



Mary Shelley (1797-1851)

1797	29 Mar	Mary Wollstonecraft, the pioneer feminist marries the political philosopher William Godwin in St. Pancras Church, London; Wollstonecraft has one daughter, Fanny by Gilbert Imlay. Godwin, a member of a circle of radical thinkers in England that counted Thomas Paine and William Blake among its ranks, had written the extremely well received article "An Enquiry into Political Justice and its Influence on Morals and Happiness(1793)," and his wife the groundbreaking text <i>A Vindication of the Rights of Woman</i> . Mary's upbringing exposed her at an early age to cutting-edge ideas. Godwin had revolutionary attitudes to most social institutions, including marriage. In her childhood Mary Shelley was left to educate herself amongst her father's intellectual circle, the critic Hazlitt, the essayist Lamb, the poet Coleridge and Percy Bysshe Shelley who came into Godwin's circle in 1812.
	30 Aug	Mary Wollstonecraft gives birth to Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin. She dies of septicaemia (puerperal fever) just 10 days after her birth.
1801	21 Dec	Within a year of Mary Wollstonecraft's death, however, Godwin began searching for a new partner and found one in his next door neighbour Mary Jane Clairmont, who had two children of her own: Charles aged seven and the willful Jane (Claire) aged four (19-21). Thus, on December 21st, 1801, Godwin and Mary Jane Clairmont were married, and in 1802 they had their own son. Mr. and Mrs. Godwin named their new-born son William, the name that Godwin had once anticipated calling Mary, before she was born a girl (21-4). Mary took an immediate dislike to her new mother.

1812	Jun	<p>The marriage of Godwin and Mary Jane Clairmont had serious consequences for young Mary, as the Clairmonts moved in with the Godwins and Mary was constantly subjected to the company of her step-sister Jane and her step-mother Mary, both of whom young Mary was afraid. Indeed, Jane is reported to have had volatile moods and to have been wild in her youth, while Mary Jane Godwin is reported to have possessed a hot temper and to have perpetually favoured her own children while picking on the shy, solemn Mary (22-4). Thus, Eileen Bigland reports that by the time Mary was eight years old, she was solitary, withdrawn, and had developed that "persecution mania" that was to haunt her for her entire life (24). Indeed, Mary yearned for love, but instead she was crammed with learning from her father, and because she was smarter than Mrs. Godwin's children, Mrs. Godwin persecuted her and told her that she was sly, slow, stupid, useless, and selfish (27). This verbal abuse had such a profound effect on Mary that by 1811 the nerves in one of Mary's arms were bothering her (27). When she was only 14 she was sent to Dundee, Scotland, to the house of a friend of her father's, William Baxter. She was unwell and she spent there two happy years going for long walks on the hills and along the river. There, she forms her first close friendship with the Baxter's youngest daughter, Isabel.</p>
	10 Nov	<p>Mary and Christy Baxter return to London for a visit. She possibly meets P. B. Shelley when he and Harriet dine with the Godwins.</p>
1813	3 Jun	<p>Mary and Christy Baxter return to the Baxter's home in Scotland.</p>
1814	Mar-May	<p>In Scotland, Mary regained both her physical and mental health and lived happily until May 1814, at which time Godwin ordered his seventeen year old girl to return home in order that she begin to earn her own living (35) Isabel Baxter has become engaged to her former brother in law old David Booth. In May she meets Shelley again. Percy Bysshe Shelley, aristocrat, political revolutionary and poet, was irresistible to many women. Shelley, disillusioned with his young wife, with whom he had a daughter, fell attracted to Mary. She was not pretty but she was the daughter of Godwin and Wollstonecraft and she was an intellectual.</p>
	28 Jul	<p>Mary met the married Percy Shelley and was immediately attracted to him (38). Mary and Percy soon fell so deeply and hopelessly in love that not only would they spend hours talking and philosophizing together in the evening, but they would also take their books and meet at Mary Wollstonecraft's grave in the afternoon (38). The great influence on her youth was her dead mother; convinced that she was Mary Wollstonecraft's innocent murderer, she spent much time reading by the tomb in St. Pancras Cemetery, communing in thought with the woman who lay there. On July 6th, 1814, only a month or two after Mary and Percy had met, Shelley gave Godwin twelve hundred pounds and asked Godwin to consent to his running away with Mary (41). Godwin took Shelley's money but vehemently forbade Shelley to continue seeing Mary. Thus, on July 27th, Mary, Percy, and Mary's step-sister Jane ran away to Switzerland together (43) On August 30th, Mary celebrated her seventeenth birthday (43). Mary's stepsister, Jane (Claire) Clairmont, came with them. Mary became pregnant and was unwell. William Godwin refuses any communication with his daughter for the next two and a half years.</p>

Jul-Aug	<p>The three take a six-week tour through France, Switzerland, Germany, and Holland. While in Paris, they leave behind a box of papers. Mary will later suspect it to contain letters "George Byron" uses to blackmail her in 1845.</p> <p>The erratic and mentally unstable Jane decided to change her name to Claire and attempted to get even more attention by throwing an attack of the "horrors," in which she claimed that a pillow on her bed had been moved to the chair by no evident human power when she had turned her head (55). Percy describes Claire in terms similar to those in which Mary later describes the daemon in <i>Frankenstein</i>:</p> <p><i>Jane was there; her countenance was distorted most unnaturally by horrible dismay- it beamed with a whiteness that seemed almost like light; her lips and cheeks were of one deadly hue; the skin of her face and forehead was drawn into innumerable wrinkles.... her eyes were wide and staring, drawn almost from the sockets by the convulsion of the muscles; the eyelids were forced in, and the eyeballs, without any relief, seemed as if they had been newly inserted, in a ghastly sport, in the sockets of a lifeless head. (55)</i></p> <p>Although Shelley sat up through the night with Claire to calm her, when dawn came Claire went into violent convulsions and "shrieked and writhed on the floor" (56). Shelley seemed to like the element of the fantastic about Jane, however, and thus spent much time with her in Switzerland (56). Indeed, Mary saw very little of Percy when they were in Switzerland, for she was sick during her first days of pregnancy and Percy would go out gallivanting with Claire every day (56).</p>
Sep-Nov	<p>Mary, Shelley, and Claire, also short of money and decided to return home from Switzerland. PB Shelley goes into hiding from his creditors; he and Mary live apart during this period. Mary, PB Shelley, and Claire move to 2 Nelson Square, Blackfriars Road</p>
14 Nov	<p>Shelley introduces Mary to his Oxford friend, Thomas Jefferson Hogg. Shelley records in his journal that Hogg is "pleased with Mary." Mary came to depend very heavily on Thomas Hogg, who would often visit her in the daytime when Percy and Claire had deserted her (60). Indeed, during her stay in Switzerland, Mary became very depressed because she felt abandoned daily, she was sick, and she was unmarried (56-60). Her depression was made worse after Percy's wife Harriet had his son Charles Bysshe on November 30th, because this boy was Shelley's rightful heir, while the baby that Mary was carrying was an "illegitimate nobody" (61).</p>
1815	<p>1 Jan T. J. Hogg, with Shelley's encouragement, declares his love to Mary. She reciprocates his affection, but not physically, due to her pregnancy. Shelley and Claire may also be conducting an affair over the next few months.</p>

	22 Feb	<p>Because Shelley was out every day, because the relentless creditors were pursuing him, and because Shelley had to leave again to evade his creditors, Mary became both nervously and physically sick (64). Possibly as a result, on February 22nd, 1815, Mary gave birth to a premature girl, Clara, who was only at the beginning of the third trimester, and thus not expected to live. Twelve days later, on March 6th, Mary woke up to find her unnamed child dead beside her (66). This threw Mary into a new state of intense depression.</p> <p>Mary began to recover her good spirits when they agreed that Claire should leave their household. Their financial circumstances also improved and they moved to a house at the edge of Windsor Forest. They settled happily into a private life, studied, wrote, walked,..</p>
1816	24 Jan	<p>Mary became pregnant again and gave birth in 1816 to a strong baby boy named William after her father(74). Only a few months after William was born, Claire convinced Mary and Shelley to accompany her to the lake of Geneva where Lord Byron was seeking sanctuary. Although Claire did not reveal her real motives for wanting to go to Geneva, she later revealed that she had asked Shelley and Mary to accompany her to Geneva because she had had a liaison with Lord Byron, was pregnant with his child, and wanted to force him to make a settlement on her (82, 91). Without first knowing this, on May 3rd, Mary, Claire, Shelley, and young William left for Geneva, where Byron and Shelley met and became good friends (80). Mary, P.B. Shelley, their son William, and a pregnant Claire journey to Italy. Claire is pursuing Byron, who left England on 23 April. They are in Paris by 8 May, and arrive a week later at the Hotel de Sécheron, Geneva. In May 1816 they rented two adjacent villas on the shores of Lake Geneva. They meet Byron, who had recently arrived in Switzerland with his physician Dr. John W. Polidori.</p>
	10 Jun	<p>Byron rents the nearby Villa Diodati. Byron and Shelley spent much time together discussing magic, superstition, and supernatural subjects (84). Thus, one evening in July, Byron, Percy and Mary Shelley, and Byron's doctor Dr. Polidori resolved that they would each write their own ghost story (84). Mary had trouble beginning her story, until Byron and Percy argued one evening about whether or not the principle of life could ever be discovered, and concluded that galvanic methods might be able to restore life to a corpse (84). Soon after, Mary began <i>Frankenstein</i> (16-17 Jun).</p>
	21-27 Jul	<p>Mary, P.B. Shelley, and Claire travel to Chamounix. Mary's description of this journey, as well as those Shelley made of his previous tour, provides material for <i>Frankenstein</i>.</p>
	24 Jul	<p>Mary's journal entry reads "Write my story"; this is the first extant written reference to <i>Frankenstein</i>.</p>
	29 Aug	<p>Mary, P.B. Shelley, William, and Claire leave Geneva and return to England, arriving in Portsmouth on 8 September. Over the next few months, Mary and the pregnant Claire remain in Bath, residing at Abbey Churchyard, while Shelley returns to London.</p>

	Oct-Dec	<p>A few months after they had returned to England, on October 11th, 1816, Mary's half-sister Fanny was found dead after she had committed suicide by overdosing on laudanum (94). There were many reasons that led Fanny to kill herself: she was jealous of Mary and Percy, Claire was pregnant and had been living in Switzerland with Mary and Percy, her real mother Mary Wollstonecraft was dead, and she had just found out that William Godwin was not her biological father (95).</p> <p>Not yet recovered from this blow they heard that Shelley's wife Harriet had also drowned herself. She had been missing since 9 November, and her pregnant body was found in the Serpentine river in Hyde Park on 10 December. Shelley immediately set off for London to claim custody of his two children, and decided that he would have a better chance if he was married to Mary, although it was against his principles.</p>
	30 Dec	<p>Mary and PB Shelly marry at St. Mildred's church, London; in urging this marriage, William Godwin abandons his long silence and reconciles with his daughter. The Shelleys live with the Hunts and the Godwins over the next month. (103).</p>
1817	12 Jan	<p>Claire moves with the Shelleys and gives birth to her daughter by Byron. She initially names the child Alba, later changing it to Allegra at Byron's request.</p>
	27 Mar	<p>A Chancery suit denies PBShelley custody of his and Harriet's two children, Charles and Ianthe.</p>
	14 May	<p>Mary, pregnant again, settled down to finishing <i>Frankenstein</i> and gave birth to a baby girl, Clara. (112)</p>
	[6] Nov	<p><i>History of a Six Weeks' Tour Through a Part of France, Switzerland, Germany, and Holland: With Letters Descriptive of a Sail round the Lake of Geneva, and of the Glaciers of Chamouni</i> (London: T Hookham, Jun.; and C. and J. Ollier), written by Mary and PBShelly, is published anonymously.</p>
1818	1 Jan	<p><i>Frankenstein: or, The Modern Prometheus</i> (London: Lackington, Hughes, Harding, Mavor, and Jones) is published in three volumes. Both PBShelley's publisher, Charles Ollier, and Byron's publisher, John Murray, had declined to publish the novel.</p>
	11 Mar	<p>The Shelleys, Claire, Allegra, and two servants leave London for Dover to undertake an Italian journey and arrive in Calais the next day. The party travels through France, staying in Lyons 21-25 March. They then travel to Italy and stay in Milan for three weeks. Claire sends Allegra to Byron in Venice. Byron, who wishes to avoid Claire, only allows her to visit her daughter if she is accompanied by the Shelleys.</p>
	7 May	<p>The Shelleys travel to Pisa, then to Leghorn.</p>
	14 Jun	<p>Mary writes Walter Scott, who had favorably reviewed <i>Frankenstein</i> for <i>Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine</i> and who had conjectured that PBShelley wrote the book. She thanks him for his review and acknowledges herself as the novel's author.</p>

	17 Aug	PB Shelley and Claire travel to Venice in hopes of persuading Byron to relinquish Allegra. Byron refuses, but, believing Mary and the children to be with them, he permits the Shelleys and Claire to visit the girl at his villa in Este. On 31 August, at PBS's insistence, Mary and her children quickly travel to Este. They arrive on 5 September. Clara Everina dies on 24 Sept. in Venice from dysentery she had contracted during the hurried journey to Este. Mary blamed Shelley and never forgave him. Mary went into another severe depression. The death of Clara affected Mary much more seriously than did her miscarriage three years earlier, although she made attempts to combat her grief (125). While Mary was melancholy, grief-stricken, and lonely, she wrote Godwin a letter telling her about her deceased baby, and he was extremely unsympathetic to her pain (125). As a result, Mary began to retreat into herself and ceased talking to Percy (125).
	Sep-Oct	The Shelleys and Claire remain at Byron's villa in Este.
	5 Nov	The Shelley party travels through Ferrara, Bologna, and Rome. After a week in Rome, they depart for Naples.
	20 Dec	In her journal 20 Dec, Mary enters "Correct Frankenstein," possibly correcting the copy that she presented to Mrs. Thomas, an Englishwoman she met in Genoa, by July 1823.
	27 Dec	An infant, registered on 27 February 1819 as "Elena Adelaide" is born in Naples. PB Shelley and "Marina Padurin" are listed as the parents. The identity of this child is still a mystery. Some theories claim the girl was PB Shelley's illegitimate child; other suggest that she was an infant he planned to adopt in order to replace Clara. There were also claims that she was the daughter of Shelley and Claire and even of Allegra's nursemaid and Byron. The baby was left with foster parents in Naples and the Shelleys travelled to Rome, where their son William was to die of dysentery.
1819	7 Jun	The one joy remaining in Mary's life was her son William. However, when Mary, Percy, and William were living in Naples, they were warned by their friend Dr. Bell to remove both Percy and William from the Roman heat as soon as possible because they both would most likely not be able to endure it (133). Mary and Percy did not leave because they refused to believe that William was frail after he had recovered so well from a sickness in May (133). Thus, when William fell ill on June 2nd, both Percy and Mary were shocked to hear that William was desperately sick (134). In fact, his fever had so progressed that William had not the strength to recover. He died five days later on June 7th, at the age of three and a half (134). Although Mary was crushed by the loss of her young son and became even more emotionally removed from Percy, even more unbearably, she was pregnant at the time and felt that she could not give birth to another child only to lose it later (134). The Shelleys leave Rome on 10 June. They move to Leghorn. On 24 June, they move to Villa Valsolvano, near Montenero.
	Aug - Feb 1820	Mary writes <i>Matilda</i> , which she sends to Godwin in 1821. He does not attempt to get the work published, and it remains unpublished until 1959.

	Oct-Nov	The Shelleys and Claire move to the Palazzo Marini, Via Valfonda, Florence. Claire leaves for Vienna on 10 November. On 12 Nov Mary gives birth to a son, Percy Florence. He was Mary's only surviving child (142).
1820	Jan-Mar	The Shelleys move to Tre Donzelle, Pisa. Mary begins writing a novel which she calls <i>Castruccio, Prince of Lucca</i> , although she had first conceived of the story's idea in Marlow. Godwin will later change its title to <i>Valperga</i> .
	Apr-May	Mary writes her mythological dramas, <i>Proserpine</i> and <i>Midas</i> .
	Jun	Paolo Foggi, the Shelley's former servant whom they had dismissed in January 1819, and who had married their servant Elise Duvillard, attempts to blackmail PBShelley over the mysterious Neapolitan child, Elena Adelaide. Although his attempts fail, he and Elise do succeed in turning the Hoppners, friends of Byron and the Shelleys, against the Shelleys by claiming that Elena's parents were PBShelley and Claire. On 10 June, Elena Adelaide dies. Mary suffered an emotional breakdown; she was incapable of coping with the birth of another son, money problems and the blackmail of the nursemaid over the baby girl who had recently died. They move back to Pisa.
	Late Nov	The Shelleys meet Emilia Viviani, the beautiful daughter of the governor of Pisa, confined to a convent until her marriage. PBShelley develops an infatuation and writes <i>Epipsychidion</i> for her.
1821	19 Jan	The Shelleys meet Edward and Jane Williams, a common-law couple. Shelley became friendly with Edward Williams. He enjoyed sailing in his new boat.
	Jul	The first translation of <i>Frankenstein</i> is published in France: <i>Frankenstein; ou le Prométhée Moderne</i> (Paris: Corrèard), translated by Jules Saladin.
	End of Aug	Mary finishes <i>Valperga</i> . She corrects and copies the novel through early December. Byron arrives in Pisa with his mistress, Teresa Guiccioli.
1822	Jan	After much wrangling with Ollier for an advance, the Shelleys send Mary's manuscript of <i>Valperga</i> to Godwin for publication, instructing him to keep the revenue from its sales. He delays publication, however, and it does not appear until 1823.
	14 Jan	Edward John Trelawny, a friend of the Williamses and Medwin, and an admirer of PBS and Byron, arrives in Pisa.
	19 Apr	Allegra Byron dies from typhus in a convent school.
	30 Apr	The Shelleys and Claire take a summer residence at Casa Magni, San Terenzo. The Williamses join them on 1 May.
	16 Jun	Mary miscarries and almost dies from the resulting hemorrhaging.

