

MONT BLANC



PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY
FROM "MONT BLANC" (1817)

MONT BLANC YET GLEAMS ON HIGH:—THE POWER IS THERE,
THE STILL AND SOLEMN POWER OF MANY SIGHTS,
AND MANY SOUNDS, AND MUCH OF LIFE AND DEATH.
IN THE CALM DARKNESS OF THE MOONLESS NIGHTS,
IN THE LONE GLARE OF DAY, THE SNOWS DESCEND
UPON THAT MOUNTAIN—NONE BEHOLDS THEM THERE,
NOR WHEN THE FLAKES BURN IN THE SINKING SUN,
OR THE STAR-BEAMS DART THROUGH THEM:—WINDS CONTEND
SILENTLY THERE, AND HEAP THE SNOW WITH BREATH
RAPID AND STRONG...

THE SECRET STRENGTH OF THINGS
WHICH GOVERNS THOUGHT, AND TO THE INFINITE DOME
OF HEAVEN IS AS A LAW, INHABITS THEE!
AND WHAT WERE THOU, AND EARTH, AND STARS, AND SEA,
IF TO THE HUMAN MIND'S IMAGININGS
SILENCE AND SOLITUDE WERE VACANCY?

MARY SHELLEY'S PARENTS

MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT

*—A VINDICATION OF THE
RIGHTS OF WOMAN*



WILLIAM GODWIN

—OF POLITICAL JUSTICE



MARY SHELLEY'S DREAM:

“I SAW THE HIDEOUS PHANTASM OF A MAN RUSH AWAY FROM HIS ODIIOUS HANDIWORK, HORROR-STRICKEN ... AND HE MIGHT SLEEP IN THE BELIEF THAT THE SILENCE OF THE GRAVE WOULD QUENCH FOR EVER THE TRANSIENT EXISTENCE OF THE HIDEOUS CORPSE WHICH HE HAD LOOKED UPON AS THE CRADLE OF LIFE. HE SLEEPS, BUT HE IS AWAKENED; HE OPENS HIS EYES; BEHOLD THE HORRID THING STANDS AT HIS BEDSIDE, OPENING HIS CURTAINS, AND LOOKING ON HIM WITH YELLOW, WATERY, BUT SPECULATIVE EYES.

I OPENED MINE IN TERROR.” (13)

DURING COMPOSITION OF *FRANKENSTEIN*

- ✧ OCTOBER 1816: FANNY IMRAY (MARY'S HALF-SISTER) DISCOVERS HER ILLEGITIMACY AND COMMITS SUICIDE
- ✧ 10 DECEMBER 1816: THE BODY OF SHELLEY'S WIFE, HARRIET; SHE HAD DROWNED HERSELF
- ✧ MARCH 1817: PERCY SHELLEY IS REFUSED CUSTODY OF HIS CHILDREN WITH HARRIET BY A COURT IN ENGLAND
- ✧ MAY 1817: *FRANKENSTEIN* DRAFT COMPLETED
- ✧ SEPTEMBER 1817: ANOTHER DAUGHTER (CLARA) BORN TO MARY AND PERCY
- ✧ MARCH 1818: MARY, SHELLEY, CLAIRE, AND CHILDREN LEAVE FOR ITALY; *FRANKENSTEIN* PUBLISHED
- ✧ SEPTEMBER 1818: BABY CLARA DIES
- ✧ MARCH 1819: SON WILLIAM DIES
- ✧ NOVEMBER 1819: SON PERCY BORN
- ✧ JULY 1822: HUSBAND PERCY KILLED AT SEA

THREE VERSIONS OF *FRANKENSTEIN*

- MARY SHELLEY'S MANUSCRIPT
- PUBLISHED VERSION OF 1818
- REVISED VERSION OF 1831

TWO VERSIONS OF THE ENDING

MARY'S VERSION:

