



FRANKENSTEIN – MARY
SHELLEY

Revision

SOME IDEAS

- ❖ A novel of doubling and reversal – Walton/Victor, Victor/Monster, Victor/Clerval, beauty/ugliness. Home or the domestic/wild nature and the laboratory
- ❖ masculine science wrests secrets from feminised nature
- ❖ Monstrous moral and legal systems – Justine
- ❖ The monster's treatment creates his desire for revenge and murder

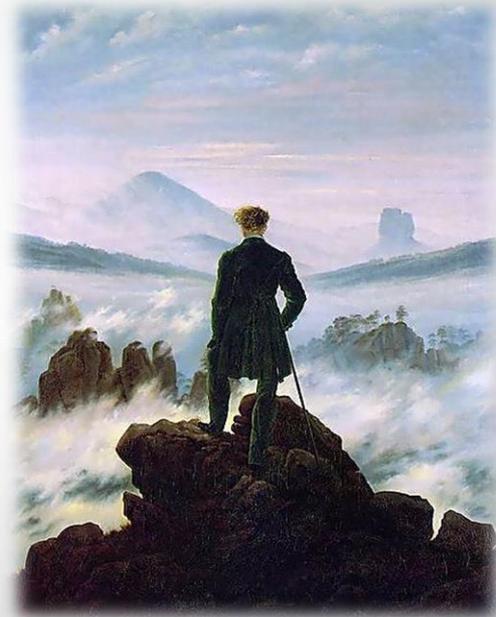


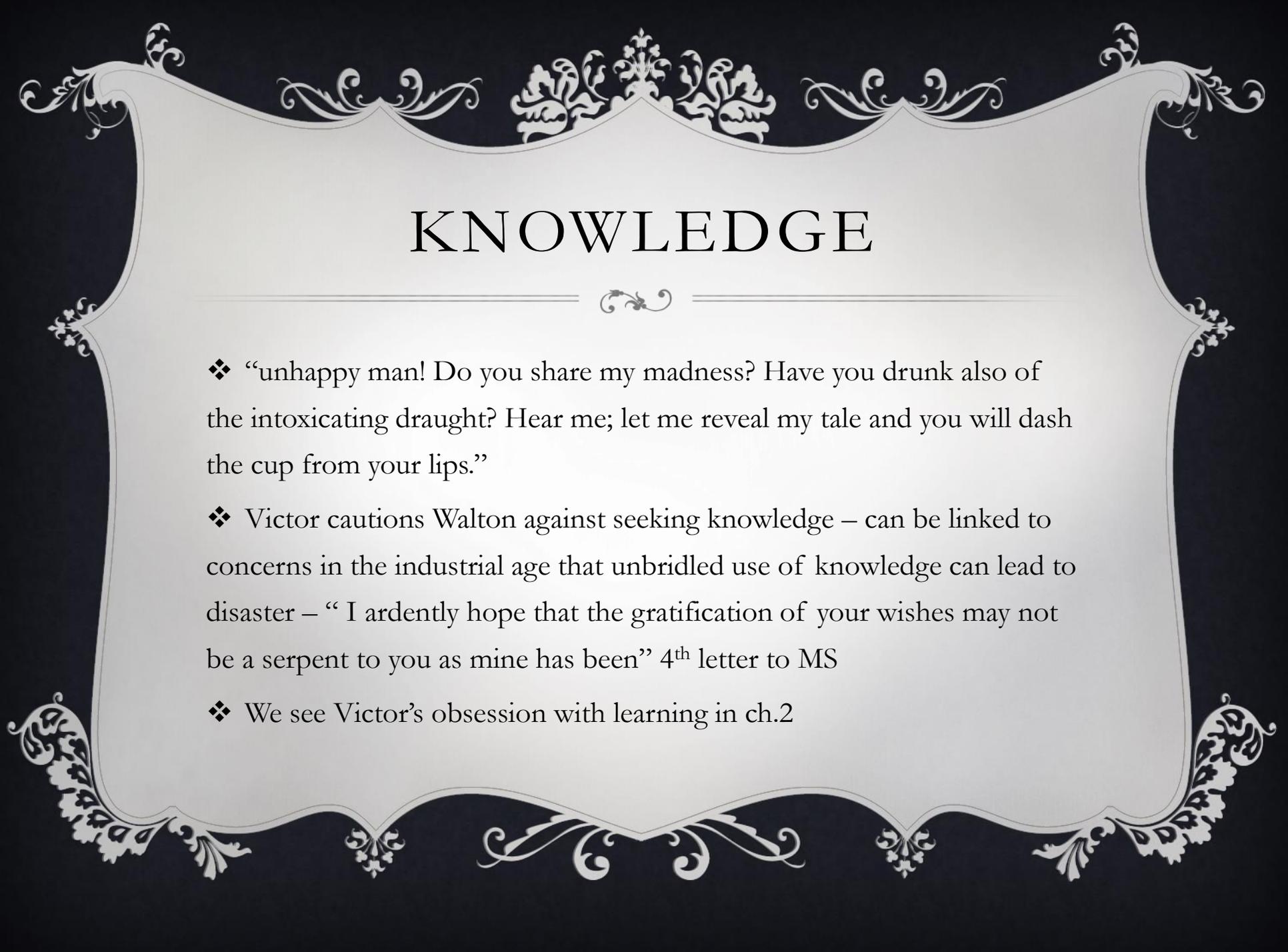
KEY IDEAS

- ❖ Knowledge
- ❖ Women
- ❖ Sublime
- ❖ Family/Parenthood
- ❖ Education
- ❖ Science/Technology

KNOWLEDGE

- ❖ Victor seeks knowledge for his own reasons
- ❖ Does not consider the ramifications
- ❖ Walton also does this
- ❖ Victor focused on Alchemy before going to university and learning about new science
- ❖ Rime of the Ancient Mariner about the death of imagination in man and embarkation on quest for spiritual and intellectual knowledge.





KNOWLEDGE

❖ “unhappy man! Do you share my madness? Have you drunk also of the intoxicating draught? Hear me; let me reveal my tale and you will dash the cup from your lips.”

❖ Victor cautions Walton against seeking knowledge – can be linked to concerns in the industrial age that unbridled use of knowledge can lead to disaster – “ I ardently hope that the gratification of your wishes may not be a serpent to you as mine has been” 4th letter to MS

❖ We see Victor’s obsession with learning in ch.2



EDUCATION

- ❖ Romantic education – self taught
- ❖ Adventures provide a source of growth
- ❖ Walton self educated “my education was neglected, yet I was passionately fond of reading.”
- ❖ Walton, however, also had a practical education aboard a whaling ship.

EDUCATION

- ❖ The creature learns from the DeLacey's
