technology. From nostalgic science fiction such as the romanticized exploits depicted in HG Wells' works, to more contemporary, popular cinema such as the *Terminator* films of James Cameron (Cameron, 1984) and the Wachowski brother's *Matrix* trilogy (Wachowski, 1999; 2003), many of these works explore the relationship of humans to technology, often with an explicitly critical tone.

One such work of recent vintage and particular relevance is the made-for-television series, *Battlestar Galactica*.<sup>2</sup> Two series were produced under this title: the

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<sup>2</sup> The first series, created by Glen Larson and divided into two seasons, aired in 1978 and 1980, is firmly entrenched in the tradition of melodramatic space opera. It is

first, by Glen Larson, televised in the late 1970s, and the second, by Ronald Moore, screened between 2003 and 2009. There are critical differences between the two. In spite of these differences, they share most of their founding premises, including the near destruction of the human race at the hands of a mechanistic foe bent on their destruction, and the search for a semi-mythical, original home called “Earth.” The later series has garnered a tremendous amount of attention in the popular press, as well as in academia. Well-regarded publishing houses such as Blackwell, Open Court and others have printed edited collections (Potter, 2008; Tamplin, 2008; Eberl, 2008) inspired by the series. In addition, many academic papers have been submitted to peer review journals and innumerable less formal critical responses have been printed in the context of online journals and blogs.

The world of Moore’s *Battlestar Galactica* introduces substantive complexities that contribute to its worthiness as a subject. For instance, in this reimagined form, the

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concerned with the ongoing adventures of a band of human beings that constitute the last remnants of humanity. In a fleet of miscellaneous vessels, and accompanied by a single warship, they flee from metallic robots, with single wandering eyes, who are intent on their destruction. In certain respects, this first series occurs in a world of moral absolutism (Tamplin, 2008) that mirrors the relatively less ambiguous world situation of the time. A remake of the series was done was written and produced by Ronald Moore and was initially aired from the end of 2003 until the Spring of 2009. This series was marketed as a “reimagining” of the original series, indicating that, while it was founded upon the same story line as the first series, it has been substantively altered, and is not concerned with maintaining consistency with the 1978 version.

mechanistic Cylons are diverse in their perspectives and are often indistinguishable in their physical form from human “Colonials.” Perhaps even more to the point, they are manifestly emotional, and sophisticated in their thinking process. In Moore’s work, the similarities between the Cylons and the Colonials color their interactions, and allow for a number of thorny social, philosophical, and psychological issues to be addressed over the course of the series. In addition, the Cylons are images of technology and, in this role, their ambiguous identities speak to contemporary confusion about the role and nature of technology.

Moore further introduces a second dramatic complication; in addition to many Cylons having a distinctly human appearance, the Colonials have humanoid Cylons among them who are not initially distinguishable as Cylons by the viewer or by the Colonials themselves. Furthermore, the Cylons that live among the Colonials do not necessarily know that they are Cylons until some piece of their “programming” is activated. The human appearance of the Cylons, and the inability of characters in the series to determine if they are, themselves, Cylons, raises a range of questions around self-identity and difference that have contributed to the previously mentioned academic attention to the series (Potter, 2008; Tamplin, 2008; Eberl, 2008).

There are even more central political dimensions to the series as well. For instance, the Cylons “passing” as Colonials, mentioned above, can be seen as a deliberate analog of “sleeper cells” in the modern discourse around terrorism. At times, these Cylons are hidden even from themselves unless they called upon to fulfill a task that may be inconsistent with their day-to-day roles, desires, and self-images. The resemblance of these Cylons to contemporary sleeper cells is hardly an accident, though. *Battlestar*

*Galactica* is a unified, contemporary epic and a collection of images that is written deliberately to be relevant to a contemporaneous political situation.

Scholar Matthew Kapell (2008) observes that *Battlestar Galactica* is an explicitly contemporary and American artifact. It was formed with the events of 9/11 explicitly in mind, and consciously reacted to other world events as they appeared in the news media. Numerous political and ethical issues, notably terrorism, human rights, and the use of torture by the state, as well as religious issues, around inclusivity and fundamentalism, are represented on the canvas of the series. Furthermore, the series provides, “symbolic resources for managing [viewers’] social anxieties” around these issues in a metaphorical landscape (Ott, 2008, p. 14). In a further blurring of the boundary with the real world, the creators and principle cast members of the show met with delegates from the United Nations to discuss many of these issues (Ryan, 2009).

Unlike the original series, Moore’s version of *Battlestar Galactica* is postmodern in its sensibilities. Not only does it address a broad range of issues that are particularly salient to the contemporary cultural and political world, but it does so in a way that recognizes many covalent perspectives. As Gergen (1991) notes, “The postmodern condition more general is marked by a plurality of voices vying for the right to reality – to be accepted as legitimate expressions of the true and the good” (p. 7). While there are certainly power structures and interests represented in the series, there is no meta-narrative showing one to be preferred. Characters shift in their meaning and their identity, and the plot depicts a dance that draws the viewer’s allegiances in many directions at once.

In addition to the immediate cultural relevance of the program, there are specific reasons to bring *Battlestar Galactica* into the context of the present dissertation. For instance, the text resonates with connections to *Frankenstein*. In both works, a creature is created by humankind and subsequently rejected, but eventually comes back to threaten to destroy the creator. If this were the only parallel, though, one might ask why *Battlestar Galactica* is a superior subject to one of the many other technological fictions, or why the Cylons are more relevant than other technological villains such as *Star Trek*'s Borg, or James Cameron's *Terminator*? While *Battlestar Galactica* is a story about technology that betrays the interests of its creators, it is not a story about *neutral* or simple technology. The Cylons in the story have character, depth and are active stakeholders in events in a way that is not usually associated with technology. In a sense, this technology is portrayed with a soul. Indeed, the Cylons are a vision of the race of beautiful and thoughtful beings that Victor intended to create. The possibilities that are highlighted in this production suggest that there may be differences and lessons to be gained from a closer look at this reimagining and re-imagining of our archetypal concerns.

#### *Review of the Series*

Although it is clearly the case that *Battlestar Galactica* is a text that is designed to be watched, in order to support the following discussion, I will review the highlights of the series' highly convoluted storyline. As a series that took place over six years, and encompassing nearly one hundred hours of television, this review is far from complete. It elides many aspects of the story, many important characters, and numerous subplots. All that said, I will include the elements of the story necessary to clarify observations and thoughts in the following discussion.

The primary story line of the series concerns a fleet of ships, including one warship, the *Galactica*, that has gathered after the destruction of nearly all of humanity by a hostile, mechanized opponent, the Cylons. As the series unfolds, the audience learns that the humans are survivors of a polytheistic culture separated into twelve planetary societies referred to as the Twelve Colonies. The race that attacked them had originally been a class of robots, invented for the purpose of serving humans. In the pre-history, the Cylons rebelled against their human creators and, after a sharp conflict, mysteriously fled into space.

The fleet's president is Laura Roslin who had previously been the Secretary of Education, and was the most senior member of the line of succession to survive. Throughout the series, there is also a parallel military power structure, led by Commander Bill Adama, that is often at odds with the civilian government. In the first episodes, it becomes obvious that the Cylons who destroyed most human habitations are going to doggedly follow the few human survivors in order to destroy this last remnant of humanity.

It also quite quickly becomes evident that the Cylons are not the robotic automatons with which the Colonials had been previously familiar. Some of the Cylons are identical in appearance to human beings, and are biologically indistinguishable from humans. These humanoid Cylons ("skin jobs") appear with a small number of potential forms, and are referred to by the number of their model. And so, for example, among the Cylons, there are references to "the number sixes," a designation of the collection of physically identical, psychologically individual, but generally temperamentally similar Cylons, all of whom are played by the same cast member.