	1 Jul	Shelley and Edward Williams sail to Leghorn in Shelley's boat, the <i>Don Juan</i> . On 8 July, they begin their return journey and, sometime during the voyage, drown in the Gulf of Spezia. On July 15th, the three corpses of Percy, Edward Williams, and Charles Vivian floated ashore (198). Mary, Jane Williams, and Claire return to Pisa. In August Shelley's body is cremated at Viareggio. Leigh Hunt, Lord Byron, and Edward John Trelawney burnt Percy's body atop a funeral pyre in Italy, with a copy of John Keats' last book (200).
	Sep-Dec	She had loved Shelley to the depths of her being, and mingled with her grief was that worst of all remorse, remorse for failure in relations with the dead. She was dedicated thenceforth to his memory and to the care of their son. Trelawny, John Howard Payne, and perhaps Washington Irving, wanted to marry her, but she refused them all. "I want to be Mary Shelley on my tombstone," she said. Mary transcribes cantos 10-12 of Byron's <i>Don Juan</i> . She also begins to transcribe PBShelley's poetry in preparation for a posthumous collection.
1823	1 Jan	"A Tale of the Passions" appears in the <i>Liberal</i> , II, 289-325.
	21 Jan	PB Shelley's ashes are interred in the Protestant Cemetery, Rome.
	19 Feb	<i>Valperga: Or, the Life and Adventures of Castruccio, Prince of Lucca</i> (London: G and W.B. Whittaker) is published in three volumes.
	24 Feb	Byron sends Mary a letter from Sir Timothy Shelley, PB Shelley's father, who initially denies Mary support and insists that he will only provide for Percy Florence if Mary relinquishes custody of him.
	[23] Apr	"Madame D'Houtetot" appears in the <i>Liberal</i> , III, 67-83.
	Jul	Mary composes her poem, "The Choice."
	25 Jul	Mary and Percy Florence leaves Genoa for England, arriving on 25 August.
	11 Aug	A second edition of <i>Frankenstein</i> (London: G. and W. B. Whittaker) is published in two volumes. The text is probably corrected by William Godwin, and the title page names "Mary W. Shelley" as the author.
	27 Nov	Mary receives an allowance of £100 per year for Percy Florence from Sir Timothy Shelley.
1824	Jan	"Recollections of Italy" appears in the <i>London Magazine</i> , IX, 21-6.
	Feb	Mary begins writing <i>The Last Man</i> .
	Mar	"On Ghosts" appears in the <i>London Magazine</i> , IX, 253-56.
	Apr	"The Bride of Modern Italy" appears in the <i>London Magazine</i> , IX, 351-63.
	19 Apr	Lord Byron dies in Greece. Mary sends a tribute to the <i>London Magazine</i> , but it is never published.

	Jun	<i>Posthumous Poems of Percy Bysshe Shelley</i> (London: John and Henry L. Hunt), a volume of PBS's unpublished poems, is published. Mary edits the volume and writes a signed preface. On 23 June, Mary learns that a displeased Sir Timothy Shelley will halt Percy Florence's allowance until she both stops publication and promises not to publish any more of PB Shelley's writings in Sir Timothy's lifetime. Sir Timothy Shelley increases Percy Florence's allowance to £200.
1825	Jan	Mary begins her friendship with Mary Diana Dods, who writes under the pseudonym "David Lyndsay."
	Feb	Mary probably finished a first draft of <i>The Last Man</i> . By November, 1825, she is copying the manuscript.
	25 Jun	Mary refuses a marriage proposal from American actor, playwright, and manager John Howard Payne.
1826	23 Jan	<i>The Last Man</i> (London: Henry Colburn), "By the Author of Frankenstein," is published in three volumes. It depicts the end of human civilization, set in the 21st century republican England. Its second part describes the gradual destruction of the human race by plague. The story is narrated by Lionel Verney, the last man of the title, living amidst the ruins of Rome. Feminist critics have paid attention to its fantasy of the total corrosion of patriarchal order.
	17 Jul	Mary meets Thomas Moore and agrees to help him compose a biography of Lord Byron. She works on this project off and on over the next few years, and <i>The Letters and Journals of Lord Byron: With Notices of His Life</i> is published in 1830.
	14 Sep	Charles Bysshe Shelley, the son of PBS and Harriet Shelley, dies, making Percy Florence heir apparent to the baronetcy.
1827	Feb	Mary establishes a friendship with Isabel, Julia, and Rosa Robinson during the first of many visits to the Robinson's Park Cottage in Paddington. Isabel Robinson will later "marry" Mary Diana Dods, who assumes the identity of "Sholto Douglas."
	Spring	Jane Williams and Thomas Hogg begin living as a married couple. Afterwards, she calls herself Jane Williams Hogg, even though she is still legally married to her first husband. Mary records in her journal her discovery of Jane Williams Hogg's disloyalty. Isabel Robinson had informed Mary of the slanderous stories Jane has been spreading about Mary as a cold, unfeeling wife.
	26 Sep	Mary writes in a letter to Godwin that she is writing each morning; the work is presumably <i>The Fortunes of Perkin Warbeck</i> . She writes the novel over the next two years, soliciting information from Godwin, John Murray, Prosper Mérimée, Thomas Crofton Croker, and Sir Walter Scott.
1828	25 Mar	Percy Florence enters Edward Slater's Gentlemen's Academy, Church Street, Kensington.

	11 Apr	Mary visits the Douglasses (Isabel Robinson & Mary Diana Dods) in Paris. She contracts smallpox soon after her arrival. During her visit, she meets Prosper Mérimée and General Lafayette. Mary returns to England and recovers from her smallpox at the Robinsons' Park Cottage. Just before Christmas she moves back to London and lives with Claire Clairmont.
1829	Jan	"Illyrian Poems--Feudal Scenes," Mary's review of Prosper Mérimée's <i>La Guzla, ou Choir de Poesies Illyriques recueillies dans la Dalmatie, la Croatie et l'Herzegovine</i> ; and <i>La Jacquerie; Feudal Scenes, followed by the Family of Carvajal, a Drama</i> , is published in the <i>Westminster Review</i> , X, 71-81.
	1 Jun	Sir Timothy increases Percy Florence's allowance to £300.
	Jul	Her review, "Modern Italy," appears in the <i>Westminster Review</i> , II, 127-140 in July. Loves of the Poets," appears in the <i>Westminster Review</i> , XI, 472-77 in October.
	Dec	The Paris Galignani edition of <i>The Poetical Works of Coleridge, Shelley, and Keats</i> , a pirated work edited by Cyrus Redding and including biographical sketches of the poets, is published. MWS had provided Redding with information on PBS earlier that year.
1830	May	Mary's review of William Godwin's <i>Cloudesley</i> appears in <i>Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine</i> , XXVIII, 711-16. In Nov-Dec. two stories by "The Author of Frankenstein" appear in <i>The Keepsake for MDCCCXXXI</i> : "Transformation" (18-39) and "The Swiss Peasant" (121-46). In addition, three poems in this volume have also been attributed to her, although only the first is signed "Mary W. Shelley": "Absence" (22), "Dirge" (85), and "A Night Scene" (147-48).
1831	31 Oct	The 1831 edition of <i>Frankenstein</i> (London: Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley) is published as part of Bentley's Standard Novels. the title page names "Mary W. Shelley" as the author. This one-volume version includes several revisions, although she claims, in a new Introduction, that they are "confined to such parts as are mere adjuncts to the story, leaving the core and substance of it untouched." E-texts and Hypertexts of the 1831 Edition of Frankenstein.
	[Nov/Dec]	"The Dream," a story by "The Author of Frankenstein," appears in <i>The Keepsake for MDCCCXXXII</i> (22-38).
	[Nov/Dec]	<i>Proserpine, a Mythological Drama in Two Acts</i> , which Mary had written in 1820, is published in <i>The Winter's Wreath for 1832</i> (1-20).
1832	Jan	Mary's review of James Fenimore Cooper's <i>The Bravo</i> appears in the <i>Westminster Review</i> , XVI 180-92. The journal refuses to publish her review of Edward Bulwer's <i>Eugene Aram</i> & she stops publishing her work there.
	29 Sep	Percy Florence enters boarding school at Harrow.

	[Nov/Dec]	Mary publishes a poem in <i>The Keepsake for MDCCCXXXIII</i> : "Stanzas" ("I must forget thy dark eyes' love fraught gaze") (52). The issue also contains two stories by "The Author of Frankenstein": "The Brother and Sister: An Italian Story" (105-41) and "The Invisible Girl" (210-27).
1833		"The Smuggler and His Family," by "Mrs. Shelley" appears in <i>Original Compositions in Prose and Verse</i> (27-53).
	May	Mary moves to Harrow so Percy Florence can become a day-student and reduce the expense of his schooling.
	[Nov/Dec]	"The Mortal Immortal," by "The Author of Frankenstein," appears in <i>The Keepsake for MDCCCXXXIV</i> (71-87). Hypertext of <i>The Mortal Immortal</i> (Romantic Circles Electronic Edition)
1834	[Jan]	Edward Moxon writes MWS to propose an edition of PBS's works. She responds on 22 January that when "family reasons" no longer hinder her, she plans to republish her late husband's poems, along with some letters and prose. She also states that she would not write a biographical sketch of PB Shelley, but might wish to select a person to do so.
	[Nov/Dec]	"The Trial of Love," by "The Author of Frankenstein," appears in <i>The Keepsake for MDCCCXXXV</i> (70-86).
		"The Elder Son," by "Mrs. Shelley," appears in <i>Heath's Book of Beauty. 1835</i> (83-123).
1835	Feb	<i>Lives of the Most Eminent Literary and Scientific Men of Italy, Spain, and Portugal</i> , Vol 1 (of 3) (London: Longman, Orme, Brown [etc.]), is published as part of <i>The Cabinet of Biography, Conducted by the Rev. Dionysius Lardner</i> .
	7 Apr	<i>Lodore</i> (London: Richard Bentley) is published in three volumes and attributed to "The Author of 'Frankenstein.'"
	[Oct]	<i>Lives of the Most Eminent Literary and Scientific Men of Italy, Spain, and Portugal</i> , Vol 2 (London: Longman, Orme, Brown [etc.]) is published.
1836	4 Feb	Jane Williams Hogg gives birth to a daughter, Prudentia Sarah Hogg; Mary will become the godmother.
	Mar	Mary removes Percy Florence from Harrow, employs a private tutor, and moves with her son to 14 North Bank, Regent's Park.
	7 Apr	William Godwin dies and is buried on 14 April in the St. Pancras churchyard, close to Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin. In his will, he leaves his manuscripts and letters to Mary with the request that she chose those worthy to print and destroy the rest. The proceeds of any publications are to benefit Mrs. Godwin. Henry Colburn agrees to pay Mary Jane Godwin 350 guineas for Godwin's memoirs; Mary begins work on the project, which she never completes.
	[Nov/Dec]	"The Parvenue" by "Mrs. Shelley" appears in <i>The Keepsake for MDCCCXXXVII</i> (209-11).

1837	Feb	<i>Falkner. A Novel</i> (London: Saunders and Otley) is published in three volumes; the title page attributes the novel to "The Author of 'Frankenstein,' 'The Last Man,' &c."
	[Sep/Oct]	<i>Lives of the Most Eminent Literary and Scientific Men of Italy, Spain and Portugal</i> , Vol 3 (London: Longman, Orme, Brown, [etc]) is published.
	10 Oct	Percy Florence enters Trinity College, Cambridge.
	[Nov/Dec]	"The Pilgrims" appears in <i>The Keepsake for MDCCCXXXIX</i> (128-55).
1838	[Jul]	<i>Lives of the Most Eminent Literary and Scientific Men of France</i> , Vol 1 (of 2) (London: Longman, Orme, Brown, [etc.]) of <i>The Cabinet of Biography, Conducted by the Rev. Dionysius Lardner</i> is published.
	Aug	Sir Timothy Shelley permits Mary to publish Shelley's poems, provided that the works contain no memoirs of his son. MWS gets around this restriction by writing biographical notes for the poems. She publishes two poems in <i>The Keepsake for MDCCCXXXIX</i> : "Stanzas" ("How like a star you rose upon my life") (179) and "Stanzas" ("O come to me in dreams, my love!") (201). The issue also contains a story: "Euphrasia: A Tale of Greece" by "Mrs. Shelley" (135-52).
1839	Jan-May	Mary's four-volume edition of <i>Poetical Words of Percy Bysshe Shelley</i> (London: Edward Moxon), with her preface and notes, is published; she dedicates the edition to Percy Florence.
	[Mar]	Mary undergoes a period of severe illness, possibly brought about by the strain of editing PBS's poems. She is frequently ill for the last 10 years of her life. In August <i>Lives of the Most Eminent Literary and Scientific Men of France</i> , Vol 2 (London: Longman, Orme, Brown, [etc.]) is published. Mary's one volume edition of <i>Poetical Words of Percy Bysshe Shelley</i> (London: Edward Moxon) is published in November. His <i>Essays, Letters from Abroad, Translations and Fragments</i> (London: Edward Moxon) is published in two volumes in December.
1840	Jun	Mary, Percy Florence, and his friends tour the Continent, arriving in Paris on 22 June. The group travels through Germany and Switzerland, spends July and August in Cadenabbia, and then proceeds to Milan, arriving on 11 September. Percy leaves for England with his friends a week later, and MWS continues to Paris, arriving on 10 October and remaining until the end of the year.
1841	Feb	Percy Florence graduates from Trinity College, Cambridge. Sir Timothy increases his allowance to £400.
	17 Jun	Mary Jane Godwin dies.
1842	Jun - 30 Aug, 1843	Mary Shelley, Percy Florence, and friends tour the Continent again, this time visiting Kissingen, Berlin, Dresden, Venice, Florence, Rome, and Paris.
	Jul-Aug	Mary visits Claire in Paris, where Claire introduces her to a group of Italian exiled revolutionaries, including Ferdinando Luigi Gatteschi.
1844	24 Apr	Sir Timothy Shelley dies; Percy Florence inherits the estate and title.

	Jul	<i>Rambles in Germany and Italy in 1840, 1842, and 1843</i> (London: Edward Moxon) is published in two volumes.
1845	Sep	Ferdinando Gatteschi, whom Mary Shelley had aided financially and whose writing she had encouraged, attempts to blackmail her with her letters to him. Through the help of Percy Florence's friend Alexander Knox, the Italian police destroy the letters on 11 October.
	Oct	George "Byron," an unknown correspondent who claimed to be Byron's son, offers to sell Mary several letters written by PB Shelley and herself. In February 1846, he threatens to publish the letters, but is dissuaded when Mary Shelley threatens an injunction against the publication.
1848	22 Jun	Percy Florence marries Jane St. John. Mary moves with them.
1851	1 Feb	Mary Shelley dies at age 53 in her home at Chester Square, London. Lady Jane Shelley arranges for the remains of Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin to be moved from St. Pancras to the churchyard at St. Peters, Bournemouth, and on 8 February, Mary is buried between her parents.

Selected works:

- HISTORY OF SIX WEEK'S TOUR, 1817
- FRANKENSTEIN; OR THE MODERN PROMETHEUS, 1818 - Frankenstein: Uusi Prometheus - film 1931, dir. by James Whale - sequel *The Bride of Frankenstein* (1935), dir. by James Whale - *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* (1994), dir. by Kenneth Branagh - see the film list below
- VALPERGA, 1823
- THE LAST MAN, 1826
- THE FORTUNES OF PERKIN WARBECK, 1830
- LODORE, 1835
- FALKNER, 1837
- TALES AND SHORT STORIES, 1891
- COLLECTED TALES AND SHORT STORIES, 1976
- THE LETTERS OF MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT SHELLEY, 1983
- JOURNALS OF MARY SHELLEY 1814-1844, 1987
- SELECTED LETTERS OF MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT SHELLEY, 1995

Frankenstein. The Modern Prometheus.

Context



The Villa Diodati

The Granger Collection New York

The Summer of 1816 Lord Byron had rented Villa Diodati on the shores of Lake Geneva, which John Milton, the author of *Paradise Lost*, had visited in the 1600's. Rousseau and Voltaire had also resided on these shores. Mary considered the area to be sacred to enlightenment.

The weather went from being beautiful and radiant to melodramatically tempestuous. Torrential rains and incredible lightning storms plagued the area, similar to the summer that Mary was born. This incredible meteorological change was due to the eruption of the volcano, Tambora, in Indonesia. The weather, as well as the company and the Genevan district, contributed to the genesis of *Frankenstein*.

The group read aloud a collection of German ghost stories, *The Fantasmagoriana*. In one of the stories, a group of travelers relate to one another supernatural experiences that they had experienced. This inspired Byron to challenge the group to write a ghost story.

Shelley wrote an forgettable story, Byron wrote a story fragment, and Polidori began the "*The Vampyre*", the first modern vampire tale. Unfortunately, Mary was uninspired and did not start writing anything.

The following evening the group continued their late night activities and at midnight Byron recited the poem, *Christabel* by Samuel T. Coleridge. Percy became overwrought during the reading and perceived Mary as the villainess of the poem. He ran out of the room and apparently created quite a scene. This incident undoubtedly affected Mary, leading to feelings of guilt that contributed to the story ideas she later developed.

For the next couple of days Mary was unable to begin her story. The poets dropped theirs but Mary persisted in her creative endeavor. She felt that her ambitions and her value were at stake and attempted to turn the pressure and frustration into creative energy.

On June 21st, the group discussed a subject from de Stael's *De l'Allemagne*: "whether the principle of life could be discovered and whether scientists could galvanize a corpse of manufactured humanoid". When Mary went to bed, she had a "waking" nightmare:

When I placed my head upon my pillow, I did not sleep, nor could I be said to think. . . I saw--with shut eyes, but acute mental vision--I saw the pale student of unhallowed arts kneeling beside the thing he had put together. I saw the hideous phantasm of a man stretched out, and then, on the working of some powerful engine, show signs of life, and stir with an uneasy, half-vital motion. Frightful must it be; for supremely frightful would be the effect of any human endeavor to mock the stupendous Creator of the world... His success would terrify the artist; he would rush away... hope that... this thing... would subside into dead matter... he opens his eyes; behold the horrid thing stands

at his bedside, opening his curtains...
(Mary Shelley, from her introduction to the third edition of *Frankenstein*)

The next morning Mary realized she had found her story and began writing the lines that open Chapter IV of *Frankenstein* - "*It was on a dreary night in November*"- She completed the novel in May of 1817 and it was published January 1, 1818.

There are numerous autobiographical references in Mary Shelley's fiction. The images of Shelley and particularly Byron inspired most of the leading male characters. Byron's impetuous heaven-challenging figure had a strong appeal for Mary.

