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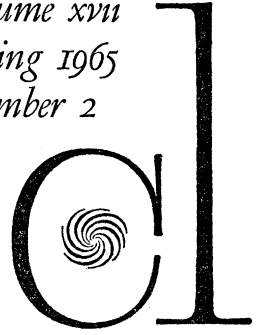
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BURTON R. POLLIN

## Philosophical and Literary Sources Of *Frankenstein*

THE GENESIS of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* has often been ascribed to an occurrence in Byron's Villa Diodati, near Geneva, in 1816; ghost stories had been read aloud and everyone present agreed to write his own weird tale for the group. Few critics have credited Mary with aiming to do more than provide entertainment and shudders. Yet, as Shelley noted in his preface to the first edition of 1818, "other motives were mingled with these as the work proceeded," chiefly "the exhibition of the amiableness of domestic affection, and the excellence of universal virtue."<sup>1</sup> Later Shelley suggested even more varied motivation for the work. In a review, unpublished during his lifetime, he briefly traced a line of inquiry which I should like to follow in this study:

We debate with ourselves in wonder, as we read it, what could have been the series of thoughts—what could have been the peculiar experiences that awakened them—which conduced, in the author's mind, to the astonishing combinations of motives and incidents, and the startling catastrophe, which comprise this tale . . . The elementary feelings of a human mind are exposed to view, and those who are accustomed to reason deeply on their origin and tendency will, perhaps, be the only persons who can sympathize, to the full extent, in the interest of the actions which are their result.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Frankenstein* . . . (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1912; reprint of 1930), p. 2. All references in the text will be made to this edition, which includes most of Mary Shelley's preface to the 1831 edition, on pages vii-xii.

<sup>2</sup> *Athenaeum*, Nov. 10, 1832, p. 730; Thomas Medwin, *The Shelley Papers* (London, 1833), pp. 165-170; Robert Ingpen and Walter Peck, eds., *Complete Works of Shelley* (London, 1926-29), VI, 263-265.

Shelley knew, better than any one else, how richly varied were the works of literature and philosophy reflected in the novel. I shall discuss only a few of the most essential, traced through the internal evidence of the novel and the journal entries of Mary Shelley: a play on the Pygmalion theme by Mme de Genlis, Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, and miscellaneous writings by Condillac and Diderot. At this time Mary was a mere nineteen, highly impressionable, and bound to incorporate her reading into her own compositions.

She began the novel during a rainy week in June 1816, during which many ideas were being exchanged by the group of five: Byron, his callow physician, Dr. John Polidori, Shelley, Mary, and her step-sister, Jane Clairmont.<sup>3</sup> The Shelley trio had arrived in Geneva on May 13 and about June 1 had moved into the small house called Campagne Chapuis or Montalègre in the district of Belle Rive. Byron had arrived on May 25 and occupied, on June 10, the Villa Diodati, which Milton had visited in 1639.<sup>4</sup> It was only a seven-minute walk between the two dwellings, conveniently close for nightly discussions.<sup>5</sup> The loss or, more likely, the destruction of Mary's journal for the period between May 13, 1815 and July 21, 1816 makes it difficult to date details exactly. A useful supplement, however, is afforded by Polidori's journal, preserved by his family after his suicide in 1821 and published in 1911 by his grand-nephew, William Michael Rossetti. Polidori notes that on June 15 Shelley and he conversed about "principles,—whether man was to be thought merely an instrument," the primal source of life, Erasmus Darwin's theories, and galvanism.<sup>6</sup> This discussion may have offered Mary the first seed of inspiration. On June 16 the group read aloud a collection of ghost stories translated from German into French, *Fantasmagoriana, ou Recueil d'histoires d'apparitions, de spectres, etc.* Byron then suggested that each one write a ghost story. If Polidori's account is valid, Mary actually began a story with the others on June 17; however, according to her preface (pp. ix-x), she

<sup>3</sup> Although often mentioned as a primary influence upon the work in June and July, Matthew G. Lewis did not arrive until Aug. 14. Louis F. Peck, *A Life of . . . Lewis* (Cambridge, Mass., 1961), p. 159, properly corrects the error. Walter Peck, *Shelley* (Cambridge, Mass., 1927), I, 55, note 41, makes the error, but convincingly argues that the title came from two of Lewis' *Romantic Tales* of 1808. The title *Frankenstein* appears for the first time in the *Journal* on Apr. 10, 1817.

