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THE ANCIENT AND MODERN PROMETHEUS

A Re-evaluation of the Promethean Figure in Mary W. Shelley's *Frankenstein, or, The Modern Prometheus*.

A Thesis Presented

by

Annaliese E. Holden

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The Faculty of the Department of Classics

of

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Table of Contents

i. Acknowledgments	2
ii. Introduction	4
1. Prometheus and <i>Prometheus Bound</i>	6
1.1. Prometheus in the Classical Tradition	9
1.2. <i>Prometheus Bound</i>	25
1.3. Promethean Themes	39
2. Frankenstein, or, the Modern Prometheus	47
2.1. <i>Frankenstein</i>	48
2.2. The Modern Prometheus	56
3. The Romantics and Prometheus	70
3.1. Romanticism	70
3.2. Mary (with Percy) Shelley	76
iii. Conclusion	84
iv. Bibliography	88

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Surprisingly, it is not by way of the priggish and “self-devoted” young scientist that Mary Shelley discovers the great power of her narrative but by way of the misshapen demon, with whom most readers identify: “My person was hideous, and my stature gigantic: What did this mean? Who was I? What was I? Whence did I come? What was my destination? (Oates 545)

Introduction

Prometheus Bound is a tale of true suffering, perfectly summed up with the phrase, “no good deed goes unpunished.” *Prometheus Bound* is a lesser-known play by Aeschylus, the Greek tragedian known as the author of the *Oresteia* trilogy. There is little known about *Prometheus Bound*—its date of composition is unknown, but it was written in the 5th century BCE. C.J. Herington, a classicist known for his work on Aeschylus and, specifically, *Prometheus Bound*, notes, “Almost all have agreed that the *Prometheus Bound* cannot be as early as the *Persians*” (644). The *Persians*, another play by Aeschylus, was staged in 472 BCE; Aeschylus died in 456 or 455 BCE (Herington 644). Therefore, we have a 16-17 year gap in which *Prometheus Bound* may have been produced and staged.

Prometheus Bound is the only known play to have survived from the proposed *Prometheia*, a trilogy that may have included sequels such as *Prometheus Unbound* and *Prometheus the Fire-Bearer*. However, the evidence for the last two remains only in fragments quoted by other ancient authors. *Prometheus Unbound* appears to have been an immediate sequel; for *Prometheus the Fire-Bearer*, however, there is little information in the fragments (Herington 655). Nevertheless, Herington posits that the three “presumably constituted a tragic trilogy, to be performed together on one occasion, just like the *Oresteia*” (655).

It would be irresponsible not to mention, briefly, that there is some argument among scholars that Aeschylus did not write *Prometheus Bound*. However, for the purposes of this thesis, I will assume Aeschylean authorship. My intent is not to ask questions of the authorship but to interrogate the text itself; the attribution of Aeschylus will do until much more satisfactory evidence comes to light.

I began this project as a translation with commentary of *Prometheus Bound* from the original Greek. However, at the same time, I read Mary W. Shelley's *Frankenstein, or, The Modern Prometheus*. With the subtitle *The Modern Prometheus*, there is already an apparent connection to the myths of Prometheus, with Dr. Victor Frankenstein being the generally accepted "Modern Prometheus." However, while reading *Frankenstein* shortly after *Prometheus Bound*, I found the comparison of Prometheus with Dr. Frankenstein superficial. Prometheus and Dr. Frankenstein are both characterized as creators; however, specifically within *Prometheus Bound*, I found Aeschylus' Prometheus and Frankenstein's Creation to be surreptitiously alike. Their similar sufferings and solitary existences are what I will be exploring in this thesis, as well as Mary W. Shelley and her comrades' familiarity with *Prometheus Bound*.

Throughout this thesis, I will touch upon Prometheus in the Greek mythical canon, Prometheus in *Prometheus Bound*, and the themes that emerge throughout the play. I will then provide a summary of *Frankenstein* and discuss how the "Modern Prometheus" subtitle may be referenced throughout the novel, tying back with themes from *Prometheus Bound*. Finally, I will discuss the Romantic period and the Shelleys, mythology's influence on Mary, Mary and Percy's literary influence on each other, and more.

I aim to show that the "Modern Prometheus" subtitle, while commonly applied to Dr. Frankenstein, can also be applied to Frankenstein's creation because of the variability of Greek mythology when portrayed by different sources. Aeschylus' Prometheus and Shelley's Creation are similar in their punishments for violating order and their sufferings; the Creation after being abandoned and Prometheus after being chained to the rock. I shall also show that Mary Shelley knew the Prometheus myth well, highlighting the sources she drew from and what they contributed to her understanding of Prometheus.

Part I: Prometheus and Prometheus Bound

In order to speak comprehensively about Prometheus and his characterization, I must speak about Greek mythology; it is important to have an understanding of mythology in order to grasp the technicalities of this thesis. It may seem a rudimentary move to attempt to explain what mythology is; however, it is complicated to define. G.S. Kirk begins his book *Myth* by stating he will not “devote the greatest part of his effort to the discussion of Greek myths,” because “in the end more can be learned about them by an indirect approach, by considering the nature of myths in general, than by a frontal attack on problems that have proved hopelessly unyielding in the past” (1). However, Kirk still spends approximately forty pages reviewing anthropological and theoretical explanations of mythology and how mythology is similar to or differs from ritual, folktales, and religion. I do not blame him; there is a lot to unpack with mythology.

I do not wish to take an “indirect approach” to mythology, especially Greek mythology, since it is necessary to dispel some misunderstandings surrounding it. Greek mythology does overlap with religion, as it does with cautionary tales, as it does with etiology. However, it is not limited to any of these, rather than an amalgamation of all; as Kirk writes, “No binary categorization of traditional tales is likely to be satisfactory” (41). In addition, mythology is not something that has been disproven, as we often use it in the place of common misconceptions. Carol Dougherty, in her wide-spanning overview of the Prometheus myth titled *Prometheus*, makes the point that “myth is not synonymous with unproven assertions or misleading historical claims” (12). In summation, it is hard to fit mythology into a definition, but perhaps it is easier to explain what it is not. Mythology can be religious or etiological, but it is not to be dismissed as unbelievable; once, somebody believed it.

We must remember that Greeks who led their lifestyles with the mythology I discuss in this thesis probably had a genuine belief in them, just as practicing Christians today have a belief in Christian mythology. It feels necessary, in general, to give some respect to the ancient Greeks' mythology and not simply write it off as unintellectual and prescientific nonsense. Mythology helped them make sense of the world as it was to them, and we are still entertained by it; if the modern world did not still find interest in ancient mythology, I would not be writing this thesis.

Many scholars will mention that Greek mythology predates writing by many centuries; the *Iliad* being a major example of a text that was initially transmitted by oral tradition until it was first written down with the invention of writing systems. In another work titled *Greek Mythology: Some New Perspectives*, Kirk argues that literacy has changed most Greek myths to how we know them today. He writes, "Greek mythology as we know it is a *literate* mythology, one based on genuinely traditional tales (no doubt), but one that was elaborated and adjusted for several generations in accordance with developed literary criteria" (77). These "genuinely traditional tales" he discusses are the transmitted oral tellings of mythology, as he expands upon: "In Greece the content of oral myths was retained as the basic plot-element of literature, but new kinds of elaboration and variation changed the underlying emphases" (77).

With this quote, we begin to touch upon a very crucial aspect of this thesis: the variability and complexity of mythology. Mythology was already liable to some change and difference due to its oral nature; however, as Kirk argues, literacy took this to a new level: "One important new factor is the individual author aware of his own artistic entity, the poet no longer content to act as a link in the traditional chain" ("Perspectives" 77). Dougherty makes a parallel statement that "Myth, then, is powerful precisely because it can take all this preworked, culturally rich material—gods, goddesses, plots, and places—and work with it to create a narrative that is

important and compelling to its audience” (14). Both authors here argue that a new, powerful technique had come to the culture of mythology: artistic choice or selectivity. With the invention of writing, authors could invent or add new aspects to their stories rather than trying to conserve oral mythology for the purposes of memorization and tradition. Selectivity allows poets who include myth to use that “preworked, culturally rich material” to create something new in the stories that people have told for centuries. For example, Zeus may appear in one play as a tragic figure and another as a comic figure: regardless, the audience will immediately know him as Zeus; even in the 21st century, he is a commonly known character. In terms of Prometheus, Dougherty argues that

The principle of selectivity is especially applicable to the study of the Prometheus myth. In fact, of all the myths from classical antiquity, Prometheus’ may be the most flexible. Nowhere [...] is it told straight through from beginning to end, and so it is critical that we note the difference between a myth and the text in which it is embedded (11).

I agree with Dougherty that Prometheus’ is a heavily flexible mythology; Prometheus is a complexly characterized figure. Part of what I will argue in this thesis is that various retellings of his myth and the selectivity of authors contribute to how the modern reader understands him. Versions across antiquity contain minor but sometimes contrasting differences described in specific texts in sections 1.1 and 1.2. For example, the primary ancient textual source for the figure of Prometheus in this thesis is the tragedy *Prometheus Bound* by Aeschylus. It is important to recognize that “The myth of Prometheus forms the basis for Aeschylus’ *Prometheus Bound*, but the myth is not synonymous with the play” (Dougherty 11). *Prometheus Bound* is far from the perfect summary of the entire Prometheus myth. Though I will be drawing much from *Prometheus Bound*, I will also touch upon many other important works that tell the myth of

Prometheus, none less faithful to Prometheus than the other, but that all draw upon the material of the same mythological fabric.

Additionally, when Prometheus is mentioned beyond his mythology, such as in Mary Shelley's "Modern Prometheus" subtitle, it is an immediate connection back to him and the whole host of multiple variants and themes of his mythology, whether explicit or not. As we now know from the explanation of selectivity in myth, basing anything on mythology creates a whole host of interpretations, including my own in this thesis. When treating the "Modern Prometheus" later, I will attempt to see which variations or connections Mary Shelley used to make sense of what sort of subtext she has made, simply by introducing Prometheus into her work.

I have examined how I will be treating mythology throughout this thesis as a complex system of storytelling that defies any binary definition. The primary takeaway about mythology is that its nature is changeable, making it liable to be represented differently in accounts given by different authors. I also discussed how Prometheus is an immediately recognizable figure and that any reference to him by later authors opens up a well of interpretation, very much seen in the work of the Romantics. For the remainder of section one, I will examine Prometheus' portrayal by ancient writers other than Aeschylus (Hesiod, Ovid, and more). To follow, I will explore Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound* and how Prometheus is portrayed, investigating the differences in Aeschylus' portrayal. Finally, I will analyze some common themes found in Promethean myths to reference during my comparison of Prometheus and Frankenstein's Creation.

1.1 Prometheus in the Classical Tradition

To the ancient Greeks, there was a vast divide between mortals and immortals. As Károly Kerényi sums it up, "In the eyes of the Greeks, humanity was distinguished from divinity with all possible clarity: [...] There was nothing poorer, more insignificant, more tormented in their eyes,

than the lot of a man” (“Prometheus” 19). In hundreds of texts across the Greek literary canon, immortals play an essential role in the lives of mortals. Generally seen as capricious, immortals seemed to hold mortals at arm’s length— humans worship them and entreat them in times of need, and the gods reply at their whim. Timothy Gantz uses Homer as an example in his comprehensive *Early Greek Myth*: “We must remember that neither in the *Iliad* nor the *Odyssey* do the gods ever display any sense of responsibility for humanity’s existence or its problems, save for instances in which they are obligated to reciprocal action by sacrifices or the like” (152). Frequently, the gods treat mortals indifferently or for reasons of exploitation or nepotistic patronage. For example, take the numerous mortals whom Zeus seduces and abandons to their own devices; Callisto, Antiope, Europa, and Io, the latter of whom appears in *PB* as a victim of Zeus. The whim of the gods in their treatment of mortals is the division between the all-powerful and their subjects. Mortals died, and immortals lived forever. However, one figure in Greek mythology bridges the gap between mortal and immortal in a purely benevolent, self-sacrificing manner: the Titan Prometheus.

Prometheus Bound (henceforth, *PB*) begins *in medias res*. To provide background, I will begin with Prometheus’ depiction in Hesiod’s *Theogony*, which is thought to have been written around 730-700 BCE, about two centuries earlier than *PB* (M.L.West “Hesiod” vii). *Theogony* is a foremost telling of Greek cosmogony and the genealogy of the gods; it is a comprehensive overview of many of the “major players” in Greek myth. *PB* and *Theogony* are significant works that look at Prometheus’ origin, crime, and punishment, but the texts frame him very differently. In *The Myth of Prometheus: Its Survival and Metamorphoses up to the Eighteenth Century*, a foundational compendium of sources detailing Prometheus from antiquity to the 18th century, Olga Raggio writes that these Greek sources “...already diverge at two points: the moral

judgment upon Prometheus' theft and the nature of the fire brought by him to mankind. Their texts, on which later authors were to rely, determine the controversial character of the myth” (44)

In *Theogony*, Prometheus is first mentioned from line 510 to line 616, where he is described as “full of various wiles” (*αἰολόμητιν*) and “wily-minded” (*ποικιλόβουλος, ἀγκυλομήτης*). His parents are the Titan Iapetos and the Oceanid Klymene, and he has three listed brothers: Atlas, Menoitios, and Epimetheus. A genealogical/cataloging theme is apparent in Hesiod: he dedicates hundreds of lines to the exposition of many generations of certain gods; for example, he traces back seven generations from Gaia and Pontus (Hes. *Th.* 233–297).

The purpose of introducing the four brothers together within 15 lines is a brief catalogue of how they are each punished by Zeus. The introduction of the four comes at a key point in Hesiod’s exposition of Zeus: he has just ascended to the throne formerly held by his father and is wielding his newly-found power as king of the gods. To introduce these four punished brothers right after Zeus ascends to power seems to be an intentional placement by Hesiod; it keeps with the genealogical style of the epic but introduces the theme of Zeus’ power and punishment.

Their punishment by Zeus is as follows: Epimetheus is given Pandora as a wife, Menoitios is smitten by a lightning bolt, and Atlas is forced to hold the sky upon his shoulders. Prometheus, too, cannot escape punishment from Zeus. His is related:

And [Zeus] bound crafty Prometheus in inescapable fetters, grievous bonds, driving them through the middle of a pillar. And he set a great winged eagle upon him, and it fed on his immortal liver, which grew the same amount each way at night as the great bird ate in the course of the day/δῆσε δ’ ἀλυκτοπέδησι Προμηθέα ποικιλόβουλον, δεσμοῖς ἀργαλέοισι, μέσον διὰ κίων’ ἐλάσσας· καί οἱ ἐπ’ αἰετὸν ὄρσε τανύπτερον· αὐτὰρ ὃ γ’ ἦπαρ ἦσθιεν ἀθάνατον, τὸ δ’ ἀέξετο ἴσον ἀπάντη νυκτός, ὅσον πρόπαν ἦμαρ ἔδοι τανυσίπτερος ὄρνις. (Hes. *Th.* 521-525).

Only after Hesiod introduces Prometheus' punishment does he explain why Zeus brings such suffering upon him. In an event at the settlement of Mekone, Prometheus taught mortals the rite of sacrifice and attempted to trick Zeus into choosing bones and fat from a slaughtered ox instead of the richer, meatier option. According to Hesiod, this is how mortals began dedicating sacrifices to the gods—burning bones on altars (Hes. *Th.* 556-557). However, Zeus saw through this trick all along, and he pretended to fall for it so that he could take his anger out on mortals:

[Prometheus] spoke meaning trickery, but Zeus, whose designs do not fail, recognized the trick and did not mistake it, and he boded evil in his heart for mortal men, which was to come to pass/Φῆ ῥα δολοφρονέων: Ζεὺς δ' ἄφθιτα μῆδεα εἰδὼς γνῶ ῥ' οὐδ' ἠγνοίησε δόλον: κακὰ δ' ὄσσετο θυμῷ θνητοῖς ἀνθρώποισι, τὰ καὶ τελέεσθαι ἔμελλεν (Hes. *Th.* 550-552).

From Hesiod's telling, Zeus already harbors a resentment towards mortals, willing to seem “tricked,” so he has an excuse to harm humanity. Zeus allows this deceit solely for the consequence it generates. In revenge for Prometheus' “trick,” Zeus takes fire from mortals as punishment, and Prometheus resists this. Hesiod writes that the

...noble son of Iapetos [Prometheus] outwitted him by stealing the far-beaconing flare of untiring fire in the tube of a fennel. And it stung high-thundering Zeus deep to the spirit, and angered him in his heart, when he saw the far-beaconing flare of fire among mankind/ἀλλὰ μιν ἐξαπάτησεν εὐς πάϊς Ἰαπετοῖο κλέψας ἀκαμάτοιο πυρὸς τηλέσκοπον αὐγὴν ἐν κοίλῳ νάρθηκι· δάκεν δ' ἄρα νειόθι θυμὸν Ζῆν' ὑπιβρεμέτην, ἐχόλωσε δέ μιν φίλον ἦτορ, ὡς ἴδ' ἐν ἀνθρώποισι πυρὸς τηλέσκοπον αὐγὴν.
(Hes. *Th.* 565-569)

Fire is a gift that is key for all production and human advancement. With fire, humans may prepare food, bake earth for building, create heat, sacrifice to gods, craft better tools, and more. For these reasons, fire is essential to developing societies like that of the early Greeks. By returning fire to them, Prometheus allows them to develop further and live with more fruition. It is unclear from Hesiod or other references how Zeus took fire from mortals and where he hid it;

in any case, Prometheus found it easily enough. One must wonder whether this is another intentional move by Zeus to set Prometheus up for punishment, just as he did at Mekone. From what we can tell, Prometheus' actions have been kindnesses towards humanity, but it is not until he interferes with the might of Zeus that he is punished. It is also unclear exactly why Prometheus is a benefactor to humanity; this is simply presented as a brute fact. Timothy Gantz writes that "We are not told [by Hesiod] why Prometheus chooses to represent [mortals] in the division at Mekone" (Gantz 154). However, he does it at the expense of himself, and this is a selfless act of human benefaction; Prometheus goes beyond a trick to ensure human survival. With this in mind, I will accept what is presented unexplained by Hesiod and other mythological sources, for it is their mythology, as I write in the introduction to Part I.

In *Theogony*, Hesiod does not tell us how humans came to exist, much less how Prometheus is connected with them. However, in another of Hesiod's epic poems, *Works and Days*, there is a discussion about mortals and their creation, known as the "Five Ages" (Gantz 152). Hesiod tells us in *Works and Days* that

The race of men that the immortals who dwell on Olympus made first of all was of gold. They were in the time of Kronos, when he was king in heaven; and they lived like gods, with carefree heart, remote from toil and misery/χρύσειον μὲν πρότιστα γένος μερόπων ἀνθρώπων ἀθάνατοι ποίησαν Ὀλύμπια δώματ' ἔχοντες. οἱ μὲν ἐπὶ Κρόνου ἦσαν, ὅτ' οὐρανῷ ἐμβασίλευεν: ὥστε θεοὶ δ' ἔζων ἀκηδέα θυμὸν ἔχοντες νόσφιν ἄτερ τε πόνων καὶ οἰζύος (Hes. *WD* 109-113)

This golden race of men died out due to natural causes but was honored like deities by the Olympians (121-123). The second race, one made of silver, was very unlike the gold race; due to their crimes and impiety, "They were put away by Zeus son of Kronos, angry because they did not offer honour to the blessed gods who occupy Olympus/τοὺς μὲν ἔπειτα Ζεὺς Κρονίδης ἔκρυσε χολούμενος, οὐνεκα τιμὰς οὐκ ἔδιδον μακάρεσσι θεοῖς, οἱ Ὀλυμπον ἔχουσιν" (137-139).

