# Elizabeth Lavenza in *Frankenstein* (I): From the Beast to the Blonde? (1818-1831)

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The alterations made by Mary Shelley to her first novel in 1831 for Colburn and Bentley's "Standard Novels" series have been well documented and received a great deal of critical attention (e.g. Mellor 170-76; Baldick 61-62; Poovey 133-42; O'Rourke)[1]. However, one of those alterations, the rather drastic change undergone by the character of Elizabeth Lavenza, Victor's betrothed and the monster's last direct victim, has not to my mind been sufficiently remarked on. As is well known, 1831 Elizabeth is an adopted child, noticed by Victor's parents while holidaying in Italy, whereas her 1818 namesake happens to be Victor's first cousin, the daughter of Victor's father's sister. As is less well known, her physical appearance changes with her circumstances, as Mary Shelley's original dark-eyed, dark-haired protagonist becomes an angelic blue-eyed blonde, which, as I will argue here, has an impact on the reading of the novel, and not merely from an ideological point of view, although it is hard not to see the 1831 Elizabeth as blander, more proper and less outspoken than her predecessor. If the socio-political implications of 1831 Elizabeth's new origin and lack of opinions have been studied (I will return in particular to the silencing of 1831 Elizabeth), as far as I am aware, the significance of her physical makeover has only been addressed by H. L. Malchow and James O'Rourke. Malchow interprets it from a post-colonial perspective, arguing that the starker contrast between the "master-race

[1] I will here focus on the two best-known texts of *Frankenstein*, leaving aside the 1823 edition, which differs very little from the original one.

maiden" and "her racial negative" (i.e. the monster) highlights "the classic threat of the black male" (112-113), while O'Rourke's reading convincingly locates it within the fairy tale tradition. According to him, Elizabeth's transformation "is the most elaborate use of the conventions of the fairy tale as the oblique vehicle through which Mary Shelley examines both her own ugliest prejudices and her participation in structures of privilege" (381). O'Rourke analyses Shelley's resort to the fairy tale conventions here and elsewhere in the 1831 version in light of the "moral dilemmas" raised by the novel (379). In this two-part essay, I would like to look at the evolution between the two Elizabeths from a different perspective, replacing it within its social, cultural, and literary contexts to reveal a shifting conception of femininity which, when considered in terms of its varying association with Victor's creature, questions the very notion of "reading" as a concept grounded in the legibility of the female (or of the monstrous) face and body, an issue of paramount importance in a novel which revolves so much around (mis)interpretation. Building in particular on the writings of Thomas Dutoit, Scott J. Juengel and Ashley J. Cross, I will try to show how the differences between 1818 Elizabeth and 1831 Elizabeth can further critical reflection on epistemological matters such as the transparency or opacity of faces, the possibility of accessing meaning and truth, and the hermeneutical limits of awareness relying on classical polarities of interiority and exteriority, surface and depth, all matters of considerable instability especially if understood from the perspective of a comparative reading of the two versions of Shelley's novel. The first part of this paper (both parts can be read independently) will consist of a descriptive analysis of these differences, highlighting the alternative representations of femininity they convey, while in Part II I will turn my attention more specifically to the 1818 version and to the critical epistemological issues that are raised by it. Shelley's depiction of her heroine's transparency will be my guiding thread.

My analysis here will rely mostly on a comparison between the following three sets of excerpts dealing with the presentation of Elizabeth's appearance and character, with a few references to the rest of the novel(s): the first introduction of Elizabeth (A), her brief description when Victor meets her again after his time in Ingolstadt and the murder of William (B), and her reaction at Victor's departure for the British Isles (C). The obvious differences in Elizabeth's looks, with which I will begin, are the outward signs of a profound shift in the conception of a character who morphs from an earthly woman to a celestial being, losing her depth in the process.