<sup>4</sup> For details see Leslie Marchand, *Byron* (New York, 1957), II, 624; Edmund Dowden, *Shelley* (London, 1886), II, 14; and Newman Ivey White, *Shelley* (New York, 1940), I, 440.

<sup>5</sup> Mrs. Marshall, *Mary Shelley* (London, 1889), I, 138-139.

<sup>6</sup> William Michael Rossetti, ed., *The Diary of Dr. John William Polidori* (London, 1911), pp. 123-124; cf. *Frankenstein*, Preface, p. x.

must have abandoned this beginning for a totally new tale, which cost her great effort: "I thought and pondered—vainly. I felt that blank incapability of invention which is the greatest misery of authorship . . ."<sup>7</sup>

In the absence of further evidence it must be assumed that her tale first took the shape of her hideous dream, described in the preface, just before Shelley and Byron departed on their tour of Lake Lemman, June 23 through July 1. Mrs. Marshall is probably correct about her being "hard at work" when they returned.<sup>8</sup> Obviously Mary's anguish of "incapability" could not have lasted many days. What she had planned as "a short tale," however, was to be developed "at greater length" through Shelley's urging (p. xii). This more ambitious endeavor required an assortment of materials for her novel which go much further back, in their provenance, than the nightmare of the "pale student of unhallowed arts kneeling beside the thing he had put together . . . the hideous phantasm of a man stretched out . . ." (p. xi).

Some of these materials, of course, were her father's novels: *Things as They are; or The Adventures of Caleb Williams* (1794), *St. Leon* (1799), and *Fleetwood* (1805). Shelley pointed out a similarity to *Caleb Williams* in his *Frankenstein* review. *St. Leon* was the first novel in English to use the Rosicrucian device of the elixir of life, according to Edith Birkhead.<sup>9</sup> *Frankenstein* was to possess this new power of "bestowing animation upon lifeless matter" (p. 46), and he looks forward to being able to "renew life where death had apparently devoted the body to corruption" (p. 48). The third novel, *Fleetwood*, stresses the importance of companionship and the social affections, renounced in *Political Justice*; as Shelley's preface indicates, they are featured in *Frankenstein*. Large portions of both these novels and also of *St. Leon* are set in Switzerland. In general, the spirit of Godwin was so strong in the novels of Mary Shelley that Gilfillan enrolled her in the "Godwin school."<sup>10</sup> Mary herself respectfully dedicated the book to her father.<sup>11</sup> The reviews of the day recognized the literary

<sup>7</sup> White, *Shelley*, I, 444 and 712, accepts his data. In *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*, III (1963), 461-472, "Dr. Polidori and the Genesis of *Frankenstein*," James Rieger rejects Mary's statement about starting the present version at a date later than June 17, chiefly because she later referred erroneously to one of the tales in *Fantasmagoriana*. He also neglects Shelley's contribution to the discussion and all of Mary's previous and concomitant reading, in order to stress the influence of the deprecated Polidori.

<sup>8</sup> Mrs. Marshall, *Mary Shelley*, I, 144.

<sup>9</sup> *The Tale of Terror* (London, 1931), Ch. VI, pp. 100-127, "Godwin and the Rosicrucian Novel."

<sup>10</sup> George Gilfillan, *Modern Literature and Literary Men* (New York, 1850), p. 261; see also Dowden, *Shelley*, II, 35.