The third race of bronze, made by Zeus, killed each other to extinction, and the fourth race (also claimed to be made by Zeus) was of demigods (143-160). The fifth and final race is the mortals that Hesiod belongs to; he bemoans,

Would that I were not born then among the fifth men, but either dead earlier or born later! For now it is a race of iron; and they will never cease from toil and misery by day or night, in constant distress, and the gods will give them harsh troubles/μηκέτ' ἔπειτ' ὄφελλον ἐγὼ πέμπτοισι μετεῖναι ἀνδράσιν, ἀλλ' ἢ πρόσθε θανεῖν ἢ ἔπειτα γενέσθαι. νῦν γὰρ δὴ γένος ἐστὶ σιδήρεον: οὐδέ ποτ' ἤμαρ παύονται καμάτου καὶ ὀϊζύος, οὐδέ τι νύκτωρ φθειρόμενοι. χαλεπὰς δὲ θεοὶ δώσουσι μερίμνας (174-178).

It is unclear to which race Prometheus may have taught sacrifice and given fire, but here we come to a contradiction in Hesiod. Prometheus is among the earliest immortals, as told in *Theogony* 233–297, “Yet there are obviously mortals in existence at this time (albeit unexplained), since they serve as the recipients of Prometheus’ benefactions” (Gantz 154).

With the trick at Mekone and the stealing of fire, Prometheus has gone against Zeus twice now by attempting to deceive him and disobeying his command. This is why he is punished; Zeus, the ruler of the gods, is someone not to be trifled with. Dougherty claims that “In part, the myth of Prometheus is introduced [in Hesiod] in celebration of Zeus’ own intellectual prowess—if Zeus can outwit Prometheus, he can outsmart anyone” (33). Throughout Greek mythology, Zeus is the omnipotent ruler of the gods. He is mighty enough to overcome his father, Kronos, former king of the heavens (Hes. *Th.* 463-465), and subdue the mighty Titans (Hes. *Th.* 687-709).

Hesiod treats Zeus in a generally awed and positive manner; twice in the ‘trick at Mekone’ scene, Zeus is called “Ζεὺς δ’ ἄφθιτα μῆδεα εἰδῶς,” or “Zeus who knows undying plans;” M.L. West translates this as “Zeus, whose designs do not fail” (Hes. *Th.* 545, 550). Dougherty says that Hesiod introduces Prometheus to celebrate Zeus, but, quite frankly, the

whole of *Theogony* is dedicated to Zeus from the beginning. Hesiod invokes the Muses in the first paragraph, and “From there [the Muses] go forth, veiled in thick mist, and walk by night, uttering beautiful voice, singing of Zeus who bears the aegis/ἔνθεν ἀπορνύμεναι κεκαλυμμέναι ἠέρι πολλῷ ἐννύχιαι στεῖχον περικαλλέα ὄσσαν ιεῖσαι, ὑμνεῦσαι Δία τ’ αἰγίοχον” (9-11). Not much later, the Muses “[...] sing of Zeus, father of gods and men, how far the highest of the gods he is, and the greatest in power/αὔτε Ζῆνα θεῶν πατέρ’ ἠδὲ καὶ ἀνδρῶν ἀρχόμεναί θ’ ὑμνεῦσι θεαὶ λίγουσί τ’ ἀοιδῆς ὅσσον φέρτατός ἐστι θεῶν κάρτει τε μέγιστος” (47-49). It is immediately evident that Hesiod worships Zeus and considers him the greatest of gods; Prometheus may try to trick him, but Zeus’ designs do not fail. In line with Dougherty’s claim, I agree that Hesiod introduces Prometheus as a further celebration of Zeus or even a warning about his power: that “the might of the king of the gods cannot be undermined” (Van Rosmalen et al. 2022).

In addition to honoring Zeus, Hesiod has construed his own judgment against Prometheus. Raggio writes that “Hesiod inserts the story of Prometheus into a systematic and pessimistic account of the origins of mankind” (44). Though I have argued that Hesiod brings Prometheus in to celebrate Zeus, I do not think Raggio’s argument contradicts this. Instead, the story of Prometheus in Hesiod can augment the positive representation of Zeus while showing Prometheus as an adversary, a bringer of negativities for humankind.

Hesiod writes about Prometheus’ benefaction for humanity, but this does not necessarily make Prometheus positive in his eyes: he also paints him as the reason for humanity’s two greatest burdens: women and work. After Prometheus has returned fire to mortals, Zeus sentences Prometheus to the eagle and punishes humans with a new and terrible thing: a woman. In *Works and Days*, Zeus describes the woman as “...an affliction in which [men] will all delight as they embrace their own misfortune/...κακόν, ᾧ κεν ἅπαντες τέρπωνται κατὰ θυμόν, ἐὸν κακόν

ἀμφαγαπῶντες.” (Hes. *WD* 57-58). Raggio goes on to say that, to Hesiod, “...the Titan [Prometheus] is the destroyer of a happy original state, a golden age when men lived "remote and free from toil and heavy sickness” (44). This quote is reminiscent of Hesiod’s lament about having been born in the fifth age of men and how the races before did not experience the hardships he did. (*WD* 174-178). The understanding from Hesiod’s and Raggio’s quotes is that the introduction of women creates not only an annoyance and care for hard-working men in their married lives but also unleashes evils across the earth. Zeus’ punishment of humanity comes in the form of a single woman, Pandora.

As paraphrased by Gantz from Hesiod, from Pandora, “...will be born the race of women, who will be lazy and drain men of prosperity,” in agreement with how Hesiod describes woman as “an affliction” (Gantz 154; Hes. *WD* 57).¹ Hand-crafted from the earth by the gods, Pandora is given to Prometheus’ brother, Epimetheus. Though Epimetheus is only briefly treated in Hesiod’s works, his existence creates a conscious parallel between himself and Prometheus. Already, Prometheus’ name can be translated as “Forethought” (πρό (pró) “before” + μανθάνω (manthánō, “to learn, to know”))². Epimetheus’ name also uses the root for knowing but with a much different prefix: ἐπί (epí, “after”). Epimetheus is the Afterthought to Prometheus’ Forethought. Károly Kerényi notes this: “The profound affinity between these two figures is expressed in the fact that they are brothers. One might almost say that in them is a single primitive being, sly and stupid at once, has been split into a duality: Prometheus the Forethinker,

¹ In addition, Gantz tackles the seemingly strange gap in the story up until this point: “...she is the source of women as we know them. In that case there would be only men, not women, before this act of Zeus’ compensation, and no means of human regeneration. But to inquire about such matters is probably to expect more than what Hesiod intended to offer” (Gantz 155).

² This etymology is generally accepted and seems the most obvious breakdown in Greek, but other theories have been presented. Dougherty writes in *Prometheus* that “While the Greeks clearly understood Prometheus’ name as ‘forethinker,’ recent work in linguistics links the *-meth-* component to a Sanskrit root *-math-*—meaning to steal—suggesting that the actual etymology refers to theft, no doubt of fire, and links the Greek Prometheus myth with other similar myths from the Caucasus” (4).

Epimetheus the belated Afterthinker” (“Trickster” 181). Prometheus warns dull-witted Epimetheus never to accept a gift from Zeus, but he does, and when Pandora becomes his wife, she unleashes a jar of woes:

For formerly the tribes of men on earth lived remote from ills, without harsh toil and the grievous sicknesses that are deadly to men. But the woman unstopped the jar and let it all out, and brought grim cares upon mankind/πρὶν μὲν γὰρ ζώεσκον ἐπὶ χθονὶ φύλ' ἀνθρώπων νόσφιν ἄτερ τε κακῶν καὶ ἄτερ χαλεποῖο πόνοιο νούσων τ' ἀργαλέων αἶ τ' ἀνδράσι κῆρας ἔδωκαν· ἀλλὰ γυνὴ χεῖρεσσι πίθου μέγα πῶμ' ἀφελούσα ἐσκέδασ'· ἀνθρώποισι δ' ἐμήσατο κήδεα λυγρά (Hes. *WD* 90-95).

These “grim cares/κήδεα λυγρά” for humanity are crucial consequences of Prometheus’ continuous benefaction of humankind. Kerényi concisely summarizes the consequences of Prometheus’ actions thus far:

Every invention of Prometheus brings new misery upon mankind. No sooner has he succeeded in offering sacrifice than Zeus deprives mankind of the fire. And when, after stealing the fire, Prometheus himself is snatched away from mortals to suffer punishment, Epimetheus is left behind as their representative: craftiness is replaced by stupidity. [...] It is Epimetheus who, in his thoughtlessness, brings mankind, as a gift from the gods, the final inexhaustible source of misery: Pandora (“Trickster” 181).

Though Pandora is not named in *Theogony* and is barely mentioned in *PB*, her life, created to punish humanity, demonstrates the angry limits of Zeus’ power and the utter terror unleashed upon mortals.

Further evidence for Prometheus’ negative characterization lies in how Hesiod refers to him. As stated at the start of section 1.1, there are epithets³ of Prometheus that appear numerous times in Hesiod’s writing. Epithets are important to understanding a figure: they reflect one’s

³ An epithet is a description or delineative phrase commonly found next to or in the place of a name. It can be unique (*rosy-fingered* Dawn, Hom. *Il.* 1.477), similar in families (*son of Atreus* for brothers Menelaus and Agamemnon), or used for perhaps unconnected figures (*great-hearted* Patroclus, Aeneas, Eurylochus; Hom. *Il.* 16.257, 20.323, *Od.* 10. 207). Epithets can also fill out metrical lines in epic dactylic hexameter and are thought to have been an aspect of memorization devices used by rhapsodes while epics were orally told.

character and can show similarities between figures. Epithets are not a tool to describe a temporary state of being; Milman Parry, a revolutionary in Homeric and Epic studies, argues that epithets are representative of a fixed moral or physical quality (Parry 126-127). Among the epithets Hesiod uses to describe Prometheus, we see *ἀγκυλομήτης* ‘ankulomētēs,’ meaning ‘crooked of counsel’ or, as classical philologist M.L. West translates it, ‘crooked-schemer.’ Considering Parry’s argument, Prometheus was not only the “crooked-schemer” when he outwitted Zeus at Mekone: he is held to be *ἀγκυλομήτης* throughout Hesiod’s stories.

Hesiod uses this epithet at a key moment in the relationship between Zeus and Prometheus, when Prometheus tries to trick Zeus into choosing the less favorable sacrifice at Mekone:

But **crooked-schemer** Prometheus, smiling quietly and intent on deceit, said to him, ‘Zeus greatest and most glorious of the eternal fathers, choose then whichever of them the spirit in your breast bids you.’/ τὸν δ’ αὖτε προσέειπε Προμηθεὺς *ἀγκυλομήτης* ἧκ’ ἐπιμειδήσας, δολίης δ’ οὐ λήθετο τέχνης: ζεῦ κύδιστε μέγιστε θεῶν αἰειγενετᾶων, τῶν δ’ ἔλε’, ὀπποτέρην σε ἐνὶ φρεσὶ θυμὸς ἀνώγει (Hes. *Th.* 546-549).

This passage and epithet paint Prometheus as a cunning and scheming individual, the adversary to Hesiod’s celebrated Zeus. Contrasted with Zeus, “whose designs do not fail” (Hes. *Th.* 545, 550) and the “wise in counsel” (*μητιόεντι*) (286), there is an immediate disharmony between the more positive “wise in counsel” versus the “crooked of counsel.”

Importantly, this is not the only time that *ἀγκυλομήτης* is used as an epithet for one of Zeus’ adversaries. *Αγκυλομήτης* is most commonly attached to Kronos, the Titan father of Zeus: “... the great **crooked-schemer** Kronos, tricked by the cunning counsel of Earth, defeated by his son’s strength and stratagem.../Γαίης ἐννεσίησι πολυφραδέεσσι δολωθεὶς ὄν γόνον ἄψ ἀνέηκε μέγας Κρόνος *ἀγκυλομήτης* νικηθεὶς τέχνησι βίηφί τε παιδὸς ἑοῖο” (Hes. *Th.* 494-496). This

epithet for Kronos in *Theogony* appears previously in lines 137, 168, and 473; it appears only once in *Theogony* and once in *Works and Days* in reference to Prometheus. Kronos is among Zeus' well-known adversaries, and Zeus' scheming against Kronos resulted in his rule of the gods. (Hes. *Th.* 501-506). By applying this epithet to Prometheus, Hesiod is subtly aligning Prometheus with Kronos, another Titan and an enemy subdued by Zeus' might.

The use of the 'crooked-schemer' epithet for Prometheus also carries the connotation that he is, indeed, a negative character to Hesiod. Kronos was destined to be replaced by Zeus when he received a prophecy that one of his children would one day overcome him. Kronos swallowed all his children as they were born to combat this prophecy. Zeus, who was spared, plotted with his mother to feed Kronos a rock in his place. When Kronos regurgitated the rock, Zeus' siblings were freed, and the prophecy was fulfilled. Kronos ate his own children to maintain his rule, an act that pained his wife; even Hesiod calls him *skhétlios* (σχέτλιος), a term that can mean 'merciless one,' 'wicked one,' or 'wretch.' M.L. West translates this as "brute" (Hes. *Th.* 488). Hesiod equates Prometheus with Kronos, the *skhétlios*, by use of the epithet *ἀγκυλομήτης*.

Another epithet of Prometheus appears later in his tradition: Prometheus *plasticator*.⁴ It is unclear how humanity came about before Zeus wished to make them extinct, but in other mythic traditions, Prometheus is considered the creator of humans. Hesiod and Aeschylus omit this detail from their stories; however, the transmission of Prometheus' myth through Latin

⁴ Through much digging, I can only find one extant use of the word *plasticator* in a Latin text: *plasticatores*, the plural form, appears in an astrological text called *Mathesis* by Julius Firmicus Maternus (Firm. *Math.* 8.16). However, according to Forbes, an editor of Firmicus' later work, *Mathesis* may have been written in 334-337 AD, which would be centuries after Ovid tells the story of Prometheus making humans (4). I suspect that *plasticator* was a word in Latin, perhaps lost to us in early use, but re-coined by modern scholars in an attempt to create an epithet for this role of Prometheus; perhaps it is also a formation from Greek words like *πλαστικός* ("plastikos," fit for moulding) or Latin *plastes* meaning sculptor. *Plasticator* does share the *plast-* root with words associated with sculpting and modeling. In any case, *plasticator* is an epithet heavily used by researchers of Prometheus, frustratingly without source of origin: see Raggio 1958 and Oates 1984 for two examples of *plasticator* used in research.

storytelling leads to this later epithet: *plasticator*; in Latin, ‘the modeler,’ the creator of humankind.

This “creator of humans/*plasticator*” aspect of his mythology perhaps has a parallel to ancient Sumeria, in the form of the god Ea (Akkadian)/Enki (Sumerian), the creator of humans who protected humanity from the Great Deluge (S.West 139). Some researchers argue that Hesiod had direct influence from Ancient Near Eastern traditions, including Jacqueline Duchemin in her 1952 seminal work *Le mythe de Prométhée à travers les âges* (The Myth of Prometheus Through the Ages). She writes (through my own translation), “Moreover, it is obvious that [*Theogony*] amalgamates a series of traditions surely very ancient/*De plus il est évident qu'il amalgame une série de traditions sûrement très anciennes*” (41). In a footnote attached to this quote, she also claims that “Prometheus has features of the Babylonian god Ea/*Prométhée a des traits du dieu babylonien Ea*” (41 n11).

Though there may not be clear descent from Mesopotamian myth to Greek, there is a relevant human-making scene in *Enuma Eliš*, the Babylonian creation myth: “Out of his blood they fashioned mankind. He imposed the service and let free the gods. After Ea, the wise, had created mankind, had imposed it upon the service of the gods—that work was beyond comprehension” (Speiser VI. 33-37). This parallel cannot prove that Hesiod was influenced by Near Eastern mythology, but it is certainly a similar tale.

Additionally, Ea saved humans from the Great Deluge. Though there was a Great Deluge⁵ in Greek mythology, there is additionally a parallel event in which Prometheus was involved. Prometheus saved the human race by returning fire to them, a tool that would greatly increase their chances of survival and continuation. Without it, they would die off, as Zeus hoped. When Ea hears that the Akkadian gods plan to send a flood into the city, he “protests against the

⁵ See Ov. *Met.* 274-348

arbitrary injustice of wholesale destruction” (S. West 136), much like Prometheus rejects Zeus’ decision to wipe out the human race. Ea cannot stop the Great Deluge nor save the entire human race, but he warns his protégé Ut-napishtim to build a boat and take his wife with him.⁶ In both these myths, Greek and Mesopotamian, we see that the *plasticator* figure still takes a vested interest in their human creations, unwilling to allow them all to die.

From there, Prometheus in the role of the creator is contained in brief mentions by Pseudo-Apollodorus, Pausanias, and Menander, but is more popularized in later Roman poets (Dougherty 17). Circa 8 CE, the Roman poet Ovid published *The Metamorphoses*, a 15-book poem that describes various myths, especially ones that include some kind of formal transformation. Ovid documents Prometheus in Book One, where he describes him in the manner of Prometheus *plasticator*:

This earth Prometheus mixed with rain and modeled in the shape of the gods who guide all things. [...] The earth, but lately crude and shapeless, was now transformed, for it was dressed in human figures, til then unknown/ *quam satus Iapeto, mixtam pluvialibus undis, finxit in effigiem moderantum cuncta deorum, [...] sic, modo quae fuerat rudis et sine imagine, tellus induit ignotas hominum conversa figuras* (Ov. *Met.* 82-83, 87-88).

Although Ovid’s Prometheus is not a primary focus of my thesis, he is still important for illustrating the evolution of Prometheus’ human-creator aspects. The Hesiodic Prometheus gives mortals a vital key to technology, fire, and as a direct consequence of his actions, woman is created. These events are not so different from what Ovid explains above much later in history; Prometheus undoubtedly contributes to humanity’s existence, whether it be by creating them or providing for them. In addition, Ovid’s reception of Prometheus contributes to Mary Shelley’s understanding of Prometheus, as will be covered in section 3.1.

⁶ If this seems reminiscent of Noah’s story in Genesis, it is; a flood myth appears in Hebrew mythology, the Biblical *Genesis*, the Greek story of Deucalion, the Indian story of Manu, and more worldwide (Leeming 138).

Other Greek works that mention Prometheus include Plato's *Protagoras*, Pseudo-Apollodorus' *The Library*, and a fragment from Sappho. In Plato's dialogue *Protagoras*, he does not view Prometheus as the creator of humans; this is a task done by the (undetermined) "gods" (Plat. Prot. 320d). Olga Raggio provides a summary of the section of *Protagoras* that mentions Prometheus, from 320d-322a:

After the gods have moulded men and other living creatures with a mixture of clay and fire, the two brothers Epimetheus and Prometheus are called to complete the task and distribute among the newly born creatures all sorts of natural qualities. Epimetheus sets to work, but, being unwise, distributes all the gifts of nature among the animals, leaving men naked and unprotected, unable to defend themselves and to survive in a hostile world. Prometheus then steals the fire of creative power from the workshop of Athena and Hephaistos and gives it to mankind (45).

It is interesting here how Plato mentions theft from other gods, not only Zeus; Athena is the goddess of artistic skills and crafts, and Hephaistos is the smith god, using fire for his craft. The matter of Hephaistos' art will appear in *PB*; let us keep this in mind as we review the final few background sources about Prometheus.

Pseudo-Apollodorus⁷, a possible Greek contemporary to Ovid in the first century, wrote a compendium of Greek mythology called *The Library (Bibliotheca)*. In *The Library*, Pseudo-Apollodorus briefly introduces Prometheus: "Prometheus molded men from water and earth and gave them fire which he had hidden in a fennel stalk unknown to Zeus" (Apollod. 1.7.1). Additionally, when Zeus pursues Thetis, Pseudo-Apollodorus writes, "Prometheus told her that the son born to her would rule heaven," a child who would take the throne from Zeus

⁷ There is controversy surrounding whether Apollodorus is the true author of *The Library*, or if it is an unknown author we dub "Pseudo-Apollodorus." Though *Gods and Heroes of the Greeks: the Library of Apollodorus* credits Apollodorus "by convention" (1), most modern scholars agree that the author cannot be Apollodorus due to dating issues.

