Summary

- The trial for Justine Moritz begins. Victor suffers silent torture while the entire scene plays out in front of him but he can do nothing to stop it. Justine carries herself calmly at the trial, answering the charges and getting a sterling defence from Elizabeth. Although Justine proclaims her innocence, she is convicted of the crime. Her sentence is to die by hanging the following day.
- Elizabeth and Victor go to see Justine in prison where both learn that Justine had given a false confession under stiff questioning. Justine goes to her death with no fear, leaving Victor to ponder the deaths of two innocent victims.

Context

- Chapter eight acts as a commentary on Mary Shelley's view of the justice system in 1818.
- First wave of feminism - late 19th century to early 20th century — women’s suffrage movement
- Mary wollstonecraft - Mary Shelly’s mum, wrote: A Vindication of the Rights of Women, which proposed that the constitution should protect both women's and men’s rights, believed that misteaching led girls to believe that they were inferior
- Feminism was a new idea and wasn’t socially accepted
- Science and education was intended for men only, whereas childbirth, childcare, and domestic life in general was reserved for the women who were perceived to be the weaker sex, inferior to men, and better suited for nursing the even weaker
- The Romantic view that thirst for knowledge is unnatural:
  - “result of my curiosity and lawless devices would cause the death of two of my fellow beings”
  - “I cannot live in this world of misery” ~ despair at loss of traditional values
  - “the first hapless victims to my unhallowed arts” ~ criticism of disturbing nature.

CONTEXT OF WOMEN IN THE NOVEL

- In Frankenstein, the ‘creation’ of women is seen in the chosen representation of these women: through the male perception and description. The adjectives that are applied to the women's persona (the goodness and idealization of Victor’s mother for example) are produced by the male narrators
- Throughout the novel, we hear from 3 main perspectives - Walton, Victor and the Monster — all male, morally flawed, while women were the victims of their flaws
- Through the perspective of the flawed males, we see perfection in the form the female — Caroline, Elizabeth, Justine
- Walton’s sister Margaret’s letters are not shown — is he ignoring her advice?
The women are represented, solely, through the male gaze and perception. They are described in little detail which inevitably reduces their importance in the story (not only the action but the meaning) and as such they function as tools, created to reflect the male characters.

What Victor fears is that the female monster, were she to be created, would have autonomy, that she would decide, “I don’t want to be part of this bargain. I don’t like this other creature I’m supposed to be a companion with. I hate him.” In other words, he’s afraid that she might have her own way of thinking. Female autonomy, in Victor’s eyes, becomes a terrible threat.

Representation of Women

ELIZABETH - JUSTINE PARALLELS

- Justine constructed similarly to Elizabeth and Mrs Frankenstein.
- Her description as she nears death parallels with Mrs Frankenstein.
  - “poor sufferer tried to comfort others”
  - Justine sacrifices herself and still tries to put the needs of others above her own.
  - Mrs Frankenstein resigned herself “cheerfully to death”
- Justine embodies the archetypal perfect woman of innocence, kindness, beauty and nurturing
  - “I hope the character I have always borne will incline my judges to a favourable interpretation”
  - “the most amiable and benevolent of human creatures”, attended her own mother during a tedious illness, in a manner that excited the admiration of all who knew her
  - “She was warmly attached to the child”
  - “like a most affectionate mother” (simile)
  - “her perfect innocence”
  - “Her mild eyes seemed incapable of any severity or guile”
- Elizabeth also embodies perfect woman, as she is caring, sympathetic, forgiving: “when I see a fellow creature about to perish through the cowardice of her pretended friends, I wish to be allowed to speak.”
- Women as selfless; to her last moments, Justine serves others
  - “the poor sufferer tried to comfort others”

RESIGNED TO FATE

- Justine’s claims innocence and hold a calm demeanour even in the face of death.
  - “The appearance of Justine was calm”
  - “I must be condemned”
  - “I am resigned”
  - “tranquil”
  - “appearance of courage”
  - “I do not fear to die, that pang is past”

VOICE AND GENDER ROLES

- Constructs women as voiceless, weak and submissive - especially as Justine gives in and confesses her guilt, despite being assured of her innocence.
  - “deep and voiceless grief of my Elizabeth.”
- Suggesting women are complicit with the roles that men give them.
- Passive and accepts her fate with minimal resistance.
Women appear naive
- “none surely would have been so wicked as to destroy me wantonly.”
Could be seen as Mary Shelly making a point about the voicelessness of women in society.
Relating to context ~ Victorian Era, where women had very few rights.
Dismantles women as the ‘victims’
- “poor Justine”
- “the judges had already condemned my unhappy victim,” (also ownership and possession)
- “poor victim”
- “the poor sufferer”
- “the saintly sufferer”
- “my wretched victim”
- Idea of female dependence, without men they cannot survive: “I had none to support me”
Men as devoting self to women: “would fill the air with blessings and spend his life in serving you”, “he who would spend each vital drop of blood for your sakes”
In Justine’s defence, Elizabeth tells the court of Justine’s character
- women standing up for women ~ challenging archetypal roles?