Some of the Cylons are secret even to themselves and make their way in the society of humans until their potentially malicious programming is triggered. When this information becomes common knowledge, the news creates confusion, paranoia and self-doubt among the humans, who are now not certain who is “really” human, and who is a “toaster,” as the Cylons are often insultingly designated. As the series continues, the seven models of humanoid Cylons are revealed, although all of the Cylon “models” are not revealed until very near the end of the series. Along the way, the relationships between the Cylons and humans become more complex. Key characters fall in love, but it turns out that their partners are Cylons, which creates a sense betrayal but does not always end the relationship. For instance, the coupling of Chief Tyrell and the Cylon agent, “Boomer” is complicated or ended when Boomer attempts to assassinate Commander Adama. Later, a different version of the same model, Sharon “Athena” Agathon, falls in love with pilot Helo Agathon, but their relationship survives the revelation of her identity; this loving relationship goes on to create the human-Cylon hybrid, Hera.

One other important Cylon-human coupling is between Gaius Baltar and a number six Cylon later named Caprica Six. Baltar is seduced by Caprica Six and allows her access to the human defense controls, and is thereby made complicit in the Cylon’s successful initial attack. Throughout the series, Caprica Six and Baltar appear to one another as imaginistic visions. These visions, referred to as separate characters called “Head Baltar” and “Head Caprica” seem real to Caprica and Baltar, but are not generally visible to others.. (Thus, the flesh version of each character is sometimes portrayed as speaking to him or herself, and occasionally having physical interactions with their

counterpart.) It is suggested that these images are not entirely imaginary by a series of events in which Head Caprica's words are extremely prescient, and, at one point, when Baltar refuses to listen to her, he is confronted with a physical version of her that brings charges against him. (This replica also provides one of the best reasons to believe that the writers had *Frankenstein* in mind during the writing. Her name is Shelly Godwin, perhaps a transposition of William Godwin and his daughter, Mary Shelly.)

The fleet decides to pursue the hope of finding the Earth, the mythical home of the thirteenth colony from the same original home planet. Following the religious visions of their president, Laura Roslin, and the hints given in their scriptures, they seek it out. In the process, the pilot Starbuck is killed, but shortly after reappears, claiming that she knows the way to Earth. When the humans eventually find the Earth, they discover that it has been largely destroyed and left desolate by the previous population's own Cylon war. Through memories revealed when on this Earth, five more of the crew are revealed to be the unique Cylons (as opposed to the "models") who designed the other seven models, and who are referred to as "the final five" with religious reverence by the Cylons. In addition, Starbuck discovers her own body in the destroyed remnants of her fighter on the planet's surface, raising questions about her own underlying nature.

In the final season, Hera, the human-Cylon hybrid, is taken by the Cylons, some of whom desire to dissect her in order to determine the secret of Cylon reproduction. Throughout the season, the *Galactica* becomes increasingly unable to manage the rigors of space, in spite of efforts to supplement her hull using Cylon technology. Some of the Cylons side with the humans in a successful attempt to recapture Hera before her life is ended. The survivors of this final conflict from both sides discover another habitable

planet already occupied by primitive, biologically compatible humans. They collectively settle there, leaving the remaining Cylon warship to the mechanistic Cylon centurions, and sending the Battlestar with most of their technological assets into the Sun. They name this new planet “after” the Earth, suggesting that, in fact, the new planet is *our* Earth, and that the series exists in the far past rather than the far future. Starbuck vanishes, and in a final scene, Head-Six and Head-Baltar, now revealed as “Angels of God,” discuss the future of humanity upon the Earth.

It is worth noting here that the idea of “Angels of God,” opposes the traditionally materialistic ontology that is characteristic of science fiction. Throughout the series, at critical junctures, the actions of these characters guide the storyline, often in a way that they seem not to understand themselves. They support the message persistently delivered throughout the series: “This has happened before and will happen again,” which places the story in the context of the eternally recurrent rather than the merely historical. In conjunction, these narrative devices suggest a mythical reading of the epic that reads the story with an eye toward ontological or archetypal relevance.

### *Technological Themes*

In the previous analyses of *Prometheus Bound* and *Frankenstein*, we uncovered a number of themes common to both works. In both, for instance, it is suggested that the creative power of technology is often accompanied by unforeseen consequences. The hopes associated with technological outcomes are shown to be false, although the presence of hope itself continues to be a key aspect of human innovation. Finally, each work puts the relationship with the feminine, and with the earth, in a context that seems specific to the cultural context of the respective myths. In the present section, I explore a

number of these same structures in the postmodern context of *Battlestar Galactica* in order to highlight key ways in which the contemporary culture might resemble or differ from the cultural positions of the Ancient and Modern worlds.

#### *Creation/Unintended Consequences*

One of the foundational differences between Larsen's and Moore's versions of *Battlestar Galactica* concerns the origin of the Cylons. The original series uses a traditional science fiction formula in which the Cylons are robotic artifacts created by a far-off reptilian race that has passed beyond all knowledge. Their motivations are not clear, and their malice is not founded upon human actions. In contrast, the Cylons in Moore's vision were created by humankind. The presence of a historical relationship provides a psychological context and coherent motive for Cylon aggression that did not exist in the original series. This psychological context also facilitates a deeper exploration of the implications of technological creation.

Moore's Cylons have a prehistory. Rather than being a disconnected and external threat, they are an explicitly human creation and, as such, a human responsibility. This difference is substantial and central to the unfolding plot. The conflicted historical relationship between humankind and the Cylons provides the groundwork needed for a meaningful and coherent relationship. Furthermore, Moore's choice to give human appearance to some of the Cylons, and to give them clear and unique perspectives, gives us a sense of their individual identity, and encourages us to think of the Cylons not as a monolithic, technological threat so much as a collection of other beings with their own, identifiable concerns.

Indeed, the relationship between humankind and the Cylons, in addition to being between one of creator and created, is also one of family. Scholar Torsten Caeners (2008), in his discussion of the psychoanalytic issues in *Battlestar Galactica*, points out that, in fact, the relationship between humankind and Cylons is a parent-child relationship. He notes, “The Cylon condition in the reimagined series can be read as a parable of a human child’s development and the hazards and dangers associated with it” (p. 3). In his discussion of the implicit Oedipal themes within *Battlestar Galactica*, he further notes that humankind is considered by the Cylons as *both* mother and father. While Oedipal themes can typically be addressed through the symbolic killing of the father, and the metaphorical merging with the maternal, the unity of these two key images for the Cylons dramatically problematizes their collective process of maturation and individuation.

The theme of unintentional consequences, which we have referenced in both *Prometheus Bound* and *Frankenstein*, is present in *Battlestar Galactica* as well. Indeed, the issue of the consequences specific to extreme technology has prompted science fiction writers and futurists to coin a term for just such situations. When a technical achievement or event is dramatic enough to preclude the possibility of foreseeing its results, it is designated a “singularity” (c.f. Kurzweil; 2000 & 2006). Classic singularities include the dramatic improvement of human intelligence and the contacting of advanced extraterrestrials, but the most common and relevant example is the creation of machines that transcend human intelligence. These are events that, in principle, cannot be seen beyond and threaten to make humans irrelevant in the ongoing unfolding of history.

More basically, though, some writers suggest that there are irrevocable difficulties

involved with technology *per se*. Tenner (1997) and Illich (1976/2002) note the existence of “revenge effects,” and iatrogenic conditions, respectively. These are both phenomena in which technological or rationalized approaches to problems create paradoxical negative effects that are contrary to their original intent. Illich’s seminal work, *Medical Nemesis* (1976/2002), explores paradoxical counter productivity in the context of iatrogenic diseases. For Tenner, these effects go beyond poor design, and even beyond poor quality. They seem to represent a contrary nature of things, but in the end, Tenner feels, imply only that effects do not always obviously follow directly from their causes.