(Apollod. 3.13.5). Aeschylus includes this story about Zeus' destined union in the earlier *PB*. In addition, we have preserved in Servius' commentary on Vergil that:

After creating men Prometheus is said to have stolen fire and revealed it to men. The gods were angered by this and sent two evils on the earth, women and disease; such is the account given by Sappho and Hesiod/*Prometheus* . . . *post factos a se homines dicitur . . . ignem furatus, quem hominibus indicavit. ob quam causam irati dii duo mala immiserunt terris, mulieres et morbos, sicut et Sappho et Hesiodus memorant.* (Sappho 191).

Though we do not have the original text in which Sappho discusses Prometheus, her work is often preserved in fragments like this one. Suppose we are to believe Servius' preservation of Sappho, who was thought to have lived in the 7th-6th centuries BCE. In that case, this means that the aspect of Prometheus *plasticator* may have existed long before sources like Ovid and Pseudo-Apollodorus (Kivilo 167). This is important for understanding mythology: what we now know is mainly due to extant texts, and there may be much more we do not know. We know that mythology is used etiologically; how humanity was created is a significant question to be explored through myth.

The final point is that *PB* occurs after the Titanomachy, the battle between the Titans and the Gods. The Titanomachy is not just a mythological event: there is a work of literature *Titanomachy*, which is a lost epic⁸ that would have included some mythology about Prometheus, and the event of the Titanomachy itself is referenced in *PB* (199-221). M.L. West argues that *Titanomachy* was composed in the late seventh century at the earliest, coming after Hesiod and before *PB* (M.L. West "Eumelos" 109). With the information in Aeschylus' play and *Theogony*,

⁸ The transmission of literature from ancient times to now often results in 'lost' compositions, works that did not survive in their entirety or at all. For example, we believe the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* to have been accompanied by numerous other epics that detailed the Trojan War, called 'The Epic Cycle.' Some of these lost stories are mentioned in extant texts; Aristotle mentions the lost works *Cypria* and *Little Iliad* in his *Poetics* (Aristot. Poet. 1459b). We know much about these epics because of Proclus' extant summaries of most of them. See his summaries translated by Nagy (2020).

we can summarize that Prometheus ultimately failed after trying to counsel his fellow Titans in strategy. With help from his mother, who is more likely to be Themis than Klymene (see section 1.2), they offered their support to Zeus, who accepted (Aesch. *PB*. 130-150). Presumably, the chronological order, constructed from *PB*, is as follows: the Titanomachy occurs with Prometheus on the side of the Gods, Zeus takes the throne where his Titan father Kronos once sat, Prometheus deceives Zeus on behalf of humanity, Zeus punishes Prometheus, and the events related in *PB* begin (Aesch. *PB*. 201-227). The Titanomachy is critical to acknowledge before discussing *PB* because it reveals that Prometheus and Zeus were once allied, making Prometheus' "crime" and punishment a betrayal between two gods formerly on the same side.

Now we know of the earliest foundations of Prometheus' myth and how Prometheus is characterized by Hesiod and other ancient writers. Whichever telling we follow, the creator of humans seen in Ovid and Sappho or the thief of fire seen in Aeschylus, or both, he is in some way responsible for creations vital to humankind; as Jacqueline Duchemin writes, "But one element is well-assured, and it is the most important: Prometheus is the appointed protector of the human race/Mais un élément est bien assuré, et c'est le plus important: Prométhée est le protecteur attribué du genre humain" (42). With this, we may turn to Aeschylus' interpretation—the interpretation I shall rely on for my direct comparisons and references between Mary Shelley's and Aeschylus' work. I will give an overview of the play, supplemented by deviations from early mythology described in section 1.1, with contributing analysis.

1.2 Prometheus Bound

Between Hesiod's writing from the latter years of the 8th century and the mid-5th century when *PB* was written, there are very few extant sources on Prometheus, none to the extent to which Hesiod or Aeschylus writes about him. Aeschylus writes much more about Prometheus

than Hesiod, with the entirety of *PB* as opposed to a couple of (important) paragraphs from *Theogony* and *Works and Days*. Though Aeschylus' play would come more than two centuries later, with a *terminus ante quem* of 424 BCE, it is the nearest extended treatment of Prometheus after he first appears in Hesiod (Flintoff 82).

PB focuses mainly on Prometheus' torture. At the beginning of *PB*, Zeus' lackeys Kratos (Violent Strength) and Bia (Force) are present, and the smith god Hephaistos is chaining Prometheus in unbreakable bonds to a rocky, isolated crag. Kratos and Hephaistos are the first characters to speak; Bia is silent throughout her stage presence. Isabel Ruffell, a professor of Classics at the University of Glasgow, writes in her book *Aeschylus: Prometheus Bound*, "As abstractions associated with Zeus, Kratos and Bia derive from Hesiod (*Theogony* 385), as part of a group of personified concepts with very little development. In *Prometheus Bound*, they embody the new regime" (30). In Herbert S. Long's commentary on *Prometheus Bound*, he writes at line 12 when Kratos and Bia are introduced: "Kratos represents Zeus' supremacy; Bia, a mute person, the brute force by which Zeus maintains his supremacy" (232). Additionally, he comments on their use in the play at line 207: "The Titans were violent in thought, but also in action. Zeus overcame them by guile; but, like them, he now puts his trust in brute **strength**, symbolized by the thunderbolt [...] Cratos and Bia embody Zeus' trust in his power, a trust once felt by the Titans" (Long 245). Kratos and Bia are not random characters but extensions of Zeus' power and violent strength. Zeus never speaks directly to Prometheus in the play, but in the introductions, he literally speaks by means of Power and Violence.

In contrast with Kratos and Bia, however, Hephaistos is more sympathetic to Prometheus' suffering: "Kratos menaces and intimidates another participant, the god Hephaistos,

who reluctantly wields implements. Hephaistos offers sympathy for the plight of the victim [Prometheus], but acquiesces in nailing him to a crag” (Ruffell 25). Hephaistos admits,

“I’ve little heart for nailing a kindred god to this stark cliff in harshest winter. Yet I’ve got to find such a resolve, for he who slights the Father’s [Zeus’] command cloaks himself with danger/ἐγὼ δ’ ἄτολμός εἰμι συγγενῆ θεὸν δῆσαι βία φάραγγι πρὸς δυσχειμέρω· πάντως δ’ ἀνάγκη τῶνδέ μοι τόλμαν σχεθεῖν, εὐωριάζειν γὰρ πατρὸς λόγους βαρὺ” (Aesch. *PB*. 14-17).

Throughout his scene, Hephaistos seems to vacillate between his loyalty to Zeus and his pity for Prometheus, so much so that Kratos asks him: “Tell me, why drag your feet and wear your pity? Don’t you detest a god hateful to gods because he gave [your] privilege to humans/εἶέν, τί μέλλεις καὶ κατοικτίζει μάτην; τί τὸν θεοῖς ἔχθιστον οὐ στυγεῖς θεόν, ὅστις τὸ σὸν θνητοῖσι προὔδωκεν γέρας;” (Aesch. *PB*. 36-38).

I would like to point out here one word that Matthews has neglected to translate, προὔδωκεν (*proúðōken*), the verb for betrayal; in this context, Prometheus betrayed Hephaistos, too, by giving his privilege to humans. This privilege is fire, as Hephaistos is the god of blacksmithing, metalworking, and, by extension, volcanoes. He is a master of fire, skilled in using it for his own crafts. Kratos implies that Hephaistos’ fire mastery also leads to some kind of possession and that Prometheus’ theft made him a traitor to Hephaistos. This passage is similar to Plato’s telling in *Protagoras*; how Prometheus “stole from Hephaestus and Athena wisdom in the arts together with fire—since by no means without fire could it be acquired or helpfully used by any/κλέπτει Ἡφαίστου καὶ Ἀθηνᾶς τὴν ἔντεχνον σοφίαν σὺν πυρί—ἀμήχανον γὰρ ἦν ἄνευ πυρὸς αὐτὴν κτητὴν τῷ ἢ χρησίμην γενέσθαι” (321d). Though Athena is not mentioned in *PB*, a connection between the two should mean that Hephaistos rues Prometheus’ theft of his most precious tool, fire. However, this does not seem to be the case: Hephaistos laments that he must chain Prometheus, cursing his role as the blacksmith god, the only one able

to weld unbreakable bonds. Hephaistos abruptly leaves after he has finished chaining Prometheus, and Kratos and Bia also leave, not without Kratos, the strong-arm of Zeus, taunting Prometheus one last time.

After Hephaistos leaves him, chained to the cliff face, other deities appear: first, the chorus of Oceanids. A chorus in Greek plays is a group of minor characters who act as a whole and generally comment on the action or provide background context. The Oceanids are nymphs who come to investigate the hammering noise caused by Hephaistos chaining Prometheus to the cliff. They ask Prometheus what happened, who chained him there, why, and more. This prompting is a helpful plot exposition for retelling Prometheus' "crimes" since, as stated above, the play begins *in medias res*.

In Aeschylus' exposition, Prometheus gave humans fire in a fennel-stalk, like in Hesiod's and Pseudo-Apollodorus' tellings. In Aeschylus' version, however, Prometheus speaks of what comes from his gift of fire: "I sought out and hid in a fennel stalk the secret source of fire, which humans used as a teacher of **all skills and a great resource**/ ναρθηκοπλήρωτον δὲ θηρῶμαι πυρὸς πηγὴν κλοπαίαν, ἢ διδάσκαλος τέχνης πάσης βροτοῖς πέφηνε καὶ μέγας πόρος." (Aesch. *PB*. 109-111). Though an incredible amount of technology stems from fire alone, Prometheus adds further skills. Raggio references his words; he claims to have given mortals skills such as dream/prophetic interpretation, augury, medical knowledge, inference, writing, numerals, etc.:

From its benefactor Prometheus mankind receives not only the physical fire in the fennel stalk, but also the subtler fire of reason and wisdom from which all aspects of human civilization are derived: divination, astrology, medicine, mathematics, the alphabet, agriculture—every science and every art (45).

Much later, Prometheus declares, "whatsoever skills the humans have, they got as a gift from Prometheus/μάθε· πᾶσαι τέχναι βροτοῖσιν ἐκ Προμηθέως" (Aesch. *PB*. 505-506). This section in

Aeschylus shows Prometheus as a bringer of fire and a teacher of skills and crafts previously unknown to them. This is parallel with Plato's *Protagoras* from section 1.1; Plato writes that Prometheus stole "wisdom in the arts together with fire/τὴν ἔντεχνον σοφίαν σὺν πυρὶ" (*Prot.* 321d). However, *PB* emphasizes Prometheus' actions as a benefactor, a more positive figure whose only crime was to defy the tyrant Zeus, which is less seen in Hesiod's foil to Zeus. In contrast, Plato emphasizes his crime, not only against Zeus but against Athena and Hephaistos.

Isabel Ruffell argues that *PB* makes a considerable change in the "profoundly pessimistic view of human culture inherited from archaic Greece" (57). Furthermore, she says that "*Prometheus Bound* articulates an optimistic, progressive vision of human self-reliance and self-sufficiency, rooted in technological progress" (57). Prometheus in *PB* selflessly gave humans a positive outlook on their lives, deeming them to have virtue while no other gods did, all the while knowing what would happen to him: "I know my fate and I have known it in advance/καίτοι τί φημι; πάντα προὔξεπίσταμαι σκεθρῶς τὰ μέλλοντ'" (*Aesch. PB.* 101-102). The chorus even criticizes Prometheus' lack of care for himself over humans: "So why lavish all your gifts on humans when you can't take prudent care of yourself?/μή νυν βροτοῦς μὲν ὠφέλει καιροῦ πέρα, σαυτοῦ δ' ἀκήδει δυστυχοῦντος;" (*Aesch. PB.* 507-508). This is what I mean in how *PB* emphasizes Prometheus as a benefactor; Prometheus self-sacrificingly helps mortals in Hesiod, yes, but not with the foreknowledge that Aeschylus adds.

In the middle of Prometheus' conversation with the Oceanid chorus, Oceanus appears. He is their father and personification of the ocean, riding in a similar fashion to the chorus. He seems to want to pity Prometheus, but not in the way Hephaistos does; he tries to advise Prometheus, saying that he can help Prometheus be free and that Zeus will listen to him (*Aesch. PB.* 288-297). Prometheus knows Zeus cannot be swayed, and after a back-and-forth between

Prometheus and Oceanus, Prometheus urges him not to be involved in his punishment, lest Oceanus fall out of Zeus' favor (387-396). Oceanus leaves Prometheus with the Oceanids.

In the following few lines, the Oceanids ask Prometheus for more—he proudly tells them about his gift for humanity, and afterwards, the discussion turns to Zeus. Prometheus hints at a future matter concerning Zeus; however, at this point in the play, he is unwilling to discuss it just yet (518-525). At line 560, Io enters the stage. Io was a lover of Zeus, who seduced her; when Hera found out, he turned Io into a cow. Hera, still suspecting Io, sent a herd of gadflies to sting her eternally. She wanders across lands plagued by the gadflies; half-woman, half-cow, she is another victim of Zeus. She empathizes with Prometheus: “You who have done such good for humans, why are you being punished here?/ὦ κοινὸν ὠφέλημα θνητοῖσιν φανείς, τλήμων Προμηθεῦ, τοῦ δίκην πάσχεις τάδε;” (Aesch. *PB*. 613-614). Since Io is sympathetic to Prometheus, being a victim of Zeus herself, he reveals the future matter concerning Zeus that he had hinted to the Oceanids; Zeus will marry a woman, and that woman will bear a son that will overthrow Zeus. Prometheus knows who this woman is, but he will not tell Zeus by any means (755-770). After she begs him, Prometheus reveals to Io when she will be free of her torture but that she has to go through much more before she is relieved. He also tells Io, and the chorus, that one of her descendants will be the person to free him; however, he must wait for generations to be released. He ends with, “This is the prophecy my mother, the Titan Themis, told me/τοιόνδε χρησμὸν ἡ παλαιγενὴς μήτηρ ἔμοι διήλθε, Τιτανὶς Θέμις” (873-874). Io leaves, still swarmed by gadflies, unable to do anything for Prometheus.

Most notably, in Hesiod, Prometheus' parentage is Iapetos and Klymene, one of the Oceanids. Should this be the case in *PB*, since Iapetos is a Titan brother of Kronos, Zeus and Prometheus would technically be cousins. Additionally, if Prometheus' mother is an Oceanid,

then the Oceanid chorus would be his aunts or further relations. However, in Greek mythology, human familial ties typically do not apply to the gods—consider Zeus’ marriage and subsequent family with Hera, who is both his wife and sister. Aeschylus may have considered this, though; in *PB*, Prometheus’ father is not named, and Prometheus’ mother is said to be Themis, a goddess of divine order, also associated with prophecy. She is also associated with Gaia, or Mother Earth, in a way that may be *ad hoc*: Alan Sommerstein, a translator of *PB*, writes in a footnote that “The poet wanted Prometheus to be one of the Titans, but also wanted his mother to be Themis, a prophetic goddess” (Aeschylus ed. Sommerstein 467). Both goddesses are why, in *PB*, Prometheus invokes the earth as his mother, but is also called Themidos (*Θέμιδος*, ‘[son] of Themis’) (Aesch. *PB*. 17).

Prometheus knows Zeus’ and Io’s fates because he has the power to see the future. This is not just a godly ability; it is particular to Prometheus since none of the other gods are able to tell Zeus’ fate. Prophecy is a key element to Aeschylus’ telling; Prometheus’ ability to see the future means that, unlike Hesiod’s Prometheus, he has something that Zeus desires: the ability to see who will one day overthrow him. Prometheus’ name, which, as I have discussed, means ‘Forethought,’ is held to reflect this power. The etymology of his name is referenced in *PB*: “The gods were wrong to name you Forethought, unless they meant the forethought you’ll now need to free yourself from this fix./ψευδωνύμως σε δαίμονες Προμηθέα καλοῦσιν· αὐτὸν γάρ σε δεῖ προμηθέως, ὅτῳ τρόπῳ τῆσδ’ ἐκκυλισθήσῃ τέχνης” (Aesch. *PB*. 85-87).

As Aeschylus treats Themis as Prometheus’ mother (873), and she is connected to prophecy and oracles, it is reasonable to think that she gave him this ability. In addition, she is the divine personification of justice and law, extremely dissimilar to the other personifications Prometheus has met before, Kratos and Bia. Aeschylus makes a heavy contrast when he creates

Prometheus as the son of justice and fairness and has him sentenced to an unjust punishment from an unfair ruler through Power and Strength. In the preface to the Loeb Classical Library's edition of *PB*, Alan Sommerstein writes, "And Themis is able to give Prometheus knowledge—foreknowledge, enabling him to live up to the meaning of his name—of crucial developments in the history of the divine world" (Sommerstein 435). The text does not tell us, but the woman Zeus is destined to marry is Thetis; the Greek audience presumably would have known this (Sommerstein 436). This aspect of Prometheus' story may have been adapted by Pseudo-Apollodorus in *The Library* 3.13.5 when Prometheus warns Zeus not to have sex with Thetis. During the plot exposition given to the Oceanids, Prometheus says:

The day will come he'll need me, the very me he's tied and fettered; our Commander of the Blessed will need me to point out the plot against his throne and power. Not with honeyed charm will he persuade me, nor with his fierce threats intimidate me to tell him what I know, unless he unchains me and compensates me for this pain/χρείαν ἔξει μακάρων πρύτανις, δεῖξαι τὸ νέον βούλευμ' ὑφ' ὅτου σκῆπτρον τιμάς τ' ἀποσυλᾶται. καί μ' οὔτι μελιγλώσσοις πειθοῦς ἐπαιοιδᾶσιν θέλξει, στερεάς τ' οὔποτ' ἀπειλὰς πτήξας τόδ' ἐγὼ καταμηνύσω, πρὶν ἂν ἐξ ἀγρίων δεσμῶν χαλάση ποινὰς τε τίνειν τῆσδ' ἄκειας ἐθελήση. (Aesch. *PB*. 169-177).

Zeus wants Prometheus' knowledge about his future marriage and deposition. However, Prometheus refuses to tell him. Prometheus is willing to withstand painful punishment as retribution for Zeus' desires: "I'll hide this at all cost; for only by keeping it will I wrench free from my spiteful bondage and pain/ἀλλὰ συγκαλυπτέος ὅσον μάλιστα· τόνδε γὰρ σφύζων ἐγὼ δεσμοὺς ἀεικεῖς καὶ δῦας ἐκφυγάνω" (Aesch. *PB*. 523-525).

Prometheus has equal knowledge: as he tells Io, he will be freed from the cliff but must suffer until then. Why should he wait so long in chains when he could be released? It is because Prometheus has the ultimate power over Zeus, playing him at his own game:

Prometheus: Destiny has a plan for me: I'm to be bent by ten thousand agonies before I'm free from this pain. Destiny overwhelms intelligence.

οὐ ταῦτα ταύτη μοῖρά πω τελεσφόρος κρᾶναι πέπρωται, μυρίαῖς δὲ πημοναῖς δύαις τε καμφθεῖς ὧδε δεσμὰ φυγγάνω· τέχνη δ' ἀνάγκης ἀσθενεστέρα μακρῶ.

Chorus: Who then is the helmsman of Destiny?

τίς οὖν ἀνάγκης ἐστὶν οἰακοστρόφος;

P: The three Fates and the unforgetting Furies.

Μοῖραι τρίμορφοι μνήμονές τ' Ἐρινύες.

C: Is Zeus less powerful than they are?

τούτων ἄρα Ζεὺς ἐστὶν ἀσθενέστερος;

P: Yes, for even he bows to Destiny.

οὔκουν ἂν ἐκφύγοι γε τὴν πεπρωμένην.

(Aesch. *PB*. 511-518)

Here is where Prometheus can get even with Zeus; by withholding the secret he wants most,

Prometheus forces his hand. Prometheus knows what is coming for him, and Zeus does not.