<sup>11</sup> See Roger Ingpen, *Letters of Shelley* (London, 1909), II, 563, for Shelley's concern that the publisher print it carefully.

consanguinity at once, without knowing the author of the novel, and the Tory organs such as the *Quarterly* condemned the work for its mischievous Rosicrucian heresy.<sup>12</sup>

My concern, however, is not with this obvious derivation but with unnoticed sources. *Pygmalion et Galatée* by Mme de Genlis is one of these. Shortly after Mary's journal resumes on July 21, 1816 she records two interlinked items during the famous trip to Chamonix: "I read 'Nouvelles Nouvelles' and write my story" (*Journal*, p. 53); she mentions the completion of the reading on August 23 and lists the work twice in her summary of reading for the year (p. 72), the second time as *Nouveaux Nouvelles*.<sup>13</sup> In fact, the full title was *Nouveaux Contes Moraux et Nouvelles Historiques*. This work by Stéphanie-Félicité Ducrest de Saint-Aubin, Marquise de Silléry and Comtesse de Genlis (1746-1830) was published in Paris in 1802-03 in two editions of four and six volumes, and republished in 1815, 1819, and 1825. The *Nouveaux Contes* consists of varied types of fiction, including novellas, short stories, and a few dramatic sketches, one of which is *Pygmalion et Galatée; ou La Statue animée depuis vingt-quatre heures*.<sup>14</sup> There is no continuity in the series of tales, and I assume that Mary read the work before the evening of her inspirational "nightmare," described in her preface of 1831. Mme de Genlis' works previously and afterwards had an absorbing interest for her. Mary's mother, Mary Wollstonecraft, had mentioned the presence in Altona of the aristocratic refugee from revolutionary France in her *Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark*. This famous work was familiar to both Shelley and Mary.<sup>15</sup> They both knew Godwin's reference to Mme de Genlis' *Leçons d'une Gouvernante*, cited to illustrate faults in the education of princes and the prejudices implicit in the phrase "filial piety" (*Political Justice*, 1798 edition, II, 17-20 and 53). He calls her "a woman of uncommon talents, though her-

<sup>12</sup> See the *Quarterly Review*, XVIII (Mar. 1818), 379-385; "a tissue of horrible and disgusting absurdity" (p. 382). A brief note in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, LXXXVIII (Apr. 1818), 334, objects to its "pride of Science." Even the formerly liberal *Monthly Review*, n.s., LXXXV (Apr. 1818), 439, briefly objects to its "doctrines of materialism" and considers it an "eccentric vagary of the imagination." See other reviews in R. G. Grylls, *Mary Shelley* (London, 1938), pp. 315-318.

<sup>13</sup> White, *Shelley*, I, 712, incorrectly transcribes her journal, from *Shelley and Mary*, as "I read Nouvelle Heloïse." All textual references to the *Journal* are to the edition of Frederick L. Jones (Norman, Okla., 1947).

<sup>14</sup> It was first printed in the *Bibliothèque des romans* (which Mme de Genlis helped to edit), according to a prefatory note in her *Œuvres* (Paris, 1825), VI, 253.

<sup>15</sup> *Letters* (London, 1796), p. 253; see *Journal*, p. 13, for the 1814 reading and pp. 132 and 134 for the 1820 reading.

self infected with a considerable number of errors" (p. 19). This judgment is supported by the accounts in Michaud and in others cited by Quérard and Bourguelot.<sup>16</sup> Her sentimentality may have endeared her to Mary and perhaps repelled Shelley, for she is never listed in their joint readings. Even in 1815 Mary was a devotee, going through all five volumes of *Les Veillées du château*, translated in 1785 by Thomas Holcroft, Godwin's intimate friend (*Journal*, p. 34); in the summer of 1816, after beginning *Frankenstein*, she was reading *Adèle et Théodore, ou Lettres sur l'éducation* and *Les Vœux téméraires* (*Journal*, pp. 56 and 60). In November she read *Alphonsine, ou la Tendresse maternelle* (*Journal*, p. 66), and in January 1817, the *Knights of the Swan* (p. 75). Mary's partiality is evident.

