The Cambridge Companion to Mary Shelley

Known from her day to ours as “the Author of Frankenstein,” Mary Shelley indeed created one of the central myths of modernity. But she went on to survive all manner of upheaval – personal, political, and professional – and to produce an oeuvre of bracing intelligence and wide cultural sweep. The Cambridge Companion to Mary Shelley helps readers to assess for themselves her remarkable body of work. In clear, accessible essays, a distinguished group of scholars places Shelley’s works in several historical and aesthetic contexts: literary history, the legacies of her parents William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft, and of course the life and afterlife, in cinema, robotics, and hypertext, of Frankenstein. Other topics covered include Mary Shelley as a biographer and cultural critic, as the first editor of Percy Shelley’s works, and as travel writer. This invaluable volume is complemented by a chronology, a guide to further reading, and a select filmography.
For the next generation:

Daniel, Jordy, Susannah in Princeton
Noemi, Shayna, Rafaella in Millburn
Adam in Atlanta
Gabriel and Zachary in Stamford
Annabelle in White Plains
and
Jake in Seattle
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Walter Greenblatt brewed the coffee every morning and stayed up with me till all hours of the night. Sine te non.
(Sept. 10) Wollstonecraft dies of puerperal fever.

1801: (Dec. 21) Godwin remarries, to Mary Jane Clairmont. Mary Godwin is raised in Somers Town (near London); her family household consists of her father, stepmother, half-sister (Fanny Imlay, daughter of Wollstonecraft and Gilbert Imlay), and step-siblings Mary Jane (Claire) Clairmont and Charles Clairmont.

1808: Publishes first story, “Mounseer Nongtongpaw” (M. J. Godwin and Co.).

1812: (June 7) Travels to Dundee to live with the Baxter family until the following spring.
(Nov. 11) Briefly meets Percy Bysshe Shelley (b. Aug. 4, 1792) and his wife, Harriet Westbrook Shelley.

1814: (May) Meets Percy Shelley again; a friendship develops.
(June 28) Elopes with Percy Shelley to the Continent, with Claire Clairmont.
(July–Aug.) Travels in France, Germany, Switzerland, Holland.
(Sept.) They return to England. During the next two months, Percy Shelley resides in London, dodging creditors.

1815: (Feb. 22) Gives birth to her first daughter, who dies March 6.
(Aug.) Moves to Bishopsgate, Windsor.

1816: (Jan. 24) Gives birth to a son, William.
(May) Travels with Percy Shelley and Claire Clairmont, who is pregnant with Byron’s child, to Geneva. They live near Byron and Poldori.
(June 16) Begins writing Frankenstein.
(July) Visit to Chamonix.
(Oct. 9) Fanny Imlay commits suicide.
(Dec. 10) Harriet Shelley’s pregnant body is found in the Serpentine, Hyde Park, London; five days later, Percy Shelley is informed about her suicide.

(Dec. 30) Marriage to Percy Shelley in St. Mildred’s Church, London.

1817:

(Jan. 12) Claire Clairmont gives birth to Alba, later Allegra, Byron.

(Mar.) Percy Shelley loses custody of his children, Charles and Ianthe. Mary Shelley moves to Marlow.

(May 14) Completes *Frankenstein*.

(Sept. 2) Gives birth to a daughter, Clara.


1818:

(Jan. 1) *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* published (Lackington, Hughes, Harding, Mavor, & Jones).

(Mar. 11) Family departs for Continent; arrives in Milan April 4.

(June) At Bagni di Lucca.

(Sept. 24) Clara Shelley dies in Venice.

(Nov.–Dec.) Travel to Rome and Naples; they remain in Naples until the following February.

1819:

(Mar. 5–June) In Rome, where William Shelley dies of malaria on June 7.

(June 17) Move to Livorno (Leghorn).

(Aug.) Begins writing *Matilda*.

(Oct. 2) Move to Florence.

(Nov. 12) Gives birth to Percy Florence.

1820:

(Jan. 26) Move to Pisa.

(Feb.) Finishes *Matilda*.

(Mar.) Begins *Castruccio, Prince of Lucca*; Godwin later renames it *Valperga*.

(Apr.–May) Composes *Proserpine* and *Midas*.

(Oct.) After relocating several times, move to Pisa.

1821:

(Aug.–Dec.) Finishes and revises [*Valperga: or,] *Castruccio*.

1822:

(Apr. 19) Allegra Byron dies from typhus.

(June 16) Miscarriage; hemorrhage arrested when Percy Shelley places her in a vat of icy water.

(July 8) Percy Shelley drowns in the Gulf of Spezia.

(Sep.) Moves to Genoa.

1823:

(Feb.) Publishes *Valperga* (Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley).