“HE SPRUNG FROM THE CABIN WINDOW AS HE SAID THIS UPON AN ICE RAFT THAT LAY CLOSE TO THE VESSEL AND PUSHING HIMSELF OFF HE WAS CARRIED AWAY BY THE WAVES AND *I SOON LOST SIGHT OF HIM IN THE DARKNESS AND DISTANCE.*”

PERCY'S CHANGE:

“HE SPRUNG FROM THE CABIN-WINDOW, AS HE SAID THIS, UPON THE ICE-RAFT WHICH LAY CLOSE TO THE VESSEL. *HE WAS SOON BORNE AWAY BY THE WAVES, AND LOST IN DARKNESS AND DISTANCE.*”

PERCY'S HELPFUL SUGGESTIONS

MARY'S VERSION:

“NOR WERE THESE MY ONLY VISIONS. THE RAISING OF GHOSTS OR DEVILS WAS ALSO A FAVOURITE PURSUIT AND IF I NEVER WAS SUCCESSFUL I ATTRIBUTED IT RATHER TO MY OWN INEXPERIENCE AND MISTAKES THAN WANT OF SKILL IN MY INSTRUCTORS.”

PERCY'S VERSION:

“NOR WERE THESE MY ONLY VISIONS. THE RAISING OF GHOSTS OR DEVILS WAS A PROMISE LIBERALLY ACCORDED BY MY FAVOURITE AUTHORS, AND THE FULFILMENT OF WHICH I MOST EAGERLY SOUGHT; AND IF MY INCANTATIONS WERE ALWAYS UNSUCCESSFUL, I ATTRIBUTED THE FAILURE RATHER TO MY OWN INEXPERIENCE AND MISTAKES, THAN TO A WANT OF SKILL OR FIDELITY IN MY INSTRUCTORS.”

1818 VERSION

- ADVOCATES THE IDEA OF RADICAL HUMAN FREE WILL
- F. HAS COMPLETE FREEDOM IN DECIDING TO PURSUE HIS STUDIES AND CREATION OF THE MONSTER
- ORGANIC VIEW OF NATURE
- FRANKENSTEIN AS AUTHOR OF EVIL

1831 VERSION

- MORE DETERMINIST
- “DESTINY WAS TOO POTENT, AND HER IMMUTABLE LAWS HAD DECREED MY UTTER AND TERRIBLE DESTRUCTION.”
- MECHANISTIC VIEW OF NATURE
- FRANKENSTEIN AS VICTIM

MMARGARET

WWALTON

SSEVILLE

MMARY

WWOLLSTONECRAFT

SSHELLEY

PROMETHEUS



PROMETHEUS UNBOUND, PERCY SHELLEY

MONARCH OF GODS AND DÆMONS, AND ALL SPIRITS ...
BEHOLD WITH SLEEPLESS EYES! REGARD THIS EARTH
MADE MULTITUDINOUS WITH THY SLAVES, WHOM THOU
REQUITEST FOR KNEE-WORSHIP, PRAYER, AND PRAISE,
AND TOIL, AND HECATOMBS OF BROKEN HEARTS,
WITH FEAR AND SELF-CONTEMPT AND BARREN HOPE.
WHILST ME, WHO AM THY FOE, EYELESS IN HATE,
HAST THOU MADE REIGN AND TRIUMPH, TO THY SCORN,
O'ER MINE OWN MISERY AND THY VAIN REVENGE.
THREE THOUSAND YEARS OF SLEEP-UNSHELTERED HOURS,
AND MOMENTS AYE DIVIDED BY KEEN PANGS
TILL THEY SEEMED YEARS, TORTURE AND SOLITUDE,
SCORN AND DESPAIR, – THESE ARE MINE EMPIRE.

MARGARET HOMANS' BIOGRAPHICAL READING

“THE NOVEL’S LOGIC WOULD SEEM TO BE THIS:
TO GIVE BIRTH TO AN ILLEGITIMATE CHILD IS
MONSTROUS, FOR IT IS THE INEXORABLE LIFE OF
THESE BABIES, ESPECIALLY THOSE OF MARY
WOLLSTONECRAFT AND OF HARRIET SHELLEY,
THAT DESTROYS THE LIFE OF THE MOTHER.
SUBSEQUENTLY.... THE GUILTY DAUGHTER PAYS
FOR THE DESTRUCTION OF HER OWN MOTHER IN
A FANTASY OF BEING DESTROYED BY HER OWN
CHILD.”