- ❖ Typical Romantic reading list
- ❖ No- one to guide him in his learning
- ❖ 'There was none among the myriads of men that existed who would pity or assist me; and should I feel kindness towards my enemies? No: from that moment I declared everlasting war against the species, and, more than all, against him who had formed me and sent me forth to this insupportable misery'
- ❖ Safie is educated also by the De Lacey's

PARENTHOOD / FAMILY

- ❖ Elizabeth's mother died early during childbirth
- ❖ Her family taught her to care for the poor (another key concern of the novel)
- ❖ Victor does not care for the creature he 'parented'
- ❖ Rousseau's ideas on education – children should learn naturally – Shelley critiques this
- ❖ Victor is the real monster – he neglects his own 'child'
- ❖ Critiques the cult of the individual, of solitariness and introversion of the time.

SUBLIME / NATURE

- ❖ Walton asserts that he will keep going over the 'untamed yet obedient' regions
- ❖ Nature, or the stars will witness his success.
- ❖ Eerie arctic setting
- ❖ Elizabeth – “none could behold her without looking at her as a distinct species, as being heaven sent, and bearing a celestial stamp on all her features”



SUBLIME / NATURE

- ❖ Creature feels uplifted by the natural world
- ❖ Victor rows on Lake Geneva
- ❖ Victor wants to ‘pursue nature to her hiding places’ – this leads him to neglect his friends and family
- ❖ Once he achieves his dream ‘now that I have finished, the beauty of the dream vanished, and breathless horror and disgust fill my heart’
- ❖ Landscapes in ch. 10 are icy, barren and inhospitable, as alien to warm humanity as Frankenstein’s manic desire. Sublime becomes dangerously inhuman.