Mary Shelley's story did not arise from the void. Scientists and physicians of her time, tantalized by the elusive boundary between life and death, probed it through experiments with lower organisms, human anatomical studies, attempts to resuscitate drowning victims, and experiments using electricity to restore life to the recently dead. For instance, when Harriet Shelley (Percy's first wife) died in 1816, rescuers took her lifeless body to a receiving station of the London Society where melling salts, vigorous shaking, electricity, and artificial respiration had been used since the 1760s to restore drowning victims to life. In March 1815, Mary Shelley dreamed of her dead infant daughter held before a fire, rubbed vigorously, and restored to life. During the 1790s, Italian physician Luigi Galvani demonstrated what we now understand to be the electrical basis of nerve impulses when he made frog muscles twitch by jolting them with a spark from an electrostatic machine. When *Frankenstein* was published, however, the word galvanism implied the release, through electricity, of mysterious life forces. At Eton College P.B Shelley had become interested in Luigi Galvani's experiments with electric shocks to make dead frogs' muscles twitch. It is possible that his teacher, James Lind had demonstrated the technique to Shelley. The first edition of book had an unsigned preface by Percy Shelley. Many thought that it is also his novel, disbelieving that only 19-year-old woman could write such horror story.

To make his creature, Victor Frankenstein "dabbled among the unhallowed damps of the grave" and frequented dissecting rooms and slaughterhouses. In Mary Shelley's day, as in our own, the healthy human form delighted and intrigued artists, physicians, and anatomists. But corpses, decaying tissue, and body parts stirred almost universal disgust. Alive or dead, whole or in pieces, human bodies arouse strong emotion--and account for part of *Frankenstein's* enduring hold on us.

The heart of Mary Shelley's novel is its protagonist's struggle to deal with the responsibility for the tragic consequences of an overreaching scientific endeavor. The novel is a triumph of Gothic storytelling with its supernatural and horrifying depiction of science gone awry, and the framing of various narratives contributes to the tale's complex, nuanced, and fascinating nature.

Key Facts

Full title - *Frankenstein: or, The Modern Prometheus*

Genre - Gothic science fiction

Time and place written - Switzerland, 1816, and London, 1816–1817

Date of first publication - January 1, 1818

Publisher - Lackington, Hughes, Harding, Mavor, & Jones

Narrator - The primary narrator is Robert Walton, who, in his letters, quotes Victor Frankenstein's first-person narrative at length; Victor, in turn, quotes the monster's first-person narrative; in addition, the lesser characters Elizabeth Lavenza and Alphonse Frankenstein narrate parts of the story through their letters to Victor

Climax - The murder of Elizabeth Lavenza on the night of her wedding to Victor Frankenstein in Chapter 23

Protagonist - Victor Frankenstein

Antagonist - Frankenstein's monster

Setting (Time) - Eighteenth century

Setting (Place) - Geneva; the Swiss Alps; Ingolstadt; England and Scotland; the northern ice

Point of view - The point of view shifts with the narration, from Robert Walton to Victor Frankenstein to Frankenstein's monster, then back to Walton, with a few digressions in the form of letters from Elizabeth Lavenza and Alphonse Frankenstein

Falling action - After the murder of Elizabeth Lavenza, when Victor Frankenstein chases the monster to the northern ice, is rescued by Robert Walton, narrates his story, and dies

Tense - Past

Foreshadowing - Ubiquitous—throughout his narrative, Victor uses words such as "fate" and "omen" to hint at the tragedy that has befallen him; additionally, he occasionally pauses in his recounting to collect himself in the face of frightening memories

Tone - Gothic, Romantic, emotional, tragic, fatalistic

Symbols - Fire and light

Themes - Dangerous knowledge; sublime nature; texts; secrecy; monstrosity

Motifs - Passive women; abortion

Plot Overview

In a series of letters Robert Walton, the captain of a ship bound for the North Pole, recounts to his sister back in England the progress of his dangerous mission. Successful early on, the mission is soon interrupted by seas full of impassable ice. Trapped, Walton encounters Victor Frankenstein, who has been traveling by dog-drawn sledge across the ice and is weakened by the cold. Walton takes him aboard ship, helps nurse him back to health, and hears the fantastic tale of the monster that Frankenstein created.

Victor first describes his early life in Geneva. At the end of a blissful childhood spent in the company of Elizabeth Lavenza (his cousin in the 1818 edition, his adopted sister in the 1831 edition) and friend Henry Clerval, Victor enters the university of Ingolstadt to study natural philosophy and chemistry. There, he is consumed by the desire to discover the secret of life and, after several years of research, becomes convinced that he has found it.

Armed with the knowledge he has long been seeking, Victor spends months feverishly fashioning a creature out of old body parts. One climactic night, in the secrecy of his apartment, he brings his creation to life. When he looks at the monstrosity that he has created, however, the sight horrifies him. After a fitful night of sleep, interrupted by the specter of the monster looming over him, he runs into the streets, eventually wandering in remorse. Victor runs into Henry, who has come to study at the university, and he takes his friend back to his apartment. Though the monster is gone, Victor falls into a feverish illness.

Sickened by his horrific deed, Victor prepares to return to Geneva, to his family, and to health. Just before departing Ingolstadt, however, he receives a letter from his father informing him that his youngest brother, William, has been murdered. Grief-stricken, Victor hurries home. While passing through the woods where William was strangled, he catches sight of the monster and becomes convinced that the monster is his brother's murderer. Arriving in Geneva, Victor finds that Justine Moritz, a kind, gentle girl who had been adopted by the Frankenstein household, has been accused. She is tried, condemned, and executed, despite her assertions of innocence. Victor grows despondent, guilty with the knowledge that the monster he has created bears responsibility for the death of two innocent loved ones.

Hoping to ease his grief, Victor takes a vacation to the mountains. While he is alone one day, crossing an enormous glacier, the monster approaches him. The monster admits the murder of William but begs for understanding. Lonely, shunned, and forlorn, he says that he struck out at William in a desperate attempt to injure Victor, his cruel creator. The monster begs Victor to create a mate for him, a monster equally grotesque to serve as his sole companion.

Victor refuses at first, horrified by the prospect of creating a second monster. The monster is eloquent and persuasive, however, and he eventually convinces Victor. After returning to Geneva, Victor heads for England, accompanied by Henry, to gather information for the creation of a female monster. Leaving Henry in

Scotland, he secludes himself on a desolate island in the Orkneys and works reluctantly at repeating his first success. One night, struck by doubts about the morality of his actions, Victor glances out the window to see the monster glaring in at him with a frightening grin. Horrified by the possible consequences of his work, Victor destroys his new creation. The monster, enraged, vows revenge, swearing that he will be with Victor on Victor's wedding night.

Later that night, Victor takes a boat out onto a lake and dumps the remains of the second creature in the water. The wind picks up and prevents him from returning to the island. In the morning, he finds himself ashore near an unknown town. Upon landing, he is arrested and informed that he will be tried for a murder discovered the previous night. Victor denies any knowledge of the murder, but when shown the body, he is shocked to behold his friend Henry Clerval, with the mark of the monster's fingers on his neck. Victor falls ill, raving and feverish, and is kept in prison until his recovery, after which he is acquitted of the crime.

Shortly after returning to Geneva with his father, Victor marries Elizabeth. He fears the monster's warning and suspects that he will be murdered on his wedding night. To be cautious, he sends Elizabeth away to wait for him. While he awaits the monster, he hears Elizabeth scream and realizes that the monster had been hinting at killing his new bride, not himself. Victor returns home to his father, who dies of grief a short time later. Victor vows to devote the rest of his life to finding the monster and exacting his revenge, and he soon departs to begin his quest.

Victor tracks the monster ever northward into the ice. In a dogsled chase, Victor almost catches up with the monster, but the sea beneath them swells and the ice breaks, leaving an unbridgeable gap between them. At this point, Walton encounters Victor, and the narrative catches up to the time of Walton's fourth letter to his sister.

Walton tells the remainder of the story in another series of letters to his sister. Victor, already ill when the two men meet, worsens and dies shortly thereafter. When Walton returns, several days later, to the room in which the body lies, he is startled to see the monster weeping over Victor. The monster tells Walton of his immense solitude, suffering, hatred, and remorse. He asserts that now that his creator has died, he too can end his suffering. The monster then departs for the northernmost ice to die.

Character List

Victor Frankenstein - Frankenstein is the eldest son of a wealthy, Genevese man, Alphonse, and his young wife, Caroline. Victor grows up in the perfect family with a happy childhood and a constant and devoted companion in his adopted cousin, Elizabeth. He is sensitive, intelligent, and passionate about his interests and becomes absorbed in the quest to find out what creates life. While away at college in Ingolstadt, Victor creates a being from scavenged corpse parts and gives it life, but is repulsed by its hideousness once it lives. The monster, in retaliation for Victor's negligence, destroys his life by killing off those Victor loves. Victor chases him to the far reaches of the Arctic planning to destroy him and then die to escape his misery and remorse at his creation, but he dies aboard Walton's ship before he can catch the monster. When he attends university at Ingolstadt he learns about modern science and, within a few years, masters all that his professors have to teach him. He becomes fascinated with the "secret of life," discovers it, and brings a hideous monster to life. The monster proceeds to kill Victor's youngest brother, best friend and wife. He also indirectly causes the deaths of two other innocents, including Victor's father. Though torn by remorse, shame, and guilt, Victor refuses to admit to anyone the horror of what he has created, even as he sees the ramifications of his creative act spiraling out of control.

Victor changes over the course of the novel from an innocent youth fascinated by the prospects of science into a disillusioned, guilt-ridden man determined to destroy the fruits of his arrogant scientific endeavor. Whether as a result of his desire to attain the godlike power of creating new life or his avoidance of the public arenas in which science is usually conducted, Victor is doomed by a lack of humanness. He cuts himself off from the world and eventually commits himself entirely to an animalistic obsession with revenging himself upon the monster.

At the end of the novel, having chased his creation ever northward, Victor relates his story to Robert Walton and then dies. With its multiple narrators and, hence, multiple perspectives, the novel leaves the reader with contrasting interpretations of Victor: classic mad scientist, transgressing all boundaries without concern, or brave adventurer into unknown scientific lands, not to be held responsible for the consequences of his explorations.

The monster - The eight-foot-tall, hideously ugly creation of Victor Frankenstein. Assembled from old body parts and strange chemicals, animated by a mysterious spark. He enters life eight feet tall and enormously strong but with the mind of a newborn. The monster is a conglomeration of human parts with inhuman strength. He is so hideous that Victor, his own creator, cannot stand to look upon him. Abandoned by his creator and confused, intelligent and sensitive, the monster attempts to integrate himself into human social patterns, but all who see him shun him. His feeling of abandonment compels him to seek revenge against his creator. Looking in the mirror, he realizes his physical grotesqueness, an aspect of his persona that blinds society to his initially gentle, kind nature. He is loving and gentle at the beginning of his life, childlike in his curiosity and experiences, but after several harsh encounters with humans, he becomes bitter. He seeks revenge on his creator for making him so hideous and rendering him permanently lonely because of his ugliness. He offers Frankenstein peace in exchange for a companion of like origin, but when Frankenstein does not comply, he vows to destroy him and begins killing off Frankenstein's friends and family -- those figures he most envies because he does not have them. After Victor destroys his work on the female monster meant to ease the monster's solitude, the monster murders Victor's best friend and then his new wife. While Victor feels unmitigated hatred for his creation, the monster shows that he is not a purely evil being. The monster's eloquent narration of events (as provided by Victor) reveals his remarkable sensitivity and benevolence. He assists a group of poor peasants and saves a girl from drowning, but because of his outward appearance, he is rewarded only with beatings and disgust. Torn between vengefulness and compassion, the monster ends up lonely and tormented by remorse. Even the death of his creator-turned-would-be-destroyer offers only bittersweet relief: joy because Victor has caused him so much suffering, sadness because Victor is the only person with whom he has had any sort of relationship. After finding Frankenstein dead aboard Walton's ship, the monster goes further north with plans to destroy himself and end the suffering that Frankenstein began when he created him.

Robert Walton - The Arctic seafarer whose letters open and close Frankenstein. Indirect narrator of the story, he tells Victor Frankenstein's story through letters to his sister, Margaret Saville. Walton is a self-educated man who set out to reach and explore the North Pole and find an Arctic passage to connect the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. While his ship is locked in ice, his crew sees Frankenstein's monster pass by on a dog sled and Frankenstein himself, exhausted and weakened, not far behind. They take Frankenstein aboard and Walton nurses him and talks with him because he has been longing for a friend. In seeing Walton's raw ambition to explore the North Pole at all costs, Frankenstein is prompted to tell the story of his destruction that a similar ambition brought upon him. After Frankenstein's death and just before the ship heads back to England, Walton is also the last to see the monster before he goes north to kill himself. Walton records the incredible tale in a series of letters addressed to his sister, Margaret Saville, in England. Walton's letters to his sister form a frame around the main narrative, Victor Frankenstein's tragic story. Walton captains a North Pole-bound ship that gets trapped between sheets of ice. While waiting for the ice to thaw, he and his crew pick up Victor, weak and emaciated from his long chase after the monster. Victor recovers somewhat, tells Walton the story of his life, and then dies. Walton laments the death of a man with whom he felt a strong, meaningful friendship beginning to form. Walton functions as the conduit through which the reader hears the story of Victor and his monster. However, he also plays a role that parallels Victor's in many ways. Like Victor, Walton is an explorer, chasing after that "country of eternal light"—unpossessed knowledge. Victor's influence on him is paradoxical: one moment he exhorts Walton's

almost-mutinuous men to stay the path courageously, regardless of danger; the next, he serves as an abject example of the dangers of heedless scientific ambition. In his ultimate decision to terminate his treacherous pursuit, Walton serves as a foil (someone whose traits or actions contrast with, and thereby highlight, those of another character) to Victor, either not obsessive enough to risk almost-certain death or not courageous enough to allow his passion to drive him.

Alphonse Frankenstein - Victor's father, very sympathetic toward his son. Alphonse consoles Victor in moments of pain and encourages him to remember the importance of family.

Elizabeth Lavenza - An orphan, four to five years younger than Victor, whom the Frankensteins adopt. In the 1818 edition of the novel, Elizabeth is Victor's cousin, the child of Alphonse Frankenstein's sister. In the 1831 edition, Victor's mother, Caroline Beaufort Frankenstein, rescues Elizabeth from a destitute peasant cottage in Italy. She became Victor's constant companion and he watched over her as if she were his own possession from their meeting when he was 5 years old. Her beauty and kindness made her adored almost reverently by all who knew her, and it was taken for granted that she and Victor would marry. She is the gentling influence and the comforter for the males of the Frankenstein family when Caroline dies, and her beauty and goodness are constant throughout her life. She and Victor are married, but on their wedding night, the monster strangles Elizabeth to punish Victor for not creating for him a companion creature. Elizabeth embodies the novel's motif of passive women, as she waits patiently for Victor's attention.

Henry Clerval – Victor's boyhood friend, who nurses Victor back to health in Ingolstadt. After working unhappily for his father, Henry begins to follow in Victor's footsteps as a scientist. His cheerfulness counters Victor's moroseness. Henry is poetic, sensitive and caring. When Victor was in Ingolstadt so long without sending word to his family, Henry relocated there to study and to look after Victor. Henry nursed him through a long period of illness before Victor returned to Geneva. Later they traveled together to England and Scotland, but while they were there, the monster strangled Henry to punish Victor. Victor was accused of the murder, but was acquitted.

William Frankenstein - Victor's youngest brother and the darling of the Frankenstein family. The monster strangles William in the woods outside Geneva in order to hurt Victor for abandoning him. William's death deeply saddens Victor and burdens him with tremendous guilt about having created The monster.

Justine Moritz - Servant in the Frankenstein household, adopted as a young girl into the Frankenstein household while Victor is growing up. Justine was another beautiful, gentle, and kind addition to the Frankenstein family whom Caroline took in to care for and educate. When Caroline got scarlet fever, Justine nursed her, and after Caroline died, Justine returned to her own mother. Her mother too became ill and died, so Justine returned to the Frankenstein home to help raise the two sons Caroline had left when she died. Justine was a grateful and faithful part of their household, but she was accused of 5-year-old William Frankenstein's murder when a locket he had been wearing was found in her dress. Although she had been framed by the monster and was innocent, she was executed and Victor considered her death his fault.

Caroline Beaufort - After her father's death, Caroline is taken in by, and later marries, Alphonse Frankenstein. Mother of Victor, Ernest, and William, Caroline Beaufort Frankenstein was the daughter of a once-wealthy friend of Alphonse. Planning to aid his friend, Alphonse found his home and went there only to find Caroline weeping over his coffin. Alphonse took her into his home and married her two years later. They had a loving relationship and cared for their children very much. She was a good, beautiful, and

gentle woman adored by all her family until she died from the scarlet fever she contracted nursing Elizabeth back to health, just before Victor leaves for Ingolstadt at age seventeen.

Beaufort - Friend of Alphonse Frankenstein and Caroline's father. A merchant, Beaufort lost his wealth and relocated to escape the humiliation of his poverty. Caroline nursed him as his health declined and was weeping over his coffin when Alphonse found her and took her back to Geneva.

Alphonse Frankenstein: Victor Frankenstein's father, Alphonse was a wealthy and benevolent man who loved his wife and his children very dearly. He rescued Caroline Beaufort, daughter of his close friend, from poverty after her father's death. He was a doting husband and father bent by the grief of loss after loss until he dies from accumulated sorrow and shock.

Mrs. Margaret Saville: Sister of Robert Walton, ship captain, Mrs. Saville is significant only because she is the recipient of the letters describing Frankenstein's story. Walton writes to her of the progress of his journey and his acquaintance with Frankenstein.

M. Waldman: Chemistry professor at Ingolstadt. His lectures revive Victor's interest in discovering the spark of life and creation. He dismisses the alchemists' conclusions as unfounded but sympathizes with Victor's interest in a science that can explain the "big questions," such as the origin of life.

M. Krempe - A professor of natural philosophy at Ingolstadt. He dismisses Victor's study of the alchemists as wasted time and encourages him to begin his studies anew.

Ernest Frankenstein: Victor's brother. Ernest is 7 years younger than Victor and is only mentioned a few times, the longest reference in a letter to Victor from Elizabeth. She mentions that Ernest wants to join the Swiss military.

William Frankenstein: Victor's youngest brother, William is sweet, happy, greatly adored by his family. William is strangled in the woods while the family was out for a walk. He is the first of the monster's victims, and Justine is framed for the murder.

De Lacey Family: Felix, Agatha, and their blind father. This is the family of cottagers near where the monster lives. They are French exiles living in Germany because Felix helped an unjustly imprisoned Turk escape. He watches them and over time learns to speak and read from observing them. The monster becomes attached to them and chops wood for them as well as other small services without revealing himself to them. He craves their acceptance and affection and educates himself further to win them over. When he seeks their affection, however, they are afraid of him and their scorn sends him away. This rejection sends him on a quest to find Victor, his creator, and seek vengeance. A foreign woman named Safie also lives with them.