FRANKENSTEIN'S SPEECH TO WALTON'S MEN:

“ARE YOU THEN SO EASILY TURNED FROM YOUR DESIGN? DID YOU NOT CALL THIS A GLORIOUS EXPEDITION? ... YOU WERE HEREAFTER TO BE HAILED AS THE BENEFACTORS OF YOUR SPECIES; YOUR NAME ADORED, AS BELONGING TO BRAVE MEN WHO ENCOUNTERED DEATH FOR HONOUR AND THE BENEFIT OF MANKIND.... DO NOT RETURN TO YOUR FAMILIES WITH THE STIGMA OF DISGRACE MARKED ON YOUR BROWS. RETURN AS HEROES WHO HAVE FOUGHT AND CONQUERED.” (213-4)

FRANKENSTEIN'S FINAL WORDS TO WALTON:

“SEEK HAPPINESS IN TRANQUILLITY,
AND AVOID AMBITION, EVEN IF IT BE
ONLY THE APPARENTLY INNOCENT
ONE OF DISTINGUISHING YOURSELF IN
SCIENCE AND DISCOVERIES.” (216)

CREATURE AS PART OF VICTOR'S OWN PSYCHE:

“I CONSIDERED THE BEING WHOM I HAD
CAST AMONG MANKIND AND ENDOWED
WITH THE WILL AND POWER TO EFFECT
PURPOSES OF HORROR ... NEARLY IN
THE LIGHT OF MY OWN VAMPIRE, MY
OWN SPIRIT LET LOOSE FROM THE
GRAVE AND FORCED TO DESTROY ALL
THAT WAS DEAR TO ME.” (99-100)

WHY “CATASTROPHE”?

“WITH AN ANXIETY THAT ALMOST AMOUNTED TO AGONY, I COLLECTED THE INSTRUMENTS OF LIFE AROUND ME, THAT I MIGHT INFUSE A SPARK OF BEING INTO THE LIFELESS THING THAT LAY AT MY FEET. IT WAS ALREADY ONE IN THE MORNING; THE RAIN PATTERNED DISMALLY AGAINST THE PANES, AND MY CANDLE WAS NEARLY BURNT OUT, WHEN, BY THE GLIMMER OF THE HALF-EXTINGUISHED LIGHT, I WAS THE DULL YELLOW EYE OF THE CREATURE OPEN; IT BREATHED HARD, AND A CONVULSIVE MOTION AGITATED ITS LIMBS. HOW CAN I DESCRIBE MY EMOTIONS AT THIS CATASTROPHE...?” (83)

=> IS THE MOMENT OF THE MONSTER’S *LOOKING* MORE IMPORTANT THAN HIS LOOKS?

WHAT DOES IT MEAN THAT VICTOR “JUST KNOWS”?

“IT WAS THE WRETCH, THE FILTHY
DAEMON TO WHOM I HAD GIVEN LIFE.
WHAT DID HE THERE? COULD HE BE (I
SHUDDERED AT THE CONCEPTION) THE
MURDERER OF MY BROTHER? NO
SOONER DID THAT IDEA CROSS MY
IMAGINATION, THAN I BECAME
CONVINCED OF ITS TRUTH.... THE
MERE PRESENCE OF THE IDEA WAS AN
IRRESISTIBLE PROOF OF THE
FACT.” (99)

THE KISS OF DEATH:

“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.” (84)

THE CREATURE'S FINAL MOMENTS =
THE END OF THE NOVEL (IS HE A
DOUBLE FOR SHELLEY HERSELF?):

“FEAR NOT THAT I SHALL BE
THE INSTRUMENT OF FUTURE
MISCHIEF. MY WORK IS NEARLY
COMPLETE.” (220)