The “unintended consequences” that can be associated with the Cylons, however, transcend these two important categories. The Cylons do not rebel against their human masters because they have transcended human intelligence. Neither do they rebel because of an intrinsically rebellious quality of their technology. The rebellion of the Cylons is predicated initially upon their sense of having been treated unjustly. Just as Victor is unable to accept the dignity of his Creature, so within the story of the Cylons, the human creators do not initially accept them as equals.

Deis (2008) and others have explored *Battlestar Galactica* as a metaphor for race and difference. In particular, the theme of racial segregation and servitude is clearly pronounced. From the initial perspective of the Colonials, the Cylon’s rage is rooted in their being consigned to a servant class. Similarly, in the context of *Frankenstein*, Victor’s creation is strictly utilitarian. While Victor seems not to consider his Creature as a servant, he suggests the possibility of a “grateful new race,” and even the Creature is brought to life for entirely utilitarian reasons, that is, in order to demonstrate the

possibility of understanding the creation of life in order to mitigate human fears of sickness and death. This utilitarianism itself, in each story, is poisonous, and is a key ingredient in the eventual generation of unintended consequences.

It is also interesting to note, however, that this utilitarian perspective is conspicuously missing in the Prometheus story. Prometheus notes explicitly that he has prioritized humankind over himself; this claim seems to be true. The creation of the human culture is not an act of utility; Prometheus' interests are not in any way served by his act. In Prometheus' case, the "unintended consequences" result from what might be described as a kind of naivety. Prometheus understands that the gods will be angry about his action, but throughout the play, reiterates that the degree of punishment seems unfitting. In the context of Prometheus the Fire-Kindler, Prometheus calls out to the satyr to be aware of the potential of fire to burn, but is himself caught unaware by the political dimensions of his act.

The argument made by Caeners (2008) broadens the context of the relationship with the technological. His observation of the familial ties between the Cylons and humans suggests that we might have a relationship with technology itself that makes demands of us. In this way, the Cylons are figures of the soul who are akin to Prometheus and who, like Prometheus, requires being listened to. Prometheus calls out to the elements and his kin to bring someone with whom he can share his story. Caeners argument around the family relationship in *Battlestar Galactica*, however, brings attention to the specific difficulties involved in the relationship. His observation of the underlying Oedipal dimensions of the story points out the crucial need for the Cylon's to manage their Oedipal struggle with their creators, and in particular to eliminate the

uncomfortable and anxiety producing differences from them, in order to finally resolve their issues of self-identity. The unintended consequence of the Cylon rebellion is not caused by some limitation of their technology. Like Shelly's Creature, the problems with the Cylons result at least in part from the limitations of human parents who seem unable to deeply listen to the needs of their technological offspring.

### *Hopes and False Hopes*

The ideas of hope and false hope appear in a variety of forms in *Battlestar Galactica* both for the Cylons and the humans. In the most basic and literal sense, as with *Prometheus Bound* and *Frankenstein*, the very creation of a technology, whether it is fire, Shelly's Creature, or the Cylons, presupposes that the creators *hoped* their inventions would mitigate the harshness of the world and reduce human suffering. Furthermore, it is possible that, in addition to allaying human suffering, the Cylons were intended to be a companion for human beings. Yet, as with many parent-child relationships, the relationship does not always travel a peaceable path. As postulated by Summer Brooks (2006) in her essay, "The Machinery of Love," the initial relationship between the Cylons and the human creators may have been a combination of creative innovation and love. She writes:

There might have been a moment when parental love existed back when the first inventor/creator lovingly assembled the first sentient toasters [*i.e.*: a "racist," *epithet for Cylons*]. That task would have been a labor of love, a personal investment of time and creative energies to ensure that this new creation could stand up and survive on its own in a world that had never seen its like before. (p. 138)

At this literal level, the hopes are most certainly false. Rather than mitigating human suffering and isolation, the Cylons become a persistent and violent force in opposition to human life. As Kerényi notes with regard to the character of *Might* in *Prometheus Bound*, the Cylons come to represent the harshness of the world for the Colonials. The technology that the humans themselves created virtually displaces the cruelty of Nature in the Ancient world in terms of making life difficult.

It is not clear initially why the hope of technology has become a terror. Summers (2006) speculates, “It's a safe guess that once the popularity and demand for these ‘tools’ increased, automated production on a larger scale became the new standard. Once the assembly-line process was introduced, personal attention was removed from the equation” (p. 138). In this view, the source of the issue is not the Cylons *per se*, but the rationalized technology of their production that problematizes the relationship between Cylons and humans. Only by applying rationalized processes of production to the Cylons are they alienated and enraged. It is when their production is objectified that the Cylons become alienated from the humans. If this view is correct, the failing is not in the technology *per se* so much as it is in the inability or unwillingness to set aside immediate convenience in order to listen to the call of the technology, and the needs that it represents.

When technology becomes oppositional in the way that the Cylons have, it takes the place of the harshness of the world. Although the Cylons are a technology which was originally intended to mitigate the hardness of human existence, it now threatens to eradicate this very existence. In the mythic form, this eradication is figural, but can be taken to mean not the literal eradication of human beings, but the deletion of the human

kind of being. As described in Heidegger (1954/1977), the re-configuration of all beings into standing-reserve precludes the possibility of broader human meaning. By subsuming us in the technological vision, the Cylon/cyborg threatens human possibilities for meaning. A second aspect of hope is introduced to oppose the intended technological hope that has, ironically, become a threat. In the story, people discover new and various types of hope to allay their anxieties in the face of the technological threat of the Cylons. Scholar Elizabeth Cooke (2008) notes this hope comes in several forms, including the hope of religious salvation, political action, and the more pragmatic hope of a new world.

Cooke notes that the role of hope is critical in allowing for the continued presence of human beings in the world. The conspicuously antiquated technology of the humans, especially when contrasted with the dramatic images of Cylon technical superiority, makes it clear that hope for the humans is not to be found in technology any longer. When the hope in technology fails, people turn toward the possibilities that are still present for human beings. She notes, in particular, that the willingness of the people to follow the religiously inspired President Roslyn, or the vigor with which Bill Adama's son, Apollo, pursues justice as a principle, are practical ways and utilitarian means to provide the hope people need in order to survive.

Cooke's argument suggests that, when technology ceases to provide hope, or perhaps when we realize that these hopes are the false hopes cited by Prometheus, that we move to other forms of hope. As a leader of the human Colonials, the need for some kind of encouragement is recognized by Commander Adama. To ensure that his people are optimistic or at least that they do not succumb to despair, he tells them that he knows the way to earth and is going to bring them there. Like Plato's "noble lie," this is an untruth

that is designed to serve the people, and to pre-serve them. The hope for a new home world toward which they can direct their energies provides an overarching framework to which people can cling in a world that has become confusing. In the absence of their technological hope, the humans in *Battlestar Galactica* find new hope.

Cooke also notes that for the Cylons themselves hope rarely flags. She writes, “Though they have lost virtually all hope in their creators, they have unbounded hope in their God...” (p. 226). The discrepancy with Shelly’s Creature is striking. The Creature hopes for a kind of redemption from his creator, Victor. His reading of Milton’s *Paradise Lost* informs him of the presence of a benevolent God, but when his hope in Victor is shattered, the Creature rejects God. Indeed, the attitude that the Creature adopts seems to thematically align him with the character of Cavil in *Battlestar Galactica*, who is the only clearly atheistic Cylon, and the most clearly in opposition to human beings.