Muhammadan: Turk Felix aided and for whom the De Lacey family was exiled to Germany. Muhammadan was unjustly condemned for reasons of religion and wealth, and Felix helped him escape, falling in love with Muhammadan's daughter, Safie, along the way. Muhammadan promises to allow them to marry, but plans secretly to take Safie back to Turkey with him.

Safie: Daughter of Muhammadan and Arabian Christian woman. Safie falls in love with Felix and doesn't want to return to the oppressive country of her birth. When her father leaves for Turkey with the expectation that she will follow soon after with all of his possessions, she seeks out Felix and lives with him and his family in Germany.

M. Kirwin: Irish/Scottish magistrate who cares for Victor when he falls ill after being accused of Henry's murder. Kirwin is sympathetic and believes Victor is innocent, so he has a doctor care for Victor while he is imprisoned and also sends for Alphonse.

Themes, Motifs and Symbols

Themes

Themes are the fundamental and often universal ideas explored in a literary work.

Dangerous Knowledge and Glory - The pursuit of knowledge is at the heart of *Frankenstein*, as Victor attempts to surge beyond accepted human limits and access the secret of life. Likewise, Robert Walton attempts to surpass previous human explorations by endeavoring to reach the North Pole. This ruthless pursuit of knowledge, of the light (see "Light and Fire"), proves dangerous, as Victor's act of creation eventually results in the destruction of everyone dear to him, and Walton finds himself perilously trapped between sheets of ice. Whereas Victor's obsessive hatred of the monster drives him to his death, Walton ultimately pulls back from his treacherous mission, having learned from Victor's example how destructive the thirst for knowledge can be.

Friendship is important throughout the novel because it is the goal of Walton, the narrator, as well as the monster Frankenstein created. Loneliness and isolation are major themes throughout Romantic literature, and in this novel they motivate the monster to turn to destruction. Walton longs for a friend to share his excitement over the voyage to the North Pole. He is separated from his sister, whom he may never see again, and he has no one to buoy his courage or steady his heady excitement. Friendless in the cold, white blankness of Archangel, and preparing to sail into the vast and unknown frozen arctic, seems a desolate situation for Walton.

Sublime Nature - The sublime natural world, embraced by Romanticism (late eighteenth century to mid-nineteenth century) as a source of unrestrained emotional experience for the individual, initially offers characters the possibility of spiritual renewal. Mired in depression and remorse after the deaths of William and Justine, for which he feels responsible, Victor heads to the mountains to lift his spirits. Likewise, after a hellish winter of cold and abandonment, the monster feels his heart lighten as spring arrives. The influence of nature on mood is evident throughout the novel, but for Victor, the natural world's power to console him wanes when he realizes that the monster will haunt him no matter where he goes. By the end, as Victor chases the monster obsessively, nature, in the form of the Arctic desert, functions simply as the symbolic backdrop for his primal struggle against the monster.

Monstrosity - Obviously, this theme pervades the entire novel, as the monster lies at the center of the action. Eight feet tall and hideously ugly, the monster is rejected by society. However, his monstrosity results not only from his grotesque appearance but also from the unnatural manner of his creation, which involves the secretive animation of a mix of stolen body parts and strange chemicals. He is a product not of collaborative scientific effort but of dark, supernatural workings. The monster is only the most literal of a number of monstrous entities in the novel, including the knowledge that Victor used to create the monster (see "Dangerous Knowledge"). One can argue that Victor himself is a kind of monster, as his ambition, secrecy, and selfishness alienate him from human society. Ordinary on the outside, he may be the true "monster" inside, as he is eventually consumed by an obsessive hatred of his creation. Finally, many critics have described the novel itself as monstrous, a stitched-together combination of different voices, texts, and tenses.

The monster has remained a symbol of humanity overstepping its bounds—a complex figure in whom the desire for companionship struggles tragically against the thirst for revenge. The legend of Frankenstein

continues to capture the imagination, encapsulating in a single, grotesque figure society's continuing hopes and fears about science.

In the two centuries since Mary Shelley wrote her masterpiece, science and technology have advanced rapidly, and their influence on modern life is incalculable. Yet the knowledge behind this scientific revolution bears risks: nuclear power is balanced by the threat of nuclear waste and weaponry; genetic engineering to prevent hereditary diseases is balanced by the ethical and environmental issues of cloning and eugenics. *Frankenstein* remains a relevant analysis of the dangers of science, a sensitive, complex exploration of the tension between developing the mind and knowing too much, creating and playing the Creator, exploring new ground and crossing into forbidden territory.

Frankenstein's original reasons for creating life from dead parts are noble. He wants to help mankind conquer death and diseases. But when he reaches the goal of his efforts and sees his creature and its ugliness, he turns away from it and flees the monstrosity he has created. From that moment on he tries to suppress the consequences of his experiments and wants to escape them by working in other sciences. Victor even withdraws from his friends and changes psychologically. Mary Shelley seems not to condemn the act of creation but rather Frankenstein's lack of willingness to accept the responsibility for his deeds. His creation only becomes a monster at the moment his creator deserts it (Weber 1994: 24). Insofar *Frankenstein* warns of the careless use of science, which is still an important issue, even 200 years after the book was written. Taken into consideration what many inventions of the last 50 years brought upon mankind one must assume that many scientists still do not care much. Most scientists seem to be like Victor Frankenstein, who finished his work in the prospect of becoming famous. Only when he realises how horrible his creation has turned out he comes to senses. Intended as a warning, Frankenstein tells his story to the polar explorer Walton:

"I will not lead you on, unguarded and ardent as I then was, to your destruction and infallible misery. Learn from me, if not by my precepts, at least by my example, how dangerous is the acquirement of knowledge, and how much happier that man is who believes his native town to be the world, than he who aspires to become greater than his nature will allow." (Shelley 1992: 51-52)

The text of Mary Shelley permits the possibility of considering the character of the "Creature" from the Axel Honneth's perspective of the Ethics of reconnaissance. From this point of view, the dramatic sense of this novel moves round identity's problem. The essential condition to build identity is the recognition from each to other. That is why identity can not be obtain in the sense of solitarious consciousness, but requires of intersubjectivity. The Creature becomes deprived of recognition, even by Frankenstein who has created him. This Creature becomes perverse because this privation, when the most elemental right of human being so as being someone and having an identity, is denied to him. His wickedness is the secondary effect of exclusion and suffering. The creature describes eloquently to Walton his efforts to seek out beauty and how crime has degraded it beneath the meanest animal. "He is dead who called me into being; and when I shall be no more the very remembrance of us both will speedily vanish. I shall no longer see the sun or stars, or feel the wind play on my cheeks. Light, feeling, and sense will pass away; and in this condition must I find my happiness."

Secrecy - Victor conceives of science as a mystery to be probed; its secrets, once discovered, must be jealously guarded. He considers M. Krempe, the natural philosopher he meets at Ingolstadt, a model scientist: "an uncouth man, but deeply imbued in the secrets of his science." Victor's entire obsession with creating life is shrouded in secrecy, and his obsession with destroying the monster remains equally secret until Walton hears his tale. Whereas Victor continues in his secrecy out of shame and guilt, the monster is forced into seclusion by his grotesque appearance. Walton serves as the final confessor for both, and their tragic relationship becomes immortalized in Walton's letters. In confessing

all just before he dies, Victor escapes the stifling secrecy that has ruined his life; likewise, the monster takes advantage of Walton's presence to forge a human connection, hoping desperately that at last someone will understand, and empathize with, his miserable existence.

Texts - *Frankenstein* is overflowing with texts: letters, notes, journals, inscriptions, and books fill the novel, sometimes nestled inside each other, other times simply alluded to or quoted. Walton's letters envelop the entire tale; Victor's story fits inside Walton's letters; the monster's story fits inside Victor's; and the love story of Felix and Safie and references to *Paradise Lost* fit inside the monster's story. This profusion of texts is an important aspect of the narrative structure, as the various writings serve as concrete manifestations of characters' attitudes and emotions. Language plays an enormous role in the monster's development by hearing and watching the peasants, the monster learns to speak and read, which enables him to understand the manner of his creation, as described in Victor's journal. He later leaves notes for Victor along the chase into the northern ice, inscribing words in trees and on rocks, turning nature itself into a writing surface. The different readings of *Frankenstein*, on the one hand conservative criticism on science, on the other hand the opinion of people like Mary Shelley's husband Percy, are partly based on the different narrators of the novel. At least the narratives of Frankenstein and the Monster contain completely different points of view; the frame narrative of Walton more or less supports Frankenstein's story. Therefore the value of Mary Shelley's novel lies not in presenting a clear morale but in encouraging the readers to make up their own.

If only the Monster's narrative is considered he appears to be an almost perfect creation (apart from his horrible appearance), who is often more human than humans themselves. He is benevolent (he saves a little child; he helps the De Lacey family collecting firewood), intelligent and cultured (he learns to read and talk in a very short time; he reads Goethe's *Werther*, Milton's *Paradise Lost* and Plutarch's works). The only reason why he fails is his repulsive appearance. After having been rejected and attacked again and again by the people he runs into only because of his horrible physiognomy, the Monster, alone and left on his own, develops a deadly hatred against his creator Frankenstein and against all of mankind. Therefore only society is to blame for the dangerous threat to mankind that the Monster has become. If people had adopted the Monster into their society instead of being biased against him and mistreating him he would have become a valuable member of the human society due to his outstanding physical and intellectual powers.

Mary Shelley's husband, the romantic poet Percy B. Shelley, saw *Frankenstein* as a summing up of one of the central ideas of the enlightenment movement. The moral qualities and faults of a human being are mainly the products of his/her private and social environment (cf. Gassenmeier 1994: 28). In his review "On Frankenstein" (1818) Percy B. Shelley wrote, "Nor are the crimes and malevolence of the single Being, though indeed withering and tremendous, the offspring of any unaccountable propensity to evil, but flow irresistibly from certain causes fully adequate to their production. They are the children, as it were, of Necessity and Human nature. In this the direct morale of the book consists, and it is perhaps the most important and of the most universal application of any morale that can be enforced by example - Treat a person ill and he will become wicked. Requite affection with scorn; let one being be selected for whatever cause as the refuse of his kind - divide him, a social being, from society, and you impose upon him the irresistible obligations - malevolence and selfishness. It is thus that too often in society those who are best qualified to be its benefactors and its ornaments are branded by some accident with scorn, and changed by neglect and solitude of heart into a scourge and a curse." (Shelley 1954: 308)

For Percy Shelley the problem does not seem to be Frankenstein's promethean transgression because danger for mankind is not rooted in science but in society itself. In this context Frankenstein's final words become quite clear: Someone else should continue his experiments and remove the creature's visible defects, in other words assemble a creature with a more beautiful appearance, which would be

accepted by society much easier. If this could be achieved the result would be the perfect artificial human being.

At this point other critics (cf. Gassenmeier 1994: 43) continue and read *Frankenstein* in a different context. To them the book contains criticism on religion. The horrible physiognomy of the Monster is only a result of Frankenstein's hurry and anxiety caused by his awareness of committing a sin against God. Because of this unrest he uses inadequate materials and assembles them too quickly. It implies that a scientist can only work for the benefit of mankind if he breaks with the church and its values. This reading of *Frankenstein* may have been influenced by Percy Shelley's pamphlet "The Necessity of Atheism" (1810), where he states that a reasoning human being has to deny the existence of God because of a lack of proofs. But in my opinion this interpretation of *Frankenstein* is a bit far-fetched. Since Victor Frankenstein is not at all a professional surgeon he cannot be expected to create a perfect human being out of partly rotten body parts.

In her preface to *Frankenstein* Mary Shelley admits that her main goal was to write a ghost story. She got the idea for what she later called her "hideous progeny" during the legendary summer of 1816, which she spent at Lake Geneva in Switzerland together with Percy Shelley, Lord Byron and Dr. John Polidori. Inspired by *Fantasmagoriana*, a French translation of German Gothic tales, they held some kind of ghost story competition where Mary Shelley invented her story of *Frankenstein*. But the classification of *Frankenstein* as a ghost story, Gothic novel or horror novel is not fully adequate. It contains no supernatural apparitions such as ghosts, witches, devils, demons or sorcerers. In *Frankenstein* all "diabolical agency has been replaced by human, natural and scientific powers" (Botting 1996, 103). Other typical Gothic elements, e.g. ruined castles, graveyards and charnel houses, appear only briefly or in the distance. And unlike most Gothic novels *Frankenstein* is set in the 18th rather than in the 15th century. Shelley also abandoned the good-evil scheme of the Gothic novel. Neither Frankenstein nor the Monster are one hundred percent good or evil. Instead they are both highly ambivalent characters. *Frankenstein* is rather a kind of novel German literary critics call "Entwicklungsroman", a form of the novel showing the development of an individual's character. Both Victor and his creation change during the novel as a consequence of their relationship. Furthermore, one could argue that it shows the Monster's development from earliest childhood to adulthood. And by making its protagonist hero as well as victim *Frankenstein* is clearly set in the context of Romanticism. But since one of its main topics is a scientific discovery, *Frankenstein* could equally be called a precursor of the science fiction novel. The artificially created Monster is often seen as a foreshadowing of recent scientific developments like test-tube babies, robots and organ transplantation. The Monster may also be interpreted as "a symbol of the ambiguous nature of the machine" (Baldick 1990: 7) or as a symbol of modern technology.

Motifs

Motifs are recurring structures, contrasts, or literary devices that can help to develop and inform the text's major themes.

Passive Women - For a novel written by the daughter of an important feminist, *Frankenstein* is strikingly devoid of strong female characters. The novel is littered with passive women who suffer calmly and then expire: Caroline Beaufort is a self-sacrificing mother who dies taking care of her adopted daughter; Justine is executed for murder, despite her innocence; the creation of the female monster is aborted by Victor because he fears being unable to control her actions once she is animated; Elizabeth waits, impatient but helpless, for Victor to return to her, and she is eventually murdered by the monster. One can argue that Shelley renders her female characters so passive and subjects them to such ill

treatment in order to call attention to the obsessive and destructive behavior that Victor and the monster exhibit.

Feminist literary theory claims that Frankenstein's act of creation is not only a sin against God/nature. It is also an act against the "female principle", which includes natural procreation as one of its central aspects. The Monster, the result of male arrogance, is the enemy and destroyer of the eternal female principle (cf. Markus 1994: 61). The Monster is the child of an unnatural act of procreation in which woman has become unnecessary. Man, who is the executive power in a patriarchal system, has deprived woman of her most natural function because he can now create children without female participation. The present discussion about genetic engineering and human cloning shows that this is not a far-fetched utopia.

At least in his subconscious Frankenstein must have realised his crime against the "female principle", which becomes clear in the following symbolic dream. In the night after the reanimation of the Monster Victor has a nightmare in which he kills his mother and his fiancée:

"I thought I saw Elizabeth, in the bloom of health, walking in the streets of Ingolstadt. Delighted and surprised, I embraced her; but as I imprinted the first kiss on her lips, they became livid with the hue of death; her features appeared to change, and I thought that I held the corpse of my dead mother in my arms; a shroud enveloped her form, and I saw the grave-worms crawling in the folds of the flannel." (Shelley 1992: 57)

At the same time Frankenstein is not willing to fully take the role of the mother of his "child". Immediately after its birth he leaves his child and thereby evades his parental duty to care for the child.

Abortion - The motif of abortion recurs as both Victor and the monster express their sense of the monster's hideousness. About first seeing his creation, Victor says: "When I thought of him, I gnashed my teeth, my eyes became inflamed, and I ardently wished to extinguish that life which I had so thoughtlessly made." The monster feels a similar disgust for himself: "I, the miserable and the abandoned, am an abortion, to be spurned at, and kicked, and trampled on." Both lament the monster's existence and wish that Victor had never engaged in his act of creation. The motif appears also in regard to Victor's other pursuits. When Victor destroys his work on a female monster, he literally aborts his act of creation, preventing the female monster from coming alive. Figurative abortion materializes in Victor's description of natural philosophy: "I at once gave up my former occupations; set down natural history and all its progeny as a deformed and abortive creation; and entertained the greatest disdain for a would-be science, which could never even step within the threshold of real knowledge." As with the monster, Victor becomes dissatisfied with natural philosophy and shuns it not only as unhelpful but also as intellectually grotesque.

Symbols

Symbols are objects, characters, figures, or colors used to represent abstract ideas or concepts.

Light and Fire - "What could not be expected in the country of eternal light?" asks Walton, displaying a faith in, and optimism about, science. In *Frankenstein*, light symbolizes knowledge, discovery, and enlightenment. The natural world is a place of dark secrets, hidden passages, and unknown mechanisms; the goal of the scientist is then to reach light. The dangerous and more powerful cousin of light is fire. The monster's first experience with a still-smoldering flame reveals the dual nature of fire: he discovers excitedly that it creates light in the darkness of the night, but also that it harms him when he touches it. The presence of fire in the text also brings to mind the full title of Shelley's novel, *Frankenstein: or, The Modern Prometheus*. The Greek god Prometheus gave the knowledge of fire to humanity and was then severely punished for it. Victor, attempting to become a modern Prometheus, is

certainly punished, but unlike fire, his "gift" to humanity—knowledge of the secret of life—remains a secret.

Theme & Topic Tracking: Friendship

Letters

When Walton meets Frankenstein, he sees in him the potential for the kind of friendship that Walton desires. Frankenstein is intelligent, passionate, and sensitive despite the tragedy that surrounds him; the kind of friend Walton could talk to about his fears and aspirations. But Frankenstein is so weakened by exhaustion and misery that Walton doesn't want to disturb him.

As Frankenstein grows stronger, Walton sees the potential for a meaningful friendship growing, but he doesn't understand that Frankenstein has lost a lifetime of friends due to their connection to him. Walton talks of sharing his enthusiasm with a friend, hoping Frankenstein will be that friend, but it is not meant to be. While Frankenstein agrees with Walton concerning the importance of friendship, he tells Walton that he has lost all the people in the world whom he cared about and wishes to form no other ties of affection.