Prometheus invokes the Fates and the Furies here; the Fates are the deities who, as their name suggests, unfurl the fate of mortals and humans. Prometheus has the power to see Zeus' fate, but he cannot change it; that is the job of the Fates. The Furies are a different matter; these are deities of vengeance. Prometheus insinuates that with the fulfillment of Zeus' fate, there will be vengeance to pay, perhaps for Zeus' injustice.

The chorus, shocked by Io's story, seems to begin to see Zeus in a new light; however, Hermes appears before they can interrogate Prometheus too much longer. Hermes, the messenger god and another extension of Zeus, gives Prometheus a last opportunity to tell Zeus' future. The detail-oriented reader may have noticed that, unlike the Hesiodic Prometheus, the Aeschylean Prometheus does not suffer the fate of the eagle devouring his liver daily. That fate is withheld for future punishment because Zeus is holding it back to be used later; he is not quite finished with Prometheus yet. Hermes says threateningly,

First the Father [Zeus] will shatter this crag with thunder and lightning bolt, and seal you in the craggy innards wrapped in rocky embrace; it will take long, dull work to reach the light of day again. Then the winged hound of Zeus, the bloody eagle, shall rend great shreds of flesh from you, coming back each day to eat some more: your liver shall be his meal and his beak will be black with your blood/πρῶτα μὲν γὰρ ὀκρίδα φάραγμα βροντῆ καὶ κεραυνία φλογὶ πατήρ σπαράξει τήνδε καὶ κρύψει δέμας τὸ σόν, πετραία δ' ἀγκάλῃ σε βαστάσει. μακρὸν δὲ μῆκος ἐκτελευτήσας χρόνου ἄψορρον ἤξεις εἰς φάος· Διὸς δὲ τοι πτηνὸς κύων, δαφεινὸς αἰετός, λάβρως διαρταμήσει σώματος μέγα ῥάκος. ἄκλιτος ἔρπων δαιταλεὺς πανήμερος, κελαινόβρωτον δ' ἦπαρ ἐκθονιάσεται (Aesch. *PB*. 1016-1025).

Prometheus still refuses, even in the face of imminent threat. His last words before the rock splits, and his last words in the entire play, are as follows: “O holy mother mine, O sky that circles all and sheds its light on all, look at me now and see how I suffer, and how unjustly/ ὦ μητρὸς ἐμῆς σέβας, ὦ πάντων αἰθῆρ κοινὸν φάος εἰλίσσω, ἐσορᾷθ' ἔκδικα πάσχω.” (Aesch. *PB*. 1091-1093). The withholding of the eagle creates an added tension throughout the play.

Prometheus is allowed to rail against his jailkeepers and the tyrant who put him there (helpful plot exposition for us) and shows us a great deal of suffering and emotion between him and the characters who visit before he spirals down into the unseen but promised torture.

Throughout my summary, we have seen that Aeschylus embellishes dramatic character elements not present in Hesiod: a new mother for Prometheus, the power of prophecy, and the eagle as torture. Gantz notes these as “surprising derivations from Hesiod,” but as we know, myth is not always consistent (159). There are more deviations to analyze outside of the summary that have a consistent role throughout the play, such as Zeus as a tyrant and Prometheus’ punishment. Let us begin with Zeus as a tyrant.

Zeus is a newly-enthroned, insecure, harsh and tyrannical ruler, while Prometheus becomes a more sympathetic figure. Gantz claims, “From the opening lines the drama is shaped

in such a way that it cannot but work against Zeus. Kratos and Bia [...] summarize power politics in its most unattractive form, while Hephaistos' sympathy for Prometheus (this is from the offended party in the case) undermines the seriousness of the charges" (Gantz 159). The mention of "power politics" by Gantz rings similarly to Ruffell's and Long's interpretations of Kratos and Bia as extensions of Zeus' powerful and violent new regime. Hephaistos as the "offended party" references Prometheus' stealing of fire, and yet he is still sympathetic to Prometheus; though Kratos berates Hephaistos for his sympathy, Hephaistos introduces the subtext that not everyone agrees with Zeus' punishment.

For historical context, Lewis notes in *Promethean Politics* that "In Greek letters we find numerous condemnation of tyrants, who are always hard, merciless, arrogant, willful, acquisitive, and lustful, always punish without first convicting of wrong, and are always above the law" (15). In addition, she cites the political theories of Plato and Aristotle, who both found tyrants among the worst rulers (14). Tyranny is further argued against in Herodotus' *Histories* (3.80) and Lucian of Sicily's *The Downward Journey* (28-29) (Lewis 15). If we believe, as Lewis states, this is the "traditional view of tyranny" held by the Greeks, and later ancient writers, then Zeus in *PB* must have been read as a tyrant (15). As opposed to Hesiod, whom I argue celebrates the power of Zeus in invoking praise of Zeus and contrasting epithets with Prometheus, I agree with Lewis that *PB* is a "political drama with Olympian Zeus in the role of a tyrant and Titan Prometheus as a rebel against monarchy" (13).

For evidence that dates around the time of Aeschylus, Isabel Ruffell writes, "The word used by Kratos for Zeus' regime is *tyrannos*. The modern association of tyranny with despotism and repression does not necessarily hold for Archaic Greece, but by the mid-fifth century in Athens, such associations could be exploited" (Ruffell 32). Ruffell then explains that plays like

Sophocles' *Ajax* and *Antigone*, which also date from the fifth century, present *tyrannos* in a highly negative fashion (32). Aeschylus uses the term in other plays; one use of *tyrannos* in the *Oresteia* trilogy is to describe Klytaimnestra and Aegisthos, the murderers of Agamemnon, in a negative way (Ruffell 32).

In this regard, Aeschylus' drama presents Zeus in a light that some Greeks would have found disagreeable, especially in Athens, where the plays would have been staged at the City Dionysia (Herington 644). In mid-5th century Athens, around the time of Aeschylus, democracy was nascent (Raaflaub 3). Its foundation came about half a century after the expulsion of the tyrant Pisistratid dynasty in 510 BCE and new proto-democratic reforms set by Cleisthenes in 508/507 (Ober 88).⁹ Athens was ushering in a new form of government and, according to evidence from plays of the period and new reforms, was ready to leave tyranny in the troubled past.

Prometheus attributes Zeus' tyranny to why Zeus betrayed him after taking his side in the Titanomachy:

For all the help I gave the tyrant Zeus this is the payment he has given me.
There is an illness deep in the core of tyranny: the tyrant can't trust his friends/τοιιάδ' ἐξ ἐμοῦ ὁ τῶν θεῶν τύραννος ὠφελημένος κακαῖσι τιμαῖς ταῖσδέ μ' ἐξημεῖψατο. ἔνεστι γάρ πως τοῦτο τῆ τυραννίδι νόσημα, τοῖς φίλοισι μὴ πεποιθέναι (Aesch. *PB*. 221-225).

To Zeus' disagreeable tyranny, Prometheus takes on a more sympathetic light as a victim of unjust ruling. He was once an ally of Zeus, then an enemy, sentenced by his hand. Other characters view Zeus as a tyrant as well but are more willing to conform; Oceanus advises Prometheus to "stop your complaining, since our harsh king rules alone and need not consult

⁹ This is an extremely abbreviated version of what I could say about the origins of democracy in Athens. I felt it necessary to mention as background information surrounding Zeus as a *tyrannos*; however, for the purposes of this thesis, I only cover the most basic information. There is much more to be said about the topic; see Raaflaub 2007 for more.

anyone about what he does./οὔκουν ἔμοιγε χρώμενος διδασκάλῳ πρὸς κέντρα κῶλον ἐκτενεῖς, ὀρῶν ὅτι τραχὺς μόναρχος οὐδ' ὑπεύθυνος κρατεῖ” (Aesch. *PB*. 322-324). Zeus is a harsh tyrant to all, but everyone is willing to conform to his authority, everyone except Prometheus.

Aeschylus does not have to use only the word *tyrannos* to describe Zeus as a tyrant; this characterization appears in more ways than one. Τραχὺς (*trakhùs*) is an adjective that can mean ‘rugged’ or ‘rough’ and is frequently applied to rock formations. However, when applied to people and their nature, it can mean ‘harsh’ or ‘savage.’ The Liddell-Scott-Jones Greek-English Lexicon, a principal reference for Greek studies, cites a passage from *PB* as an example of *τραχὺς* applied to persons: “ἅπας δὲ **τραχὺς** ὅστις ἄν νέον κρατῆῖ” (35). This line, spoken by Hephaistos, references Zeus in that “everyone who is new to power is harsh;” Zeus is referenced with *τραχὺς* several times more in *PB*. Hephaistos never uses the direct word *tyrannos* to describe Zeus, even though, as we have discussed, he is sympathetic to Prometheus. Completing his job of binding Prometheus nonetheless, he carefully watches his words: anything overly critical of Zeus could mean retribution, but a word like *τραχὺς* that carries less negative connotation could keep Hephaistos safe. This is the terror of tyranny; Hephaistos sees in front of him what can happen to another god, Prometheus; he keeps loyalty to Zeus as best as he can, lest the same happen to him.

Aeschylus does not mention that Zeus denied fire to humanity because of Prometheus’ sacrifice trick at Mekone. Kerényi argues that this is intentional to show just how unjust Prometheus’ suffering is, a line of argument I would like to explore and question. He cites a line from Aeschylus to discuss *dikē*, or justice: “A god yourself, you did not dread the god’s anger, but gave to mortals honor in excess of justice.../θεὸς θεῶν γὰρ οὐχ ὑποπτήσσω χόλον βροτοῖσι τιμὰς ὅπασαζ πέρα δίκης.” (“Prometheus” 87, Aesch. *PB*. 29-30). Kerényi writes that though the

“excess of justice” claim supported by Zeus’ followers shows that Prometheus’ punishment is just, it is counteracted by Prometheus’ ‘excess of love’ for humanity in *PB*. He cites a line spoken by Prometheus, “Look at me then, in chains, a god who failed, the enemy of Zeus, whom all gods hate, all that go in and out of Zeus’ hall. **The reason is that I loved men too well**” (“Prometheus” 87, Aesch. *PB*. 119-23). Here Kerényi claims that

the order to which this measure belongs is to blame for the sufferings of Prometheus, who has done nothing more than men are compelled to do. He put himself in our place—the place of men—and his actions and suffering were the inevitable consequence. [...] And now it is perfectly clear: because his actions and sufferings resulted from his putting himself in the position of man, the source of his suffering is injustice (“Prometheus” 88).

Kerényi’s argument, to summarize, is that Prometheus put himself into the position of man, a race that Zeus already wishes to make extinct, having done “nothing more than men are compelled to do.” It seems that Kerényi argues that Zeus is treating Prometheus unjustly because he is treating him like a human rather than the god he is.

I am still determining whether I agree that Zeus views Prometheus like a human. Zeus is indeed unjust to humans, especially when perceived as a tyrant; in addition, we are still left in the dark as to why he wants to make mortals extinct. However, Zeus does know Prometheus as a god, especially if we believe their former alliance in the Titanomachy. Zeus gives Prometheus a god-specific punishment; any mortal human would have died on that cliff face, if not from hunger or thirst, then exposure—but not Prometheus, as he is immortal. Of course, Prometheus’ punishment is still unjust; as Ruffell points out, Zeus could have simply struck him with a thunderbolt, as he did with Menoitios (28). However, this cliff-face punishment, on top of the plotted eagle, is especially crafted and harmful, something that Zeus created as a particular punishment for Prometheus, what we may call ‘cruel and unusual.’ Ruffell also argues that

“[torture] is a way of attacking and breaking resistance and opposition to a regime. Prometheus is being punished in order that he might recant his opposition to Zeus and thereby serve as an example and a warning to others” (29). In the end, I sought to include Kerényi’s points because it is true that Zeus’ punishment is unjust; also, to demonstrate further why this particular punishment was chosen for Prometheus.

With the presented differences between two major sources, Hesiod and Aeschylus, we see major contradictions in Prometheus’ mythology. We see Prometheus as a giver of skills to humanity and Prometheus with the gift of prophecy from a new mother. We also see the same methods of torturing Prometheus from what Hesiod tells us, but in Aeschylus, the tortures are spread out to fit the timeline of the play. Throughout the play, we also see new themes of Zeus’ tyranny, more heavily emphasized to fit the politics of 5th century Athens. In addition, we see a mild change in what Prometheus’ crimes may have been, perhaps to express that Zeus’ punishment is extremely unjust.

I believe that the variability of myth and concentrated plot surrounding Prometheus’ punishment in *PB* led Aeschylus to pick and choose some aspects of Prometheus’ mythology to include in his play. Because *PB* is presented as a singular setting, with Prometheus stationary, Aeschylus could only tell the story through his interaction with characters rather than Prometheus’ actions. For example, if Aeschylus had gone with the eagle torture immediately rather than saving it for the end, we would not have as much of a tense build-up, a confrontation between Zeus and Prometheus for answers. If Prometheus does not have the gift of prophecy, he has nothing that Zeus wants, nor is he able to tell Io to go on so that one of her descendants can free him. Much of the narrative development in *PB* would be lacking if Aeschylus did not invest in giving his readers and theater-goers a small window of time in which Prometheus is at his

most wilful, yet suffering. I will dive further into what aspects in *PB* make Prometheus who he is in Promethean Themes.

1.3 Promethean Themes

Though somewhat contrasting in Hesiod and Aeschylus, if we take the tellings of the Prometheus myth from above, certain elements of Prometheus are always present. I will summarize these aspects to define the characteristics of a Promethean figure. However, due to the already-established variability of myth from the introduction to Part I, it is a challenge. Aeschylus, when picking Promethean traits to highlight in his play, perhaps understood he could not encapsulate everything found in, say, Hesiod's work and make the play the way he intended to; however, that is the beauty of Promethean mythology. Scholars have spent years discussing variable aspects of Prometheus, which leads me to have to do my own 'picking and choosing': I have selected the aspects of Prometheus I feel are most applicable to what I intend to argue, concentrating on *PB* in order to best compare Aeschylus' Prometheus with Frankenstein's Creation. I will present the humanist, rebel, and suffering themes of Prometheus' myth; each is heavily interconnected, but all are essential to understanding Prometheus in *PB* and beyond.

Firstly, the humanist Prometheus. Since Hesiod and Aeschylus do not treat the Prometheus *plasticator* role of Prometheus, I will choose to stick to other sources for the purpose of concentration. With this view that Prometheus did not create humans, we must accept the presented fact that Prometheus loved humans and saw virtue in them enough to defy Zeus and sentence himself to punishment on their behalf.

There are undeniable representations of his love for humankind. Prometheus himself freely admits to it: "Here can be seen a god in chains, enemy of Zeus and all who enter Zeus' palace hall, who was far too kind to humans/ ὀρᾷτε δεσμώτην με, δύσποτμον θεόν, τὸν Διὸς

ἐχθρόν, τὸν πᾶσι θεοῖς δι’ ἀπεχθείας ἐλθόνθ’, ὅποσοι τὴν Διὸς αὐλήν εἰσοιχνεῦσιν, διὰ τὴν λίαν φιλότητα βροτῶν” (Aesch. *PB*. 119-123). I think that translation underwhelms Prometheus’ love for humanity. Φιλότητα (philótēta) is the Greek word for friendship, love, or affection, and, in addition, Aeschylus adds the word λίαν (lían). Λίαν is an adverb that means exceedingly or excessively, further adding to Prometheus’ overweening love for humankind: he had the ‘*exceeding* affection’ for humans. These nuances are how Aeschylus gets it across: this is no casual love.

At the beginning of *PB*, Hephaistos accuses Prometheus of exactly this: “This is what you get for loving humans overmuch. A god like you should know to fear the god’s wrath; instead you gave humans more than their due/τοιαῦτ’ ἀπηύρω τοῦ φιλανθρώπου τρόπου· θεὸς θεῶν γὰρ οὐχ ὑποπτήσων χόλον βροτοῖσι τιμὰς ὅπασας πέρα δίκης” (Aesch. *PB*. 28-30). The object Prometheus gave humankind that was “more than their due,” of course, was fire; according to the speaker, Hephaistos, this was more than they deserved to have. He calls Prometheus φιλανθρώπου (philanthrṓrou), human-loving, almost in a derogatory fashion. Though one of the more sympathetic characters towards Prometheus, Hephaistos still holds the view that mortals are unnecessary, not worthy handlers of fire. The Oceanids are similarly awed by the theft of fire: “These daylight creatures now have fire?/καὶ νῦν φλογωπὸν πῦρ ἔχουσ’ ἐφήμεροι;” (Aesch. *PB*. 253). It is worth stating again that Prometheus, in his humanist fashion, is the only deity who thinks mortals should have fire in order to lead their lives with technology; much more, he believes they are beings who *should* live.

However, while the champion of humanity, Prometheus is simultaneously penalized and blamed for Zeus’ further punishments on humanity. Prometheus in *PB* captures this sad conundrum: “By helping humans I heaped trouble on myself, but I didn’t foresee that I’d be

punished like this, wasting away on this airy crag, this mountain top, alone/ θνητοῖς ἀρήγων αὐτὸς ἠύρομην πόνους. οὐ μὴν τι ποινᾶς γ' ὀρόμην τοίαισιν με κατισχνανεῖσθαι πρὸς πέτραις πεδαρσίοις τυχόντ' ἐρήμου τοῦδ' ἀγείτονος πάγου.” (Aesch. *PB*. 267-270). His contributions to humanity caused Zeus to grow increasingly angrier and give punishments to both Prometheus and mortals. As a result, Prometheus is presented as “...the one responsible for the difficulties and miseries of mankind. [...] his actions have consequences—not just for him, but also for mankind—and Prometheus is thus also implicated in the suffering that marks the human experience” (Dougherty 19). The sad combination of humanist and bringer of punishment is difficult to process, especially considering Prometheus’ selfless acts; it is a contradiction we must weigh in our minds in order to understand the consequences of his human-loving ways.

Secondly, the rebel Prometheus. Rebellion, in the context of a play like *PB*, concerns a wilful resistance to authority and established convention. A powerful characteristic across all tellings of his myth, Prometheus rebels against the established king Zeus in more ways than one: the sacrificial trick at Mekone in which he outwitted Zeus, stealing fire against Zeus’ command for humanity, and withholding secrets about Zeus’ future. His rebellious spirit is how he dares to act against Zeus, the omnipotent ruler of the gods.

In *PB*, in particular, Kratos, the strong-arm extension of Zeus, calls Prometheus one of the “enemies of Zeus” (τῶν Διός τ' ἐχθρῶν, Aesch. *PB*. 67) and further harasses Prometheus as he is being chained: “Now what good is the insolence by which you stole a privilege from the gods and gave it to your May-fly humans? ἐνταῦθά νυν ὕβριζε καὶ θεῶν γέρα συλῶν ἐφημέροισι προστίθει” (Aesch. *PB*. 82-83). Of particular interest here is the word ὕβριζε (*húbrizde*, from a verb meaning to insult, outrage, or be prideful). To the Greeks, it did not mean *hubris* in the sense it means to us (as our word came from the Greek); instead, it meant a purposeful,

potentially violent transgression, particularly against the gods. Andrew Karp argues that Prometheus' *hubris* in *PB* reveals his rebel side most forcefully: "[...] Oceanus reiterates the sentiment when he says of Prometheus, "You will not bend or yield to misfortune" Such an unwillingness to bend one's knee to anyone or accept any god or force as limiting one's power, however, smacks of *hubris* [...]" (Karp 5). This verb for *hubris* appears again, twice, close to the end of the play in Prometheus' discussion with Hermes before his further punishment:

Hermes: Better to be a rock's slave, you say, than to serve the mighty Father.
 κρεῖσσον γάρ, οἶμαι, τῆδε λατρεύειν πέτρα ἢ πατρὶ φῦναι Ζηνὶ πιστὸν ἄγγελον.
 Prometheus: Thus do the insolent show their insolence.
 οὕτως ὑβρίζειν τοὺς ὑβρίζοντας χρεῶν.
 (Aesch. *PB*. 968-970)

Hubris is much like rebellion in describing an action that transgresses against an authority figure. In this play, Prometheus is not defined by our modern terms concerning rebellion: he is defined by *hubris*, the most inflammatory and sacrilegious manner a Greek can possibly act in. This is how Aeschylus shows us the rebel Prometheus.