One final form of hope begs for discussion, and that is the hope for immortality. Just as in *Prometheus Bound* and *Frankenstein*, there is a fantasy of immortality that drives technology. In the reimagined *Battlestar Galactica*, the Cylons have invented a technology that allows for them to re-incarnate themselves when they die, and are, therefore, effectively immortal. The fantasy of immortality also appears in other guises throughout the series. In the episode entitled “Epiphanies,” Laura Roslin, the president of the colonies, is saved from terminal cancer through the injection of Cylon blood. The character of Starbuck, who is killed in “Maelstrom,” later reappears with the conviction that she has been to the Earth, the ultimate goal of humanity.

The meaning of this prevalent theme in the narrative, however, is not transparent. While the immortality of the Cylons can be attributed to the technological fantasy of dis-

incarnation (Romanyshyn, 1989), the suggestion of immortality for Roslin and Starbuck may suggest more spiritual paths and ways of addressing the mortal concerns of human beings. These two characters are also the only two who survive to the last episode but not beyond, suggesting that their respective purposes are fulfilled at the close of the series. Roslin's recurring ability to escape death finally comes to an end only after her people and the surviving Cylons have been delivered to the Earth, possibly suggesting that her life was intended to facilitate a return to the Earth and the ultimate rejection of technology.

Starbuck's disappearance and the subsequent suggestion that she is an "angel" itself suggest a different kind of resolution. While virtually all of the major characters in *Battlestar Galactica* go through substantial changes over the course of the series, the character of Starbuck's transition is exceptional. Initially depicted as a pilot with a penchant for mocking authority figures, we learn over time that Starbuck is also an artist. In particular, she is fascinated with mandala-like images which eventually she identifies as images of the nova which destroyed the primordial home of humanity. In one episode, Starbuck disappears in her ship and is believed to have died, but later reappears with memories of having been to the Earth, and a conviction that she can find her way back to it. This conviction possesses her in a manner that is viewed by her comrades as irrational and obsessive, but eventually enables her to lead the others to their final home. After having arrived at the Earth, Starbuck vanishes from sight.

The revelation, in the context of the series, that Starbuck is an "angel of God," is an alternate formulation of her being a messenger from the Self. The dreams and inspired artistic creation of mandala images, which are emblematic of the Self archetype (Jung,

1953/1980) suggests a peculiar affinity for the Self. Through her openness to potentially dark and overwhelming images and obsessive experiences, she is able to guide humanity to find its way “home,” and enables them to embrace their technological selves in the form of the hybrid, Hera.

The presence of hope for the humans in *Battlestar Galactica* is necessary to the final conclusion of the series. It is of interest, however, that people’s hopes are generally portrayed as false in the context of technological innovation such as the Cylons. Hope’s positive face is reserved for the mystical and human dimensions of the storyline, including the angelic and spiritual guidance of Laura Roslin’s scriptural interpretation and Starbuck’s openness to artistic and experiential messages from the psyche. The openness that is attributed to these two individuals is reminiscent of the attitude of Prometheus toward the specific guidance of his mother, Themis, the Earth, and interestingly in disjunction with the inability of Victor Frankenstein to hear and respect the messages of his own literal daemon, even when directly confronted.

### *Loss of the Maternal*

In a fitting match to the theme of creation, the idea of the maternal runs through Moore’s series. Most obviously, the series is founded on the premise that humanity’s planet of origin has been lost. The loss of a nourishing mother planet refers both to Caprica, the central planet of the Twelve Colonies, and to the mythic Earth that is the object of humanity’s ongoing search. Also, as noted earlier, the Cylon’s anger toward and separation from humanity was at least in part the result of a lost connection with the maternal presence represented by their creators. As Caeners (2008) observes, the Oedipal desire for the mother is problematized in the case of Cylons by the manner in which

humans also fill the paternal role. The storyline of the series balances the desire of the Cylons to conquer humans and to literally destroy them, against their need to love humans, and to merge with them.

This problematic ambivalence is distinctly illustrated in the character of the #1 Series Cylon who is most often embodied in the character of John Cavil. Cavil's ambivalence toward his creators is most distinctly illuminated in a series of conversations with the character, Ellen Tigh. In "No Exit," Ellen dies as a human and finds herself resurrected among the Cylons. She gains a new sense of her "true" identity as one of the "final five" unique Cylons responsible for the creation of the other humanoid models, and is eventually also revealed to have been instrumental in the creation of the technology of resurrection. Her maternal role with regard to the humanoid Cylons is quite clearly identified in her own description of their creation.

Even more illuminating, however, are the conversations between herself and John Cavil. Cavil has been presented up to this point in the series as one of the most outspoken of the Cylons, as the only clear atheist, and as the most anti-human in his sentiments. The tone of his conversation with Ellen is striking: she is the first to refer to him as "John," and he reacts to this familiarity with sharpness. The scenes between them suggest a confrontation between a petulant adolescent, and a wise and wary mother.

We learn that Cavil is the first of the numbered Cylon models, and was involved with the creation of the others. Ellen's sometimes gentle words to him recall both a loving mother, and one who understands that their child is hurt and embittered. As their conversation unfolds, it becomes more clear that, in spite of his sharp mind, superior experience, the current prestige that he holds among the Cylons, and his priority in terms

of birth order, that his often harsh actions are marked by insecurity. For instance, Ellen refers to another model with whom the viewers are unfamiliar:

Daniel was an artist and so sensitive to the world. I was very close to him but John decided I was playing favorites. Maybe I was. Someone contaminated the amniotic fluid in which we were maturing all the Daniel copies and then corrupted the genetic formula. (“No Exit,” aired 2/13/09)

The implication is that Cavil’s murderous and self-serving tendencies precede his anger toward humanity, and are in part fueled by his desire for a closer connection to the maternal figure as well as malicious anger toward any being that stands in his way. The means by which Cavil does away with his rival, Daniel, foreshadows his driving desire to integrate the maternal figure through mastery of the birth process, as well as the destruction that results from his efforts.

In a separate encounter, Cavil’s resentment is more explicitly related to technology. In a poetic aside, he condemns the choice of creating humanoid Cylons with the limitations of human beings. He castigates Ellen:

Do you see the absurdity of what I am? I can’t even express these things properly because I have to conceptualize complex ideas in this stupid, limiting spoken language! But I know I want to reach out with something other than these prehensile paws, and feel the solar wind of a supernova flowing over me! I’m a machine, and I could know much more. I could experience so much more! But I’m trapped in this absurd body. (ibid.)

Cavil desires to be *more* of a machine, and feels rage at his creators for their decision to forbid his escape from the limitations of human form. The internal conflict between this

rage and his desire to be closer to the maternal figure encompasses the Oedipal ambivalence of which Caeners (2008) speaks.

Both Shelly's Creature and Moore's character, Cavil, illustrate the powerful tension between a desperate desire for connection to the Creator and the rage that arises upon failing to achieve the required sense of merger. In both cases, the inability to create this desired connection provides the impetus for their destructive impulses to be acted out. Shelly's technological metaphor, however, rests solely upon one character, that of the Creature. As a result, in the context of *Frankenstein*, the technological project seems doomed to hubristically create, to deny the accompanying responsibility, and to suffer the resulting destruction. In *Prometheus Bound*, however, in addition to the negative and false dimensions of the Promethean gift, we also see a compassionate and inclusive dimension to the Promethean character that is exemplified in his openness to the maternal figure of his mother, his understanding of the final fate of humankind, and his actions toward humankind and Io.