| A 1818 | A 1831 |
|---|---|
| From this time Elizabeth Lavenza became my playfellow, and, as we grew older, my friend. She was docile and good tempered, yet gay and playful as a summer insect. Although she was lively and animated, her feelings were strong and deep, and her disposition uncommonly affectionate. No one could better enjoy liberty, yet no one could submit with more grace than she did to constraint and caprice. Her imagination was luxuriant, yet her capability of application was great. Her person was the image of her mind; her hazel eyes, although as lively as a bird's, possessed an attractive softness. Her figure was light and airy; and, though capable of enduring great fatigue, she appeared the most fragile creature in the world. While I admired her understanding and fancy, I loved to tend on her, as I should on a favourite animal; and I never saw so much grace both of person and mind united to so little pretension. (20) | She appeared of a different stock. The four others were dark-eyed, hardy little vagrants; this child was thin and very fair. Her hair was the brightest living gold, and despite the poverty of her clothing, seemed to set a crown of distinction on her head. Her brow was clear and ample, her blue eyes cloudless, and her lips and the moulding of her face so expressive of sensibility and sweetness that none could behold her without looking on her as of a distinct species, a being heaven-sent, and bearing a celestial stamp in all her features [...]. When my father returned from Milan, he found playing with me in the hall of our villa a child fairer than pictured cherub — a creature who seemed to shed radiance from her looks and whose form and motions were lighter than the chamois of the hills. The apparition was soon explained [...]. Elizabeth Lavenza became the inmate of my parents' house — my more than sister — the beautiful and adored companion of all my occupations and my pleasures. (79-80) |

| B 1818 | B 1831 |
|---|---|
| We were soon joined by Elizabeth. Time had made great alterations in her form since I had last beheld her. Six years before she had been a pretty, good-humoured girl, whom every one loved and caressed. She was now a woman in stature and expression of countenance, which was uncommonly lovely. An open and capacious forehead gave indications of a good understanding, joined to great frankness of disposition. Her eyes were hazel, and expressive of mildness, now through recent affliction allied to sadness. Her hair was of a rich, dark auburn, her complexion fair, and her figure slight and graceful. (51) | We were soon joined by Elizabeth. Time had altered her since I last beheld her; it had endowed her with loveliness surpassing the beauty of her childish years. There was the same candour, the same vivacity, but it was allied to an expression more full of sensibility and intellect. (123) |

| C 1818 | C 1831 |
|---|---|
| It was in the latter end of August that I departed, to pass two years of exile. Elizabeth approved of the reasons of my departure, and only regretted that she had not the same opportunities of enlarging her experience, and cultivating her understanding. She wept, however, as she bade me farewell, and entreated me to return happy and tranquil. "We all," said she, "depend upon you; and if you are miserable, what must be our feelings?" (110). | It was in the latter end of September that I again quitted my native country. My journey had been my own suggestion, and Elizabeth therefore acquiesced, but she was filled with disquiet at the idea of my suffering, away from her, the inroads of misery and grief. It had been her care which provided me a companion in Clerval — and yet a man is blind to a thousand minute circumstances which call forth a woman's sedulous attention. She longed to bid me hasten my return; a thousand conflicting emotions rendered her mute as she bade me a tearful, silent farewell. (195) |

***Dark hair, golden hair***

So the hazel-eyed (1818 A and B), dark auburn-haired (1818 B) woman has turned into a blue-eyed one with hair of "the brightest living gold" (1831 A). In this respect, 1831 Elizabeth resembles her fellow blond Shelleyan heroines in the three novels published prior to the revision of *Frankenstein*: Euthanasia in *Valperga* (1823), Idris in *The Last Man* (1826), and Katherine Gordon in *Perkin Warbeck* (1830). This evolution, and the predominance of the blond female protagonist in Shelley's fiction after 1818, can be explained by several cultural and literary sources, which I will briefly retrace and describe in order to single out salient points which will be developed afterwards. Shelley's first and most direct source of inspiration comes from the contrast between dark and blond heroines in Romantic prose fiction, more precisely in Walter Scott's novels. Shelley expressed many times her admiration for Scott and as her reading list shows[2], she read *Waverley* (1814) in 1815 and again in 1817 and 1821, *Ivanhoe* (1819) in 1820 and 1821, *The Pirate* (1821) in 1822, etc. The 1831 version of *Frankenstein* probably owes a lot to Scott's influence, separating as it does its female characters along stereotypical traits: Elizabeth, the blond domestic woman, and Safie, the dark adventurous one, to whose appearance 1818 Elizabeth was closer, with dark eyes, dark hair, and light skin – a fair complexion for Elizabeth (1818 A) and a "wondrously fair" one for Safie (1818 81). Shelley resorts to the same contrast most

[2] Compiled by Paula R. Feldman and Diana Scott-Kilvert and first published in *The Journals of Mary Shelley: 1814-1844* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1987), the Shelleys' reading list is available online on the Romantic Circles website (http://www.rc.umd.edu/editions/frankenstein/MShelley/reading, last accessed 08/05/2018).