On the side of power, Zeus is described as a tyrant ruler (τύραννος) who eagerly seized Kronos' former throne and began a despotic rule. As Prometheus explains, Zeus wished to make the human race extinct; "but to humans, that unhappy race, he paid no heed, for he planned to blot them out and install another, new race to replace them/ βροτῶν δὲ τῶν τάλαιπῶρων λόγον οὐκ ἔσχεν οὐδέν', ἀλλ' αἰστώσας γένος τὸ πᾶν ἔχρηξεν ἄλλο φιλῦσαι νέον." (Aesch. *PB*. 231-233). Prometheus, in turn, defends humanity: "Against this plan only I dared to stand. I saved humans from utter destruction, from swift, cruel passage to the house of death/ καὶ τοῖσιν οὐδεις ἀντέβαινε πλὴν ἐμοῦ, ἐγὼ δ' ἐτόλμησ', ἔκ τ' ἐλυσάμην βροτοὺς τὸ μὴ διαρραισθέντας εἰς Ἄϊδου μολεῖν." (Aesch. *PB*. 234-236). The act of saving them clearly shows his rebellious character against tyrannical rule: Prometheus knew Zeus' plan for humanity, to "blot them out

and install another, new race to replace them.” Therefore, with full intention to disobey the installed tyrant, Zeus, Prometheus saves them from the brink of destruction.

Prometheus continues his defiance of Zeus throughout the play, right up until Hermes comes down to threaten him with the eagle if he does not confess Zeus’ future: “Accept, worship, and flatter whomever you like. But I begrudge Zeus everything. Let him squat on his throne a few days more; those days are few/σέβου, προσεύχου, θῶπτε τὸν κρατοῦντ’ αἰεὶ· ἐμοὶ δ’ ἔλασσον Ζηνὸς ἢ μηδὲν μέλει. δράτω, κρατεῖτω τὸνδε τὸν βραχὺν χρόνον ὅπως θέλει· δαρὸν γὰρ οὐκ ἄρξει θεοῖς.” (Aesch. *PB*. 937-940). Prometheus’ knowledge of Zeus’ future allows him to rebel even further. Prometheus knows what punishment will come to him, and he is unafraid of letting fate take its course. However, Prometheus has information, to the chagrin of the tyrant Zeus, and he is not afraid to continue in his punishment to rebel against the god who tried to extinguish the human race.

Finally, the suffering Prometheus. The entirety of *PB* has its basis in Prometheus’ suffering in combination with a lack of pity. We, as modern readers, may self-interestedly see that Prometheus’ intentions were positive—rebellious against authority to protect humanity and, in turn, giving himself to endless suffering—but other deities are not so sympathetic. However, Prometheus does not want to be alone and unpitied; as Kerényi writes in his book *Prometheus*: “Prometheus wants to be seen” (85) and “Prometheus calls in as witnesses the sacred elements and the sun, the supreme witness” (86). After Hephaistos, a character who pitied Prometheus, leaves him chained to the cliff face, other deities appear: first, the chorus of Oceanids. Prometheus urges them to witness him, and they do: “I see, Prometheus, and in my fear for you a mist of tears rose in my eyes to see you withering shamefully on your cliff in your adamantine bonds/λεύσσω, Προμηθεῦ· φοβερὰ δ’ ἐμοῖσιν ὄσσοις ὀμίχλα προσῆξε πλήρης δακρῶν σὸν

δέμας εἰσιδούσα πέτρα προσαναινόμενον ταῖσδ' ἀδαμαντοδέτοισι λύμαις” (Aesch. *PB*. 144-148). However, after Prometheus answers their questions about how he ended up there, they are stunned. They want to continue to pity him, but they find his actions egregious: “What hope is there? Don’t you see what you’ve done wrong?/ τίς ἐλπίς; οὐχ ὄραῖς ὅτι ἤμαρτες;” (Aesch *PB* 186). Oceanus appears and seems to hold a similar view:

...but you’ve brought pain on yourself by haughty talk; you’re not humble; you don’t yield to misfortune but resist it and in so doing seem to call for still more/ τοιαῦτα μέντοι τῆς ἄγαν ὑψηγόρου γλώσσης, Προμηθεῦ, τὰπίχειρα γίγνεται. σὺ δ’ οὐδέπω ταπεινός, οὐδ’ εἵκεις κακοῖς, πρὸς τοῖς παροῦσι δ’ ἄλλα προσλαβεῖν θέλεις; (Aesch *PB* 318-321).

The above scenes can be frustrating to a reader because even though these characters offer to help Prometheus escape, they fail to empathize with Prometheus’ actions and, in the end, cannot help him. The Oceanids fear divine retribution from Zeus if they sympathize with Prometheus; “Sympathy for the rebel, however, exacts a heavy toll on his adversary. If Prometheus suffers unjustly, Zeus is a despot; and if he suffers for helping mortals, Zeus is a misanthrope” (White 107). The Ocean nymphs do not want to advocate for either of these beliefs lest Zeus be angered with them, so they shy away. In this passage from White, Zeus is presented as a misanthrope; because it is still unclear why he wants to be rid of all mortals, this is presented as an undeniable fact; I cannot say I disagree with it.

Oceanus thinks Prometheus haughty in the above passage from *PB*, but he is embittered by the unjust punishment brought to him by a tyrant and the fact that Oceanus cannot find logic in Prometheus’ actions. Prometheus does display haughtiness at the beginning of the play; Long notes that “his own thoughts have been haughty and hubristic (αἰτυμῆτα) and lacking in εὐβουλία [prudence], as Hermes later tells him” (232).

As the play goes on, however, Prometheus begins to seek sympathizers to his plight almost desperately. Prometheus wants someone to understand and take his side, and “His display of his torment serves to enhance the imagery, but it does not [...] spring from personal pride or arrogance. This is the cry of a Greek when he is persecuted unjustly: *martýromai*— “You who have seen, I summon you as witnesses” (Kerényi 86). Kerényi likens Prometheus’ desire for sympathy to someone denouncing injustice in a law court, to which witnesses are important as “the only form of evidence that had legal significance in the practice of the Athenian jury courts” (Polinskaya 5). Kerényi is seemingly pulling an analogy from Aeschylus’ political use of tyranny. Though clever, it does not matter; Prometheus has no witnesses who are willing to support or pity him. Prometheus is alone, seeking someone, anyone, who may understand his reasoning, doomed for as long as Zeus wishes. Even Prometheus cannot foresee an end to his sufferings.

The above logic is precisely why Aeschylus’ framing of *PB* is so well done; between the opening scene of the binding of Prometheus and the ending with the eagle torture, we have a 1093-line-spanning view of Prometheus, speaking about nothing but his punishment. As I have mentioned before, there is a tension that builds during the play, especially knowing that further punishment is to come for Prometheus. However, this tension is added to by the various characters who visit Prometheus but cannot help him: Hephaistos pities him, but not enough to break the will of Zeus; the Oceanids weep for him but are afraid to cross Zeus; Oceanus does not want to get caught in the crossfire, Io has a different destiny. Prometheus has physical company; however, in terms of those who understand his motives and pity him on that account, he is utterly alone.

I have listed three qualities that I find most universal to Prometheus' character and most applicable in qualifying another character to be a Promethean figure; first, the humanist, who in his undeniable love for humankind, winds up utterly punished. Second, the rebel, who rivals with authority in the face of controversy, unafraid to continue rebelling even while suffering. Finally, perhaps most importantly, the one suffering, who spends his punishment unpitied and alone. These three themes also make a considerable appearance in *Frankenstein*, which is why I have chosen the themes most relevant to both Prometheus and Frankenstein's Creation. There is so much content relevant to Prometheus' myth that I would love to explore, but for the purposes of this thesis, I will concentrate my analysis on similarities between *Prometheus Bound* and *Frankenstein*. Before discussing Prometheus through the Creation, however, I shall provide background for my second major source, *Frankenstein, or, the Modern Prometheus*.

Part II: Frankenstein, or, the Modern Prometheus

Frankenstein, or, The Modern Prometheus, was completed in 1817 by Mary W. Shelley. Challenged to write a horror story by her companions Percy Bysshe Shelley, Lord Byron, and John William Polidori, she spent several days contemplating, ultimately inventing the tale of *Frankenstein*. The novel was published anonymously in 1818 but heavily revised in its 1831 edition, including a new introduction describing the story's origin, found in Charles Robinson's edited compilation (437). Though the 1831 edition is more popular and widely published, renewed interest has been taken in the original 1818 version and her draft versions of the text. Though the Draft contains many grammatical and spelling errors, and is not a complete draft of the text, Robinson writes that readers enjoy seeing Mary Shelley's unedited voice shining through, something that becomes obscured with further editing of later editions (17). Her husband, Percy Bysshe Shelley, heavily edited and corrected the text before its 1818 publication, mostly adding clarifying phrases but sometimes inserting his voice.¹⁰ In the copies afterward, there is little to no distinction between her original writing and his corrections, especially with new revising in each new publication. For this reason, I chose to source the text of *Frankenstein* from *The Original Frankenstein*, edited by Charles E. Robinson. This book contains two versions of *Frankenstein*: the 1818 version edited by Percy Shelley and the unedited Draft written solely by Mary Shelley.

It is imperative to my analysis of Mary Shelley's intentions with the Promethean figure that the text was written by her hand rather than another. I will compare the two versions to

¹⁰ For example, Percy inserted the whole of this statement into *Frankenstein*'s introduction of Justine: "*The republican institutions of our country have produced simpler and happier manners than those which prevail in the great monarchies that surround it. Hence there is less distinction between the classes into which human beings have been divided: and the lower orders, being neither so poor nor so despised, are more refined and moral. A servant at Geneva does not mean the same thing as a servant in France or England—Justine was thus received into our family to learn the duties of a servant, which in our fortunate country does not include a sacrifice of the dignity of a human being*" (Shelley & Shelley 89). This is a whole lot of writing not inserted by Mary.

ensure that her ideas, not Percy's, drive my evidence.¹¹ Percy had begun his poem *Prometheus Unbound* during the time he edited Mary Shelley's Draft. *Prometheus Unbound* was directly influenced by *PB*, and, although Mary and Percy lived closely and were influenced by each other's work, I want to ensure that I can surely attribute certain sections to Mary, without Percy's Promethean influence, which will be discussed later. With this brief background and my selections of the text explicit, I will begin to summarize *Frankenstein*. Though my summary is long, I believe it is necessary to lay the novel out for reference and for a reader who may not be familiar with the text.

2.1 *Frankenstein*

Frankenstein begins *in medias res*, similar to *PB*. It is written in epistolary style, comprised of letters from Captain Walton to his sister. He is navigating the North Pole when he discovers an emaciated and near-frozen stranger on the ice; this is revealed to be Dr. Victor Frankenstein.¹² As Dr. Frankenstein recovers aboard the ship, he tells Walton about himself and what has brought him there. Dr. Frankenstein recounts his youth and curiosity for science. His family includes his parents, two brothers, William and Ernest, and two adopted 'cousins,' Elizabeth and Justine, who becomes William's nanny. In addition, he has a close friend throughout the novel, Henry Clerval. Frankenstein's mother dies before he goes to university, and with the university being a natural place for his scientific mind, he immerses himself in experiments.

¹¹ I will use the 1818 published edition as a more polished source; however, if Percy has heavily edited the text, I will borrow my quotes from her Draft. Unfortunately, there are some points in the Draft where Mary Shelley did not finish sections or chapters; here, I will have no choice but to turn to the 1818 published edition. I shall mark in the citations where I use the Draft ("Draft") and where I use the edited 1818 published version (Shelley and Shelley).

¹² Due to the modern confusion brought to *Frankenstein* by horror films and mass media, I shall clarify that the name 'Frankenstein' exclusively refers to Dr. Victor Frankenstein and no other character in the novel.

Ultimately, Dr. Frankenstein realizes that he can spark life into lifeless matter. He worked himself sick for years before completing his work and bringing the Creation¹³ into the world, said to be in November (M. Shelley “Draft” 276). He had formed his Creation to be beautiful, but as soon as he opens his eyes, Frankenstein is aghast and flees him. After a tortured evening, he awakes to find the Creation watching him sleep—once more, he flees and spends time with Clerval. After returning home, Frankenstein falls ill for perhaps several months. He is worried about the Creation, as it had disappeared from his apartment after he fled.

By the following May, he has not seen the Creation but receives a letter from his adopted cousin Elizabeth that his youngest brother, William, has been strangled to death. At the news of this loss, Clerval bids Frankenstein to join him in Geneva, their hometown. In a town near Geneva, Frankenstein wanders off and rages, alone, at the death of William. There is a massive storm over the Alps, and as Frankenstein bemoans his loss, a sudden flash of lightning illuminates the unmistakable figure of the Creation, watching him. The Creation escapes, and Frankenstein instantly believes he is William’s killer. As he nears Geneva, Frankenstein contemplates telling his family about his suspicion. He thinks:

My first thought was to discover what I knew of the murderer & cause instant pursuit to be made. But I paused when I reflected what the story was that I had to tell. A creature whom I myself had created and endued with life The tale was utterly improbable and I knew well that if any other had communicated such a relation to me I should have looked upon it as the ravings of delirium¹⁴ (M. Shelley “Draft” 297)

¹³ Frankenstein’s creation is never named in the novel, but it refers to itself as a ‘creature’ in an argument with Frankenstein, the same argument in which he calls it an “Abhorred monster! fiend that thou art!” and “wretched devil” (Shelley “Draft” 317) I have chosen to call it the Creation throughout this thesis, not only in keeping with the Promethean myth of the creation of humanity but also due to the dissonant and negative nature of the terms applied to it. Charles Robinson writes in the introduction to his compiled versions of *Frankenstein* that “Mary Shelley purposefully gave him no name, forcing her readers to reveal their biases by denominating him ‘monster’, ‘creature’, ‘creation’, ‘wretch’, or ‘dæmon’ (18). The Creation is also referred to by Frankenstein as male, which I have reflected in my writing.

¹⁴ Due to the rough nature of Mary Shelley’s draft, I have written the quotes from her draft exactly how they appear, including lack of punctuation, random capitalization, or misspellings. This section was added to by Percy Shelley

When Dr. Frankenstein arrives in Geneva, he finds that William's killer has been misidentified as Justine, and Frankenstein wrestles with his guilt, keeping his suspicions silent all the while, and assures himself that Justine will be acquitted. Finally, however, Justine is condemned. Frankenstein is in abject misery: "[...]such deep and bitter agony! I gnashed my teeth and ground them together, uttering a groan that came from my inmost soul" (Shelley and Shelley 112). Justine was sentenced to death, and Frankenstein is remorseful, knowing that, by giving the Creation life, he had contributed to the deaths of William and Justine.

Miserable, Frankenstein takes to the Alps and sees a figure approaching him— it is his Creation. Now expressive and eloquent, the Creation begs Frankenstein to listen to his tale and answer his conditions. The plot becomes narrative-in-narrative, with Dr. Frankenstein still relaying this to Capt. Walton, and this is where Volume II begins. The Creation's narrative is most important for my analysis of him and Prometheus in *PB*, so I will expand the summary during his narrative.

The Creation describes his first feelings at waking up, newly made: confusion, hunger, thirst, and cold. Having left Frankenstein's apartment, he wandered into the woods, unable to speak or make sense of his surroundings. Upon discovering an abandoned fire, he discovers pain when he touches the embers but nurtures the fire and teaches himself to cook food. After three days, the Creation finds a hut where a shepherd lives. The shepherd runs off, scared, and the Creation eats his food and continues to find a village. The villagers chase him away, throwing stones and other missiles. He finds a hut attached to a cottage but only hides in the hut; the reaction from the villagers has made him avoidant of human interaction. He is now wary of humans: "I retired, for I saw the figure of a man at a distance; and I remembered too well my

before publication. He added to the unpunctuated sentence fragment: "*A being, whom I myself had created and endued with life, had met me at midnight among the precipices of inaccessible mountain*" (Shelley and Shelley 101)

treatment the night before to trust myself in his power” (Shelley and Shelley 132). He decides the hut is safe enough to live in, and through small holes in the walls of his hut, he spies on the family that lives in the cottage. The family comprises a young woman, a young man, and a blind old man. The Creation perceives that they are often sad, the cause of which he later learns is poverty.

While living near the family for months, the Creation learns much from them. He learns practical skills, such as harvesting wood for a fire, but most importantly, he learns how to speak and recognize words. He learns the names of the cottagers—the young man is Felix, the young woman Agatha, and he knows the old man as De Lacey, presumably his surname. The Creation has some trouble placing abstract words, “Such as good dearest—unhappy” (M. Shelley “Draft” 332). However, he does learn an abstract concept from this family—kindness. He watches as the children give De Lacy food when they have none for themselves, and he says that “This trait of kindness moved me sensibly” (M. Shelley “Draft” 331). He uses some of the practical skills he has learned to assist them. For example, he repeatedly cuts firewood for them and leaves it for them to find in the morning. The Creation expresses pleasure at their astonishment and joyful reactions; this is arguably the first time the Creation expresses a positive emotion, aside from his wonder at his previous discoveries.

With the arrival of an Arabian woman, Safie, the Creation gets an opportunity to learn the language much better. Safie does not speak the language spoken by the family, but Felix teaches her the language, and the Creation follows along.¹⁵ He learns history, which Felix teaches Safie, and expresses wonder at the capriciousness of humans: “Was man, indeed, at once so powerful,

¹⁵ The language the De Lacey family speaks is presumably French; as I expose later in my plot summary, the family was exiled from France. In the decade before Mary Shelley started writing *Frankenstein*, the country of Germany was in a state of war—annexations, battles for hegemony, the Napoleonic era, etc. With the involvement of France in these affairs, it is reasonable that the De Laceys were a French-speaking family. See Fulbrook 2004.

so virtuous, and magnificent, yet so vicious and base?” (Shelley and Shelley 145).¹⁶ In addition to history, he learns about human life; birth, death, parental care, siblinghood, and love. The Creation begins to feel alone, with no parents who care for him (remember how Frankenstein fled him) and no one like him with whom to engage.

The Creation overhears the family’s story of how they came into poverty. They had once been a prosperous family in Paris, affluent and distinguished. Safie’s father was a Turkish merchant in Paris and was imprisoned for unjust reasons. Felix, who had been present at the trial, aided in the escape of Safie and her father. However, Safie’s father betrayed his promise of marrying Safie and Felix, and De Lacey and Agatha were exiled in association with Felix. The De Laceys took Safie in when she discovered her father’s betrayal and left him to be with Felix, whom she loved.

Upon hearing this story, the Creation was impressed even more deeply by the family: “As yet I looked upon crime as a distant evil; benevolence and generosity were ever present before me [...]” (M. Shelley “Draft” 338). One day while foraging for sustenance, the Creation happens upon a suitcase filled with some clothing and, more attractive to him, books. He pores over the books critically; they are Plutarch’s *Lives*, Goethe’s *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, and Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. It is *Paradise Lost* that he loves the most. It moves him in a way nothing else does, particularly the characters. He compares himself to Adam: “Like Adam I was created apparently as I had been but united by no link to any other being [...] he was allowed to converse & acquire knowledge from beings of a superior nature—but I was wretched helpless and alone” (M. Shelley “Draft” 340). He was created, like Adam, but lacks the kindness of any Godlike or parental figure. He then goes on to compare himself to another: “Many times I considered Satan

¹⁶ The section of the text that introduces Safie and from where this quote is taken is not included in the Draft; I have no choice but to select it from the 1818 version.

as my fitter mate for often like him when I viewed the bliss of my protectors the bitter gall of envy rose within me” (M. Shelley “Draft” 340). The Creation, alone in his existence, sees himself in these books and reads for the first time.