Chapters 1-6

Elizabeth and Frankenstein were the closest of friends, and it was their relationship that made them perfect because they balanced each other out. Henry was Frankenstein's only close friend outside the family because Frankenstein preferred to know a small group of people well rather than many people only slightly. With these two friends, Frankenstein was completely happy. Both Henry and Elizabeth seemed to be extensions of Frankenstein himself, and combined, they made a perfect whole. Frankenstein was the scientific and mechanical part, while Henry was the literary part; Elizabeth was the soothing, gentle, feminine influence that balanced out the literary and scientific passion. These friendships not only complemented each other's lives, but they were also an integral part of their lives, especially Frankenstein and Elizabeth.

Chapters 7-12

Although Elizabeth and Frankenstein were so close to one another, even her presence didn't ease his agitation and depression. The power of his guilt and remorse was so strong that even the brighter part of himself, Elizabeth, was incapable of cheering Frankenstein or relieving his distress. It seems odd that a friend so close to him couldn't help him, but she wasn't informed of the burden he bore. Had she known what was disturbing Frankenstein, perhaps she could have found a way to help him. But he was alone in his misery, isolated by his own horrific error.

The monster explained to Frankenstein that he had no friends and was lonely and his quest in life was for companionship and understanding. It was his loneliness that made him savage. The monster wanted what Frankenstein and so many other humans had and took for granted -- a place to belong. He had seen a family who loved each other and realized what he was missing. He had no one to comfort him, support him, or love him, and he felt that absence strongly. Loneliness recurs as a theme throughout the monster's existence.

The monster desired the friendship of the De Lacey family and went about seeking ways to gain it by doing small chores for them anonymously and educating himself so that they would see past his horrid face. He watched their family together and saw the way they loved each other. He hoped they had

enough charity in their hearts for him because he was a singular creature with no home or family, a being alone in the world. He wasn't an emotionless beast indifferent to his solitary state. He was sensitive and very aware of the isolation he experienced, so he wanted to reach out to the De Lacey family to end his loneliness.

Chapters 13-18

The monster, feeling quite alone in the world because he realized that he was the only monster like himself in existence, longed even more for the friendship of the De Lacey family. He began to plan a way to win them over because failure would break his heart. He knew the family to be kind, gentle, and accepting, so he expected that he could win them over and end the wretched loneliness that had been forced upon him by his creator. Frankenstein was the reason the monster was lonely because he had created him as the only one of his kind and then abandoned him. The De Lacey family was the monster's chance for love.

The De Lacey family was too afraid of him to befriend him, so the monster was rejected by a family he had come to care for. Frankenstein was responsible for his state of isolation, and the monster planned to make him pay for his insensitivity. He was angry and vengeful, so he sought out Frankenstein.

The monster planned to kidnap William and keep him as a companion because he believed that the fears and cruelty of the rest of humanity had not yet prejudiced a child so young. When he learned that William was Frankenstein's brother, however, the prospect of revenge seemed better than keeping the boy as a companion. His desire for revenge took greater precedence over his desire for companionship. The anger and vengeance he exhibited in killing William were a result of the loneliness and rejection the monster had been subject to throughout his life.

The monster demanded that Frankenstein construct a female companion for him so that he wouldn't be miserable and friendless anymore. Frankenstein didn't want to leave the monster lonely, but over time decided that he couldn't create the monster. Frankenstein willingly condemned the monster to a life of loneliness and isolation with his refusal to create a companion. But the monster didn't wallow in his loneliness because revenge became his focus. Because the monster could never be happy, he vowed to make Frankenstein miserable as well. Their battle caused the destruction of Frankenstein's family and friends before it eventually killed him, too.

Theme & Topic Tracking: Nature

Letters

Natural beauty is often a soothing influence with the characters of the novel, particularly Frankenstein, and it is an important part of the Romantic influence. This appreciation of beauty in a novel so filled with brutality seems an odd contrast, but it is part of what makes this story a Romantic piece.

As Robert Walton prepares for his journey to the North Pole, the beauty of nature in St. Petersburg impresses him because he believes it is a hint of how glorious the North Pole will be. His excitement is heightened by the brisk and picturesque world around him, and in that way nature plays an important part in his journey to the North Pole.

Walton describes Frankenstein as completely broken-down by grief, but still able to appreciate the natural beauty of the world around him, which seems remarkable. A man destroyed by sorrow can still look up at the night sky and feel some sense of relief, happiness, or awe at the fabulous beauty that

surrounds him. The grandeur of nature overwhelms human emotion and makes it seem small and insignificant in comparison to the great beauty of the world.

Chapters 7-12

Frankenstein was anxious about the changes in his homeland since he had been away for six years, so he spent a few days resting in a small town and letting the landscape of his country ease his worry. The familiar mountains, which seemed timeless when compared to the span of human life, calmed his worries. Nature makes us feel small and unimportant because we last such a short time in comparison to the mountains, rivers, and trees around us, so whatever we are experiencing must be miniscule as well.

Frankenstein, so distraught by his responsibility for William and Justine's deaths, often went out onto the lake near his home after his family was asleep. The lake was so lovely that he often wanted to dive into it and let it wash over him forever. He wanted to become a part of nature that was beautiful and calm instead of being what he was, a man riddled with guilt and fear.

On his day trip to a mountaintop near Chamounix, the beauty of the landscape around him impressed Frankenstein and it eased his depression for a while. He looked at the majestic mountains, their size and strength, and felt revived. Nature once again overwhelmed his senses and manipulated his emotions with its beauty.

When the monster told his story to Frankenstein, he talked about appreciating the beauty of nature early on in his life experience. He enjoyed the birdsong and the beauty of the forest before he encountered humanity and he was happy. Nature itself, before he even knew what it was, made the monster happy.

Chapters 13-18

The monster's first spring was lively and beautiful to him. It lifted his spirits and eased his loneliness because the world around him was so lovely. He was lonely, but he wasn't completely unhappy because nature soothed his spirits with blossoms and birdsong.

After the De Lacey's chased him away and he was shot while saving a woman from drowning, the monster no longer took comfort in the natural beauty of the world because humanity made it ugly for him. The imperfection of human beings marred the glory of nature.

Traveling along the Rhine on their way to England, Henry and Frankenstein were both impressed by the beauty of their surroundings. It seemed that Henry was more affected by the scenery than was Frankenstein. Frankenstein remembered Henry's passion for natural beauty as one of the more tender and wonderful aspects of his dear friend. Henry's character may possess qualities of Lord Byron, who was a Romantic poet as well as a friend of Mary Shelley and her husband.

Chapters 19-24

On their honeymoon trip to Evian, Elizabeth seemed sad, so she tried to cheer herself with the beauty of their surroundings, but to no avail. As if she had some premonition of her approaching death, the beauty of the earth could not cheer Elizabeth that day. As powerful as nature's influence is, Elizabeth was unmoved by the things around her because Death cast a shadow over the scenery.

Theme & Topic Tracking: Responsibility

Chapters 7-12

Elizabeth felt responsible for William's murder because she loaned him the locket that was presumed to be the motive for the murder. Her feeling of responsibility was so great that it manifested itself in physical illness. Throughout the story Elizabeth, and even more so Frankenstein, have a sense of responsibility for things that they did not directly cause.

Frankenstein felt responsible for his younger brother's death when he realized that the monster he created murdered William. Frankenstein started to feel as if he himself had committed the murder because of his role in the monster's existence. Everything the monster did was Frankenstein's fault because he was the creator. Rather than blame the monster for his downfall, Frankenstein blamed himself because he created the monster's life.

Frankenstein felt as if he murdered Justine as well as William because she was executed for a crime the monster committed. Elizabeth was altered by the injustice of Justine's death, and Frankenstein felt responsible for that alteration as well. The chain of events that the monster set off with William's murder began not with the monster, but with Frankenstein's desire to create life.

The weight of remorse about his role in the deaths of William and Justine adversely affected Frankenstein's mental and physical health. His responsibility for their deaths and whatever other destruction the monster may have wreaked on humanity overwhelmed him.

When the monster came to Frankenstein to plead his case and tell his story, Frankenstein realized that he had some obligation to the monster because he created it, in the same way that he bore responsibility for the monster's actions. Frankenstein was no longer simply responsible to humanity for the monster's actions, but he was also responsible to the monster for his happiness. Being the creator of a life was more responsibility than Frankenstein planned for.

Chapters 13-18

The monster called upon Frankenstein to fulfill his obligation of providing for his happiness by creating a female companion to keep him company. Out of his sense of obligation to his creation and out of fear for his family, Frankenstein agreed to make the female monster. His responsibility to his creation carried greater weight than the idea of his responsibility to humanity for the actions of the original monster and the new one he agreed to create. He hadn't yet realized the full weight of responsibility he would bear for the actions of both monsters.

Before Frankenstein could marry Elizabeth, he had to complete his obligation to the monster so that he could be completely rid of him and the responsibility for his actions. As a result, Frankenstein postponed the wedding and took a trip to England to work without the danger of being discovered by his family. His obligation to the monster was not only to ensure the monster's happiness, which Frankenstein felt obliged to do as the monster's creator, but also as a way to protect his family from the monster's vengeance.

Chapters 19-24

Before he completed the female monster, Frankenstein realized the weight of responsibility he would bear if together the two monsters destroyed any other human life or reproduced, and the thought was just too much to bear. Rather than deal with the responsibility for two hideous, superhuman creatures, Frankenstein would rather deal with the wrath of one, so he destroyed his work on the female monster. So began the battle between Frankenstein and the monster.

Frankenstein was responsible for Henry's death at the hands of the monster, and this grief rendered him ill for a long time. Frankenstein is once again in the position he found himself with William and Justine's deaths. He didn't murder Henry, but his friendship with Frankenstein made Henry susceptible to the monster's wrath because he used Henry to get back at Frankenstein. Although the Irish magistrate acquitted him, Frankenstein knew that he was responsible for Henry's death because he had defied the monster's wishes and the monster repaid him by killing his friend.

Frankenstein, feeling responsible for Elizabeth's death as well as his father's, vowed vengeance. The only way to absolve his responsibility for the monster's actions was to kill him, so that's what Frankenstein set out to do. He was responsible for the monster's creation and its actions, and he planned to be responsible for the monster's destruction as well.

Theme & Topic Tracking: Fatal Knowledge & Glory

Letters

The quest for glory is a potentially fatal flaw in Walton and was the downfall of Frankenstein. Their desire to discover or create and be great among men makes them reckless and dangerous to those around them. Robert Walton seeks glory and knowledge from his expedition to the North Pole. He is fascinated by what he might learn there, but seems to be driven more by the thirst for recognition and accomplishment than just the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake. As the leader of an expedition, he will be responsible for the lives of other men, and if he is ruthless in his pursuit of glory, he will endanger those men. The thirst for recognition and glory leaves no room for rational perceptions of what is possible and what is impossible. It's a dangerous pursuit.

Although Walton finds himself lonely and friendless, he is still passionate about his quest for glory and discovery at the North Pole, but he wishes he had a friend to share the excitement with. Loneliness be damned, he is going to reach his goal and be remembered as the man who made fascinating and helpful discoveries about the secrets of the North Pole. He has no one to temper his lofty ambitions with rational thought about the probability of making it to the North Pole, the danger of going there, and the responsibility he will have as captain for the life of his crew. He is all enthusiasm and no sense.

Walton and his men have started their journey, and he's certain that they will succeed because his men have taken care of a few, small problems that sprang up so far. Because they managed to patch up a small leak without sinking the ship, he believes they can navigate through icebergs, frozen waters, and other unknown hazards of the North Pole. He becomes cocky and believes that the sheer force of his will to succeed can defeat even the obstacles of nature.

When Walton mentions his determination to Frankenstein, Frankenstein seems distraught at Walton's ambition. He plans to succeed even at the cost of human life because he considers his potential discoveries worth such a sacrifice, and Frankenstein recognizes this raw ambition as the same thing that led to the destruction of his family and himself. This was the same ambition that drove Frankenstein to exhaust himself night after night in his laboratory creating the monster that, when completed, was hideous. This ambition is like a madness that blinds men to the dangers of their actions. Frankenstein couldn't see the horror of what he was doing until it was too late, and if Walton doesn't learn to temper his ambition with consideration of his responsibilities to his crew, he's going to get them all killed.

Frankenstein decides to tell Walton his horrible story in the hopes of dissuading Walton from being so determined to achieve glory and recognition that he destroys himself and others in the process as

Frankenstein did when he created his monster.

Chapters 1-6

Frankenstein's own quest for glory began with the study of outdated theories on the source of life and how to create a human being invincible to all but a violent death. His passion for the subject was all consuming, but for a brief while he abandoned his studies and found himself a happier person. But that didn't last too long. His desire for glory was merely latent, waiting for the perfect moment to spring up and take over like a disease and consume him until he was blind to all but his thirst for achievement.

At college in Ingolstadt, Frankenstein's interest in the spark of life was renewed by his studies in chemistry, and the desire for glory flared up in him again. This desire for glory prompted many rational and acceptable recognition for improvements on the instruments of chemistry, but all that was preliminary to his ultimate goal, which was to create a human life with his own hands.

After Frankenstein discovered the source of human life power, he became wholly absorbed in his experimental creation of a human being.. This drive for success blinded him to the vulgarity and repulsiveness of harvesting body parts from corpses and reconstructing them in a laboratory. It blinded him to the dangers of his project because all he could see was his goal of achievement and not the repercussions of his actions.

The search for glory left Frankenstein cold when he thought about the hideousness of the monster he created. He left that field of study and the quest for recognition because he was so disgusted with his results. Finally out of the clutches of his impassioned ambition, Frankenstein could see the danger of his desire for glory. He realized the way that it took over his life and blinded him to the pitfalls and terrors of the actions to which his ambition drove him.

Chapters 19-24

When Walton's men are too afraid to continue to the North Pole, Frankenstein gives them a scathing lecture on bravery and determination necessary for glory, but it does no good. The men would rather live than be glorious in death. Walton gives in to their fears and decides to go home although he would rather have glory than life. Frankenstein's story at least brought to light the importance of considering the welfare of others in the quest for glory. Walton did not continue on when so many of his crew were against losing their lives, as they most certainly would have if they had traveled on toward the North Pole. Walton learned to temper his own desire for glory to protect those for whom he was responsible, a lesson Frankenstein didn't learn until it was too late.

Theme & Topic Tracking

Letters

December 11th, 17--: Robert Walton writes to his sister, Mrs Margaret Saville, about his excitement at the prospect of his upcoming voyage to the North Pole. Knowledge and glory are the goals of his expedition. He outlines his plan to leave St. Petersburg, Russia for Archangel. Once there, he will hire a ship and crew and leave for the north in June.

(Theme and Topic Tracking: Glory)

(Theme and Topic Tracking: Nature)

March 28th, 17--: In Archangel, Walton finds a ship and gathers men to sail with him. While he is close to starting out for his dream, he realizes that he is missing something. He writes to his sister:

"I have no friend, Margaret: when I am glowing with the enthusiasm of success, there will be none to participate my joy; if I am assailed by disappointment, no one will endeavour to sustain me in dejection." (Letter 2, pg.4)

Although Walton is lonely, he is still passionate about his voyage.

(Theme and Topic Tracking: Glory)

(Theme and Topic Tracking: Friendship)

July 7th, 17--: Walton sails out and feels optimistic about the success of his journey because all incidents up to that point had been handled with relative ease. In his mind, success seems definite.

(Theme and Topic Tracking: Glory)

August 5th, 17--: Walton explains that his letters will become a record of his conversations with Victor Frankenstein the Swiss man Walton's crew rescued from the frozen Arctic waters a week prior. When the ship became iced in, the crew witnessed a large man in the distance riding a dogsled across the frozen ocean. Some time later, Frankenstein appeared and they brought him aboard the ship. Frankenstein, sick and weakened by the cold, stayed on the ship while Walton nursed him. Walton writes that Frankenstein seems broken by grief and interested only in the giant man who traveled past the ship. Walton is curious about Frankenstein and believes that if the men had met before Frankenstein was broken down, they would have been great friends, the kind of friend Walton longs for in his earlier letter.

(Theme and Topic Tracking: Friendship)

August 13th, 17--: Walton talks to Frankenstein about his voyage to the North Pole. He explains his desire to see and explore the North Pole at any cost, even the cost of human life. Frankenstein seems dismayed to hear of Walton's reckless ambition and it upsets him so much that Walton drops the subject. After a while, Frankenstein asks Walton about his life, and Walton mentions the lack of any close friend to share his ups and downs. In agreement, Frankenstein says, "we are unfashioned creatures, but half made up, if one wiser, better, dearer than ourselves -- such a friend ought to be -- do not lend his aid to perfectionate our weak and faulty natures." (Letter 4, pg.14)

Although he agrees that friendship is an important part of life and happiness, Frankenstein says that he can form no such ties because he has lost everyone he cares about and can't start over. Their conversation ends, but Walton finds Frankenstein to be an incredible person because despite his obvious loss and sadness, Frankenstein still seems to appreciate the natural beauty of the world around him.

(Theme and Topic Tracking: Glory)

(Theme and Topic Tracking: Friendship)

(Theme and Topic Tracking: Nature)

August 19th, 17--: Frankenstein decides to tell Walton his story in the hopes that he can learn some lesson from the mistakes that have led to Frankenstein's ruin.

(Theme and Topic Tracking: Glory)

Chapter 1

Frankenstein tells Walton about his Genevese origins. Frankenstein describes how his father, was a wealthy, respected and benevolent man who rescued his mother from poverty before marrying her. She was the daughter of Beaufort, Alphonse's friend who lost his fortune and relocated to escape the shame of his poverty. Alphonse traveled to Beaufort and his daughter with the intention of offering assistance, but when he arrived at their home, Beaufort was dead and Caroline was left impoverished and alone. Alphonse took her back to Geneva with him and married her two years later. Although much younger than her husband, Caroline loved him dearly and he doted on her, so their relationship was a happy, loving one. Victor, their first son, was born as they traveled through Italy, and although Caroline wanted a daughter, she had not conceived again by the time that Victor was five. On a walk through the Italian countryside where Caroline visited the poor, she found a beautiful orphan girl being raised by a peasant family. Elizabeth Lavenza the fair-haired, lovely orphan child, was adopted by the Frankenstein family, and Victor considered it his job to care for Elizabeth. The two became inseparable from that moment.

Chapter 2

Frankenstein describes the perfect serenity of his childhood with his family, which grew to include two younger brothers as time passed. Elizabeth was his perfect complement and constant companion. Frankenstein was the kind of person who attached himself intensely to only a few people, and Elizabeth and Henry Clerval a schoolmate, were his closest friends.