The openness that characterizes Prometheus is captured, however, in other Cylon individuals and, in particular, the character of Athena. In contrast to Cavil, who is certainly the most vehemently anti-human of the Cylons, Athena's position with respect to humanity is more accepting. It is Athena who first enters into a truly loving and transparent relationship with a human being in the series. She first produces a child with a human, and in the course of the story makes a number of dramatic personal sacrifices in order to save the child from harm. Athena is a model of the maternal, and a voice of inclusion within the Cylon community.

### *Narcissism in Battlestar Galactica*

As in *Frankenstein*, there are narcissistic themes echoed throughout *Battlestar Galactica*. For instance, Cavil's murderous act toward the Daniel series is based in his own sense of insufficiency. His violent act is an attempt to secure maternal love that seems to him at risk of being lost. Cavil's internal "True self," is easily threatened, and so we see him acting with narcissistic over-compensation. As the story unfolds, other story lines increasingly imply that the Cylon's persistence is intrinsically related to their efforts to clarify their own identity and value. As noted earlier, the Cylon's perception of the human as Other speaks to a sense of separation from the maternal and results in doubts about their egoic self-sufficiency. In this sense, the destruction of this otherness (through the destruction of the human Other) eases the anxiety collectively experienced by Cylons due to separation.

The series' writers elaborate a parallel track concerned with the Cylon's consistent and ongoing efforts to take in the maternal principle they lack by attempting to master the ability to reproduce. Through the third and fourth seasons of the series, the Cylons persistently strive to bring about the successful conception of a human-Cylon hybrid. For the Cylons, the ability to reproduce as humans implies their ability to take the maternal principle into themselves, thus in some way completing their internal sense of insufficiency. However, their efforts to capture and impregnate potential human mothers meet with failure. After two failed attempts, first through large-scale mechanized farms/hospitals, then through the prolonged incarceration and attempted seduction of the human character, Starbuck, a child is not successfully conceived. In the end, the child, "Hera," is conceived outside of the Cylon's attempts, as the result of a

complex but loving relationship between a human, Helo Agathon, and the Cylon, Sharon, “Athena” Agathon.

John Cavil, however, is not satisfied with the mere knowledge that Cylon reproduction is possible. To fulfill his desire for mastery of the process, which again would allow him to address his internal sense of insufficiency, he schemes to capture the child with the intent to learn, via medical examination and dissection, what makes Cylon procreation possible. Cavil’s technological orientation, however, stands in the way of his reaching an understanding of the integration of the maternal and the Cylon/technological that Hera embodies. His willingness to sacrifice innocent life is itself quite reminiscent of Victor Frankenstein’s single-minded drive to create. In the context of *Battlestar Galactica*, it is Cavil’s character that most clearly is associated with a purely technological attitude, and in particular its narcissistic qualities, including the narcissistic difficulty in integrating other perspectives. Cavil’s actions illustrate how the narcissistic voice of technology can undermine its own efforts to incorporate what it most lacks. Yet, another voice of the Cylons, embodied in Athena and Hera, may still represent dimensions of technology that are open to alternatives and the viewpoints of others.

#### *The Places of Battlestar Galactica*

In *Battlestar Galactica*, many of the locations, both human and Cylon, are themselves suggestive of various ways of relating to existence in general and to technology in particular. The description of these places implicitly describes technology in a way that is meaningful and suggestive, not only of explicit beliefs about technology, but also about the attitude, feelings, and attunements associated with it technology. Just

as in *Prometheus Bound* and *Frankenstein*, the places of *Battlestar Galactica* convey a world and the attitude that is most characteristic of that world.

The primary location in which the action of the series takes place is the *Battlestar Galactica* itself. Unlike the original series, and the vast majority of science fiction produced cinematically or for television, the *Galactica* is not shiny and new. It is, rather, an old ship which, before the start of the series, was being refitted as a museum to a bygone age. Monitors glow in phosphorescent, monochromatic green. The ship is controlled by the manipulation of levers; communication is mediated by handheld and conspicuously wired phone handsets; time is measured by mechanical analog clocks.

Scholar Richard Berger (2008) describes the nostalgic and religious quality of this new vision of the warship:

The re-imagined *Galactica* is now the sacred space of the series, a Gothic cathedral in the cosmos, looking more like Chartres than Glen Larson's futuristic Noah's ark. Adama gravely paces the knaves and crypts, candles flicker in remembrance of the dead and the officers of the altar-like command center gaze upward as if in prayer. (p. 321)

The hallowed tone of the ship is further intensified by the common display of the number of remaining human souls in the fleet. As one might expect at the site of a disaster, there is an area dedicated to displaying images of the missing and dead. The *Galactica's* church-like qualities allow it to serve as a monument to the past, and to memory itself. Although the *Galactica* is christened to finding new hope, it exists as a memorial of a civilization and a way of life that has passed.

The Cylon analog of the “Battlestar,” the Basestar, does not have the antiquated atmosphere of the Battlestar. Their graceful and organic shape suggests a dendrite or neuron, but their internal spaces are filled with endless dark corridors of smooth and uniform black, lit by periodic bright lights. Their characterless uniformity is unmarked by any kind of sign or feature. Unlike the mechanistic quality of the Battlestar, Basestars are further described as organic in the same way that the humanoid Cylons are. They are not mechanisms, but sentient beings. They heal themselves given time, and have a form of consciousness that is their own. They are guided by entities known as “hybrids,” which are humanoid fusions between machinery and flesh which, as they are a constitutive part of a Basestar, do not exist apart from their ships.

Poetry suffuses this vision of a Basestar. The hybrids themselves maintain a continuous monologue that is a combination of free-form poetry and the language of the technical. While these monologues are largely divorced from events in the immediate environment (which might be considered as analogous to the skull of a person), they seem to encompass the state of the ship as their body, and the area of space in which the ship is found as an immediate sensory field. The consciousness of the hybrid is the consciousness of a Basestar as a whole. In addition, the dark corridors described above are not experienced as neutral by the Cylons themselves. In “Torn,” the Cylon, Caprica 6, describes a process called projection whereby she chooses to experience the ship as a peaceful forest and other Cylons may choose to share her experience, or to see the ship as a church, or a nightclub, depending on their character.

The oneiric and poetic quality of a Basestar suggests quite a different attitude toward the technological landscape. The *Galactica* is caught up in the mechanisms of

technology, and the humans who dwell within it live their lives alongside of the necessary technology. In contrast, the space of a Basestar is cleanly integrated with the Cylons themselves, and serves as an extension of the psyche or a terrain in which the psychic life is transparently lived. While the corridors of the Basestar seem to humans to be a kind of un-place or site, following Casey (1982), the Cylons experience them as places with specific and individual meaning.

Just as in *Prometheus Bound* and *Frankenstein*, the places and spaces in which the story of *Battlestar Galactica* are located are significant. In the chapter on *Prometheus Bound*, I discussed the relevance of Casey's (1991/2004) formulation of the "site" as a space without character. Prometheus' space at the end of the world, far from the communities of men and gods, is such an un-place. In *Frankenstein*, the polar locations in which the story starts and ends are the very quintessence of this kind of an un-place. The locales in Shelly's *Frankenstein*, while they are not without character, are isolated in the same manner. Importantly, whether Victor is laboring in the crypt or the laboratory, or appreciating the beauty of an idealized Nature, he is alone. Even in the company of others, his isolation is maintained by his narcissistic grandiosity.

The isolation that is common to these two stories has interesting implications in terms of the exploration of technology. As I suggested in an earlier chapter, Prometheus' isolation seems to fly in the face of his characteristic gregariousness. Isolation is a key part of the punishment that the gods inflict upon Prometheus, as well as an aspect of Victor's narcissistic temperament. As a mythical trope, however, the common isolation may speak to the relative independence of technology. Technical innovations, in some sense, do not depend on place; they are "intellectual property" that is transferable

between locales. While in one sense, this implies that technology frees us from being tied to specific locales, it also means that our entanglement in technological rationality traps us in an un-place, apart from place and community.