The Creation finds some papers in the pockets of the clothes he took from Frankenstein’s apartment. They were journals from the four months before he assembled his Creation. The Creation deciphers Frankenstein’s handwriting, which describes the process in every detail. The Creation is sickened by the journals and laments that he was ever made. Again, he compares his life to *Paradise Lost*:

Why did you form a monster so hideous that even you turn from me in disgust. God in pity made man beautiful & alluring— I am more hateful to the sight than the bitter apples of Hell to the taste <.> Satan has his companions, fellow devils to admire and encourage him. but I am solitary and detested (M. Shelley “Draft” 341).

After many months, believing that the cottage family will be sympathetic to him, he decides to interact while De Lacey, the blind father, is alone. He comforts the Creation, but as the Creation begs him for sympathy and protection, Felix, Agatha, and Safie return. Unfortunately, Felix beats the Creation out of their home, and the Creation is rejected from the benevolence of the people he thought would most pity him. The next day the De Lacey family moves out, and the Creation never sees them again. For the first time, the Creation feels anger; he has nowhere to go. “The mildness of my nature had fled and all within me was turned to gall and bitterness” (M. Shelley “Draft” 350). In his rage, he loses control and burns down their vacant cottage.

Using the details in the journal, the Creation decides to set a course for Frankenstein, towards whom he feels vengeful. On the way to Geneva, the Creation comes across a young girl who has fallen into a river. A man, presumably her relative, appears, takes back the girl, and shoots the Creation. Wounded, the Creation says, “This then was the reward of my benevolence

<.> I had saved a human being from destruction and as a recompense I now writhed under the miserable pain of my wound” (M. Shelley “Draft” 351). Though he has acted kindly towards humans for the entire duration of his existence, the Creation receives no pity and nothing but fear from them. He turns his revenge on whom he perceives is the ultimate cause of his struggles—Dr. Frankenstein.

Upon arriving in Geneva, a young boy happens to run by his hideout. Driven by the urge for companionship and hoping to raise the boy unafraid of him, the Creation seizes him. In a panic, the boy reveals his family name: Frankenstein. Realizing his opportunity for revenge against Frankenstein, the Creation kills the boy we now know as William. The Creation plants the miniature William wore in the pocket of Justine, unaware she was associated with the family. The Creation ends his narrative with a demand— he asks Frankenstein to build another version of him, this time a female, so that he may have companionship. He appeals to the merciful side of Frankenstein, arguing that Frankenstein had created him and sentenced him to a lonely fate; therefore, he should at least have one companion like him. The Creation promises never to harm any human again and take his mate to the American wilderness. Frankenstein reluctantly agrees, finding his Creation’s arguments justified, and the Creation leaves, not before promising Frankenstein that he will watch over his progress.

Frankenstein plans to go to England, taking Clerval with him, and marry Elizabeth upon his return. He separates from Clerval and travels to Orkney to begin his work on a female companion for the Creation. He knows that the Creation is watching him, as he had promised. Dreading that the female will be worse than the Creation and that they will repopulate together, Frankenstein destroys his progress on his female. The Creation, indeed watching his progress, is enraged; he wants recompense for his suffering and loneliness, and Frankenstein breaks this

promise. Leaving in a furor, the Creation swears to be with Frankenstein on his wedding night. Frankenstein returns to England to rejoin Clerval, whom he learns is murdered; he knows this is the Creation's doing. He is arrested for Clerval's murder and imprisoned. Returning home with three deaths weighing on him, Frankenstein hesitates to marry Elizabeth, remembering what the Creation said.

After the wedding, Frankenstein explores the grounds of the house, armed and looking for the Creation. While he is searching, the Creation murders Elizabeth; at the news of Elizabeth's death, Frankenstein's father dies days after. Frankenstein is left without family and friends and no one to believe the story of his Creation. Nevertheless, Frankenstein pursues the Creation, heading more northward, until his narrative ends when he is rescued by Captain Walton, freezing and ill. The story returns to epistolary style, with Walton narrating the decline of Frankenstein and his death from hypothermia. Walton returns to the cabin, where Frankenstein's body lies, only to find the Creation standing over his creator's body. The Creation explains that he did not source joy from his murders but only acted from revenge. However, he does not expect Walton to understand:

But I do not seek a fellow feeling in my misery—I feel it deeply & truly & for sympathy that I may never find. But now that virtue is to me merely a shadow and happiness & content are turned into despair shall I seek for sympathy in that. No—I am content to suffer alone while I do suffer
(M. Shelley "Draft" 427).

Finally, the Creation once more compares himself to Satan and promises to die, but not before one last message for Frankenstein: "Farewell, Frankenstein If a desire for revenge remains to you in death it would be better satisfied in my life than in my destruction— But it was not so" (M. Shelley "Draft" 429). The Creation leaps from the ship and drifts away, never to be seen again.

In the following section, I will take what I have summarized here and apply textual evidence to my comparison of the Creation and Prometheus in *PB*. There are many apparent parallels in *Frankenstein* and *PB*: I will utilize the themes I discussed in section 1.3 to as a guide for comparing and contrasting.

2.2 *The Modern Prometheus*

The subtitle of Mary Shelley's novel, *The Modern Prometheus*, establishes an immediate connection between the ancient Prometheus and *Frankenstein*. However, the specifics of that connection are superficial: I want to investigate in this section who the "Modern Prometheus" really is beyond the role of Frankenstein as a creator figure. I remind the reader that the intention of this thesis is not to dismiss the notion that Dr. Frankenstein is *The Modern Prometheus*. I seek to illustrate that Promethean themes may be applied to Dr. Frankenstein and to his Creation. With the above evidence, I do not believe Mary Shelley was misguided in her application of Prometheus to Dr. Frankenstein. It is difficult to say that she even could have been misguided in the first place; I have discussed how it is nearly impossible to encapsulate all of mythology's aspects, even for an ancient Greek, and especially to create a fully-realized literary classic such as *Frankenstein*. Once more, the complexity of myth contributes to multiple interpretations of who the "Modern Prometheus" truly is. Carol Dougherty writes

It should come as no surprise that both Frankenstein and the monster exhibit Promethean qualities given the tension at the heart of the Promethean myth itself. The complexity of Prometheus' persona—both creator and saviour of mankind and symbol of its suffering—enables a kind of moral ambiguity that distinguishes Mary Shelley's novel from the work of other Romantic authors who celebrate Prometheus' creative powers (113).

Dougherty emphasizes the point I have made that the variability of Greek mythology lies at the heart of defining anything by means of mythology. The “moral ambiguity” she mentions is a fascinating concept: I will discuss it further in section 3.1 when I explore Romantic writings.

Scholars generally agree that the “Modern Prometheus” subtitle is about Dr. Frankenstein (Small 48; Hustis 845). It is important to realize that with the complexity and variability of the Prometheus myth, Mary Shelley could have been drawing on any mention of Prometheus, perhaps extremely similar or different from other tellings, to work her “Modern Prometheus” idea. Some sources of the Promethean myth I have mentioned in section 1.1 align with how Victor Frankenstein is written: he created a being not unlike a human, just as Prometheus molded humanity from clay in some versions of his mythology, such as Ovid’s telling. In the Creation’s narrative to Frankenstein, he says that

It is with difficulty that I remember the æra of my being. All the events of that period appear confused and indistinct. A strange sensation seized me I saw, felt heard, and smelt, at the same time and it was indeed a long time before I learned to distinguish between the {op}operations of my various senses. By degrees I remember a stronger light pressed upon my nerves so that I was obliged to close my eyes. Darkness then came over me and troubled me.—But hardly had I felt this when (by opening my eyes, as I now suppose) the light poured in upon me again. [...] I was a poor, helpless, miserable wretch— I knew & could distinguish nothing but feeling pain invade me on all sides I sat down and wept.
(M. Shelley “Draft” 322-323)

This telling of the Creation’s first confused perceptions and his gaining of senses is incredibly similar to how Prometheus describes the human race and the lack of their senses before he bestowed the gift of fire in *PB*:

But let me tell you how befuddled humans were before I aided them, how witless they were before I taught them to think and to solve problems. [...] For they had eyes but couldn’t see, and ears but couldn’t hear. They stumbled the length of their lives through a purposeless blur like the

ragged shapes of dreams/τὰν βροτοῖς δὲ πῆματα ἀκούσαθ', ὡς σφας
 νηπίους ὄντας τὸ πρὶν ἔννοους ἔθηκα καὶ φρενῶν ἐπηβόλους. [...] οἱ πρῶτα
 μὲν βλέποντες ἔβλεπον μάτην, κλύοντες οὐκ ἤκουον, ἀλλ' ὄνειράτων
 ἀλίγκιοι μορφαῖσι τὸν μακρὸν βίον ἔφυρον εἰκῆ πάντα
 (Aesch. *PB*. 442-442, 447-450).

Additionally, there is a connection between punishment for the creator in *Frankenstein* and *PB*. Frankenstein is punished for his creation like Prometheus is, perhaps not in the means of punishment, but through the way that he suffers. In the wake of his experiment and abandonment of the Creation, the vengeful Creation kills his brother, William, and plants evidence leading to the death of Justine; later, when Frankenstein refuses to build a female companion, the Creation further kills Clerval and Elizabeth, then leading to the death of Frankenstein's father out of grief. The downfall of his family and closest relations is a final blow for Frankenstein; he can no longer live with what his Creation has brought upon him.

This is an interesting parallel to Prometheus' refusal to tell Zeus' future in *PB*, which leads to his further torture by the eagle: "Consider what a storm of ruin, what a wave of misery will break over you, if you don't heed me. You'll have no escape./σκέψαι δ', ἐὰν μὴ τοῖς ἐμοῖς πεισθῆς λόγοις, οἷός σε χειμῶν καὶ κακῶν τρικυμία ἔπεισ' ἄφυκτος" (Aesch. *PB*. 1014-1016). Frankenstein's "storm of ruin" and "wave of misery" is persistent all the while; he is wracked with negative feelings from the moment he built the Creation to the moment he dies, unsuccessful in ending the Creation's life just as he started it.

I believe that Mary Shelley, when using Prometheus in her subtitle, had a certain understanding of his mythology from what she had read on the matter. In fact, Brett M. Rogers writes in his essay *The Postmodern Prometheus and Posthuman Reproductions in Science Fiction* that there are many 'Prometheis' (plural of Prometheus) that Mary could have drawn from in writing the "Modern Prometheus." He cites two in particular: Prometheus *pyrphoros*, or

Prometheus the ‘fire-bearer’—this is the Prometheus seen in Aeschylus, whom Rogers cites specifically. The other Prometheus he cites is Prometheus *plasticator*, from Ovid. Rogers makes a unique point that ties in with Dougherty’s claim that both Frankenstein and his Creation exhibit Promethean qualities due to mythical complexity. Rogers’ point is this: that one could read *Frankenstein* as a “tale of Ovidian *plasticator* (in the form of Victor Frankenstein) pitted against Aeschylean *pyrphoros* (in the form of the Creature)” (208). I would like to develop Rogers’ point further, that in line with my claim, Frankenstein and his Creation can both be Promethean, but in different iterations of his mythology; this is a phenomenon Rogers cleverly dubs “Polyprometheism” (208).

Rogers continues his investigation of Polyprometheism in *Frankenstein*, claiming that Mary Shelley deliberately evokes different Prometheis throughout the novel; we have the Prometheus *plasticator* invoked immediately through the subtitle, for example (210). It is not so easy to claim that *Frankenstein* is a clear illustration of the Creation as Prometheus and Frankenstein as the oppressor, perhaps a Zeusian figure, especially when we have Mary’s present subtitle deeming Dr. Frankenstein as the Promethean figure. Then the line of thought deviates: if Frankenstein is Prometheus, is the Creation an oppressor, or a new spin of humanity having gone bad, like the early races in Hesiod’s ‘Five Ages’ story? This is why Mary’s novel is so fascinating and why Rogers’ Polyprometheism is so accurate; far from a simple retelling of the Prometheus mythology, her characters are deeply complex. Frankenstein is the creator, but does he not hate his Creation and wish to destroy him? The Creation is a murderer, yes, but Mary writes him in such a way that the reader cannot help but have pity for him; is he really a monster? Rogers writes, “While we might simply argue that Victor and the Creature often resemble one another—the Creature is a mirror of Victor—it is important to consider how some

identifications may shift or stop working when others are activated” (211). Rogers puts a technological spin on the complexity of their Promethean identification, but the claim remains; the characters are fluid, indefinable by a single aspect of Prometheus. When identifying both characters with Prometheus, we must continue to look critically at the texts in order to understand their qualities.

Though *Frankenstein* is not a direct correspondent to *PB*, there are many parallels that struck me when I read both. What first occurred to me reading *Frankenstein* concerning the nature of the Creation’s Promethean circumstance was his relationship with humankind. The Creation, at first, learns to love humans and assists them; he brings firewood to the De Lacey family and stops eating their food, and rescues the girl who fell in the river. The Creation gives the De Lacey tools with which they can thrive; though not fire itself, the poor family is able to attend to other household matters while not chopping wood. Just as Prometheus’ fire contributes much more to humanity than warmth and cooking, the Creation’s gift of wood allows the family more freedom for household upkeep, therefore, better living conditions. The humanist side of the Creation shines through with his compassion for humans, though this lends to much of his internal struggle throughout the novel.

The Creation’s anonymous help alone cannot win the De Lacey’s affection. The Creation is hesitant to make contact with the De Lacey because of how he has been treated by humans in the past:

hoping he might still be lifted to the glories of love and sympathy, but fearing that he might be forced into the depths of malevolence and depravity because of his isolation, the creature still finds his fate determined, once the DeLaceys reject his friendly advances, just as all mankind has rejected him beforehand (Goldberg 36).

Fate plays an interesting role in how Prometheus and the Creation live. Prometheus knows his own fate; in *PB*, he defies Zeus for humanity with full awareness of his fate. In that regard, Prometheus was perhaps better equipped to deal with his punishment than the Creation is. Unlike Prometheus, the Creation does not have the power of foresight; if he did, he may have realized sooner that humanity would never accept him. He realizes this after the De Lacey family drives him away from their home and moves away: “my protectors had departed and had broken the only link that held me to the world” (M. Shelley “Draft” 348). The Creation is left untethered, with no one to empathize with him, a scene played out before.

His fate is predetermined by the way he looks and the fact that he was not formed in the usual manner for humans; Frankenstein, in his scientific mania, bypassed the natural order of creating humans by reproduction and birth.¹⁷ The Creation is assembled from body parts from morgues and cemeteries, and though he was intended to be beautiful, even Frankenstein cannot bear to look at him (M. Shelley “Draft” 276). The way he is created establishes his fate; since everyone else is terrified of him, they automatically drive him away. This is his punishment: he will never fit in with humanity, nor will they ever sympathize with him. The Creation, as a violation of natural laws of reproduction, parallels Prometheus as a violator of tyranny. Both are punished unjustly—Prometheus for his benevolence towards humanity, sentenced against the arbitrary laws of a tyrant, and the Creation for simply existing, suffering against humanity’s powerful fear of the unknown.

This is where Polyprometheism adds a layer of complexity. One might argue that Frankenstein also suffers as a violator of natural order and that it seems Promethean how Frankenstein brings suffering upon himself and his creation, like Prometheus’ punishment and the punishment of humankind. However, Harriet Hustis argues that these fated punishments

¹⁷ The Romantics had a fascination with science in this matter; I will discuss it further at section 3.1.

come from contrasting responsibility. Prometheus can come to terms with his punishment after fully accepting his “solitary gesture of defiant compassion” (848), but Victor Frankenstein cannot grasp the concept of cause and consequence (849). Frankenstein forms the Creation, but he does not feel pity for him or any responsibility for his creation until he begins to feel guilt. Therefore, we see Frankenstein as a problematic Promethean figure, but the Creation truly shines through here as the symbol of natural violation, much like Prometheus as a symbol of violation of tyranny.

Continuing to seek Frankenstein, the Creation seeks pity from him, much like the Promethean seeking of sympathetic witnesses. When they meet at the summit of the Alps, Frankenstein is enraged at the Creation, but the Creation stops him, saying, “Be calm! I entreat you to hear me, before you give vent to your hatred on my devoted head” (M. Shelley “Draft” 318). When Frankenstein refuses, the Creation continues to implore him:

How can I move you? said the fiend—Will no entreaties cause you to turn a favorable eye upon thy creature who implores thy goodness and compassion—Believe me, Frankenstein I was benevolent—my soul glowed with love and humanity but am I not alone miserably alone—You, my creator abhor me What hope have I then from your fellow creatures (M. Shelley “Draft” 318).

Frankenstein refuses to listen to the Creation since he knows he has killed William; however, the Creation is still loyal to his creator, and Frankenstein is the only chance he has for human affection. The Creation understands he has done wrong in Frankenstein’s eyes and asks Frankenstein to listen to his story before judging him:

Let your compassion and justice be moved and do not disdain me. Listen to my tale! when you have heard that deny or commiserate me as you shall judge I deserve. But hear me—The guilty are allowed by human laws, bloody as they are, to speak in their defence Listen to me Frankenstein You accuse me of murder and yet you would with a satisfied conscience destroy thy creature (M. Shelley “Draft” 319).

The Creation makes a point to Frankenstein that he is contradictory in his justice but still asks that Frankenstein hear him out before judgment; all the while, the Creation does not deny any crime against Frankenstein. There is a quote by Prometheus in *PB* that rings closely with that which the Creation expresses concerning prejudgement and knowing what is considered wrong.

Prometheus says to the chorus of Oceanids:

It's easy for him whose foot is free from harm to talk of right and wrong and to rebuke me. All along I've known what you just said. I knew it wrong and I did it wrong and don't deny it. [...] Please, I beg you, join your fate to my troubled fate/έλαφρόν, ὅστις πημάτων ἔξω πόδα ἔχει, παραινεῖν νοθετεῖν τε τὸν κακῶς πράσσοντ'. ἐγὼ δὲ ταῦθ' ἅπαντ' ἠπιστάμην. ἐκὼν ἐκὼν ἤμαρτον, οὐκ ἀρνήσομαι· θνητοῖς ἀρήγων αὐτὸς ἠρόρμην πόνου. [...] πίθεσθέ μοι, πίθεσθε, συμπονήσατε τῷ νῦν μογοῦντι (Aesch. *PB*. 263-267; 274-275).

I quite like what Prometheus says here in the last line: “join your fate to my troubled fate.” It seems reminiscent of what the Creation asks of Frankenstein. The Creation has sought Frankenstein because he is the only human whom he feels can treat him justly: “Oh Frankenstein, do not <be> equitable to every other and trample upon me to whom thy justice & even mere charity is due” (M. Shelley “Draft” 318). The Creation does not want to be abandoned any longer and is giving Frankenstein a chance to remedy that, to join his fate to the troubled fate of the Creation. The Creation is much like the lone Promethean figure, needing someone to share in his sufferings with sympathy, someone to know that what is happening to him is not just. However, much like his failed attempt to convert William to sympathy, the Creation will only earn short-lived pity from Frankenstein; his fate is to remain unpitied.

In a sense, the Creation as a violation of natural order lends itself to the theme of Promethean rebellion. I have already defined rebellion in 1.3 as a “wilful resistance of authority and established convention.” The Creation already resists established conventions of nature simply by existing; though he is a victim of these conventions, his existence is a rebellion of

what is ‘natural’— he defies nature’s logic. In terms of rebellion against authority, there is only one person to blame for the Creation’s existence and, in turn, his suffering: Dr. Frankenstein. Up until the point in which he met William, the Creation had no intention to kill; humans broke his spirit by rejecting his compassion, yes, but he still loved them. When he comes to Frankenstein’s Geneva, searching for the one human who might keep him company, William stumbles into his hiding place. The Creation sees an opportunity to start new: “Suddenly as I gazed on him an idea seized me—that this little creature was unprejudiced & had lived too short a time to have imbibed a horror of deformity. If therefore I could seize him & educate him as my companion & friend, I should not be so desolate in this peopled earth” (M. Shelley “Draft” 352). The Creation here, though about to carry out his first act of rebellion against Frankenstein, cannot let go of his human-loving feelings.