The *Pygmalion* of Mme de Genlis was highly uncharacteristic in its liberal social content; indeed, M. N. Bernardin, the only commentator that I have found, declared her to be "socialiste" in this work.<sup>17</sup> Mme de Genlis' prefatory note indicated that the *Pygmalion* was written to be played after the "scène lyrique" on the same theme by Rousseau. His work of 1775 was utterly sentimental, with no trace of any social or analytically psychological content.<sup>18</sup> On the contrary, she filled her dozen and a half short scenes with criticism of the composition of society, delivered through a conversation between the pure, ingenuous Galatea and an old servant. They discuss the cruelties and injustices of the world. Galatea is shocked at slavery (p. 282), tyranny (p. 283), the extremes of poverty and wealth (pp. 293-299), hunting (pp. 307-316), and deception (p. 331).

In *Frankenstein* the evils of artificial society are gradually revealed when the monster overhears the course of instruction given by Felix De Lacey to Safie, an Arabian girl whom he loves. Safie, named perhaps after Sophie of Rousseau's *Emile*, has caused the impoverishment of the affluent De Lacey family. Felix had rescued her father from the legal persecution of the French government. She is now slowly learning about society, purportedly from Volney's *The Ruins of Empires*; simultaneously the naive monster becomes aware "of the division of property, of immense wealth and squalid poverty; of rank, descent, and noble blood" (p. 124). The play *Pygmalion* helped to suggest the device of awakening and the actual injustices of society with which both naive intellects become acquainted.

<sup>16</sup> *La France littéraire, Supplément* (Paris, 1848), IV, 57: "She has a very great and very bad reputation."

<sup>17</sup> M. N. Bernardin, "Le Théâtre de Mme de Genlis—Galatée," in *Revue des Cours et Conférences*, X (Nov. 1902), 74-82, specifically, p. 80.

<sup>18</sup> See *Œuvres complètes* (n.p., 1791), XVIII, 345-360.

I believe that the play also stimulated Mary's memories of Ovid, whose *Metamorphoses* she had laboriously been construing under Shelley's tutelage only a year before in April and May 1815 (*Journal*, pp. 43-47). Ovid's "Pygmalion" makes an assertion, well used in *Frankenstein*, about the importance of light to the creature's newly opened eyes: "At this the waken'd image op'd her eyes, / and viewed at once the light, and lover with surprise."<sup>19</sup> There is a slight intimation of this inspiration in the wording of Mary Shelley's preface: "His success would terrify the artist," a term little relevant to "the pale student of unhallowed arts" (p. xi). Likewise, Frankenstein initially declares: "His limbs were in proportion, and I had selected his features as beautiful." The only specific horrifying traits subsequently mentioned are his eight-foot height and "watery eyes" set in "dun white sockets . . . shrivelled complexion and straight black lips" (p. 51). Later, it is his acquired expression "of malice and treachery" which revolts all observers (p. 177). It is interesting that in a semi-parodic sketch entitled "The New Frankenstein," in *Fraser's Magazine* of January 1837, the anonymous author speaks of creating a new "phantasmagoric hero" on the basis of a picture that he has seen of Pygmalion and his statue.<sup>20</sup>

More obviously Ovid supplied a major element of the inspiration in his presentation of the Prometheus legend, acknowledged in the subtitle of *Frankenstein*. Edmund Blunden, among others, claims that Byron in his partiality for the *Prometheus Bound* of Aeschylus drew the attention of both Mary and Shelley to this theme.<sup>21</sup> This type of critical observation has resulted in a stress upon the rebelliousness of Frankenstein's creature rather than upon the manner of his creation. Consider, for example, the relevant statement of the legend in Ovid:

Whether with particles of heav'nly fire,  
The God of Nature did his soul inspire;  
Or earth, but new divided from the sky,  
And, pliant, still retain'd th'ethereal energy;  
Which wise Prometheus temper'd into paste,  
And, mix't with living streams, the godlike image caste . . .  
From such rude principles our form began;  
And earth was metamorphos'd into man.<sup>22</sup>

The generative meaning of the subtitle is strongly confirmed by the

<sup>19</sup> Dryden's translation of Book X, "Pygmalion and the Statue," in *Works of the English Poets* (London, 1810), XX, 510.

<sup>20</sup> *Fraser's Magazine*, XVII (Jan. 1837), 21-30, specifically p. 26.

<sup>21</sup> Blunden, *Shelley* (New York, 1947), pp. 153-154; see also Eileen Bigland, *Mary Shelley* (New York, 1959), pp. 94-95.

<sup>22</sup> Dryden's translation (see note 19, *supra*), p. 432.

celebrated opening of Chapter V, the section first written: "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" (p. 51). Later, when he confronts the escaped "abhorred monster," Frankenstein invites him to approach "that I may extinguish the spark which I so negligently bestowed" (p. 101). Wisely, the author attempted no specific details for the Promethean process. Doubtless other more scientific writings entered into the general conception, such as those of "Dr. Darwin and some of the physiological writers of Germany" (p. 1) mentioned in Shelley's preface. Mary's preface continued this clue with a reference to an experiment in spontaneous generation and to "galvanism" (p. x).<sup>23</sup> It is interesting that while she was writing in October 1816 she and Shelley were reading "Davy's 'Chemistry,'" presumed by Frederick L. Jones to be his *Elements of Chemical Philosophy* (1812). Davy believed that transmutation of metals was possible, according to D'Israeli's popular *Curiosities of Literature*. As a child, Mary had occasionally seen Davy at dinner in her home.<sup>24</sup>

Another important literary influence was Milton's *Paradise Lost*. It is unfortunate that modern editions of *Frankenstein* usually omit the epigraph of the 1818 edition: "Did I request thee, Maker, from my clay / To mould me man? Did I solicit thee, / From darkness to promote me?" (*Paradise Lost*, X, 743-745.) The spirit of Milton's epic permeates Mary Shelley's work, from the title page until almost the very end: "The fallen angel becomes a malignant devil. Yet even that enemy of God and man had friends and associates in his desolation; I am alone" (p. 240). Three themes are hinted at in these two citations: the molding of a living being "from clay"; the growth of malice and the desire for revenge; the isolation of the hostile being and the consequent increase of his hostility. It is easy to establish Mary's knowledge of and frequent resort to *Paradise Lost*, one of the works which

<sup>23</sup> For Shelley's continuing interest in and poetic use of Darwin's ideas, see Carl Grabo, *A Newton among Poets* (Chapel Hill, 1930), pp. 59, 116. Shelley was responsible also for Mary's use of the Bavarian University of Ingolstadt as the scene of Frankenstein's academic training. He had read to Mary Barruel's *Memoirs Illustrating the History of Jacobinism* (1797-98, R. Clifford, tr.), which devotes two of its four volumes to an account of Weishaupt's society of the Illuminées (sic), founded at Ingolstadt in 1776 (*Journal*, p. 19, for Oct. 9 and 11, 1814, and p. 219, for Shelley's autograph in the New York Public Library copy). Walter Peck in *Shelley*, I, 127-129, traces ideas and phrases in Shelley's *Proposals* (Dublin, 1812), drawn from Barruel's presentation of Weishaupt's "article" of organization.