remarkably in two of her subsequent novels, *Valperga*, where the blond, blue-eyed, sensible aristocrat Euthanasia is paired with the equally beautiful but passionate Beatrice, a prophetess with "deep black eyes" and "jet hair" (143); the same contrast occurs in *Perkin Warbeck* between a princess with blond hair and blue eyes, Lady Katherine Gordon, and the daughter of a Moor, Monina de Faro. In Scott's novels, the passivity of the blond (e.g. Rose Bradwardine in *Waverley*, Rowena in *Ivanhoe*, Brenda Troil in *The Pirate*) contrasts with the activity of the brunette (e.g. Flora McIvor, Rebecca and Minna Troil in *Waverley*, *Ivanhoe* and *The Pirate* respectively)[3]. The distinction between the two types of heroines usually rests on a social basis as well, the blond one being of noble origin, like Idris in *The Last Man*, born into the royal family of England, while the dark-haired one springs from more humble stock and often has foreign blood, like Safie and Monina.

According to Alexander Welsh (48-49), this duality derives from the contrast between the two female protagonists of another novel re-read by Shelley shortly before her writing of the original *Frankenstein* (and again after, in 1818 and 1820): Madame de Staël's *Corinne* (1807), where the passionate, dark-haired and dark-eyed Corinne, who is half Italian, is spurned by her English lover who eventually marries the sweet, blond and bland (and younger) Lucile Edgermond. The latter's name corresponds to her blondeness, connoting both light (lux) and near-otherworldliness, edge-of-the-world-ness. This trans-linguistic pun is made by Ellen Moers (233), who explains that Lucile, Corinne's blond rival and stepsister, is "the ideal woman" for an Englishman of the time, the "ideal of English womanhood, English culture, and English Romanticism. Lucile is young, pale, innocent, and silent," all points to which we will return further down – one might add that this ideal will be taken to its extreme during the Victorian period. "[Lucile's] very nullity as a person is the source of her charm," adds Moers (239); a non-person, Lucile is a void waiting to be filled, sexually and intellectually, or perhaps more precisely, she and characters like her are mere surfaces onto which one – Lord Nelvil, Victor Frankenstein – can project whatever image one wishes. As a result, transparent heroines of this type come across as two-dimensional, lacking the depths and complexities of human beings, which is the case with 1831 Elizabeth, as we will see later[4].

[3] For a more thorough analysis of the types of heroines in Scott's novels, see Welsh 48-55.

[4] Another probable literary source, Richardson's *Clarissa*, will be evoked below and in Part II of this essay.

In this respect, they strongly resemble the female protagonists of a more traditional and less direct source of inspiration for 1831 Elizabeth, a source where princesses abound: fairy tales, where "[g]olden hair tumbles through the stories in impossible quantities," in Marina Warner's words (365). Indeed, 1831 Elizabeth's "crown of distinction" likens her to the real aristocrats Idris, Katherine Gordon, and Euthanasia (a countess if not exactly a princess like the other two). In *From the Beast to the Blonde*, from which I borrow the title of this first part, Warner examines the role played by blond hair in those tales, writing that "the colour fulfils a symbolic function, not a practical or descriptive purpose," standing for light, goodness, and purity (364). It might be worth mentioning at this point that when Mary Shelley was eight, in 1805, William and Mary Jane Godwin set up the Juvenile Library to publish children's books, among which Charles and Mary Lamb's *Beauty and the Beast* (1806), subtitled "A Rough Outside with a Gentle Heart" – the creature in *Frankenstein* refers to himself as a "beast" (1818 95; 1831 177) and the Beast is also called a "Monster" in the Lambs' poem, where Beauty, although not explicitly endowed with golden hair, is repeatedly characterized as "fair," like 1818 Elizabeth's complexion and 1831 Elizabeth in excerpts A[5]. Furthermore, 1831 Elizabeth is compared to "a garden rose" (1831 79), the rose being "the emblem" of Beauty in the tale and in the Lambs' poem (11). The change in Elizabeth's origin between the two versions assimilates her to that archetypal fairy tale hero or heroine, the foundling: half Swiss on the Frankenstein side, half Italian in 1818, she retains her Italian father in 1831 but acquires a German mother, which distances her from Victor and from the rest of the Frankensteins – and of course from the swarthy Italian family she is found in to begin with. The symbolism of light and purity associated with blondeness explains why female saints and the Virgin Mary generally possess halo-like golden hair (Warner 362-69). These religious connotations are found in another source for 1831 Elizabeth, Dante's Beatrice, particularly as she is described in *La Vita Nueva*, read by Shelley in 1821: in this work, the poet falls in love with the angelic child Beatrice, who comes to represent the spiritual and divine aspect of life. The love was unconsummated and the lady died at a young age, which reinforces the parallels with Victor's unravished bride. Although not explicitly blonde, the *donna*