It is not until William says the wretched words that spark the Creation’s rage: “hideous monster let me go—My papa is a syndic he is M. Frankenstein let me go you dare not keep me” (M. Shelley “Draft” 352-353). The Creation realizes his opportunity for something that has dawned on his mind but not yet taken hold—revenge. “Frankenstein cried I—You belong then to my enemy—To him towards whom I have sworn eternal revenge & you shall be my first victim” (353). Seeing that this has successfully grieved Frankenstein, the Creation uses his newfound might to resist his authority figure and make him do something. This rings a bell with Prometheus’ withholding of prophecy: both figures are willing to harm their authority figure for the unjust manner in which they have been treated. The Creation wishes for a companion and promises to leave and never to return once he has her. The Creation is no longer lonely, no more murders, and problem solved. However, fate does not allow this to happen. Frankenstein ruins his progress of the Creations’ female companion and the Creation’s rage is sparked again: “Man,

you shall repent of the injuries you inflict [...] I shall be with you on your marriage night” (376) He kills Clerval on the way back from Orkney, where Frankenstein was working on the female and, as promised, kills Elizabeth on her and Frankenstein’s wedding night. This is how the Creation can rebel for his feelings: he destroys everything Frankenstein loves, a parallel to how Prometheus has the potential to destroy Zeus’ regime unless he reveals his prophecy.

The murder of William is actually not the first time the Creation has lashed out; he burns down the De Lacey’s cottage after they evict. The Creation loved the De Lacey’s, but they did not take pity on him. His rage builds up, much like how he turns to violence against William;

the blast [of wind] tore a long Like a mighty avalanche and produced a kind of insanity in my spirits that burst all bounds of reason or reflection—I lighted a dry branch of tree and danced with fury around the devoted cottage, [...] I waved my brand—it sunk and with a loud scream I fired the straw and hay that I had collected. The wind fanned the fire and the cottage was quickly enveloped by the flames which clung to it and licked it with their forked tongues, to destroy it (M. Shelley “Draft” 349).

The Creation’s relationship with fire is one of the most basic similarities scholars bring up when touching upon his Promethean aspects. Prometheus gives fire and other skills to humans in *PB*; it opens up the world to new technological possibilities; recall the quote, “*Prometheus Bound* articulates an optimistic, progressive vision of human self-reliance and self-sufficiency, rooted in technological progress” (Ruffell 57). The Creation discovers fire for himself while still in a state of understanding his senses: “In my joy I thrust my hand into the live embers but quickly drew it away with a cry of pain—How strange, I thought, that the same cause should at once cause such opposite effects” (M. Shelley “Draft” 324). I believe that, like the humans Prometheus gave fire to, the Creation’s self-discovery of fire is a turning point in learning necessary skills and his development. In the following 25 pages, the Creation discovers how to cook food with the fire, how to collect wood to tend it, what is good to eat; from there, with the help of the De Lacey’s, he

learns abstract concepts, goodness, kindness, complex emotions and learns how to read and speak. However, when the Creation is constantly shunned, his emotions build up into a shift from using fire for good to using fire for harm. The combined set of skill and fire is very Promethean, one that appears in Plato in addition to *PB*.

A culminating similarity between Prometheus and the Creation appears in the Creation's narrative to Frankenstein: "This then was the reward of my benevolence <.> I had saved a human being from destruction and as a recompense I now writhed under the miserable pain of my wound" (M. Shelley "Draft" 351). After rescuing the young girl and being shot by her father, the Creation now realizes that his desire to belong to humanity is unrequited. His fate is that of suffering; he was sentenced by simply being created, by violating the unspoken precedent of nature I spoke about earlier in this section. This quote from *Frankenstein* speaks with extreme similarity to what Prometheus says in *PB*: "I gave humans my first measure of pity and now can win no pity for myself, for pitiless is he who chains me here, a spectacle that shames the fame of Zeus/θνητούς δ' ἐν οἴκῳ προθέμενος, τούτου τυχεῖν οὐκ ἤξιώθην αὐτός, ἀλλὰ νηλεῶς ὄδ' ἐρρύθμισμαι, Ζηνὶ δυσκλεῆς θέα." (Aesch. *PB*. 239-241). As soon as the Creation learned abstract emotions of care and love, he gave them to his beloved humans, the De Lacey's; however, he won no love for himself, and was driven away as soon as he was seen. Lack of pity for the victim is something I identify in the Promethean theme of suffering; we see it throughout the novel, from Frankenstein, the De Lacey's, and other humans. Both characters give compassionately without selfishness, but what they get in return is undue.

Finally, a most remarkable connection between the Creation and Prometheus stems from another great work of literature—*Paradise Lost*. As described in section 2.1, the Creation reads Milton's novel after finding a few abandoned books. He recognizes that he should be like Adam,

the man created by God, but states that he considers Satan his “fitter mate.” One of the last things the Creation says before promising to end his life is an allusion to Satan: “But it is even so—The fallen Angel becomes a malignant devil” (M. Shelley “Draft” 427).

The Shelleys indeed read *Paradise Lost* and knew Satan’s character well; Percy writes in his 1821 essay, *A Defence of Poetry*, “Nothing can exceed the energy and magnificence of the character of Satan as expressed in *Paradise Lost*” (P. Shelley “Defence” 62). Jones writes that Percy gave Mary volumes of *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* about two or three years before she began writing *Frankenstein* (495). From Mary’s reading lists in her journals, we know she read *Paradise Lost* in 1815, and Percy read the book aloud to her from Nov. 17-22, 1816. Additionally, she read it several times after the publication of *Frankenstein* (M. Shelley “Journals” 663).

Though Mary’s thoughts about *Paradise Lost* are unclear, many scholars argue that her work was directly influenced by the poem.¹⁸ However, we do know Percy’s feelings towards *Paradise Lost*, Milton’s Satan, and, fascinatingly, Prometheus. In the preface to his poem *Prometheus Unbound*, Shelley writes: “The only imaginary being resembling in any degree Prometheus, is Satan” (P. Shelley “Prometheus” 120). Percy draws an undeniable similarity between the two, and Mary furthers this connection with the Creation’s self-alignment with Satan. M.A. Goldberg writes that

Milton’s narrative also parallels to no small degree the Hellenic myth of Prometheus, who, having usurped the powers of the higher gods, is alienated forever from both men and gods, and chained to the frozen top of the Caucasus. This is an allusion of which Mrs. Shelley was certainly conscious (Goldberg 32).

¹⁸ See Oates p. 545 and Tannenbaum p. 101.

The Creation-Satan-Prometheus connection is certainly a tantalizing piece of evidence that shows the passage of characters through literary and classical reception. Rogers also notes in his section titled *Shifting Identities* that the references to Milton in *Frankenstein* add yet another layer of complexity upon the “Modern Prometheus” and Polyprometheism themes. The Creation declares that Satan is his fitter mate, but ideally, he wishes to be Adam. These layers of interpretation, comparison, and external sources are challenging to wade through, but the Creation and Prometheus are linked through Milton’s Satan.

My analysis in this section of the Creation’s Promethean character has taken on a more nebulous form than expected. Since the Creation carries the Promethean traits I have identified throughout the novel, they are often inextricably linked; suffering and humanist traits become apparent in his interaction with humanity, and rebellion is demonstrated as a result of his suffering, which in turn is caused by human shunning. However, it is clear that there are generous parallels between the Creation and Prometheus, whether through fate, violation of divine or natural law, calling of witnesses, abandonment, or more. I also discuss what I have argued is a ‘superficial’ application of the “Modern Prometheus” to Dr. Frankenstein and find there is more depth to this label. If we recall Roger’s Polyprometheism, with Dr. Frankenstein as Prometheus *plasticator*, we see Frankenstein as a problematic Prometheus *plasticator* figure, with a lack of care and responsibility for the things he has created. Continuing in the same manner with the Creation as Prometheus *pyrphoros*, we see a suffering Creation, carrying the traits in a less obvious but more profound manner (along with fire, no less).

As I have written, with *PB*, Aeschylus allows for us a beautiful insight into one, short period of Prometheus’ punishment, bookended by his bondage and subsequent further punishment; without the space between the punishments, there would be little room for narrative

development and the course of Prometheus' emotions I believe that Mary Shelley gives us the same, well-done insight with her Creation's narrative; we see an exposition of plot and a whole host of suffering and emotion. We see the Creation's skills grow, and he changes from unwavering love for humans to feeling vengeful for his outcome; this is the result of a slow build of emotion after each negative interaction with humans. It is a powerful work that makes the reader sympathetic to the victim, though he is shown as the villain: this is true for both *Frankenstein* and *PB*.

In Part II of this thesis, I have showed you *Frankenstein* and how Frankenstein and the Creation both fulfill a Promethean role. With my analysis complete, I would like to finish my thesis with a discussion of what was happening beyond the pages of *Frankenstein*. Specifically, I would like to lay out what the Romantic world was like at the time, and how the myth of Prometheus played a significant role in it. In addition, I will present evidence for the Shelleys' thinking surrounding Prometheus and how he influenced the couple in and out of their writing.

Part III: The Romantics and Prometheus

With my above evidence between Prometheus from *PB* and the Creation from *Frankenstein*, further questions stem from authorial intent. What was Mary Shelley's intention in naming the book *The Modern Prometheus*? What associations may she have had with Prometheus, if any? Classical studies were extremely common up until the 21st century, even a requirement in schools, so the Shelleys and their Romantic peers would have had the skills to successfully read ancient works, thus opening the world to a realm of new ancient possibilities to be interpreted. Therefore, it is important to investigate the Romantics' knowledge of Prometheus in order to understand their conceptions about the myth and its meaning. To finalize this thesis, I shall explore the period of Romanticism, how the Romantics perceived Prometheus, and, in particular, Mary Shelley's influences and education surrounding Prometheus.

3.1 Romanticism

As I have stated in the introduction to Part I, any mention of Prometheus will recall the vast variations of his myth and the associations that come with it. The Romantics had a particular predilection for Prometheus; as Dougherty writes, “[In] the Romantic period, it is Prometheus’ dual role as defiant rebel and creator of humans that captures the imagination of European poets and writers” (91). The rebel Prometheus I discussed in section 1.3, Promethean Themes, particularly captured the hearts and minds of the Romantics in their movement, which emphasized the individual, feelings, and freedom. For “Byron and the Shelleys, Prometheus was at once the rebel against authority, the symbol of human suffering, and the creator of mankind—it was the richness of Prometheus as a mythic archetype that made all this possible” (Dougherty 92). As Dougherty writes, the Romantics are all able to have unique perspectives on Prometheus because of the complexity of myth that still carries all the way throughout this thesis.

To discuss the usage of the Romantic Prometheus, I will discuss the Romantic period and select a few Romantic authors whose works have engaged with Prometheus, reviewing what exactly the Romantics found so attractive about the Titan.

As Aidan Day, a specialist in 19th-century literature, writes, “the “Romantic Period” is usually taken to extend approximately from the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789—or alternatively, from the publication of {Wordsworth and Coleridge’s} *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798—through the first three decades of the nineteenth century” (Day 1). Romanticism defines a period of literary and cultural movement in England, not necessarily a historical era; in terms of the years Day cites, the era overlaps with the end of the Georgian era and the Victorian era of British history (Pryde 45-47). It is difficult and perhaps un-Romantic to try and pin down the dates of the movement; as Duncan Wu says, “If instead we think of Romanticism as mobile, localized, impermanent, and filtered through the prism of the individual, it becomes easier to see why attempts to restrict it to a definable moment remain perpetually open to debate” (5).

Lilian R. Furst cites a definition of Romanticism as “*Une crise de la conscience européenne*”: this is the succinct and telling phrase chosen by van Tieghem to describe the Romantic movement in Europe” (116). One need not have to know French to understand what van Tieghem means by his assertion. Furst continues:

The real significance of Romanticism as a "*crise de la conscience européenne*" lies not in its mere quantity, but in the quality of the changes it implied. For Romanticism brought not just a greater freedom and a new technique; these were only the outer manifestations of a complete and deep-seated orientation, not to say revolution, in the manners of thought, perception, and consequently of expression too (116).

The line in this quote about a “revolution in the matters of thought, perception, and consequently of expression” flow smoothly into her (quite good) summation of Romanticism. I yield to Furst

for her definition of Romanticism because it neatly encapsulates what I want to say about the subject:

[...] the Romantics emphasized individualism, imagination, and emotion as their guiding principles. Hence the old 'rules' of 'good taste,' regularity, and conformity gave way to the unbridled creative urge of the original genius, and the ideal of a smooth beauty was scorned in favour of a dynamic outpouring of feeling. A new mode of imaginative perception gave birth to a whole new vocabulary and new forms of artistic expression: this is the essence of that "*crise de la conscience européenne*" which lies at the heart of the Romantic revolution, and this is also perhaps as near an approximation to a definition of Romanticism as is possible. (116)

Lots of feeling, a great deal of imagination, and the individual at the forefront: these are the things that carry throughout Romantic works. The Romantics also felt highly linked to nature, feeling that the world was moving away from naturalism: this Romantic element is the “so-called “return to nature”” (Furst 125). These natural themes emphasized elements like fire, which I have discussed as a touchstone between *PB* and *Frankenstein*; in addition, the naturalism of Romanticism may have influenced Percy heavily, which I will address further in section 3.2.

In addition to these themes, Jennifer Wallace, in *Shelley and Greece*, discusses the influence of classics upon the Romantic world; she cites a mocking Bernard Knox quote claiming that the Victorians appropriated ancient Greeks and writes that they used them heavily for influence (2). She further writes, “The varied response to Greece by different writers reveals the heterogeneity of classical influence. [...] By focusing on the work of the individual writer, one sees the detailed process of selection and appropriation of Greek culture” (3). Finally, Wallace introduces an idea of Romantic Hellenism, the always-present and constant influence of the ancients in the writings of the Romantics.

With the broader influence of the ancients, many Romantic poets and authors wrote about Prometheus, especially those within the Shelley’s circle. For the purposes of this thesis, I cannot

touch upon every Romantic writer who wrote about Prometheus, but I will concentrate my efforts on two: Percy Shelley and Lord Byron. Perhaps it is better for me to choose two, since, as Wu, Furst, and Wallace tell us, the Romantics are quite the individualists. The two are in addition to what I have already written about Mary; I will write about her further as the author of *Frankenstein* in 3.2. We already know about *Frankenstein, or, The Modern Prometheus*, and I have briefly mentioned Percy's *Prometheus Unbound*; however, I want to discuss how Percy and Byron interpreted the Romantic Prometheus and how it differs from Mary's work.

Percy Bysshe Shelley first published *Prometheus Unbound* in 1820, though, as I mentioned in the introduction to Part II, he was writing it around the time Mary was writing *Frankenstein*. *Prometheus Unbound* is a direct response to the events that may have followed *PB* in the proposed *Prometheia* trilogy. Percy borrows the name directly from Aeschylus; *Prometheus Unbound* by Aeschylus may have been the fragmentary sequel to *PB*. However, Percy does not just borrow the character of Prometheus from Aeschylus, he revises him: "From the perspective of thirty-thousand years of torture, Shelley's Prometheus has seen the error of his hateful ways, and his rebellion is a thing of the past. He no longer wishes for revenge; he seeks no power for himself" (Dougherty 100). This turn of Promethean character may come as a surprise, especially considering Mary's rage-fueled Promethean figures and the Byronic Prometheus to come. However, Percy completely owns his characterization of Prometheus:

"The *Prometheus Unbound* of Aeschylus supposed that the reconciliation of Jupiter [Zeus] with his victim as the price of the disclosure threatened to his empire by the consummation of his marriage with Thetis. [...] But, in truth, I was averse from a catastrophe so feeble as that of reconciling the Champion of humanity with the Oppressor of mankind" (P. Shelley "Prometheus" 120).

Percy could not envision a true sequel to *PB* that puts Prometheus in the position of weakness, finally crumbling to tyranny in order to be freed. Instead, Prometheus waits for ages; instead of

an outright rebellion, Percy's Prometheus plays the (long, torturous) waiting game. Zeus eventually falls into an abyss at the hands of the Demogorgon, a new creature Percy inserts, but Prometheus (and, by extension, Percy) gets his wish: "And behold, thrones were kingless, and men walked/One with the other even as spirits do" (P. Shelley "Prometheus" 3.4.130-131). As Carol Dougherty summates, "And so Shelley's Prometheus is more about imagining an escape from the institution of tyranny than a lament on its limitations" (101). Percy's story is fortunate to have the convenient toppling of Zeus; any other Prometheus is not so lucky. The stories that Mary and Lord Byron tell are quite different from Shelley's unique spin on the sequel to *PB*.

George Gordon Byron, better known as Lord Byron, was a contemporary poet to Mary and Percy Shelley; in fact, Lord Byron was vacationing with Percy and Shelley and present the night that Mary was challenged to write a "ghost story" and came up with the idea for *Frankenstein*. Byron was taught in Greek and Latin and even "set to verse a choral passage from Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound*" (Dougherty 97). In addition, Jeffery Vail notes in the compendium *Selected Poetry of Lord Byron* that "Byron has been fascinated by the defiant Titan since as a schoolboy he translated the *Promethe Vincetus* of Aeschylus" (Byron 223). Amusingly, Wallace writes that in contrast with other Romantic writers from the period, "[...] Byron could read Greek, but he chose not to do so. When travelling round Greece he preferred to go swimming while his companion John Cam Hobhouse studied the ruined columns of ancient temples" (3). Still, it is simple, but quite accurate, to say that Byron loved Prometheus. *PB* especially influenced him from early on to explore his own views of the world. (Dougherty 97).

For Byron, Prometheus' only "crime" was to show kindness to humans. In his well-known poem *Prometheus*, written in 1816, he writes to the suffering Titan: "Thy Godlike crime was to be kind/To render with thy precepts less/The sum of human wretchedness/And

strengthen Man with his own mind” (Byron 224, 35-38). Much in line with Aeschylus’ view, Byron sees Prometheus as a sufferer of unjust punishment, taking a stance with Prometheus against the forces of oppression, and celebrates him against “the deaf tyranny of Fate,/The ruling principle of Hate” (Byron 224, 19-20). We already know that Byron loves the Prometheus character and this poem is a clear championing, much unlike how Mary attributes the “Modern Prometheus” to her problematic anti-hero character Dr. Frankenstein.¹⁹ It is even more unlike how Percy writes his Prometheus; Byron focuses on celebrating the tyrant-defying Prometheus, the one who would never cease to oppress injustice, whereas Shelley uses Prometheus as a tool to move towards a mode of non-defiance and away from tyranny.

The two poets, Percy and Byron, did inspire Mary in another aspect: scientific discovery and human creation. As I mentioned, Mary, Percy, and Byron vacationed together during the ‘ghost story’ night that sparked *Frankenstein*. She wrote in the preface to the 1831 edition that her imagination ran wild from discussions between the two of them about the principles of life and that her story then came to her in a dream. She stated,

“Many and long were the conversations between Lord Byron and Shelley, to which I was a devout but nearly silent listener. During one of these, various philosophical doctrines were discussed, and among others the nature of the principle of life, and whether there was any probability of its ever being discovered and communicated. [...] Not thus, after all, would life be given. Perhaps a corpse would be re-animated; [...] perhaps the component parts of a creature might be manufactured, brought together, and endued with vital warmth” (M. Shelley 441)

Mary was surrounded by like-minded individuals, Romantic spirits, who added to her tools to construct *Frankenstein, or, the Modern Prometheus*: I will speak more about these “tools,”

¹⁹ Mary Shelley was with Byron when he wrote Prometheus; in fact, she “copied this poem and carried it to Byron's publisher John Murray when she returned to England in August 1816” (Mellor 70). Anne Mellor claims that Mary Shelley associated Byron with a “Modern Prometheus,” as he aligned himself heavily with the traits of Prometheus he wrote into his own poem (70). Whether this is true is unclear, but Byron almost certainly made his love for Prometheus well-known during his writing period.

particularly her knowledge of Greek and Greek mythology, in section 3.2. By applying the principles of a mythical creator of humans to a reanimation story in a relatively modern setting, Mary Shelley explores the question, could reanimation really happen? If so, what are the moral repercussions of such an act? From the moment Victor animates the Creature to the very end of the novel, *Frankenstein* demonstrates the failures of this scientific exploration, both for the creator and the created. As Carol Dougherty writes, this is the kind of moral ambiguity that distinguishes Mary's work from the work of other Romantic writers (113).

