



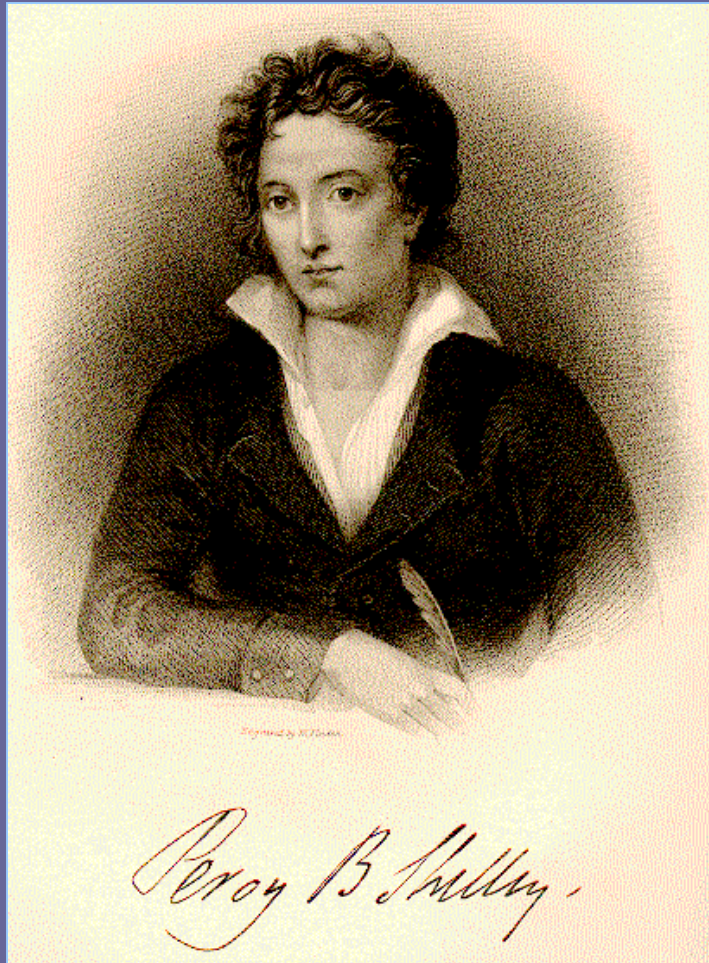
# *The Shelleys:*

*British Romanticism's  
Power Couple*

**Percy Bysshe  
Shelley &  
Mary (Godwin)  
Shelley**

*(from **Mary Shelley**, formerly **A Storm in the Stars**, starring Douglas Booth and Elle Fanning, ~2018)*

# Percy Bysshe Shelley



- Percy Bysshe Shelley was born into a noble family (baron).
- Went to Oxford University but got kicked out for writing about being an atheist.
- Married a 16-year-old girl named Harriet when he was 19.

- Once he married Harriet, they moved to Ireland.
  - He was a radical political activist while in Ireland.
- He met Mary Godwin after befriending her father (William Godwin) and sisters (Fanny Imlay and Claire Clairmont).
- He left Harriet (who was pregnant) after 3 years and ran off to Switzerland with Mary and Claire.
  - Scandal!



- He eventually moved to Venice, Italy, as did other major poetic figures of the time.
- He and Mary had several children but most died young (one son, Percy Florence, survived).
- Percy Bysshe died at the age of 29 in a boating “accident.”
  - Some believe it was suicide.
  - Some believe he was assassinated.
  - Some believe he was robbed (pirates).





- His body was burnt on the beach in a funeral pyre.
- Pictured: Edward Trelawny, Leigh Hunt, and Lord Byron.
- Trelawny stuck his hand into the smoldering fire and pulled out Shelley's heart, which supposedly "refused the burn." He gave it to Leigh Hunt, who then gave it to Mary Shelley, who kept it her entire life.

# Mary Shelley



- Mary was the daughter of Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin.
  - Her mother wrote *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*.
  - Her father was a famous radical political activist.
  - Mary Wollstonecraft died within a few days of giving birth to Mary (Godwin) Shelley.
- When not at boarding school, she was mostly raised by her stepmother, who was a “vulgar woman” (according to Percy).

- Mary ran off with Percy Bysshe Shelley at the age of 16 (1813).
  - Her father would not speak to her for 3.5 years after she ran off with a married man.
- She and Percy married after Percy's first wife Harriet killed herself (threw herself into the Serpentine Lake in Hyde Park, London) in 1816.
- Mary loved Percy, but he was a bit of a **narcissist**.
- She wrote her own masterpiece, *Frankenstein*, as part of a ghost-story challenge among friends.



- After Percy Bysshe Shelley died, she devoted herself to promoting his work and writing her own.
- She died of a brain tumor in 1851.