[5] Even though "fair" does not necessarily connote blond hair, the two meanings of the word have almost come to merge in English since the 16th century (Warner 363). Emily Sunstein briefly examines the fairy tale elements in Mary Shelley's childhood and suggests that her interest in *Valentine and Orson* in particular, a tale involving two brothers, one of whom is a noble youth and the other was raised by bears, might have had an impact on the pair formed by Victor and his Monster in *Frankenstein* (31-32).

*angelicata*, whose light is a reflection of Divine Love, leads Dante through Heaven in *Il Paradiso* (on Shelley's reading list for 1819) and constitutes a model to which Elizabeth, Euthanasia, Idris and Katherine Gordon all conform, according to Jean de Palacio (391). This leads me to focus more narrowly on a major distinction between the two Elizabeths: the shift from the woman to the angel.

***Earthly "woman", divine "being"***

In the two excerpts A, if 1818 Elizabeth's feelings are "uncommon," it is 1831 Elizabeth's appearance with the "crown of distinction" created by her golden hair which sets her apart as the blond, royal little girl among the "dark-eyed, hardy little vagrants" as Thomas Dutoit points out (851). Her nobility is that of the saint, "a being heaven-sent, and bearing a celestial stamp in all her features" (1831 A). The adjective "celestial" is repeated later in the revised version, in a passage which takes up the same religious theme: "[t]he saintly soul of Elizabeth shone like a shrine-dedicated lamp in our peaceful home […]; her smile, her soft voice, the sweet glance of her celestial eyes, were ever there to bless and animate us" (1831 82). The "woman" of 1818 has been replaced by a soul, a purely spiritual "being" (1818 B and 1831 A). No wonder then that the ethereal 1831 version of Elizabeth seems less subject to the passing of time, which has "*greatly* altered" her 1818 counterpart but merely "altered" her in the two excerpts B (emphasis added), maintaining her in a virginal child-like state which her blondeness also connotes (Warner 368). In the same line of thought, the symbolism of lightness associated with blond hair is to be taken in all the senses of the word "light;" as a matter of fact, if 1818 Elizabeth has a "light and airy" figure, she is also "capable of enduring great fatigue," while 1831 Elizabeth exhibits no such robustness and appears to be deprived of a body: "lighter than the chamois" (1831 A), this Elizabeth barely appears to touch ground. Like Richardson's Clarissa, "she seemed to tread air, and to be all soul" (949). The comparison with Clarissa (the 1748 novel was on Shelley's reading list in 1815, 1816, 1818 and 1819) and the saintliness of both heroines bode ill for 1831 Elizabeth, whose golden hair seems destined to become the crown of the martyr.

This comparison is reinforced by a remarkable echo between two of the most famous literary dreams, Victor's and Lovelace's, more perceptible in the 1831 version because of the Clarissa-like character of 1831 Elizabeth:

> I thought I would have clasped her in my arms: when immediately the most angelic form I had ever beheld, all clad in transparent white, descended in a cloud, which, opening, discovered a firmament above it, crowded with golden cherubs and glittering seraphs, all addressing her with Welcome, welcome, welcome! and, encircling my charmer, ascended with her to the region of seraphims; and instantly, the opened cloud closing, I lost sight of her, and of the bright form together, and found wrapt in my arms her azure robe (all stuck thick with stars of embossed silver) which I had caught hold of in hopes of detaining her; but was all that was left me of my beloved Clarissa. (1218)

> 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 the grave-worms crawling in the folds of the flannel. (Shelley 1818 36; 1831 102)

Both men dream of embracing a woman alive at the time of the dream but soon to become a dead body, in the dream and in the diegesis; the woman disappears, leaving behind her the garb of a saint which the dreamer wraps in his arms (Lovelace) or transformed into a corpse which the dreamer holds in his arms (Victor). Clarissa ascends among the "golden cherubs," while Elizabeth was herself described as a golden-haired "cherub" a few pages before the second extract. The whiteness of the angel's dress finds a macabre echo in the "livid" hue of Elizabeth's lips and of course the shroud enveloping Caroline Frankenstein's body. In both cases the dream can be read as proleptic, announcing the death of the beloved woman, a death for which the two dreamers may be said to be at least partly responsible.