<sup>24</sup> Ford K. Brown, *William Godwin* (London, 1926), p. 179, refers to Coleridge's letter of Dec. 24, 1799 on the friendship of Godwin and Davy. Professor Thomas O. Mabbott has helpfully indicated to me D'Israeli's reference, in his chapter on "Alchemy."



was revered in the home of Godwin.<sup>25</sup> Both Mary and Shelley had read it in 1815 and again in November 1816; her journal notes her listening to Shelley's oral rendition and her working on *Frankenstein* as though simultaneously (*Journal*, pp. 68-69).<sup>26</sup> Shelley's preface refers to *Paradise Lost* for its contribution of a new "combination" of "the elementary principles of human nature" (p. 1). In the tale itself Mary cleverly includes it as one of the three books which the creature studied "with extreme delight" (p. 133). This knowledge enabled him to declare: "Like Adam, I was apparently united by no link to any other being . . . I was wretched, helpless, and alone. Many times I considered Satan as the fitter emblem of my condition" (pp. 135-136). In like fashion, after the loss of his family and his bride, the scientist considered himself as a lonely Satan.

A few of the many Miltonic echoes can be briefly presented. Mary Shelley refers to the Faustian idea that knowledge intoxicates and is dangerous when excessive (pp. 17, 46, 49), becoming a serpent's "sting" in itself (p. 19) or in its product (p. 179). Frankenstein hopes to be blessed as the "source" of a "new species" (p. 47), but ironically his product evolves into a self-acknowledged Satan (pp. 136, 143, 229), who swears eternal revenge and war upon his creator and all the human race (pp. 150, 204). The monster himself reflects that hell is an internal condition (pp. 53, 88, 220) which is intensified, if not produced, through loneliness (pp. 125, 156). His only salvation in the face of universal ostracism is a mate, to be created by Frankenstein as his "Eve" (p. 156). His culminating malice follows upon the destruction of this requested second weird creation by the scientist himself, fearful lest a stronger, malevolent race may dominate mankind (pp. 176-177).

During the latter part of the book, Frankenstein regularly refers to his creature in terms reminiscent of *Paradise Lost*: "the fiend" (pp. 176, 198), "the daemon" (pp. 73, 153, 172, 177, 238), "adversary" (pp. 204, 206), "devil" (pp. 177, 179). After the death of Frankenstein, the monster lengthily reveals to Walton, the final narrator, his dual nature in his self-analysis just before he flees into the Arctic wastes to destroy himself on a funeral pyre (pp. 237-242). Critics have occa-

<sup>25</sup> See *Political Justice* (London, 1798), I, 72, 323, and Godwin's book of 1815 on Milton's nephews, *The Lives of Edward and John Phillips*, read by Shelley and Mary in the same year (*Journal*, p. 47).

<sup>26</sup> For their later reading of *Paradise Lost* see *Journal* for Dec. 1817, p. 88; for Apr. 1819, p. 119; and for Aug. 1819, pp. 122-123. M. A. Goldberg, "Moral and Myth in . . . *Frankenstein*," *Keats-Shelley Journal*, VIII (Winter 1959), 27-38, offers a good general treatment of the Miltonic theme of the "temptation of knowledge and the punishment of estrangement."

sionally observed that both master and creature are torn by their internal conflicts, chiefly over the misapplied knowledge and their sense of isolation.<sup>27</sup> In fact, they are sharply differentiated in essential qualities after the monster's nature is warped through the senseless abuse of the country folk. To save mankind Frankenstein indirectly and ironically has to condemn his fiancée to a gruesome death. This is a faint relic of Godwin's famous Fénélon-in-the-fire dilemma of *Political Justice*, in which the good of mankind is presented as superior to all private obligations.

The Promethean or Adamic type of image operative in the genesis of the work also suggests the last element for consideration—psychological sensationalism. This aspect of the novel could not have been accidental, and I suggest that another animated statue, that of Condillac, was partly responsible. This figure had become almost a metaphorical cliché among the Encyclopaedists and their English followers, including Godwin. Condillac's *Treatise on Sensations* (1754) succinctly asserted that sensations alone (the apprehension of external reality through impressions) can account for the whole development of perceptions and of complex and abstract ideas. The master psychologist or physiologist of the work adds sensations, one by one, to explicate the development of consciousness.<sup>28</sup> Condillac's work and ideas were likely to be cited in the Diodati discussions.