To flesh out my examination of Romantic writings from just Mary Shelley, I have discussed two individual Romantic poets that wrote two poems surrounding Prometheus; first, Percy Shelley with his *magnum opus*, *Prometheus Bound*, then Lord Byron with a poem that takes after his beloved classical figure, *Prometheus*. All three writers, Mary, Percy, and Byron, write Prometheus in a unique and individualized way. Mary attributes the "Modern Prometheus" to her irresponsible and uncompassionate antihero Dr. Frankenstein and plays with the realism of human creation to interpret its consequences in her era. Percy wrote a story of hope, non-defiance, and the outlasting of tyranny on its own, and Byron wrote a laudatory poem celebrating Prometheus' only crime of being kind. Much like the ancient authors after the creation of writing, the Romantics were using selectivity to paint the Prometheus they wanted to get across. In my final section, I will discuss Mary and Percy's backgrounds in classical knowledge and how Prometheus influenced them in their deeply intertwined personal life, closing out the arc of Promethean influence from Classical to Romantic.

3.2 *Mary (with Percy) Shelley*

I have already discussed the general Romantic influence of Greece and classics more broadly, but I would like to get even more individual and mention some final, important aspects

about the great Romantic couple: Mary, the author of *Frankenstein*, and Percy, the author of *Prometheus Unbound*. These aspects include notes from their personal lives, such as Mary's experience with classical languages and well-kept reading lists, and Percy's dietary regimen.

Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin was born in 1797 to two literary greats; her father, William Godwin, was a spearhead of political philosophy, and her mother, Mary Wollstonecraft, was a groundbreaking feminist philosopher (Spark ix). In 1814, at the age of sixteen, she met Percy Bysshe Shelley, a radical devotee of her father's philosophy. Later that year, the couple eloped, and Mary was henceforth known as Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley. Mary was Percy's second wife, and, among extramarital dalliances and other strains in their relationship, they remained married until Percy's death by drowning in 1822. Regarding their works, it is difficult to write about Mary without including Percy (and vice versa). They wrote together, edited one another's works, and even shared a diary, started on the day of their elopement. In a sense, their lives and works from that period were heavily linked for the years they were together until Percy's death.

It is important to discuss the controversial theory that Percy, not Mary, was the author of *Frankenstein*. Exploring this will shore up a claim underlying this thesis: that Mary, indeed, wrote *Frankenstein*. Charles Robinson, who compiled the 1818 edition and Draft together, writes, "Collaboration seems to have been the hallmark of the Shelleys' literary relationship" (24). They edited one another's works, Percy arranged a publisher for *Frankenstein* while Mary was pregnant, and Mary transcribed Percy's poetry, just to name a few examples of their collaboration. As stated in Part I, Percy edited *Frankenstein* before its publication and contributed much to the story before its first publication. Robinson estimates that Shelley added approximately 4,000-5,000 words to the 72,000 work *Frankenstein* (25). Additionally, *Frankenstein* was initially published anonymously. Since Percy had brought the text forward for

publishing and had written the preface on Mary's behalf, many assumed he had written the entire novel, "including Sir Walter Scott, who wrote: 'it is said to be written by Mr Percy Bysshe Shelley, who, if we are rightly informed, is son-in-law to Mr Godwin'" (Wu 212). The first edition in which Mary's name was attached was a French translation of *Frankenstein* in 1821 (M. Shelley, "Prométhée").

However, because the Shelleys had a close relationship in and out of work, this does not necessitate that Percy wrote *Frankenstein*. From Robinson's compilation of the Draft and the 1818 edition alone, it appears that Percy's embellishments are merely work that a copy editor would do; Robinson concludes his examination with this statement (Robinson "Shelley's Texts" 135). Duncan Wu argues that "the most important piece of evidence in any discussion of evidence in any discussion about its authorship is the manuscript," in every respect written by Mary (216). He criticizes advocates of Percy's authorship for their lack of integrity regarding the manuscript and cites a journal entry of Mary's from August 21st, 1816, as evidence for her ownership of the 'author' title: "Shelley and I talk about my story" (M. Shelley "Letters" 130); the crucial word here, as Wu emphasizes, is "not 'his' story but '*my* story'" (Wu 216). I titled this section *Mary (with Percy) Shelley* for a reason. Charles Robinson uses this title to delineate which version of *Frankenstein* we are reading in his compendium; the 1818 revised version bears this title. Mary is not alone in her writing; Percy supports her, as she does for his texts, but by all means, she is the author of *Frankenstein*.

I may now satisfactorily conclude my exploration of this theory by stating that Mary certainly was the author of *Frankenstein*, with editorial assistance from Percy.²⁰ With that claim

²⁰ There are, in addition to the authors I have cited above, a great deal of feminist scholars who defend that Mary wrote *Frankenstein*. I will have to save feminist scholarship of the *Frankenstein* authorship question for further research; see Anne K. Mellor 1988 and Johanna M. Smith 1992 for more.

substantiated, I will continue to another question I posited: what knowledge does Mary have of Prometheus?

As Ellen Herson Wittmann writes in her essay *Mary Shelley's Daemon*,

Mary's entrance into classical studies is a significant move, in light of Percy's previous and yet, up to this point, superficial engagement with Greek. [...] It betrays a desire on Mary's part not merely to learn from Percy, but perhaps also to hold her own in an area where Percy had as yet little advantage (90).

Mary Shelley learned ancient Greek by independent study in September 1814, acquiring a greater skill of Greek than Percy, and learned Latin in March 1815. The fact that Mary knew Greek and Latin is further demonstrated in the various classical texts on her reading lists. She compiled these reading lists in her journals for every year and marked which ones Percy had also read. In addition to manifold ancient authors, we know that Mary read *PB* with Percy (listed as *Prometheus Desmotes*, the Greek name) on July 13th, 1817: "S tra[n]slates Promethes Desmotes²¹ and I write it" (M. Shelley "Journals" 177). Percy had likely read *PB* before this; he had included a quote from *PB* in a letter to Mary before they were married, dated to October 25th, 1814 (Desset 270). Importantly, Mary also read Ovid's *Metamorphoses* by herself in April and May of 1815. Therefore, Mary knew Prometheus, at least superficially, as he appears in *PB* and as the Prometheus *plasticator* that appears in Ovid. Mary had already begun writing *Frankenstein* by the time she transcribed *PB* for Shelley, but she read Ovid's account of Prometheus one or two years before beginning her work on *Frankenstein*.

Genevieve Liveley, a professor of Classics at the University of Bristol, argues that Mary supplied a great deal of myths from *Metamorphoses* in *Frankenstein*. The consequences of creation and reanimation in these myths seem to follow well with the Creation's story:

²¹ This is the transliteration from the Greek title of *Prometheus Bound*, Προμηθεὺς Δεσμώτης.

Hippolytus and Asclepius, Deucalion and Pyrrha, and, indeed, Prometheus (Liveley 4-5). The myths that Liveley mentions all involve some sort of creation gone terribly wrong. Deucalion and Pyrrha (interestingly, the son of Prometheus and daughter of Epimetheus, respectively) must recreate the human race after the Great Deluge upon humanity; they are commanded by Themis to throw stones behind them as they walk, which become the new human race, and “from that we are a hard, enduring race” (*Ov. Met.* 1.313–415). Hippolytus, unrecognizably mangled in a chariot crash, is put back together by Asclepius, the god of medicine. Saved from death but left unrecognizable from his former self, Cynthia (an epithet of Diana) gives him a new name, Virbius, and he spends the rest of his life hidden with her followers (*Ov. Met.* 15. 479–546). Per Liveley’s interpretation, it is unclear whether Hippolytus is hidden with a new name and face to hide his disfigurement or to shield the fact that he has been resurrected (5).

The story of Deucalion and Pyrrha resonates with the story of Dr. Frankenstein. They create humans, as had happened before, but their new humans come out different; they are hardened and suited to deal with the intensity of life. This is much like the Creation, who learns through difficulty to become hardened to hostility and humanity. The story of Hippolytus (Virbius) and Asclepius is even more closely reminiscent. Hippolytus’ mangled corpse reminds one of Dr. Frankenstein’s attempt to form a human out of reused body parts; in this matter, Dr. Frankenstein is an Asclepian figure, and the Creation is the Virbian figure who must now live his life hidden away.

I would argue that these very Frankensteinian myths and the ancient source material on Mary’s reading lists provide inspiration for *Frankenstein*. Mary did have the tools to navigate different interpretations of Greek myth, specifically that of Prometheus; in combination with evidence from section 2.2 and Rogers’ claim of Polyprometheism, it would not be remiss to

think that Mary may have drawn upon several different Promethean sources for her portrayal of the Modern Prometheus. In addition, her knowledge of scientific thought and the principles of life through conversation with her peers, such as Percy and Byron, was a sure influence. In combination with the potential science of reanimation, the myth of Prometheus as a life-giver, and reanimation myths from Ovid like Hippolytus, Mary visualized her “ghost story,” and it is in our hands today as *Frankenstein*.

Another way of exploring Prometheus, perhaps more negatively, through the Shelleys’ eyes is through their beliefs, specifically, their dietary ones. Percy was a well-known vegetarian, or, at the time, “Pythagorean,” in keeping with the Greek philosopher Pythagoras’ recommendations of vegetarian practices (Morton 196). It seems that, amusingly, Greeks influenced their lives even outside of literature. In turn, this could be seen as an extension of Percy’s Romantic naturalism, with the “return to nature” of a cleaner diet: “Man, and the animals whom he has infected with his society, or depraved by his dominion, are alone diseased” (P. Shelley “Vindication” 12). Percy wrote a treatise on vegetarianism called *A Vindication of Natural Diet* in 1813, and prior to that, in 1811, he met Dr. William Lawrence, a vegetarian like himself (Morton 196). Timothy Morton, in his contribution to *The Cambridge Companion to Shelley*, writes that William Lawrence was “a biologist who made very significant early contributions to materialist theories of evolution and the body which had a profound influence on Mary Shelley in writing *Frankenstein*” (196), much like how Percy and Byron first planted the seed of human reanimation in Mary’s mind. This is not the only instance in which Mary was involved in peripheral vegetarian influence; Morton adds, “While Mary Shelley was writing *Frankenstein*, Percy ate vegetarian food and Mary recorded the amounts in grams” (Morton 197).

It is unclear whether Mary also adopted a vegetarian diet, but many authors imply that she followed Percy in his practice (Hansen 6).²² However, her vegetarian influences still make a subtle appearance in *Frankenstein*. The Creation, left alone in the elements after being abandoned by Frankenstein, tells of his encounters with natural foods: “I ate some berries which I found on the trees or lying on the ground” (M. Shelley “Draft” 322), and “I had been accustomed during the night to steal a part of [the De Lacey’s] store for my own consumption; but when I found that in doing this I inflicted pain on the cottagers, I abstained, and satisfied myself with berries nuts and roots which I found in a neighbouring wood” (M. Shelley “Draft” 331). The Creation does kill a hare for Frankenstein to eat in the Northern region where Capt. Walton finds them; however, since he does not partake in it, Mascha Hansen argues that the Creation claims vegetarianism by choice (3).

The theory of the Creation’s vegetarian practices culminate in this quote: “My food is not that of man; I do not destroy the lamb or the kid to glut my appetite. Acorns & berries afford me sufficient nourishment” (M. Shelley “Draft” 356). The Creation tells Frankenstein about his profound disinterest in meat; in addition, this line, written by Mary, appears extremely similar to a line from Percy’s *Queen Mab*, an envisioning of a vegetarian future: “He slays the lamb that looks him in the face, and horribly devours his mangled flesh” (P. Shelley “Poetry” 65). *Queen Mab* was published in the same year as *A Vindication of Natural Diet*, both of which preceded *Frankenstein* by four to five years. Suppose we can believe the Creation to be truly vegetarian; in that case, it appears that Mary may have at least held similar beliefs to Percy, even if there is no evidence of her practicing vegetarianism.

What is most striking about Percy’s vegetarianism (and perhaps Mary’s, by extension) is his integration of Prometheus into his dietary practices. In his notes to *Queen Mab*, Percy writes,

²² See Seymour 2018.

Prometheus effected some great change in the condition of his nature, and applied fire to culinary purposes; thus inventing an expedient for screening from his disgust the horrors of the shambles. It consumed his being in every shape of its loathsome and infinite variety, inducing the soul-quelling sinkings of premature and violent death. All vice arose from the ruin of healthful innocence (P. Shelley "Poetry" 163).

Prometheus appears to Percy as a negative figure in this regard; Prometheus gave humanity the tool (fire) to cook digestible food, a direct opposition to Percy's meatless practices. Leonard Wolf, a frequent commentator on gothic horror novels, adds in *The Essential Frankenstein*: "Prometheus is by no means a heroic figure. [In notes to *Queen Mab*] he is blamed for bringing fire to mankind and thereby seducing the human race to the foul vice of meat-eating" (20).

Though perhaps a strange route to find Percy's feelings for Prometheus, it does matter that the Titan played a role in Percy's life outside of literature, even if through a dietary restriction; Prometheus' influence on Percy and Mary was powerful. Throughout this section, I have shown how myths and philosophy have influenced Mary and Percy, whether through their extensive reading lists, their knowledge of Greek and Latin, or Percy's vegetarianism; all of this has led them to Prometheus in one way or another. Percy's admiration for Prometheus as a Miltonic Satan figure contends with his criticisms about the vice of eating meat and what Prometheus contributed to that. In addition, the two's ability to read Greek and Latin left them able to critically interpret various ancient versions of the Prometheus myth in order to create their own. With Part III completed, I may now begin to conclude this thesis.

Conclusion

Since the writing of ancient works and the era of the Romantics, the modern day has had its share of entertainment with the figure of Prometheus. A simple search for Prometheus in any search engine will show, among others, the following: a 2012 sci-fi film, a biotech company, a brand of cigarette lighter, and more. We have seen in this thesis how Prometheus evolved throughout the ancient period and how the Romantics pushed him further in their works; we are doing the same in the 21st century by interpreting him into our entertainment and brands. Prometheus has not become an irrelevant figure but has maintained his presence as the long-suffering, rebellious, philanthropic Titan of myth that has traveled through culture to the present day. References to him today are a testament to the power of mythology and its ability to take new forms and adapt to different circumstances.

I began this thesis in Part I by discussing mythology and its complexity, and how it is liable to be reinterpreted over time by different authors. Authorial selectivity plays a significant role in this, as they could draw from “preworked, culturally rich material” from oral tradition and expand on it in new ways in writing. The mere mention of Prometheus in a written text is bound to invoke his complex and sometimes-contrasting tradition, which is why the use of “Modern Prometheus” as Mary Shelley’s subtitle immediately grabs the attention; it causes the reader to think about which aspect of Prometheus she means.

I expanded upon some of the most popular versions of Prometheus in section 1.1—the Prometheus *pyrphoros* of Hesiod and Plato, and the added tradition of Prometheus *plasticator* in Ovid, Pseudo-Apollodorus, and perhaps Sappho. These stories are important as evidence for mythology’s variability: Hesiod and Aeschylus have very different accounts of Prometheus, but modern scholars use both as evidence of the Prometheus myth in ancient Greece. The

understanding that I came to is that regardless of how Prometheus is portrayed—*pyrphoros*, *plasticator*, or a combination of the two—he is responsible for the continuation and success of the human race in some way, some kind of creator of things vital to humankind.

With the understanding of Prometheus in various other myths, I turned to the primary focus of my thesis, *Prometheus Bound* by Aeschylus, in 1.2. I explain how Aeschylus's plot gives us a look at Prometheus' torture within a short window of his punishment and how the plot of *PB* differs from the tellings of Prometheus I wrote about in 1.1. In *PB*, we see Aeschylus' dramatic embellishments, such as the gift of prophecy for Prometheus, and there is also a development of Zeus' tyranny, emphasized as a representation of the political ongoings of 5th century Athens, just to name a few. Then, for 1.3, I selected some themes from *PB* that I felt best represented Prometheus—humanism, rebellion, and suffering. I also selected these themes to more easily compare Prometheus and Frankenstein's Creation, because the themes also make a considerable appearance in *Frankenstein*.

Part II is where I summarized *Frankenstein* as a reference, and I continue in 2.2 with a comparison of Prometheus with Dr. Frankenstein and the Creation. I do not intend to say that Dr. Frankenstein is *not* a "Modern Prometheus," but that the Creation also plays a subtle role here. I have utilized Brett M. Rogers' concept of Polyprometheism to argue Dr. Frankenstein as Prometheus *plasticator*, the creator of a being, and the Creation as Prometheus *pyrphoros*, the suffering violator of the laws of nature. I also wrote that Frankenstein, as the *plasticator*, is an irresponsible creator: his Creation is tortured because of Frankenstein's continued negligence for him, the Creation who was supposed to be beautiful and was abandoned in a state much like a newborn. After I wrote direct textual comparisons between *Frankenstein* and *PB*, I introduced another layer to their comparison—*Paradise Lost*. The Creation, meant to be the blessed Adam

created by a benevolent god, aligns himself more with Satan, who is unloved, unpitied, and alone in the world. This third text draws the connections of the Creation and Prometheus even closer together, adding a layer of how the authors perceived Prometheus in their other texts, such as Prometheus as Satan for Percy Shelley in *Prometheus Unbound*.

For Part III, I step back and provide a background of Romanticism and the poets that came out of it, specifically the Shelleys and Lord Byron, and how they interpreted Prometheus differently from one another. I define Romanticism as a period in Britain that emphasized individualism, a “return to nature,” and an influence on classical studies, or Romantic Hellenism. The character of Prometheus appealed to the Romantic writers, and they portrayed him very differently. The earliest work of the three Romantics I focus on is Byron’s *Prometheus* from 1816, a celebration of Prometheus’ rebellion and strength in the face of suffering. The next, chronologically, is *Frankenstein*, published in 1818, in which we see the titular Prometheus as the problematic antihero, with the Creation, as I argued, as a more subtle Prometheus. Lastly, in 1820, we have Percy Shelley’s *Prometheus Unbound*, which portrays Prometheus much differently, as a more placid Prometheus towards the end of his punishment, no longer seeking revenge. However, it still ends up with Zeus becoming overthrown, even without Prometheus’ involvement—his rebellion is not the outcome of Percy’s story. Though these three are very different roles of Prometheus, they are all examples of how the Romantics viewed Prometheus and could use him for their own artistic expressions, much like how the ancients used selectivity after myths started to become written down.

Finally, I discussed how Mary and Percy were involved in classics, with Mary learning Greek and Latin at young ages; in addition, their extensive reading lists contained works like Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, Aeschylus’ *PB*, and Milton’s *Paradise Cycle*, many of which they read

together. There is much potential for Mary to have been inspired by Greek myth for *Frankenstein*, not only from *PB* but from *Metamorphoses*, especially in the myths of Hippolytus and Asclepius and Deucalion and Pyrrha.

In the study of classics, there is always room for possibility because of how many unknowns have come to us through time. In this matter, antiquity is strikingly similar to the Romantics; though they did not live as long ago as the ancients, neither group is alive to answer our remaining questions. In the face of unknowns, we may be tempted to turn to guesswork, but what is really important is to look at what still exists—their writings. *Frankenstein* and *PB* carry on the legacy of two writers who found inspiration in the Titan Prometheus and use him as a mythological vessel to carry out their works. People see themselves in Prometheus, whether as the tortured and suffering soul, the rebel against authority, or someone who does good for others. It is no wonder that Prometheus has been, and will continue to be, a myth that inspires a variety of interpretations and will keep him alive in our culture for eras to come.

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