It might in fact be argued that unlike the original Elizabeth, the 1831 one is not even alive in the first place. If her predecessor's animation is stressed several times in excerpt 1818 A, with the repetition of "lively" and the occurrence of "animated," the life which characterizes her has been transferred to the colour of 1831 Elizabeth's hair, of "bright *living* gold" (emphasis added) – the only thing about her that seems endowed with life. Inanimate herself, 1831 Elizabeth animates others: "her smile, her soft voice, the sweet glance of her celestial eyes, were ever there to bless and animate us" (1831 82). The mineral of 1831 Elizabeth's golden hair has replaced the natural, animal and vegetal, in the description of 1818 Elizabeth, with her "hazel eyes, […] lively as a bird's," whom Victor moreover likens to a "summer insect" and to "a favourite animal" (excerpt 1818 A); the "hazel" of her eyes is repeated in excerpt 1818 B. Even the one natural reference in 1831 Elizabeth, the chamois, sounds vaguely ominous retrospectively: the animal returns further on in the novel as a prey, when Victor

explains that the monster "may be hunted like the chamois" (1818 144; 1831 239). His ability to tread lightly is not the only trait which the monster shares with1831 Elizabeth, described for instance in excerpt A as "an apparition," a term also used several times for the creature (e.g. 1818 13 or 146; 1831 69 or 243). In fact, the "being heaven-sent" that is 1831 Elizabeth is constructed as the exact opposite to the (dark-haired) hellish "being that [Victor] had created" (1818 36), an angel of light to his "fallen angel," which is how the creature sees himself (1818 68; 1831 142), in a rather straightforward, Manichean opposition between the demonic and the angelic. Both are connected through their divine characteristics[6], which by implication emphasises the Creature's non-human nature.

The pairing of Elizabeth and the Creature has often been perceived and commented on[7] but it does not work in the same way and to the same effect in the two versions. Indeed, 1818 Elizabeth is related to the Monster not through the divine, but through the natural: the "nuts" which he eats are reminiscent of her hazel eyes (1818 72), and Elizabeth in excerpt A is compared to creatures which the monster is said to be, an "insect" (1818 67) and an "animal" (e.g. 1818 51). The same terms apply to the two of them, literally for the monster-beast and metaphorically for Elizabeth, a process which we will trace from another perspective in Part II. Another natural element connects them, this time a physical characteristic: they share the same dark hair. We know from her manuscripts that Shelley toyed with the idea of calling her character by the rather strange name of "Myrtella," which of course evokes the myrtle, another vegetal, but also "derives from the name of a mistress and courtesan" (Ketteredge 273)[8]. Although 1818 Elizabeth has nothing about her of the prostitute, this clearly reveals her bodily quality, brought out by the sensuousness of her "rich, dark auburn hair" (1818 B), which conveys the idea of a woman made of flesh and blood, a very possible bride for Victor, far from the pure soul and eternal virgin that 1831 Elizabeth seems to be. Yet 1818 Elizabeth is also described as being "light and airy", and angelic women already appear in the first version of *Frankenstein* with Caroline Frankenstein, the "angel mother" (1818 48); both earthly and airy, the image of femininity which emerges from the description of 1818 Elizabeth and from the novel as a whole is more complex than the

[6] On the monster's divine characteristics, see Dutoit 858-59.

[7] See for instance Knoepflmacher: "Yet the beautiful and passive Elizabeth and the repulsive, aggressive Monster who will be her murderer are also doubles – doubles who are in conflict only because of Victor's rejection of the femininity that was so essential to the happiness of his 'domestic circle' and to the balance of his own psyche" (109). Knoepflmacher's essay is based on the 1831 text.

[8] Perhaps "Myrtella" owes her flowery name to *Waverley*'s Flora and Rose.

idealisation of 1831, whose Elizabeth, as has been noted, prefigures the Victorian angel in the house (Mellor 176; Malchow 112). This complexity is the last point I wish to examine here.