(Theme and Topic Tracking: Friendship)

At 13 Frankenstein became interested in the spark of life and studied theories of the creation of human life that, unbeknownst to him, were outdated. He explains that,

"The world was to [him] a secret which [he] desired to divine. Curiosity, earnest research to learn the hidden laws of nature, gladness akin to rapture, as they were unfolded to [him], are among the earliest sensations [he] can remember....It was the secrets of heaven and earth that [he] desired to learn; and whether it was the outward substance of things or the inner spirit of nature and the mysterious soul of man that occupied [him], still [his] inquiries were directed to the metaphysical, or in it highest sense, the physical secrets of the world." (Chapter 2, pg.22-3)

He became absorbed in these studies until he saw lightning completely decimate a tree, and then he learned theories of electricity and galvanization (using electricity to give life to inanimate matter) from a guest at their home. Frankenstein abandoned his earlier, intense line of study and became a happier person. Destiny, however, had other plans for him.

(Theme and Topic Tracking: Glory)

Chapter 3

When he was 17, Frankenstein was scheduled to leave for Ingolstadt for college when Elizabeth got scarlet fever. As she was recovering, Caroline, who had been nursing Elizabeth, fell ill. On her deathbed, Caroline told Frankenstein and Elizabeth that she wanted them to marry. After a grieving period, during which Elizabeth was a great comfort despite her own sadness, Frankenstein left for

Ingolstadt. Henry wanted to go with him, but his father wouldn't allow it. Frankenstein was nervous about being alone and away from everyone he knew and loved, but once there, he found his niche within the science department. A chemistry professor Waldman, befriended him, and Frankenstein became devoted to the study of human creation and the spark of life that he had abandoned earlier. Waldman assured him that, "The labours of men of genius, however erroneously directed, scarcely ever fail in ultimately turning to the solid advantage of mankind." (Chapter 3, pg.34). Waldman was horribly wrong.

(Theme and Topic Tracking: Glory)

Chapter 4

Frankenstein became an ardent student of chemistry and anatomy in his quest to determine what gives life. After two years of study at Ingolstadt, he considered returning home because his studies were so advanced that he couldn't progress any further at the college. But before he planned his trip home, Frankenstein discovered the essence of life, which he refuses to reveal to Walton because he doesn't want Walton to follow his poor example. He said,

"Learn from me, if not by my precepts, at least by my example, how dangerous is the acquirement of knowledge and how much happier that man is who believes his native town to be the world, than he who aspires to become greater than his nature will allow." (Chapter 4, pg.38)

After Frankenstein figured out what gives life, he experimented with creating a human being. He constructed a giant man, 8 feet tall with superhuman strength and endurance, from harvested body parts that he took from corpses. He worked secretly and without rest for almost a year, during which time his correspondence with his family and friends stopped. His health began to decline from the constant labor, little rest, poor diet, and lack of exercise, but he refused to stop working until his project was finished.

(Theme and Topic Tracking: Glory)

Chapter 5

One rainy, autumn night, Frankenstein brought his creation to life and all his illusions of grandeur were dashed by the hideousness of the beast. He had constructed the monster in perfect proportion with parts he considered beautiful, but the end result was horrific. His perfect creation was a frightening disaster. "For this I had deprived myself of rest and health. I had desired it with an ardour that far exceeded moderation; but now that I had finished, the beauty of the dream vanished, and breathless horror and disgust filled my heart." (Chapter 5, pg.42). Frankenstein fled his laboratory and collapsed in his room. He woke from a nightmare to see the monster standing over him, smiling with his hideous, black lips. Frankenstein ran away out into the city and walked until dawn. He ran into Henry in the city and was so excited to see his friend that he forgot about the monster that he had created until they returned to his apartment. The creature was gone, and Frankenstein was relieved, but as he and Henry talked, Frankenstein's fatigue and poor health prompted hallucinations of the monster. Frankenstein collapsed into a fever that left him bedridden for several months, during which Henry cared for him. In the throes of his illness, Frankenstein rambled on about the monster, but Henry chalked it up to the fever. He never asked Frankenstein what had happened, and he covered up the severity of Frankenstein's illness when he wrote to the Frankenstein family. When Frankenstein began to recover, Henry gave him a letter from Elizabeth.

Chapter 6

In her letter, Elizabeth begged for a letter from Frankenstein himself to assure his family that he was well. Her letter also provided a long description of the hardships of Justine Moritz, a servant who had become very close to Caroline and Elizabeth in her time with the Frankenstein family. Justine had come to live with the Frankenstein family years before when Caroline saw how Justine's mother mistreated her. She grew close to Caroline and nursed her during her illness. After Caroline's death, Justine went home to her mother, but rejoined the Frankenstein household as a beloved part of the family after her own mother died.

Frankenstein wrote to his family to reassure them of his health and then spent some time introducing Henry to professors at the college because he was going to begin studying there. Frankenstein avoided his scientific studies because it reminded him of his disastrous experiment. He planned to go home, but his trip was postponed several months, so to pass the time before he left, Frankenstein and Henry went on a tour of Ingolstadt.

(Theme and Topic Tracking: Glory)

Chapter 7

When Frankenstein and his friend, Henry Gerval returned from their tour of the woodlands around Ingolstadt, there was a letter for Frankenstein from his father. In the letter, Alphonse explained to Frankenstein the circumstances of his five year-old-brother, William's murder. The family was walking in the woods near their Geneva home when William disappeared. After a night spent searching for him, Alphonse found his strangled body. Elizabeth was distressed because she had loaned the boy a miniatura or a locket of Caroline, William's dead mother, and it was no longer around his neck. The locket seemed the motive for the boy's murder, and Elizabeth felt responsible.

(Theme and Topic Tracking: Responsibility)

Frankenstein left for Geneva immediately to comfort and grieve with his family. Returning to his hometown after six years made him nervous and afraid of the changes that had taken place there, so he stopped for a few days before he got to Geneva and let the landscape of his native country soothe his fears. He reached Geneva just after the city gates were closed, so he was forced to spend the night in a small town nearby. Unable to sleep, Frankenstein walked to the spot where William was murdered and watched a storm approach over the mountains. In the fury of the storm, "A flash of lightning illuminated the object and discovered its shape plainly to me; its gigantic stature, and the deformity of its aspect, more hideous than belongs to humanity, instantly informed me that it was the wretch, the filthy demon to whom [he] had given life." (Chapter 7, pg.60)

The monster ran away and climbed the sheer rock face of a mountain with incredible speed and agility before Frankenstein could stop him. Frankenstein knew that the monster was William's murderer and realized with horror the evil he had released into the world. Frankenstein himself was William's murderer because he created the fiend that killed him. Frankenstein realized that he couldn't tell anyone that the monster murdered William because no one would believe him. And even if they did believe him, who would be able to catch the monster? He decided to keep quiet about what he knew, but when he got home, he learned that Justine, their servant and friend, had been accused of the murder because another servant had found the missing locket in Justine's dress. Elizabeth believed Justine was innocent, but the rest of the family wasn't sure what to think. Frankenstein was the only one who knew the truth, and he was distraught.

(Theme and Topic Tracking: Responsibility)

(Theme and Topic Tracking: Nature)

Chapter 8

At her trial, Justine could explain away all the evidence against her except for the locket. Frankenstein knew the monster planted it on her to frame her for William's death. Elizabeth, convinced of her friend's innocence, pleaded to the jury. Frankenstein also made an appeal, but Justine was convicted and executed. Frankenstein had two deaths on his conscience and Elizabeth was inconsolable. Frankenstein knew then that it was only the beginning of their sorrow and he was responsible for all of it but unaware of how to prevent it. "[He] beheld those [he] loved spend vain sorrow upon the graves of William and Justine, the first hapless victims to [his] unhallowed arts." (Chapter 8, pg. 73)

(Theme and Topic Tracking: Responsibility)

Chapter 9

Frankenstein's agitation over his role in the deaths of William and Justine impaired his mental state and became obvious in his haggard appearance and antisocial tendencies. He spent much time alone on the lake after his family had gone to bed and contemplated drowning himself. His father believed the distraction to be grief, but Frankenstein couldn't get over his melancholy because he felt responsible not only for the deaths of William and Justine, but also for the grief that weakened his father's health and the drastic alteration in Elizabeth's nature. She was somber and dark, where before she was radiant and bright. Elizabeth also noted despair and vengeance in Frankenstein's manner, and she tried to comfort him with her friendship, but sometimes his anguish and fear concerning the monster was so strong that he had to leave his home to escape. His family and friends couldn't ease his mind because they didn't know the source of his trouble. They had no idea about the monster, and he couldn't tell them, so he had to handle his anguish alone. He embarked on a trip to Chamounix to escape again.

(Theme and Topic Tracking: Responsibility)

(Theme and Topic Tracking: Nature)

(Theme and Topic Tracking: Friendship)

Chapter 10

While on a day trip to the top of a mountain, the monster approached Frankenstein. Ready to fight to the death, Frankenstein cursed the monster, but the monster asked Frankenstein to hear him out. He claimed to be a virtuous creature until the scorn of humans made him miserable and lonely. The monster said: "All men hate the wretched; how then, must I be hated, who am miserable beyond all living things! Yet you, my creator, detest and spurn me, thy creature, to whom thou art bound by ties only dissoluble by the annihilation of one of us." (Chapter 10, pg. 83)

Frankenstein still refused to listen, and the monster told him that as his creator, Frankenstein owed it to him to hear his story and meet his demands. If Frankenstein would meet the demands, the monster vowed to withdraw from humanity and leave Frankenstein in peace. If he refused the monster's offer, however, the monster vowed to destroy Frankenstein's family. Out of a small sense of compassion and even greater curiosity, Frankenstein agreed to listen and accompanied the monster to his ice cave in the mountains.

(Theme and Topic Tracking: Responsibility)

(Theme and Topic Tracking: Nature)
(Theme and Topic Tracking: Friendship)

Chapter 11

The monster told Frankenstein about the development of his senses after he awoke in the laboratory. He was unable to differentiate between the five senses or determine the sources of light and darkness when he blinked. His vision took several days to come into focus, the way it takes time for infants' eyes to adjust. When he escaped from the laboratory, he wandered around the forest near Ingolstadt living on raw berries and nuts until he discovered the flickering remnants of some traveler's fire. He learned of the warmth and utility of fire as well as the danger of it (which he figured out when he stuck his hand in the flames and burned it), but the source of the fire eluded him. Because he was uncertain how to start a fire, he kept it burning continuously so that he could use it to keep warm and to cook the nuts he found. The sound of his own voice when he imitated the birds around him frightened him. The monster was forced to relocate when the food supply dwindled. As he wandered, snow fell and he sought shelter in a shepherd's cottage. When he entered the cottage, the man ran away screaming in fear at the hideousness of the monster. The monster, having never seen himself, didn't understand the reaction. He stayed in the cottage, which fascinated him because it was the first shelter he'd ever been in. After he ate the food and rested, he wandered away again and came upon a village. He sought shelter there and was chased away by the frightened villagers who threw rocks at him.

(Theme and Topic Tracking: Nature)

This hostile reception made him afraid of people, so when he found another cottage off in the forest, he just hid in a shed near the house and watched the De Lacey Family-- Agatha, Felix, and their blind father -- through a small hole in a covered window. He heard music for the first time when the father played his guitar. The monster even experienced the sympathetic emotions of sadness and joy while he watched them, but he didn't know what those feelings were. Watching them made him happy, but the monster didn't want the family to know he was there.

Chapter 12

Over time, as the monster watched the De Lacey family, he learned that they were sad because they were poor, and although all seemed a little disheartened, Felix, the boy, seemed the saddest for some unknown reason. The monster began chopping wood and shoveling the snow from the path while they slept so that they could use the daylight hours for the garden and other, more productive, work. The family considered the anonymous favors the work of a good spirit. Studying them, the monster learned to recognize words like "milk," "cheese," and "bread," as well as learning the cottagers' names. He realized that when Felix read aloud in the evenings, he was really looking at symbols that stood for words. The monster wanted to be able to understand and communicate. He wanted to master language before he revealed himself to the De Lacey family because he had discovered his ugliness in the reflection of a stream, and he knew it would scare them if he couldn't talk to them. After seeing their beauty and his hideousness, the monster was saddened, but he believed that if he could talk to them, they wouldn't hate and fear him as other humans had. He expected to be able to win their love.

(Theme and Topic Tracking: Friendship)

Chapter 13

Spring blossomed around the monster and the de Lacey's family cottage, but Felix, the son, seemed sadder than before until a dark and beautiful woman came to the cottage. Safie the Arabian woman, spoke no French, their language, but was as in love with Felix, and he was in love with her. The family welcomed her and taught her to speak French, and the monster learned along with her. He became able to understand their conversations and the nightly readings of history so that he grew more educated concerning humanity and the world. In learning about humanity, he noted his separation from them. "When I looked around I saw and heard of none like me. Was I, then, a monster, a blot upon the earth, from which all men fled and whom all men disowned?" (Chapter 13, pg.105). The more he learned, the worse he felt. He had no idea where he came from or how he came into existence. These unanswered questions made the monster increasingly more lonely.

(Theme and Topic Tracking: Friendship)
(Theme and Topic Tracking: Nature)

Chapter 14

Having gained the ability to understand language and even read, the monster learned the history of the cottagers and the Arabian woman. He offered Frankenstein copies of the letters of Felix and Safie as proof of his honesty. At one time, De Lacey, the old man, was a wealthy Parisian, until Felix learned of the unjust imprisonment of Muhammadan, Safie's father. Felix set out to free the man condemned for his religion and wealth, and that's how he met Safie and fell in love with her. Muhammadan, uncertain of Felix's loyalty to his cause, promised Safie's hand in marriage upon his escape from prison to ensure that Felix wouldn't forget about him. Felix, expecting to marry Safie, waited with Muhammadan in Italy until the escaped prisoner could get to Turkey safely. Safie did not want to return to Turkey because of the restrictions on the religion and society of women there. Her late mother, a Christian Arab freed from slavery by marriage to Muhammadan, had taught Safie independence and she wanted to stay in France with Felix, but her father had other plans. Muhammadan wanted Safie to return with him, but he kept his plans a secret so that Felix wouldn't turn him over to the French government.

Meanwhile, the French government discovered the De Lacey's connection with Muhammadan's escape, and De Lacey and Agatha were imprisoned. Felix heard the news and returned home immediately expecting that Muhammadan would leave for Turkey as soon as he could, but that Safie would wait in Italy for Felix to come back for her. When Felix and his family were exiled to Germany, Muhammadan told Safie to forget Felix, and then, fearing he would soon be discovered, he left for Turkey. Safie was to wait in Italy to gather his possessions and then travel to Turkey, but she left for Germany to find Felix instead.

Sources

In his corrupting striving for knowledge Frankenstein is compared to Prometheus, as the novel's subtitle "The Modern Prometheus" suggests. The mythological Prometheus rebelled against a divine authority just as Frankenstein was a rebel against nature when he tried not only to find the secret of life but also to remove life's defects (cf. Gassenmeier 1994: 42). In Victor both aspects of the Prometheus myth are embodied: the transgressive and the creative. Therefore *Frankenstein* is truly a drama of the romantic promethean hero who fails in his attempt to help mankind.

In Greek and Roman mythology, *Prometheus*, the immortal giant, was the champion of humankind. He moulded people out of clay, and stole fire for them from the gods' home on Mount Olympus. When Zeus,

leader of the gods, looked down on Earth and discovered that Man had received the gift of fire -and hence of independence- he determined to punish Prometheus. Aeschylus's (525 B.C.)¹ *Prometheus Bound* is, therefore, one of the first sources for *Frankenstein*. Prometheus was sentenced to be chained to a rock, and to have his liver pecked out by an eagle in a never-ending torture. He was finally freed by Hercules. For the Romantics, Prometheus was a symbol of artistic achievement, a hero who dared to defy the forces that would prohibit his creative endeavour. To them he was an anti-establishment rebel who was concerned with progress and intellectual enlightenment.

Zeus's servants Kratus (=force in Greek) and Bia (=violence in Greek) carry Prometheus to a mountain in the Caucasus, where Prometheus must be chained to a rock on the orders of Zeus in punishment for giving fire to human beings. Prometheus is expected to learn to like Zeus and stop liking humans. Prometheus is also being punished for loving humanity. Mythical accounts differ, but some suggest that Prometheus actually created human beings. As he reveals later in the play, he has also taught them almost everything of value. Prometheus stands for human progress against the forces of nature. We learn close to the beginning that he has given humanity the gifts of fire and hope. Hope helps human beings to struggle for a better future while fire, as the source of technology, makes success in that struggle possible. Prometheus lists his gifts to humanity in a progressive order, starting with the things necessary for survival and continuing on to the tools of commerce and economic expansion. Aeschylus here expresses a faith in human progress, and there is at least a veiled implication that Zeus feels threatened by this progress. The gods are at least partially personifications of nature. Human progress is the slow advance of humanity against the threatening elements of nature. In a sense, progress threatens to do away with the gods as nature is slowly understood and conquered through technology. Prometheus's contribution of technological gifts to humanity thus endangers the other gods and he is punished for bestowing on human beings the favors that rightly belong to the gods alone.

The simple fact that Zeus's representatives are Force and Violence gives us an immediate intimation as to Zeus's character, as he rules only through brute force. The surrounding elements: the ocean, the

¹ Aeschylus spent much of his life in Athens, where he witnessed political and social changes that almost certainly influenced his plays: Prometheus rebellion against tyranny could only have been invented by an author who had seen firsthand the collapse of tyranny, the introduction of a constitution, and the slow maturation of the world's first democracy. Aeschylus is credited with inventing drama. Before Aeschylus, drama involved a single actor on stage speaking in monologues while a chorus offered extensive commentary. Aeschylus introduced a second actor on stage, allowing for action and interaction to take place and establishing a caste of professional actors. He let the chorus converse with the characters, introduced elaborate costumes and stage designs, and wrote a good deal of material for the stage himself. Over eighty plays are credited to his name, of which only seven have been preserved. *Prometheus Bound* presents a great number of difficulties for scholars. First and foremost is the problem of authorship. The play differs substantially from Aeschylus's other plays in subject matter, character portrayal, setting, and, most importantly, meter and style. Some critics have argued that certain linguistic turns and philosophical ideas expressed in the tragedy simply were not available to playwrights before 456 B.C., the year of Aeschylus's death. A more likely alternative to the traditional view is that either a follower of Aeschylus wrote the play, or that Aeschylus had written some of the play and a later playwright finished it off for him. The story of Prometheus is a story of rebellion and an allegory about humanity's struggle with nature through perseverance and intelligence. But it is also a story of maturation, reconciliation, friendship, and the reestablishment of a balance between god and Titan, as well as humanity and nature.

earth, the wind, and the sun expand the audience's perception of both the location and the time of action (it could not change in Greek Drama). Furthermore, they serve to underscore Prometheus's isolation. The human beings on whose behalf he is punished will not be able to see him so far away from all civilization. He is left completely alone with the elements. Prometheus's name means foresight, and Kratus's remark is meant to ridicule the uselessness of foresight as well as the powerlessness of Prometheus. As we will soon see, however, Prometheus's foresight is exactly what he counts on to secure his eventual release. The power (Kratus=force; Bia=violence) of Zeus is clearly contrasted with the seemingly useless forethought (intelligence) of Prometheus. Underlying this conflict, however, is the idea that force requires thought to guide and sustain it. Aeschylus is clearly preparing us for a resolution where thought and force work together to avoid catastrophe. The healthy functioning of the universe requires the cooperation of opposing elements, such as thought and power, and the avoidance of excessive positions. Nothing good can come of conflict. The Chorus constantly emphasizes this moral belief while counseling Prometheus to tone down his defiance.