(July 29) Opening night of *Presumption, or, The Fate of Frankenstein*, a play by Richard Brinsley Peake; Mary Shelley sees it on August 28.

(July 30) “Giovanni Villani” appears in *The Liberal*, 4, 281–97.
 Chronology

(Aug.) Second (unrevised) edition of *Frankenstein* appears.

1824:
(Apr. 19) Byron dies at Missolonghi in Greece.
(Spring) Begins *The Last Man*.
(June) Publishes her edition of Percy Shelley’s *Posthumous Poems*; enraged, Sir Timothy Shelley threatens to withdraw Percy Florence Shelley’s allowance if she again brings Percy Shelley’s name before the public.

1825:
(June 25) Refuses marriage proposal from American dramatist John Howard Payne.

1826:
(Jan. 23) Publishes *The Last Man* (Henry Colburn).
(Dec.) “A Visit to Brighton” appears in *London Magazine*, n.s. 6, 460–66.

1827:
(June) Agrees to help Thomas Moore with his biography of Byron.
(July) Helps secure passports for friends Isabel Robinson, her illegitimate child, and her partner, “Sholto Douglas” (Mary Diana Dods); the three elope to Paris.

1828:
(Jan.) Begins *The Fortunes of Perkin Warbeck*.
(Mar.) Begins writing for the *Keepsake*, to which she will contribute for ten years.
(Apr.) In Paris with Douglasses; meets Prosper Mérimée; contracts smallpox.

1829:

1830:
(Jan. 18) Moore publishes Volume I of his *Letters and Journals of Lord Byron: With Notices of his Life*.
(May 13) *Perkin Warbeck, A Romance* published (Colburn and Bentley).

1831:
(Jan.) Begins *Lodore*. Volume II of Moore’s *Byron* published.
(Nov.) Publishes revised third edition of *Frankenstein*, with “Author’s Introduction,” in Bentley’s Standard Novels series (Colburn and Bentley).

1832:
(Sept. 8) William Godwin, Jr. (born Mar. 28, 1803, son of William and Mary Jane Clairmont Godwin) dies of cholera.
(Sept. 29) Percy Florence enters Harrow; the following May, Mary Shelley moves there.

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1835: (Feb.) Publishes volume i of *Lives of the Most Eminent Literary and Scientific Men of Italy, Spain and Portugal* (Longman). (Apr.) Publishes *Lodore* (Richard Bentley). (Oct.) Publishes volume ii of *Lives of ... Men of Italy, Spain and Portugal*.


1838: (Aug.) Publishes volume i of *Lives of the Most Eminent Literary and Scientific Men of France* (Longman). Sir Timothy Shelley relents, allowing publication of his son's poems, but not a biographical memoir. Mary Shelley instead writes extensive notes.


1840: (June 22) Arrives in Paris with her son and his Cambridge friends for continental tour; travel through Germany and Switzerland, summer in Italian lakes; arrive Milan on Sept. 11. Late September, Percy Florence Shelley and friends depart for England; Mary Shelley travels to Paris, where she remains through December.

1841: (Jan.) Returns to London. (Feb.) Percy Florence Shelley graduates from Cambridge. (June 17) Death of Mary Jane Godwin.

1842: (June 30–Aug.) With her son and friends, second tour of Continent: Kissingen (baths), Berlin, Dresden, Venice, Florence, Rome, Paris. (July–Aug.) In Paris; meets Ferdinando Luigi Gatteschi and other Italian exiles.

1844: (Apr. 24) Death of Sir Timothy Shelley; Percy Florence Shelley inherits baronetcy and estate. (July) Publishes two-volume *Rambles in Germany and Italy in 1840, 1842, and 1843* (Moxon).

1845: (Sept.) Gatteschi threatens to expose her letters to him; blackmail attempt foiled.
CHRONOLOGY

1846: (Mar.) “Attack,” probably of severe back pain; possibly also chest pain.
1848: (June 22) Percy Florence Shelley marries Jane St. John, a young widow.
    (Oct.) Complains of headaches; probably symptoms of a brain tumor.
    Intermittently ill until her death.
1850: (Dec. 17) Diagnosis of brain tumor.
1851: (Feb. 1) Mary Shelley dies at age fifty-three at home in London.
    (Feb. 8) Buried in Bournemouth with her parents, who were exhumed from St. Pancras at Lady Jane Shelley’s request.
ABBREVIATIONS

Most citations to Mary Shelley’s works appear in the text. For ease of reference, several works available in multiple editions, including the 1818 *Frankenstein*, *The Last Man*, and *Valperga*, are cited by volume, chapter, and page numbers; the 1831 *Frankenstein* is cited by chapter and page numbers. Works in multi-volume, modern editions are cited by volume and page numbers.


*KSJ*: *Keats–Shelley Journal*.


SiR: Studies in Romanticism.