### *Surface and depths*

The portrait drawn of 1818 Elizabeth in excerpt A is fraught with contradictions: she is "docile and good tempered, *yet* gay and playful […]. *Although* she was lively and animated, her feelings were strong and deep […]. No one could better enjoy liberty, *yet* no one could submit with more grace than she did […]. Her imagination was luxuriant, *yet* her capability of application was great," conveying an image far from the simplicity of the celestial vision offered by her 1831 counterpart. To the playfulness of the child, 1818 Elizabeth allies application and a "luxuriant" imagination; to her "affectionate" disposition she adds an "understanding" which Victor admires, whereas not much is said of 1831 Elizabeth's interior life. If the sentence "she busied herself with following the aërial creations of the poets" occurs in both versions (1818 20; 1831 81), in 1831 it is followed by Elizabeth's passive "admiration and delight" at the spectacle of nature, while in 1818 the paragraph ends with her vision of the world as a "vacancy, which she sought to people with imaginations of her own" (1818 20); the later character is deprived of the little agency that belonged to her predecessor, an agency poetic in essence, that of "imagining," of forming images, mentioned in her very first introduction (1818 A). Smoothing the asperities within the feminine self in 1831, Shelley leaves her reader with an image of perfection so opposed to the monster as to become the other side of the same coin, the coin of femininity, as several critics have remarked. Envisaging Elizabeth (in the 1831 version) in connection not with the monster but his unfinished female mate, Barbara Johnson explains the repression of female self-contradictions, i.e. complexity, thanks to the clear separation between femininity and monstrousness:

> It is thus indeed perhaps the very hiddenness of the question of femininity in *Frankenstein* that somehow proclaims the painful message not of female monstrousness but of female contradictions. For it is the fact of self-contradiction that is so vigorously repressed in women. While the story of a man who is haunted by his own contradictions is representable as an allegory of monstrous doubles, how indeed would it have been possible for Mary to represent feminine contradiction *from the point of view of its repression* otherwise than precisely in the *gap* between angels of domesticity and an uncompleted monsteress, between the murdered Elizabeth and the dismembered Eve? (9)

It seems to me that the shift between the two Elizabeths exemplifies the repression described by Johnson by accentuating this gap and limiting women to surfaces, like the surface of the painting and of the miniature in which the mother, Caroline Frankenstein, is contained. To put it bluntly, in 1818 the monster is partly within Elizabeth, because there *is* something within; in 1831, he is decidedly without because there is nowhere else he could be. 1831 Elizabeth appears devoid of depths, an outside without an inside. While her predecessor's "feelings were strong and *deep*" (1818 A, emphasis added), the later version is only described in terms of her expressions, i.e. of what is visible on her face – or surface: "her lips and the moulding of her face [were] expressive of sensibility and sweetness" (1831 A), "an expression more full of sensibility and intellect" (1831 B), whether or not that expression corresponds to the inside, whether or not there *is* an actual sensibility, sweetness or intellect to match. Of course, the reader is led to assume that this is the case, that she is so transparent that it is needless to specify that there exists an inside equal to that outside, but since the two are never differentiated, it hardly seems to matter. The completely transparent woman shows what she is, without any mediation: "the saintly soul of Elizabeth shone like a shrine-dedicated lamp in our peaceful home". She stands as a living embodiment of truth, incapable of deceit, like Katherine Gordon in *Perkin Warbeck* (1830) [9], published just before the revision of *Frankenstein*. As Thomas Dutoit puts it, "[h]er character is entirely a function of the facial features" (851). To some extent, such was also the case with 1818 Elizabeth, whose "person was the image of her mind" (1818 A), but the word "image" suggests a comparison, not an assimilation; a representation, not a presentation, which allows for the existence of two distinct elements, a person (i.e. a body) and a mind which may or may not coincide. In other words, she possesses a character and facial features which happen to correspond, but in a more complex manner than in 1831 Elizabeth's, more human-like and less divine – hence the contradictions noticed above. If both characters can practice a form of self-effacement, 1818 Elizabeth being "forgetful of self" (26) while her 1831version "forgot even her own regret in her endeavours to make [others] forget" (88), there is a strong hint that the selflessness of the second Elizabeth is precisely that: the absence of a self.