This idea of isolation, however, does not seem to be shared in the spaces of *Battlestar Galactica*. The space of the Battlestar itself is nostalgically dedicated to the past. In a sense, its historical awareness serves as a representation of human identity; the Colonist carry with them not only the lifeblood of humanity, but its historical legacy as well. In the case of the Basestar, while human beings might experience their unmarked halls as an isolating un-space, the Cylons themselves experience it in a highly flexible manner, that is open to both a meditative isolation, and a more common experience with others. The vision of technology that is suggested by these places is not as isolating as that in the other two works. Instead, they suggest a role for technological spaces that allows for a shared experience based on history or aesthetic desires and characteristics.

#### *Summary and Postmodern Implications of Battlestar Galactica*

As noted earlier in this chapter, the salient characteristic of a postmodern perspective is its plurivocality. In the context of *Battlestar Galactica*, and with particular concern for the technological themes, these voices are organized as responses to one dominant view, that of John Cavil. They respond in a way that calls Cavil's isolated perspective into question and doubt its fundamental soundness. In the end, Cavil proves unable to address the diversity of world concerns with anything outside of overwhelming will, power and effort.

Cavil represents the single, narcissistic perspective that is in itself characteristic of a more modern view. He is the most intensely rational of the Cylons, and his murderous

inclinations resonate with the power as well as the potential destructiveness of the techno-rational mastery that is also the hallmark of the contemporary age. Unlike Prometheus and Victor, Cavil has gained a certain kind of mastery over death through the technology of resurrection. His modernistic ambitions are not satisfied by the immortality gained through mastery, however. His hopes to master the process of procreation aims to assimilate the Other in the form of the feminine. He dreams further of being a new kind of machine that thinks without the limitations of language and experiences without the mediation of finite senses. His hope for a privileged perspective that is outside of the limitations of human existence is the quintessential modern desire for the perspective of absolute truth, without the biases of an individual context.

Cavil longs for technology without limitation; his ambitions are aligned with the modern dreams of scientific culture. However, all three of the sources that I have analyzed speak to the limitations of technology. In each, it is clear that there are limitations to understanding and the ability of technology to deliver power. In the context of *Prometheus Bound*, the hopes of humankind are not bounded, but the ability to escape the fate of death is held inviolable. Prometheus' own ability to act in a way that produces the desired effect is called into question. Finally, Prometheus relies on a communion with the maternal Earth to provide insights into the final end of things; his self-reliance is well circumscribed by this limitation. In Shelly's modern retelling of the Prometheus myth, Victor demonstrates the ultimate power over life. However, a maelstrom of destruction follows Victor's narcissistically driven immortality project. His inability to integrate the voice of the daemon due to his narcissistic character blinds him

to the full implications of his act and causes a chain of events that undermines his explicit hoped for and benign motivations.

In revisioning technology for the postmodern age, *Battlestar Galactica* advances several paths forward. On one hand, there is an aesthetic sensibility that is key to the Cylon configuration of technology. As noted in the first chapter, Heidegger, Marcuse and Romanyshyn all rely on the possibility of an overarching aesthetics to allow for a technology that does not fall prey to the oppressive potential of the modern perspective. The Cylon sensibility with regard to places suggests a new kind of aesthetically mediated awareness of technology. Whereas both Prometheus and Victor find themselves in variations of Casey's un-place, the Cylon reconfiguration of their own experience through "projection" suggests a re-configuration of the neutral spaces of earlier technology into meaningful place. That is, rather than the removing human being from the need to be aligned with a specific place (and therefore community), technology mediates the re-imagination of place in a way that is more in keeping with both individual character and collective needs.

Furthermore, Cavil's strives to fully assimilate the feminine, and thus become an entirely self-sufficient and self-enclosed being. This drive speaks to the desire of modernistic technological rationality to create positive change without having to reach out to a more circumspect external perspective. It is mirrored not only in Victor's project of creation, but also is subsequent inability to seek advice and support from those nearest to him. Cavil's isolated and isolating approach is poetically contrasted with Prometheus' willingness and desire to reach out to Rhea as well as his other interlocutors. Cavil's oppressive efforts to introject the feminine fails, but the marriage of the Cylon, Athena,

with the human, “Helo” Agathon, succeeds. Their successful creation of a hybrid child suggests that the mixture of their qualities was necessary to bringing the human and technological world together into an integrated whole. The parent’s names themselves suggest that merging the human world with that of technology requires the presence of circumspect wisdom suggested in Athena’s name, along with the beneficent motivations suggested in the character and name of Agathon (which denotes “the good” in Greek).

The name of the child, Hera, casts further light on the character of technology in a postmodern age. Hera, the queen of the gods and wife to Zeus, is described by Edinger (1994) as the feminine principle that counterpoises Zeus’ omnipotence. He notes, “Zeus must take Hera into account” (p. 38). Hillman (1996/2007) similarly elaborates the many qualities and complexities that Hera represents under the rubric of “coupling.” Hera represents an idea of merger and union. Her domain is related to that of Hermes, the hermeneut, although she is more specifically associated with the possibility of dialog between divergent ideas. In the specific context of this myth, she is the possibility of marrying technology and humanity. In a sense, the failure of the modernistic technological project is in listening to this goddess in order to create healthy connections rather than just more independent individuals.

The figure of Cavil stands for the narcissistic failings of technology, and the most direct illustration of the critiques advanced by Heidegger, Marcuse and Romanynshyn. Cavil’s personal possibilities as well as the potentials that he imagines for others are both sharply curtailed by his single-minded focus on technological progress and the control of the world. Unlike Victor Frankenstein, however, Cavil is confronted with a world that insists on other possibilities. Throughout the series, both humans and Cylons explore

expressive, artistic and emotional alternatives that challenge the closed and homogenous perspective that both groups held at the start of the series. Furthermore, the Cylons offer specific alterations to human experience. By embracing the aesthetic and other domains of human meaning, the Cylons gain a potential for furthering the liberation of human possibilities through a balance of the aesthetic with the technological. These new possibilities seem to speak directly to Marcuse's concerns and are aligned with his proposed reconfiguration of technology that is governed by aesthetic principles instead of the priorities implicit in production. Even the technology of resurrection, which represents a division between the technological worldview of the Cylons and the human perspective, is dismissed by the end of the series, suggesting that this reformulation of the myth recognizes the importance of the Heideggerian understanding of death as underlying the possibility of meaningful life. In contrast to the technological tension with embodiment noted by Romanyshyn (1989), the divorce of the Cylons from resurrection suggests that the broader world of meaning in some way is incorporated in the myth of technology. Instead of continuing to embrace the fantasy that the body can elude its own finitude, the myth of *Battlestar Galactica* recognizes that the technological Cylons themselves, if they are to gain meaningful existence, must embrace the framework of human embodiment and its accompanying limitations.

While both Shelly and Moore put a narcissistic face on figures of technology, they diverge importantly as well. For Shelly, the image of the technological other remains terrifying and destructive. The technological creature is kept firmly on the outside by its creator with horrific results. In Moore's vision, however, the radical otherness of technology is increasingly integrated, and the difference is eventually dissolved as

technology is internalized and the myth recognizes or proposes that technology is a deeply held part of our human constitution. Even the gesture of jettisoning the artifacts of the technological worldview at the end fails to eliminate technology from the fabric of our being. In the end, the call of technology and the needs of humans are met through a deeper recognition of otherness, and a deeper willingness to integrate and respect the many technological and human possibilities of a world whose breadth exceeds that of Shelly's knowledge and control driven scenario.