Diderot, with whom Condillac was closely associated, was another likely element in the early shaping of the novel. Shelley knew Diderot's works and could scarcely have been unaware of the *Lettre sur les sourds et muets*, of 1751, which was supposed to have suggested the statue device to Condillac.<sup>29</sup> The journal records Mary's reading of another work by Diderot, the *Tableau de Famille*, during the "gestation" period of *Frankenstein* (*Journal*, p. 55). To note the relationship, we must

<sup>27</sup> Birkhead, *Tale of Terror*, p. 162. Muriel Spark, *Child of Light* (Hadleigh, Essex, 1951), pp. 134-137, offers the thesis—untenable in my eyes—that the monster constitutes Frankenstein's *Doppelgänger*. She also examines the sensationalism of Ch. VI, but erroneously, I believe, interprets it as an allegory of man's journey from savagery to civilization (p. 147). D. J. Palmer and R. E. Dowse, in *The Listener*, LXVIII (Aug. 23, 1962), 281, 284, "Frankenstein': a Moral Fable," speak of the "superficially didactic" education of "the Noble Savage" as weakening the structure of the work.

<sup>28</sup> Condillac, *Traité des sensations* (Paris, 1886), pp. 54-99. For the wide popularity and almost official status of the work in French schools, see Zora Schaupp, *The Naturalism of Condillac* (n.p., 1925), p. 18. For his outdoing Locke in sensational materialism and his popularity in England, see Léon Dewaule, *Condillac et la psychologie anglaise contemporaine* (Paris, 1892), pp. 8, 9, 310.

<sup>29</sup> John Morley, *Diderot and the Encyclopædists* (London, 1914), I, 106, and Schaupp, *op. cit.*, p. 33. For Shelley's knowledge, see White, *Shelley*, I, 277, and for his ordering Diderot's complete works, see Ingpen, *Letters*, I, 372.

## COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

examine the sections of her work which were indirectly shaped by these "philosophes" and also by Locke.

Frankenstein has been appalled by the creature's murder of his young brother and, by cunning contrivance, of a trusted servant. He confronts him at the Mer de Glace and is told, "Misery made me a fiend. Make me happy, and I shall again be virtuous" (p. 101). He consents to hear the whole tale of his wanderings since the moment of his birth and listens through six chapters (XI-XVI). In the course of the narration Mary Shelley presents the process whereby consciousness dawns, objects are differentiated and are given intellectual significance, and language develops. The very beginning of the monster's account is illustrative of her intention:

It is with considerable difficulty that I remember the original era of my being; all the events of that period appear confused and indistinct. A strange multiplicity of sensations seized me, and I saw, felt, heard, and smelt, at the same time; and it was, indeed, a long time before I learned to distinguish between the operations of my various senses. By degrees, I remember, a stronger light pressed upon my nerves, so that I was obliged to shut my eyes [p. 104].

He shelters himself from the light and heat of the sun, uses clothing against the cold of night, and discovers the "wonder" of the moon which enables him to find berries to satisfy his hunger. Gradually he sees and discovers the use of a stream of water, while the songs of birds give him pleasure. He distinguishes insects from herbs and one bird from another. On the other hand, the pain of fire teaches him about its danger and also about its usefulness for roasting food (p. 107). The last words of the monster, spoken to the explorer Walton in the polar regions, indicate how deliberate was the author's sensationalism: "I shall no longer see the sun or stars, or feel the winds play on my cheeks. Light, feeling, and sense will pass away . . . Some years ago, when the images which this world affords first opened upon me . . . I should have wept to die; now it is my only consolation" (pp. 241-242). When he overhears Safie's lessons and learns about injustice, he comments, "Oh, that I had forever remained in my native wood, nor known nor felt beyond the sensations of hunger, thirst, and heat!" (p. 125.) One might mention, in passing, the considerable admixture of the primitivistic doctrines of the Rousseau of the two *Discours*. This was inevitable in Geneva, when members of the Shelley-Byron group were exploring and describing such literary shrines as Clarens, the home of La Nouvelle Héloïse. The third canto of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* bears eloquent witness to this interest. In August 1816 Mary was also reading Rousseau's *Rêveries (Journal)*, pp. 55-56).