[9] "Katherine is Truth," explains her cousin the king of Scotland (219).

This assimilation between surface and depths in 1831, resulting seemingly in a denial of depths, accounts for another alteration brought to the second Elizabeth: her silencing. By 1831, Elizabeth's voice has faded away, which, as Marina Warner points out (390-95), is another feature of many a fairy-tale heroine, like Donkeyskin after she flies from her father's palace, or the protagonists of the Grimms' "The Twelve Brothers" and "The Six Swans". When considered in the light of the character's transparency, this belongs to a well-known trope according to which "in wordlessness lies sincerity," a conventional manner of doubting the truthfulness of language, which explains why a character like Cordelia in *King Lear* partly derives from the silent heroines of fairy tales (Warner 390). 1831 Elizabeth has no need for words: her face expresses her feelings and Victor understands what she means by her tears ("she longed to bid me hasten my return" in excerpt C). However, this idealisation of the silent heroine – silent heroes do crop up in fairy tales but on a much less regular basis – results at least partly from ideological considerations, as shown in the various conduct books popular in England in the late 18th and early 19th century and derided by Mary Wollstonecraft in her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792). This ideology gained ground in the 19th century: in the course of the Grimms' editing of the tales from their first publication in 1812 to the final version of 1857, the female protagonists, at least the "good" ones, became more and more silent as the ideal of virtuous, silent and self-abnegating femininity came to meet "a certain particular socio-cultural requirements of family equilibrium in the climate of early nineteenth-century Germany" and in England as well (Warner 394), culminating, as mentioned above, in the Victorian era. The two excerpts C above allow us to pinpoint more precisely the evolution in Elizabeth's character in the sense that the words she uttered in 1818 have disappeared from the later version, in which, "mute" and "silent," she can only express herself by her tears. Deprived of language, 1831 Elizabeth also seems unable to think for herself, approving of the journey because it was instigated by Victor ("My journey had been my own suggestion, and Elizabeth *therefore* acquiesced," emphasis added), not for reasons depending on her understanding as in 1818 ("Elizabeth approved of the reasons of my departure").

The mild regret expressed by 1818 Elizabeth at being prevented from leaving her home while men explore the world has also disappeared from the 1831 text, in which she no longer seems to hold any thought of her own. As has already been noticed (Mellor 175-76), two of Elizabeth's expressions of opinion were excised from the revised edition: the first consists in her fervent plea in favour of a farmer's career for

Ernest in lieu of the judicial to which his father destines him (1818 41), thereby highlighting again her link with nature, as seen above; far from disagreeing with the patriarch Alphonse Frankenstein, just as she submitted readily to Victor's decision in excerpt C, 1831 Elizabeth expresses no particular idea on the subject and is content with merely relating Ernest's wish to enter the military (1831 108). More strikingly, Elizabeth's radical speech against the death penalty and the injustice of men has vanished from the later version:

> […] when one creature is murdered, another is immediately deprived of life in a slow torturing manner; then the executioners, their hands yet reeking with the blood of innocence, believe that they have done a great deed. They call this *retribution*. Hateful name! (1818 58)

The theme but also the *tone* of her speech are echoed by the creature who also sarcastically comments on Victor's desire to murder him: "you accuse me of murder; and yet you would, with a satisfied conscience, destroy your own creature. Oh, praise the eternal justice of man!" (1818 68). Not only are the Godwinian undertones of Elisabeth's diatribe done away with in 1831, but the sarcasm she wields, perceptible notably thanks to the italics ("*retribution*"), the exclamation mark and the distance she puts between herself and the language of men ("They call it"), also disappears, although the monster's outburst remains. Whereas 1818 Elizabeth's eloquence likened her to the creature, indirectly hinting that there may be something human in his nature, 1831 Elizabeth's silence opposes her to him and reinforces the clear-cut separation between the two mentioned earlier. Moreover, the use of irony requires self-division, the ability to say one thing while meaning another; its suppression from the revised version again emphasizes 1831 Elizabeth's simplicity. The latter's transparency and truthfulness, however, avail her little and do not prevent her from dying like her more voluble precursor. While this might possibly represent an oblique criticism of the ideological requirements on which the idealisation of women relies, Shelley problematizes her society's conception of femininity in a more nuanced manner in 1818, offering a reflection on transparency and the access to knowledge and truth it may or may not grant. This is what I will explore in the second part of this essay.

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