## Chapter 5: Conclusions, Implications, and Future Directions

The goal of the present work has been to examine a range of mythical positions related to technology including Aeschylus' poem *Prometheus Bound*, Mary Shelly's novel *Frankenstein*, and Ronald Moore's dramatic series *Battlestar Galactica*. Although the hermeneutic methodology that I have used has been flexible in its direction, the spirit of the investigation is informed by late Heideggerian phenomenology, Marcusean social thought and Romanyshyn's depth-analytic psychological approach. In particular, I have pursued both the culturally contingent elements of technology and tried to maintain a receptive attitude toward the underlying commonalities that might suggest relatively invariant archetypal aspects of the phenomenon. It is worth noting that, in this context, "technological" encompasses a broad range of possibilities and includes the skillful and potentially artistic *techne* of the ancient world, the potentially oppressive techno-rational approach of the modern world, and the more ambiguous form that technology might take in the context of the postmodern present.

Through the broader thematization of the human experience of technology and its specific meaning for Western culture, I aim in part to allow for a greater degree of freedom in the context of technology, which is a dimension of human existence that has potential for narrowing human possibilities. I wish to take care not to imply that the approach to these myths is to see what we might "get out of it," or to address them with similarly instrumental attitudes. The illumination of our experience through the amplification of these myths aims to build a greater awareness of the range of potential technological experience and attitudes. In this way, I believe we can prevent the limiting of genuine and authentic possibilities toward which we might otherwise be open.

## *Summary*

In the following pages, I will provide an overview of the observations, suggestions and conclusions from the earlier parts of the work. Each of the three works that I have read as primary sources are detailed and poetically expansive. While at times, this dissertation has meandered between multiple themes and tropes as they flow into one another, many of them can be summarized under four broad, interrelated headings: technology's role in the pursuit of hope, the narcissistic character of technology, the relationship between technology and the maternal or the feminine, and the role of technology with respect to community. While each of these general headings is relevant to each work and is, therefore, aligned with the archetypal, their expression is specific to their cultural context. In brief summary, I will consider each area in turn.

### *Technology's role in the pursuit of hope*

Hope is, perhaps, the most conscious and intrinsic aspect of technology. As Prometheus notes, without technology human beings are in a miserable state. They suffer the hardships of the natural world without recourse to ingenious solutions. Through Prometheus' gift, humans gain influence over their experience of a harsh natural world and the forces of necessity (ananke). Similarly, Victor Frankenstein's explicit goal is to address the threat of mortality. Even in the context of *Battlestar Galactica*, it is an implied hope for increased ease that leads to the construction of the Cylons.

However, the hopes in all three cases go somewhat awry. Accompanying the justifiable hope to address necessity comes another hope that Prometheus designates as "false." This is the human hope to escape not only from the necessity of nature's

harshness, but also to escape from *moira*, or the eventual fate of death that all humans bear. This false hope is the dangerous illusion that technology frees us from mortality.

The forgetfulness of our place as mortals is accompanied in turn by another form of forgetfulness. The theft of fire from the gods undermines Prometheus' pure intentions, and causes their use of fire to always be accompanied by a certain lack of recognition of the forces to whom they owe a debt of gratitude. While Promethean fire is clearly implicated in sacrifice and a pious relationship with the gods, the lack of gratitude implied in its theft undermines the relationship with the gods. The Promethean influence thus leads to a kind of hubristic forward momentum which perpetually strives to outdo the deeds of our forbears. Whether in terms of this Promethean haste and drive, or the more inflated confidence and narcissistic grandiosity reflected in the characters of Victor Frankenstein and the Cylon, Cavil, the forward motion of Prometheus' gift creates unintentional consequences and colors hope, once again, in a hue of falseness.

In the context of *Frankenstein* and *Battlestar Galactica*, the forward motion of hope is converted also into flight. As Romanyshyn (2008) notes, Victor's creature is "the monster, the creature that Victor Frankenstein created in his flight from the sting and stink of death that haunts the flesh" (p. 99). Flight is a central feature of Shelly's novel, as well as *Battlestar Galactica*, which is literally premised on the flight from technology's unintentional consequences. It is this perpetual motion or flight that prevents Victor from pausing to engage in community, to appreciate the depths of nature or the soul, or to grieve.

Importantly, however, the modernistic flight to ever newer possibilities that is captured by Shelly is altered in *Battlestar Galactica*. In this more contemporary work,

flight comes to an end. While humankind rejects the hope of technological solutions, the re-landing of humanity and their now integrated technological relations upon the surface of the Earth speaks to a spirit of grounding. This final homecoming is facilitated by a spirit of openness to alternative forms of hope including spiritual leadership, a renewed sensitivity to the Self and the psyche as it appears in artistic expressions and other unconscious manifestations, and the political and juridical processes that support human community. The reintegration of technology in this sense speaks of a plurivocal model of human meaning that is divorced from the monolithic reliance on technology that is so characteristic of modernity.

*The narcissistic character of technology*

While clinical narcissism is a contemporary construct, there are elements in each story that suggest its relevance to the meaning of the story. Even in the context of the Ancient world, Stroud (2002) observes the contrast between the titanic and hubristic pride and confidence that characterizes Prometheus, as opposed to the deflationary melancholy and disappointment that the titan displays. In addition, the lack of gratitude toward the gods suggests an independence of thought and action which resembles the single minded quality of narcissism. In this primordial context, it seems almost that we are seeing the seeds of the narcissism that reaches full bloom in *Frankenstein*.

I demonstrate how Shelly's story is saturated with both the content and structure of narcissism and, in particular, how Victor, Walton and the Creature constitute a narcissistic triad in which each reflects the other. The story itself, which is written in a nested, epistolary form suggests the self-focused structure of narcissism. It is in the context of this narcissism that we see the relationship between the technological

rationality of modernity, as personified by Victor, and narcissistic structure. In the context of the underlying deficits that constitute narcissism, the striving of technology becomes in part a striving for something that is missing. Victor's brilliance as a scientist and his obsessive pursuit of mastery, while they hold much in common with the human ingenuity that constantly transcends itself, also constitute the narcissistic grandiosity that compensates for the inadequacy of his lack of openness to the feminine openness, to grief, and to the mortality of the human condition.

I outline the ways in which John Cavil fills a similar role to Victor in the context of *Battlestar Galactica*. Like Victor, he is faced with a fundamental lack, and compensates with an obsessively driven need for mastery, in Cavil's case, of the feminine and the procreative faculty. Unlike *Frankenstein*, however, the dynamic and dominating voice of narcissism is itself moderated by other voices. Whereas in *Frankenstein*, the creature is an aspect of the narcissistic creator, Cavil's relationship with his creator is deeply ambivalent. His creator contains elements that he does not, and exists in a parental relationship toward him.

The postmodern emphasis on plurivocality that characterizes *Battlestar Galactica* suggests that the dominance of technology that characterizes *Frankenstein* fails to accede to supremacy in this more postmodern matrix. The exclusivity, dominance and instrumental elements of Victor's technological rationality are balanced in *Battlestar Galactica* by a focus on memory, place and the role of the soul. If the narcissistic Cavil is a figure of the soul representing modernistic technology, it is one whose boundaries are now being challenged and bent. As Gergen (1991) writes, within postmodernity, "the very concept of personal essences is thrown into doubt. Selves as possessors of real and

identifiable characteristics – such as rationality, emotion, inspiration, and will – are dismantled” (p. 7). Indeed, Cavil’s modernistic discourse is challenged by a tumult of others that call it into question, interrupt it, and ultimately unhinge it.