It was Rousseau who had originally brought Condillac and Diderot

together. In a way, all three are united once again in the pages of *Frankenstein*. Diderot's *Lettre sur les aveugles* reminds one of her presentation of the dawning consciousness.<sup>30</sup> His emphasis there on sight as creating for normal man a basis for understanding the scope and meaning of danger may have suggested to Mary a poignant episode in the book. The monster, after loitering near the cottage of Felix De Lacey for months, finally throws himself on the mercy of the venerable, blind father in the absence of the family. His tones of sincerity convince the sightless host of his need for aid and friendship, but the returning family, horrified by his appearance, drive him out into "insupportable misery" (pp. 139-143).

Early in the composition of *Frankenstein* Mary Shelley deliberately studied a work from which the French materialists borrowed much, namely Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Her normal habit was to read very rapidly through a book and turn immediately to another. Yet she spent an unusual amount of time on the *Essay*, apparently following the lead of Shelley by two days in November 1816. Almost daily, through December, including her marriage day, and for two days of January 1817 she lists Locke's work.<sup>31</sup> She must have read the entire book meticulously. The traces appear in the passages cited above and in others. Her underlying assumptions correspond to those of Locke, concerning the absence of innate principles, the derivation of all ideas from sensation or reflection, and the efficacy of pleasure and pain in causing us to seek or avoid the various objects of sensation (I, iv; II, i, 2; and II, vii, 1-4).

Certainly other influences might be traced in the rather complex fabric of this three-volume novel—the strands of Godwin's *Political Justice*, for example, with its attempt to reconcile the sensationalism of Locke with the most demanding type of rationalistic morality; or of Buffon, who imagines a man suddenly endowed with senses in the *Histoire Naturelle*.<sup>32</sup>

Mary Shelley's intellectual ambitions later fully accord with her early aspirations. She herself aptly wrote on February 25, 1822: "Let me fearlessly descend into the remotest caverns of my own mind, carry the torch to self-knowledge into its dimmest recesses" (*Journal*, p. 170). After Shelley's death on July 8, 1822, she tried to render herself

<sup>30</sup> See Diderot's *Lettre* (Paris, 1772), pp. 72-73.

<sup>31</sup> *Journal*, pp. 68-71, 74. The *Journal* entry of "1 book of Locke's Essay" read, in 1816, is clearly erroneous (p. 73), since the item for Nov. 19 is "finish 1st book of Locke" (p. 69).

<sup>32</sup> See Schaupp, *op. cit.*, p. 90. Mary read this work only in June and July 1817, after completing the novel (*Journal*, pp. 81-82), but Shelley had read Buffon as early as 1811 and alluded to him in July 1816; see White, *Shelley*, I, 158, 714.

## COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

more worthy of the sacred trust of memories and manuscripts that had been bequeathed to her. "I am beginning seriously to educate myself," she wrote in March 1823 (*Journal*, p. 189). The readers of her many works are familiar with the resultant reflections of her self-instruction. On December 3, 1824, little more than twenty-seven years old, she speaks poignantly of her loneliness amid the "busy metropolis" of London and of her tendency toward misanthropy. She concludes, "So much for philosophising. Shall I ever be a philosopher?" (*Journal*, p. 197.) Her first novel particularly revealed a respectable philosophic intent and an intellectual ingenuity, although it was the work of a girl of nineteen.

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