



In reply: “Returning to Frankenstein: the spark of being and the fire of life”

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To the Editor,

I thank Ms. Grimes for her letter¹ and interest in how Mary Shelley's novel, *Frankenstein*, can be read for themes relevant to the practice of anesthesiology. I agree the novel is more than a “cautionary tale” and hoped through the sampling of diverse academic fields that engage with the novel, as well as the brief overview of the Stanford Frankenstein@200 initiative² (which crossed every school at the University), that my perspective piece³ would focus on topics related to anesthesiology, while acknowledging the depth and breadth of scholarship I would not be able to address.

The complex, lengthy exchange between Frankenstein and the creature later in the novel—once the creature has learned how to speak, read, and avoid all humans (due to failings of people to see beyond his appearance)—not only sets off the next chain of horrible events, but also more fully develops the themes that Shelly explores in her novel. These themes include those related to parenthood, religion, geography, responsibility, and human/nonhuman rights, among others. I agree there is both a renewed and altogether new rejection by Frankenstein of the “other”—his creature—and noted in my perspective that the quote of Frankenstein's initial rejection is an example of his flawed “attitudes, behaviours and beliefs.”³

I would like to reassure the correspondent that anesthesiologists do care about their patients long after the intense period of direct anesthesia care and the perioperative time is done, and I agree that *Frankenstein*

can also remind us of this connection. Another potentially potent area of exploration is the extent that patients mold and influence anesthesiologists—i.e., the many experiences of caring for patients shape anesthesiologists and their practice. I continue to be delighted in the generativity of Mary Shelley's novel, and credit her powerful vision in prompting this latest exchange of ideas. Indeed, one of the Stanford initiative's lectures was titled, *Frankenstein: the next 200 years!*

Conflicts of interest None declared.

Editorial responsibility This submission was handled by Dr. Hilary P. Grocott, Editor-in-Chief, *Canadian Journal of Anesthesia*.

References

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3. Shafer A. “A spark of being”: Frankenstein and anesthesiology. *Can J Anesth* 2019; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12630-019-01376-x>.

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