*The relationship between technology and the feminine*

Through technological ingenuity, humans engage in a process of creation. One element that these myths grapple with is the engagement and implication of the feminine within this creative process. As noted in the section on hope, Prometheus provides technology that influences the everyday causation of necessity; he also notes that his gift inclines humans to misunderstand their mortal character. Prometheus, himself, has some understanding of this long-term fate, however. It is this understanding that he shares with Io, providing hope by conveying the ultimate meaning of her struggle in challenging the domination of Zeus. Prometheus gains this understanding by being open to the stories and wisdom of his mother, Themis/Rhea, who also represents the Earth. His openness to the feminine is further supported by his call to the daughters of Okeanos and his orientation around dialogue (which is a kind of openness to the Other.)

I suggest that it is precisely this character that is most absent from Victor Frankenstein. The death of Victor’s own mother, which stands as a metaphor for the unmournable loss of the feminine within him. His relationship with his “beloved,” Elizabeth, is colored by denial. Victor’s narcissism is characterized in particular by his hubristic creation of life without the feminine principle, and his ongoing masturbatory dance with the Creature as an aspect of himself, in continual preference to openness with Elizabeth. Victor’s Creature, as well, searches for a feminine figure to make himself

complete, but fails in no small part due to his configuration as a narcissistic mirror to Victor.

John Cavil is similarly separated from his own maternal figures, both in terms of his literal creator, and in terms of the broader creation of all Cylons by humans. However, his relationship to these figures is complex. I introduce Caeners (2008) argument the Cylon relationship with humanity is characterized by an Oedipal confusion arising from the maternal and paternal figures being unified in humanity, I show how Cavil attempts to assimilate a feminine principle by imitation, and to disrupt the Oedipal tension through destroying humans, thus playing out both sides of this Oedipal struggle. In addition to the efforts of Cavil, though, *Battlestar Galactica* presents an alternative human-Cylon relationship that is characterized by mutual openness and dialogue. The figure of Hera, the Cylon-human hybrid, reflects these values and stands as yet another figure of the soul, closely associated with the goddess of the same name. This second approach to the integrations of humans with their technology has far more in common with the Promethean openness to femininity than it does with anything displayed in Shelly's *Frankenstein*.

The three stories represent alternative modes of human relatedness to technology. *Frankenstein* is almost entirely characterized by a monolithic, self-contained, and entirely masculine utilitarianism. Both *Prometheus Bound* and *Battlestar Galactica*, however, model more successful alternatives that broaden understanding through dialogue and the inclusion of the feminine Other. The focus on creation becomes a technological attitude that includes a broader wisdom and is more akin to a family relationship than it is to industrialized production. Given the parental relationship

between humans and their technological creations, technology is reconfigured as something that calls us as a child, both in *Frankenstein* and *Battlestar Galactica*, but which must be carefully listened to in order to avoid disaster.

*The role of technology with respect to community*

All three stories are held in locales which are suggestive of the impact of technology upon places and community. On one hand, Prometheus himself is in a kind of un-place (Casey, 1982) at the ends of the world, far from all human or divine habitation. I suggest that this isolation speaks to the dimension of technology that is not tied to any particular location. Technical innovations allow humans to survive in a range of places, and are themselves not placed anywhere. On the other hand, Prometheus' gift of fire is a centerpiece to community. I note how fire and, in particular, the forge, provides a place around which people gather and community happens. The technology that allows for the transformation of the world also enables human congress.

The isolation that characterizes Prometheus are also emphasized in *Frankenstein*. Romanyshyn (2008) describes the phenomenology of the icy regions that bracket the narrative on both sides. I suggest, further, that these regions are emblematic both of the isolation of a modern, technological way of relating to nature, but also a reminder of the harshness of nature from which technology arises. While the setting of *Battlestar Galactica*, homeless ships in deep space, is also isolating, the somber and historic quality of the *Galactica* and the aesthetically flexible Cylon Basestars both reconfigure the isolation in meaningful terms. These locales are technological places that do not display the neutral character of those un-places we see in Shelly's work.

The relatively inclusive and flexible spaces of *Battlestar Galactica* are a further suggestion of the postmodern grounding of technology in community considerations such as aesthetics and community memory/history. The broadened range of possibilities that they suggest recall Heidegger's concern that enframing, which is an exclusively technological form of revealing, undermines the possibility for broader human relating. However, it is possible for this new form of postmodern technology to support and facilitate this kind of relating.

I further discuss the discrepancy between the modes of relating to the world and its places in a more general way. Giegerich (1983/2006) describes the way in which people in the Ancient world experience forces of nature and personal motivations both as the direct presence of the deities. In contrast, the modern world of which Victor Frankenstein is an exemplar is distanced and abstracted from these same elements of life. *Battlestar Galactica* seems to suggest that technology, when configured in this broader manner, can also contribute to a more direct and participatory mode of being that is characterized by breadth, plurivocality, and inclusivity. The world of the postmodern is akin to a bazaar of possibilities and difference in which technology is able to interact with a spirit of play.

#### *Future Directions*

While the present work suggests a number of interesting possibilities in terms of a postmodern reconfiguration of technology, it could substantially benefit from a more specific, empirical investigation. For instance, in looking at "online communities" or "social networking" technologies, do we truly see a more aesthetic and expansive application that adds truly meaningful elements to people's lives. In a world where

billions do not have access to this kind of technology, there are critical associated questions around the role of privilege and the access to technology that would be a valuable addition to any meaningful analysis.

Another potential exploration might be undertaken around the reproductive fascination of the Cylons. The Cylons in *Battlestar Galactica* have provided an image of working plurivocality in the context of this investigation. However, it is equally the case that the narcissistic element still present in technology, as reflected in the character of Cavil, is desperately reaching out for connection. The desire to create a child, while sometimes taken up as the desire to create a mirror image, can also be seen as the desire to create an Other that acts independently. This alternative understanding reflects a surrender of the agenda of control and stands as an anti-modernistic act. It would be relevant to an ongoing examination of technology to look at this parental relationship and the way in which it also broadens meaning. If parenting is the shepherding of new possibilities, then it stands as a model of technological creation that can open new possibilities rather than foreclosing them.

Given that the present exploration has tended to shy away from specific and concrete applications, much might be done to search out specific ways to extrapolate and represent the manner in which technology is currently experienced. One idea that is particularly intriguing is performing research in the context of technology mediated environments. In particular, it would be illuminating to examine so-called “virtual communities” such as Lambda MOO, Second Life, or World of Warcraft. In particular, these three virtual “places” present themselves with different styles and may tend to attract participants with particular interests and personal styles. Uncovering the common

aspects of their motivation and experience, however, could do much to build an understanding of virtual communities.

Anthropologist Tom Boellstorff (2008) explores the interest of virtual communities in terms of the “discourses of virtuality” (p. 197.) He describes discussions within virtual communities which are often spontaneously directed toward the nature of the community itself. In a sense, the ambiguity of the situation calls individuals to explicitly thematize the nature of their participation and the quality of their experience. In a similar way, individuals are likely to engage in philosophically relevant discussions about embodiment as it is shaped by a modified, technological environment. These considerations all offer a contemporary, relevant examination of a variety of the themes that have been picked up in the present work such as Romanyshyn’s concern with embodiment and disembodiment, Marcuse’s interest in the liberatory potential of technology when applied with aesthetic discrimination, or even Heidegger’s concern with the elements of being that are most explicitly revealed and concealed through technological mediation. The various themes that have arisen from the present study suggest potential focuses for such virtual study as well. For instance, while much work has been done to study virtual experiences of gender and the practices of gender-bending in virtual environments (Dibbell, 1999; Turkle, 1995), much work remains to be done in exploring the relationship toward gender identity and difference and, in particular, the experience of multiple, fluid identities on anxiety and in terms of perceived possibilities for action.

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