VALUE OF INNOCENCE
Justine gave a false confession in thinking that she would not face excommunication from the church and atone for her supposed disgraceful conduct
- showing values of the time, that it was more important for Justine to be accepted in society than worry about potential conviction
- rather die knowing her loved ones know the truth than be living and frowned upon
The ‘worth’ of women is very superficial, there is a large emphasis on purity and innocence, once that is lost their whole character is tainted.
- “exquisitely beautiful”
- Beauty plays a major role in judging women.
- “girl of merit and possessed qualities which promised to render her life happy”
- “kindness… obliterated in the minds of the spectators by the enormity she was supposed to have committed.”
- “confident in innocence and did not tremble”
- “I could die in peace now that my innocence is acknowledged”
Justine expresses true remorse for the death of William, proclaims her innocence, and endeavours to plead her innocence
- “first hapless victims”
- Justine is more of an ‘authorial tool’ than a character in her own right.

Fate/Spiritual
- The monster ends up indirectly causing the death of other people. Justine is the first clear example of this. If one begins to blame the monster for indirectly causing deaths, then one also has to blame Victor for the same crime. If the monster hadn’t killed William, Justine wouldn’t have been executed. But, if Victor hadn’t created the monster, the monster wouldn’t have killed William. Once one considers this path, many questions are raised about morality and responsibility.
The Church
- Shelly also comments on the church, suggesting that it is not, as an institution, bringing comfort and love to people.
  - “my confessor has besieged me”
- Places the church in a harsh light, as the pastor uses his power to bully Justine into a false confession.
  - “he threatened excommunication and hell fire”

Justice System
- The chapter is a commentary on Mary Shelley’s view of the justice system.
  - Name Justine can be interpreted as word play on "Justice."
- Mary Shelley makes many comments on the nature of the justice system.
- Immorality of condemning the innocent.
  - “wretched mockery of justice”
  - suggests that the court is not interested in upholding justice, but merely stopping perceived threats.
- The case presented by the court doesn’t allow for the facts to be examined properly.
  - “several strange facts combined against her”
  - suggests that the truth is wired to present the best version that will condemn Justine and the facts are obscure and have no credibility.
  - “circumstance appears doubtful or suspicious” ~ conviction based on suspicion, no certainty.
  - “supposed guilt” ~ no certainty of her guilt.
  - “the bauble on which the chief proof rests” ~ aims to emphasise the lack of evidence, the insubstantial basis for her accusation.
  - “all judges had rather that ten innocent should suffer than that one guilty should escape”
  - “the saintly sufferer” ~ juxtaposition highlights the immorality of her death.
- “one circumstance weighs against me”
  - facts are taken at surface level and not questioned
  - also highlights Justine’s voicelessness
- unfair nature of the court reflected in the lack of proper defence afforded to Justine.
  - “fear and hatred of the crime… made them unwilling to come forward.”
  - women’s voicelessness.
  - society/justice system’s prejudice.
- Highlights corruption of court system
  - “evidence… was hardly required in so glaring a case.”
- The justice system and its extreme consequences are dehumanising
  - “sitting on some straw at the farther end; her hands were manacled, and her head rested on her knees”
- Relation to animalistic behaviours and crouching reduces her humanity.
- The unwillingness of officials to accept the pleas in defence of innocence
  - “My passionate and indignant appeals were lost upon them”
  - “heard the harsh, unfeeling reasoning of these men”
  - “their cold answers”

“JUSTICE” OF VICTOR FRANKENSTEIN
- Shows that Victor too, must face the consequences.
• Victor suffers "living torture" for the consequences of his actions since his university days.
• He has witnessed two people close to him die as a result of his actions (the creation of the monster).
• Explores the struggle he has within himself to confess what he knows of Justine’s innocence, versus being condemned as a mad-man.
• Victor hides in the corner of the prison cell, where he could “conceal the horrid anguish that possessed” him.