Prometheus reveals that he has knowledge of the future and can see the extent of Zeus's power through time (we must remember that Zeus's father Chronus overthrew his own father Uranus, and Zeus in turn overthrew Chronus. Chronus, like Prometheus, was one of the Titans and belonged to the older ruling class). As Prometheus tells us, the ultimate power is not Zeus, but necessity. Even the gods must live out their fate, and all they do is preordained. The important message here is that the passage of time is governed by necessity, by which both the mortals and the immortals are trapped.

At the end of his first monologue, Prometheus hears the rustling of something approaching on wings. The Chorus of Oceanids, daughters of Oceanus, on winged chariots express their sympathy for Prometheus's suffering. Having the gift of prophecy, Prometheus prophesies that one day Zeus will be in danger and will be forced to befriend him to avoid it. He also knows that Zeus will in the future send an eagle to gnaw on his liver. Knowing this, Prometheus has reason to be afraid of anything approaching on wings. The threat of someone approaching from the sky is repeated throughout the play. The sky is the seat of Zeus's power. All his servants fly and he throws lightning bolts from above. Prometheus is chained to the rock and cannot move, while others—whether friends or enemies—are free to fly around him.

Prometheus is a cross between a rebel archetype, a symbol of intelligence, and the personification of human progress. Zeus will need Prometheus's knowledge and intelligence to save himself and maintain the present order. Prometheus thus prophesies that Zeus will come to him for help and the two of them will be reconciled, restoring a proper balance to the cosmos. As Prometheus tells his story to the Oceanids, he slowly becomes angrier and more defiant. He removes emphasis from his reconciliation with Zeus and focuses on his own importance as a force of progress. Here Prometheus boasts of all the gifts he has given to humanity, insisting that he is responsible for all human arts and portraying himself as central to the growth of human civilization and the survival of the race.

We should note that Zeus's absence in the play adds to a feeling of isolation surrounding him. Not only is Zeus still removed from justice by the arbitrary nature of his laws, but also he seems removed from others. The Chorus appears in this play as an interesting character in its own right, underscoring the conflict between the accepted value of obedience and the possibly higher value of friendship. What makes this Chorus so interesting is the concluding deviation from all these moral teachings. Particularly, the Oceanids reject prudence and obedience as the main reasons for action and instead take up friendship. This is defiant because the action of staying with Prometheus contradicts divine orders. It is also imprudent since, the Chorus is helping a friend who cannot help back and because punishment here is not a possibility but a certainty. The Chorus's sudden reversal of the moral position it had been preaching is clearly significant. Friendship is a recurring theme throughout the play, often in accusations that Zeus does not trust his friends or hints that he doesn't

really understand the concept. The Chorus, by deciding to honor friendship as the highest value, gives precedence to the view that friendship is a value superior to all others.

Mary Shelley prefaced the novel with a quote from Milton's *Paradise Lost*, establishing another source for her novel:

*Did I request thee, Maker from my clay
to mould Me man? Did I solicit thee
From the darkness to promote me?*

The main themes in Milton's *Paradise Lost* are:

The Importance of Obedience to God: the poem presents two moral paths that one can take after disobedience: the downward spiral of increasing sin and degradation, represented by Satan, or the road to redemption, represented by Adam and Eve. Milton narrates the story of Adam and Eve's disobedience, explains how and why it happens, and places the story within the larger context of Satan's rebellion and Jesus' resurrection.

The Hierarchical Nature of the Universe: Satan refuses to honor the Son as his superior, thereby questioning God's hierarchy. Like Satan, Adam and Eve defy God's hierarchy by disobeying.

The Fall As Partly Fortunate: After he sees the vision of Christ's redemption of humankind in Book XII, Adam refers to his own sin as a *felix culpa* or "happy fault," suggesting that the fall of humankind does bring about good, even though it initially seems like an unmitigated catastrophe. Adam and Eve's disobedience allows God to show his mercy and temperance. He punishes them, but fairly. He forgives humans so completely that he willingly gives the life of his Son to save their lives. While humankind as a whole has fallen from grace, individuals can save themselves through continued devotion and obedience to God. Good will come of sin and death, and humankind will eventually be rewarded for its repentance.

Motifs in Milton's *Paradise Lost* are:

Light and Dark: Milton uses many opposites in *Paradise Lost*, juxtaposing Heaven with Hell, God with Satan, and good with evil. The contrast between light and dark exists in all of these opposites.

The Geography of the Universe: Milton divides the universe into four major regions: Heaven; Hell; Chaos; and young, vulnerable Earth. The opening scenes reveal Hell as a fiery, glittering place that reflects the corrupt souls of the devils. The intermediate scenes in Heaven provide a philosophical and theological context for the story. After Milton establishes these two opposing poles of evil and good, dark and light, the action shifts to Earth, a region blessed by Heaven but vulnerable to the forces of Hell. Earth becomes a battlefield where the powers of good and evil clash.

Adam's Wreath: the wreath that Adam makes as he and Eve work separately in Book IX symbolizes Adam's love for Eve, and then his corrupted love for her. As he is about to give the wreath to her, he sees that she has eaten from the Tree of Knowledge and drops the wreath in shock. When he drops the wreath, it symbolizes the abrupt change in the nature of his love for Eve. Before the fall, Adam loves Eve in a sexually and emotionally unimpeachable way. After the fall, he begins to lust for her.

Frankenstein Monster is described in the same terms as Adam and Satan. There are no clear-cut statements

about good and evil, as there would have been in a simple Gothic horror story. The Monster appears evil, but he has been given no chance to be otherwise. Indeed, Frankenstein is perhaps the more evil of the two.

Walton, constructed as a parallel to Frankenstein, is kept from continuing his dangerous journey by Frankenstein's cautionary tale. But in contrast to Walton Frankenstein's character remains somehow ambivalent. Although he feels remorse for his deeds he ends his tale with a rather strange statement: "Farewell, Walton! Seek happiness in tranquillity and avoid ambition, even if it be only the apparently innocent one of distinguishing yourself in science and discoveries. Yet why do I say this? I have myself been blasted in these hopes, yet another may succeed." (Shelley 1992: 210)

Victor Frankenstein has given up his attempts to create artificial life. But he still hopes that someone else may successfully continue his works. This last sentence makes all his warnings look like a farce. And it also brings up the assumption that Mary Shelley really did not condemn the promethean striving of her hero. Probably she was not against scientific progress but only wanted to warn of carelessness in science.

Preface and Letters 1–4

Summary

Preface

I saw the pale student of unhallowed arts kneeling beside the thing he had put together.

Frankenstein opens with a preface, signed by Mary Shelley but commonly supposed to have been written by her husband, Percy Bysshe Shelley. It states that the novel was begun during a summer vacation in the Swiss Alps, when unseasonably rainy weather and nights spent reading German ghost stories inspired the author and her literary companions to engage in a ghost story writing contest, of which this work is the only completed product.

Letter 1

What may not be expected in a country of eternal light?

The novel itself begins with a series of letters from the explorer Robert Walton to his sister, Margaret Saville. Walton, a well-to-do Englishman with a passion for seafaring, is the captain of a ship headed on a dangerous voyage to the North Pole. In the first letter, he tells his sister of the preparations leading up to his departure and of the desire burning in him to accomplish "some great purpose"—discovering a northern passage to the Pacific, revealing the source of the Earth's magnetism, or simply setting foot on undiscovered territory.

Letters 2–3

In the second letter, Walton bemoans his lack of friends. He feels lonely and isolated, too sophisticated to find comfort in his shipmates and too uneducated to find a sensitive soul with whom to share his dreams. He shows himself a Romantic, with his "love for the marvellous, a belief in the marvellous," which pushes him along the perilous, lonely pathway he has chosen. In the brief third

letter, Walton tells his sister that his ship has set sail and that he has full confidence that he will achieve his aim.

Letter 4

In the fourth letter, the ship stalls between huge sheets of ice, and Walton and his men spot a sledge guided by a gigantic creature about half a mile away. The next morning, they encounter another sledge stranded on an ice floe. All but one of the dogs drawing the sledge is dead, and the man on the sledge—not the man seen the night before—is emaciated, weak, and starving. Despite his condition, the man refuses to board the ship until Walton tells him that it is heading north. The stranger spends two days recovering, nursed by the crew, before he can speak. The crew is burning with curiosity, but Walton, aware of the man's still-fragile state, prevents his men from burdening the stranger with questions. As time passes, Walton and the stranger become friends, and the stranger eventually consents to tell Walton his story. At the end of the fourth letter, Walton states that the visitor will commence his narrative the next day; Walton's framing narrative ends and the stranger's begins.

Analysis

The preface to *Frankenstein* sets up the novel as entertainment, but with a serious twist—a science fiction that nonetheless captures "the truth of the elementary principles of human nature." The works of Homer, Shakespeare, and Milton are held up as shining examples of the kind of work *Frankenstein* aspires to be. Incidentally, the reference to "Dr. Darwin" in the first sentence is not to the famous evolutionist Charles Darwin, who was seven years old at the time the novel was written, but to his grandfather, the biologist Erasmus Darwin.

In addition to setting the scene for the telling of the stranger's narrative, Walton's letters introduce an important character—Walton himself—whose story parallels Frankenstein's. The second letter introduces the idea of loss and loneliness, as Walton complains that he has no friends with whom to share his triumphs and failures, no sensitive ear to listen to his dreams and ambitions. Walton turns to the stranger as the friend he has always wanted; his search for companionship, and his attempt to find it in the stranger, parallels the monster's desire for a friend and mate later in the novel. This parallel between man and monster, still hidden in these early letters but increasingly clear as the novel progresses, suggests that the two may not be as different as they seem.

Another theme that Walton's letters introduce is the danger of knowledge. The stranger tells Walton, "You seek for knowledge and wisdom, as I once did; and I ardently hope that the gratification of your wishes may not be a serpent to sting you, as mine has been." The theme of destructive knowledge is developed throughout the novel as the tragic consequences of the stranger's obsessive search for understanding are revealed. Walton, like the stranger, is entranced by the opportunity to know what no one else knows, to delve into nature's secrets: "What may not be expected in a country of eternal light?" he asks.

Walton's is only the first of many voices in *Frankenstein*. His letters set up a frame narrative that encloses the main narrative—the stranger's—and provides the context in which it is told. Nested within the stranger's narrative are even more voices. The use of multiple frame narratives calls attention to the telling of the story, adding new layers of complexity to the already intricate relationship between author and reader: as the reader listens to Victor's story, so does Walton; as Walton listens, so does his sister. By focusing the reader's attention on narration, on the importance of the storyteller and his or her audience, Shelley may have been trying to link her novel to the oral tradition to which the ghost stories

that inspired her tale belong. Within each framed narrative, the reader receives constant reminders of the presence of other authors and audiences, and of perspective shifts, as Victor breaks out of his narrative to address Walton directly and as Walton signs off each of his letters to his sister.

Quotations and Questions from our Web Page

Leer el texto

Temas

Tarea

I saw—with shut eyes, but acute mental vision—I saw the pale student of unhallowed arts kneeling beside the thing he had put together. I saw the hideous phantasm of a man stretched out, and then, on the working of some powerful engine, show signs of life and stir with an uneasy, half-vital motion. Frightful must it be, for supremely frightful would be the effect of any human endeavor to mock the stupendous mechanism of the Creator of the world.

Explanation

Taken from Mary Shelley's Author's Introduction to the 1831 edition of *Frankenstein*, this quote describes the vision that inspired the novel and the prototypes for Victor and the monster. Shelley's image evokes some of the key themes, such as the utter unnaturalness of the monster ("an uneasy, half-vital motion"), the relationship between creator and created ("kneeling beside the thing he had put together"), and the dangerous consequences of misused knowledge ("supremely frightful would be the effect of...mock[ing]...the Creator").

Tarea

Discuss the presentation of women in the novel. Do Victor and the monster differ in their view of women, and if so, how? (A sample-answer is provided for this task; the following questions should be addressed in a similar manner)

Answer

Women in *Frankenstein* are generally pure, innocent, and passive. Though there are a few exceptions, such as Caroline Beaufort, who works to support her impoverished father, women are generally seen as kind but powerless. For example, Elizabeth stands up for Justine's innocence but cannot prevent her execution. For both Victor and the monster, woman is the ultimate companion, providing comfort and acceptance. For Victor, Elizabeth proves the sole joy that can alleviate his guilty conscience; similarly, the monster seeks a female of his kind to commiserate with his awful existence. Each eventually destroys the other's love interest, transferring woman's status from object of desire to object of revenge; women thus are never given the opportunity to act on their own. In the context of passive female characters, it is interesting to note that Mary Shelley's mother, Mary Wollstonecraft, was the author of the strongly feminist *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. One can argue that *Frankenstein* represents a rejection of the male attempt to usurp (by unnatural means) what is properly a female endeavor—birth. One can also interpret the novel as a broader rejection of the aggressive, rational,

and male-dominated science of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century. Though it was long met with mistrust, this science increasingly shaped European society. In this light, Frankenstein can be seen as prioritizing traditional female domesticity with its emphasis on family and interpersonal relationships.

Tarea

Far more than the simple ghost story a teenaged Shelley set out to write, Frankenstein borrows elements of Gothic horror, anticipates science fiction, and asks enduring questions about human nature and the relationship between God and man. Modern man is the monster, estranged from his creator sometimes believing his own origins to be meaningless and accidental, and full of rage at the conditions of his existence. Modern man is also Frankenstein, likewise estranged from his creator usurping the powers of God and irresponsibly tinkering with nature, full of benign purpose and malignant results. Frankenstein is both a criticism of humanity, especially of the human notions of technical progress, science, and enlightenment, and a deeply humanistic work full of sympathy for the human condition. Explain with quotations from the text.

Tarea

Discuss the following quotation:

"we are unfashioned creatures, but half made up, if one wiser, better, dearer than ourselves -- such a friend ought to be -- do not lend his aid to perfectionate our weak and faulty natures." Letter 4, pg. 14

Tarea

Discuss the role of sickness in the novel. Victor often seems to fall ill after traumatic events. Is this a means of escape, and, if so, is it effective? Is there another explanation for his recurring illness?

Perspectivas

Tarea

Discuss the novel's shifts in narrative perspective. What is the effect of presenting different characters' viewpoints, especially those of Victor and the monster?

Answer

Narrative in *Frankenstein* shifts from Robert Walton to Victor Frankenstein to the monster and finally back to Walton. With each shift of perspective, the reader gains new information about both the facts of the story and the personalities of the respective narrators. Each narrator adds pieces of information that only he knows: Walton explains the circumstances of Victor's last days; Victor explains his creation of the monster; the monster explains his turn to evil. The differences in perspective between the narrators are sometimes stark, especially since Victor and the monster stand in opposition to each other for much of the novel. From Victor's point of view, the monster is nothing but a hideous and evil creature; from the monster's account, on the other hand, it becomes clear that he is a thinking, feeling, emotional being. The recounting of the murder of William Frankenstein is a prime example of the impact of perspective: while Victor's description, colored by the emotional letter from his father, focuses on the absolute evil of the act, the monster's version of events centers on the emotional circumstances surrounding it. Even if one cannot sympathize with the monster, one can at least understand his actions. This kind of dual narration is one of the more interesting consequences of the complicated narrative structure that Shelley implements.

📄Tarea

Victor attributes his tragic fate to his relentless search for knowledge. Do you think that this is the true cause of his suffering? In what ways does the novel present knowledge as dangerous and destructive?

📄Tarea

Answer the Review Quiz that you can find in the summary of the author in our [Teoría de la asignatura](#) and send it to me.

Retórica y discurso

📄Tarea

Trace and discuss the role of letters and written communication throughout the novel. (A sample-answer is provided for this question; the following tasks should be performed in a similar way)

Answer

The entirety of Frankenstein is contained within Robert Walton's letters, which record the narratives of both Frankenstein and the monster, to his sister (even Shelley's preface to the book can be read as an introductory letter). Walton's epistolary efforts frame Victor's narrative, which includes letters from Alphonse and Elizabeth. Like Walton's, these letters convey important information that serves to advance the plot and offer some sense of authenticity to an implausible story. Additionally, Victor's inclusion of these personal letters in his narrative allows Alphonse and Elizabeth to express themselves, shedding light on their respective concerns and attitudes, and thus rendering them more human. Shelley's use of letters enables the shift of narrative from one character to another while remaining within the bounds of the standard novel. Letters also serve as a means of social interaction, as characters are frequently out of immediate contact with one another. Walton never encounters his sister in the novel; his relationship with her is based wholly on correspondence. Likewise, Victor often isolates himself from his loved ones; the letters from Alphonse and Elizabeth mark attempts to connect with him. Even the monster uses written communication to develop a relationship with Victor when, at the end of the novel, he leads him ever northward by means of notes on the trees and rocks he passes.

📄Tarea

Examine the role of suspense and foreshadowing throughout the novel. Do you think these devices are effective, or does Victor's blatant foreshadowing reveal too much? How does foreshadowing differ among the three main narrators (Walton, Victor, and the monster)?

Personajes

📄Tarea

Read the following quotation and its explanation. Perform subsequent tasks in a similar manner.

"So much has been done, exclaimed the soul of Frankenstein—more, far more, will I achieve; treading in the steps already marked, I will pioneer a new way, explore unknown powers, and unfold to the world the deepest mysteries of creation."