SCIENCE

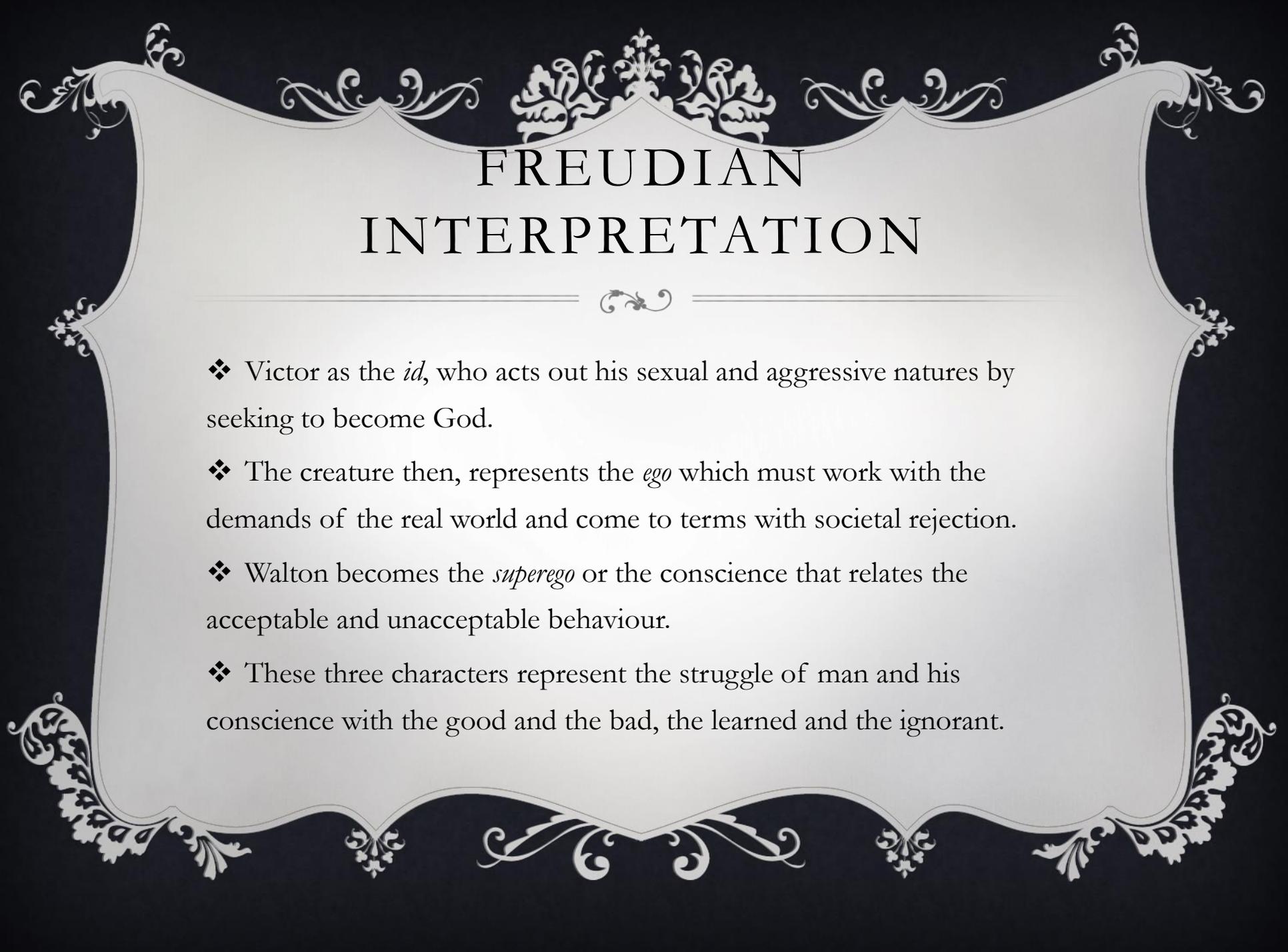
- ❖ Humphrey Davy, Luigi Galvani, Giovanni Aldini and Erasmus Darwin
- ❖ Science to *describe* or science to *intervene*
- ❖ Monster made from parts of animal as well as human – monstrous



WOMEN

- ❖ Background figures here – not considered as confidants
- ❖ Elizabeth is Victor’s “sister” he takes it for granted she is his
- ❖ Justine takes the blame for the death
- ❖ We never meet Margaret Saville
- ❖ Elizabeth’s wedding night – Victor things primarily of revenge – she dies
- ❖ Women as mothers – Victor is clearly not this





FREUDIAN INTERPRETATION

- ❖ Victor as the *id*, who acts out his sexual and aggressive natures by seeking to become God.
- ❖ The creature then, represents the *ego* which must work with the demands of the real world and come to terms with societal rejection.
- ❖ Walton becomes the *superego* or the conscience that relates the acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.
- ❖ These three characters represent the struggle of man and his conscience with the good and the bad, the learned and the ignorant.