Explanation

Victor utters these words in Chapter 3 as he relates to Walton how his chemistry professor, M. Waldman, ignited in him an irrepressible desire to gain knowledge of the secret of life. Victor's reference to himself in the third person illustrates his sense of fatalism—he is driven by his passion, unable to control it. Further, the glorious, assertive quality of his statement foreshadows the fact that Victor's passion will not be tempered by any consideration of the possible horrific consequences of his search for knowledge. Additionally, this declaration furthers the parallel between Walton's spatial explorations and Frankenstein's forays into unknown knowledge, as both men seek to "pioneer a new way," to make progress beyond established limits.

📌Tarea

There is some logic in the popular tendency to conflate the monster and his creator under the name of "Frankenstein." As the novel progresses, Frankenstein and his monster vie for the role of protagonist. We are predisposed to identify with Frankenstein, whose character is admired by his virtuous friends and family and even by the ship captain who rescues him, deranged by his quest for vengeance, from the ice floe. He is a human being, after all. However, despite his philanthropic ambition to "banish disease from the human frame and render man invulnerable to any but a violent death" (p. 42), Frankenstein becomes enmeshed in a loathsome pursuit that causes him to destroy his own health and shun his "fellow-creatures as if...guilty of a crime" (p. 57). His irresponsibility causes the death of those he loves most, and he falls under the control of his own creation.

The monster exhibits a similar kind of duality, arousing sympathy as well as horror in all who hear his tale. He demands our compassion to the extent that we recognize ourselves in his existential loneliness. Rejected by his creator and utterly alone, he learns what he can of human nature by eavesdropping on a family of cottage dwellers, and he educates himself by reading a few carefully selected titles that have fortuitously fallen across his path, among them *Paradise Lost*. "Who was I? What was I? Whence did I come?" (p. 131), he asks himself. Like Milton's Satan, who almost inadvertently becomes the compelling protagonist of *Paradise Lost*, the monster has much to recommend him.

Trace the similarities between Victor and the monster. Consider their respective relationships with nature, desires for family, and any other important parallels you find. Do Victor and the monster become more similar as the novel goes on? How does their relationship with each other develop?

Leer entre textos

Con voces críticas

📌Tarea

For a novel written by the daughter of an important feminist, Frankenstein is strikingly devoid of strong female characters. The novel is littered with passive women who suffer calmly and then expire. Feminist literary theory claims that Frankenstein's act of creation is not only a sin against God/nature. It is also an act against the "female principle", which includes natural procreation as one of its central aspects. The Monster, the result of male arrogance, is the enemy and destroyer of the eternal female

principle (cf. Markus 1994: 61). The Monster is the child of an unnatural act of procreation in which woman has become unnecessary. Man, who is the executive power in a patriarchal system, has deprived woman of her most natural function because he can now create children without female participation. The present discussion about genetic engineering and human cloning shows that this is not a far-fetched utopia. Discuss.

Con otros textos

📄Tarea

Bram Stoker's *Dracula* is another famous Gothic horror tale. Read the first chapter and point out similarities between both texts.

📄Tarea

The following texts are related to *Frankenstein* in some way or other. If you have read any of them you might be able to write a paper about *Frankenstein* and intertextuality.

Aeschylus, **Prometheus Bound**

In this tragic version of the Greek myth, Prometheus is a complex, heroic figure who suffers unjustly for defying Zeus by giving fire and other gifts to humans.

Karel Capek, **R. U. R.: Rossum's Universal Robots** (1920)

The word robot, from the Czech word for forced labor, entered the language in this popular and influential play about humanlike machines that ultimately cause more problems than they solve.

John Milton, **Paradise Lost** (1667)

This monumental epic poem, which recounts Adam and Eve's expulsion from the Garden of Eden and the origin of Satan, is an endlessly rich exploration of the relationship between God and humans.

Harry Mulisch, **The Procedure** (2001)

Echoing the rabbi in the legend of the golem (as well as Victor Frankenstein), a Dutch biologist successfully develops life from inorganic matter—and suffers the consequences—in this novel investigating the nature of creation, love, and time.

Percy Bysshe Shelley, **Prometheus Unbound** (1820)

In this lyrical drama, an allegorical continuation of Aeschylus's **Prometheus** cycle that takes on cosmic proportions, a Romantic Prometheus typifying an idealized humanity is wedded to Nature.

Por géneros

📄Tarea

Frankenstein is a Gothic Tale. Summarize the main characteristics of the genre. Can you think of other narratives that you have read that can be described as Gothic stories?

Junto a otras culturas

📄Tarea

Despite his criminal acts, the monster's self-consciousness and his ability to educate himself raise the question of what it means to be human. It is difficult to think of the monster as anything less than human in his plea for understanding from Frankenstein: "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 can I gather from your fellow-creatures, who owe me nothing? they spurn and hate me" (p. 103). When his anonymous acts of kindness toward the cottage dwellers are repaid with baseless hatred, we have to wonder whether it is the world he inhabits, as opposed to something innate, that causes him to commit atrocities. Nonetheless, he retains a conscience and an intense longing for another kind of existence.

Can monstrosity be considered a cultural issue? Explain. Think of the tale of the "Ugly Duckling" or "Beauty and the Beast".

Tarea

By their own accounts, both Frankenstein and the monster begin with benevolent intentions and become murderers. The monster may seem more sympathetic because he is by nature an outsider, whereas Frankenstein deliberately removes himself from human society. When Frankenstein first becomes engrossed in his efforts to create life, collecting materials from the dissecting room and slaughterhouse, he breaks his ties with friends and family, becoming increasingly isolated. His father reprimands him for this, prompting Frankenstein to ask himself what his single-minded quest for knowledge has cost him, and whether or not it is morally justifiable. Looking back, he concludes that it is not, contrary to his belief at the time: "if no man allowed any pursuit whatsoever to interfere with the tranquillity of his domestic affections, Greece had not been enslaved; Caesar would have spared his country; America would have been discovered more gradually; and the empires of Mexico and Peru had not been destroyed" (p. 56). Passages such as this one suggest the possibility that Shelley is writing about the potentially disastrous consequences of not only human ambition, but also a specific kind of masculine ambition. The point of view here may be that of a nineteenth-century woman offering a feminist critique of history. Discuss

En otros códigos

Monstrosity - Obviously, this theme pervades the entire novel, as the monster lies at the center of the action. Eight feet tall and hideously ugly, the monster is rejected by society. However, his monstrosity results not only from his grotesque appearance but also from the unnatural manner of his creation, which involves the secretive animation of a mix of stolen body parts and strange chemicals. He is a product not of collaborative scientific effort but of dark, supernatural workings. The monster is only the most literal of a number of monstrous entities in the novel, including the knowledge that Victor used to create the monster (see "Dangerous Knowledge"). One can argue that Victor himself is a kind of monster, as his ambition, secrecy, and selfishness alienate him from human society. Ordinary on the outside, he may be the true "monster" inside, as he is eventually consumed by an obsessive hatred of his creation. Finally, many critics have described the novel itself as monstrous, a stitched-together combination of different voices, texts, and tenses. The monster has remained a symbol of humanity overstepping its bounds—a complex figure in whom the desire for companionship struggles tragically against the thirst for revenge. The legend of Frankenstein continues to capture the imagination, encapsulating in a single, grotesque figure society's continuing hopes and fears about science.

Tarea

"I, the miserable and the abandoned, am an abortion, to be spurned at, and kicked, and trampled on".

This lines in Walton's final letter to his sister, recount the words that the monster speak to him over

Victor's dead body. This eruption of angry self-pity as the monster questions the injustice of how he has been treated compellingly captures his inner life, giving Walton and the reader a glimpse into the suffering that has motivated his crimes. This line also evokes the motif of abortion: the monster is an unwanted life, a creation abandoned and shunned by his creator.

The figure of the monster may represent those unconscious hidden fears about our very animal nature. It may also represent that which is alien to us. Something different that we cannot comprehend. The Other within us or the Other in other people. Women have sometimes been associated with monstrosity. Homosexuality has been considered a social perversion. That which we consider "unnatural" and does not fit into our schemes for interpreting life can sometimes be labelled "monstrous".

Write an essay on the subject. If you need further information you can read Freud's *Totem and Tabu* in our library.

Hacia la escritura creativa

📌Tarea

Do the monster's eloquence and persuasiveness make it easier for the reader to sympathize with him? Why do you think most film versions of the story present the monster as mute or inarticulate? Read the information in our [Teoría](#) about the film versions of the story and give your opinion about the monster's physical appearance.

En otros tiempos

📌Tarea

Discuss the following quotation. (A sample-answer is provided; perform the following tasks in a similar way)

Did I request thee, Maker, from my clay
To mould me Man, did I solicit thee
From darkness to promote me?

Explanation

These lines appear on the title page of the novel and come from John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, when Adam bemoans his fallen condition (Book X, 743–745). The monster conceives of himself as a tragic figure, comparing himself to both Adam and Satan. Like Adam, he is shunned by his creator, though he strives to be good. These rhetorical questions epitomize the monster's ill will toward Victor for abandoning him in a world relentlessly hostile to him and foist responsibility for his ugliness and eventual evil upon Victor. The lines bring forth one of the main themes in the novel-the question of rightful knowledge (eating the apple)- and link it, from the start, to Biblical sources.

📌Tarea

"Farewell, Walton! Seek happiness in tranquillity and avoid ambition, even if it be only the apparently innocent one of distinguishing yourself in science and discoveries. Yet why do I say this? I have myself been blasted in these hopes, yet another may succeed".

This last sentence shows that even if Victor Frankenstein has given up his attempts to create artificial life, he still hopes that someone else may successfully continue his works. It also brings up the assumption that Mary Shelley really did not condemn the promethean striving of her hero. Probably she was not against scientific progress but perhaps only wanted to warn of carelessness in science. Discuss.

What may not be expected in a country of eternal light?

Explanation

This quote comes from Walton's first letter to his sister in England. It encapsulates one of the main themes of *Frankenstein*—that of light as a symbol of knowledge and discovery. Walton's quest to reach the northernmost part of the earth is similar in spirit to Victor's quest for the secret of life: both seek ultimate knowledge, and both sacrifice the comfort of the realm of known knowledge in their respective pursuits. Additionally, the beauty and simplicity of the phrasing epitomize the eighteenth-century scientific rationalists' optimism about, and trust in, knowledge as a pure good.

For Further Reflection

1. Is Robert Walton's ambition similar to Frankenstein's, as Frankenstein believes?
2. Why is the fifteen-year-old Frankenstein so impressed with the oak tree destroyed by lightning in a thunderstorm?
3. Why does Frankenstein become obsessed with creating life?
4. Why is Frankenstein filled with disgust, calling the monster "my enemy," as soon as he has created him? (p. 62)
5. What does the monster think his creator owes him?
6. Why does Frankenstein agree to create a bride for the monster, then procrastinate and finally break his promise?
7. Why can't Frankenstein tell anyone—even his father or Elizabeth—why he blames himself for the deaths of William, Justine, and Henry Clerval?
8. Why doesn't Frankenstein realize that the monster's pledge "I shall be with you on your wedding-night" threatens Elizabeth as well as himself? (p. 173)
9. Why does Frankenstein find new purpose in life when he decides to seek revenge on the monster "until he or I shall perish in mortal conflict"? (p. 206)

10. Why are Frankenstein and his monster both ultimately miserable, bereft of human companionship, and obsessed with revenge? Are they in the same situation at the end of the novel?
11. Why doesn't Walton kill the monster when he has the chance?
12. Was it wrong for Frankenstein to inquire into the origins of life?
13. What makes the creature a monster rather than a human being?
14. Is the monster, who can be persuasive, always telling the truth?

"I have no friend, Margaret: when I am glowing with the enthusiasm of success, there will be none to participate my joy; if I am assailed by disappointment, no one will endeavour to sustain me in dejection." Letter 2, pg. 4

"The world was to [him] a secret which [he] desired to divine. Curiosity, earnest research to learn the hidden laws of nature, gladness akin to rapture, as they were unfolded to [him], are among the earliest sensations [he] can remember . . . It was the secrets of heaven and earth that [he] desired to learn; and whether it was the outward substance of things or the inner spirit of nature and the mysterious soul of man that occupied [him], still [his] inquiries were directed to the metaphysical, or in its highest sense, the physical secrets of the world." Chapter 2, pg. 22-3

"The labours of men of genius, however erroneously directed, scarcely ever fail in ultimately turning to the solid advantage of mankind." Chapter 3, pg. 34

"Learn from me, if not by my precepts, at least by my example, how dangerous is the acquirement of knowledge and how much happier that man is who believes his native town to be the world, than he who aspires to become greater than his nature will allow." Chapter 4, pg. 38

"For this I had deprived myself of rest and health. I had desired it with an ardour that far exceeded moderation; but now that I had finished, the beauty of the dream vanished, and breathless horror and disgust filled my heart." Chapter 5, pg. 42

"[a] flash of lightning illuminated the object and discovered its shape plainly to me; its gigantic stature, and the deformity of its aspect, more hideous than belongs to humanity, instantly informed me that it was the wretch, the filthy demon to whom [he] had given life." Chapter 7, pg. 60

"[He] beheld those [he] loved spend vain sorrow upon the graves of William and Justine, the first hapless victims to [his] unhallowed arts." Chapter 8, pg. 73

"All men hate the wretched; how then, must I be hated, who am miserable beyond all living things! Yet you, my creator, detest and spurn me, they creature, to whom thou art bound by ties only dissoluble by the annihilation of one of us." Chapter 10, pg. 83

"When I looked around I saw and heard of none like me. Was I, the, a monster, a blot upon the earth from which all men fled and whom all men disowned?" Chapter 13, pg. 105

: "from that moment [he] declared everlasting war against the species, and more than all, against [Frankenstein] who had formed [him] and sent [him] forth to this insupportable misery." Chapter 16, pg. 121

"I am alone and miserable: man will not associate with me; but one as deformed and horrible as myself

would not deny herself to me. My companion must be of the same species and have the same defects. This being you must create." Chapter 16, pg. 129

"If [he] ha[s] no ties and no affections, hatred and vice must be [his] portion....[his] vices are the children of a forced solitude that [he] abhor[s], and [his] virtues will necessarily arise when [he] live[s] in communion with an equal." Chapter 17, pg. 132-3

"You can blast my other passions, but revenge remains -- revenge, henceforth dearer than light of food! I may die, but first you, my tyrant and tormentor, shall curse the sun that gazes on your misery." Chapter 20, pg. 153

"The cup of life was poisoned forever, and although the sun shone upon [him], as upon the happy and gay of heart, [he] saw around [him] nothing but a dense and frightful darkness, penetrated by no light but the glimmer of two eyes that glared upon [him]." Chapter 21, pg. 166

"Great God! If for one instant I had thought what might be the hellish intention of my fiendish adversary, I would rather have banished myself forever from my native country and wandered a friendless outcast over the earth than have consented to this miserable marriage. But, as if possessed of magic powers, the monster had blinded me to his real intentions; and when I thought that I had prepared only my own death, I hastened that of a far dearer victim." Chapter 22, pg. 174-5

"As [he] heard it, the whole truth rushed into [his] mind, [his] arms dropped, the motion of every muscle and fibre was suspended; [he] could feel the blood trickling in his veins and tingling in the extremities of [his] limbs." Chapter 23, pg. 177

"All [his] speculations and hopes are as nothing, and like the archangel who aspired to omnipotence, [he] [is] chained in an eternal hell." Chapter 24, pg. 194

"Oh! Be men, or be more than men. Be steady to your purposes and firm as a rock. This ice is not made of such stuff as your hearts may be; it is mutable and cannot withstand you if you say that it shall not. Do not return to your families with the stigma of disgrace marked on your brows. Return as heroes who have fought and conquered and who know not what it is to turn their backs on the foe." Chapter 24, pg. 198

"In a fit of enthusiastic madness I created a rational creature and was bound towards him to assure, as far as was in my power, his happiness and well-being . . . I refused, and I did right in refusing, to create a companion for the first creature. He showed unparalleled malignity and selfishness in evil; he destroyed my friends . . . Miserable himself that he may render no other wretched, he ought to die. The task of his destruction was mine, but I have failed." Chapter 24, pg. 199-200

"Seek happiness in tranquility and avoid ambition, even if it be only the apparently innocent one of distinguishing yourself in science and discoveries." Chapter 24, pg. 200

The Gothic Genre

The sensational, the supernatural and the macabre were essential elements of the new kind of novel that thrilled readers of all kinds during the late 18C and the early 19C. The craze for such books was particularly strong in England, but they also flourished in the continent, especially in Germany.

Some of the standard constituents of the ghost story go back almost 2000 years, to the Roman writer Pliny the Younger, who told a tale about a large sinister house haunted by a spectre that moaned and

rattled its chains at dead of night. But the Gothic novel broke new ground in its use of situations and props that have since become the stock-in-trade of horror movies: bleak castles, lightning, cobwebbed rooms lit by guttering candles, skeletons dressed in monks' cowls, torture chambers, dungeons, graveyards. The term "Gothic" originally referred to the medieval settings typical of such stories, but during the late 18C the meaning changed to suggest a more general notion of remoteness, strangeness and mystery.

Forerunners of the Gothic novelists were the "Graveyard Poets" who wrote reflective, melancholy works dealing largely with human mortality. The best known of this is Thomas Gray, author of *Elegy written in a Country Churchyard* (1751). But the first Gothic novel is generally held to be *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) by Horace Walpole, son of Britain's first Prime Minister. The book was written at his home, Strawberry Hill at Twickenham (a pioneering work of the Gothic Revival in architecture) and was inspired by a dream. The next Gothic novel with a claim to fame was *Vathek* (1786) by William Beckford, written in French by translated into English. Mrs Ann Radcliffe wrote half a dozen Gothic romances, the best known of which is *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794). In this novel the heroine's honour as well as her life is threatened, but the sexual element is veiled compared with its treatment in *The Monk* (1796), a novel by Mathew Lewis who wrote the book at 19, when he was attaché at the British Embassy in The Hague. Set in Spain, it is a tale of a once-worthy monk who becomes sexually obsessed, uses supernatural powers to pursue the object of his desires, and finally rapes and murders the unfortunate girl. After being discovered and tortured by the Inquisition, he is hurled to damnation by the Devil, with whom he has attempted to make a pact. This mixture of sex and violence caused a sensation, and there were calls for the book to be suppressed. It was skilfully written and Lewis was befriended by leading literary figures such as Scott and Byron.

The success of the Gothic novel declined after 1820 to be succeeded by the historical novel, of which W. Scott was the great pioneer. Echoes of the Gothic tradition recur in Victorian literature, however (for example in Dickens' novels). And the most celebrated of vampire stories, *Dracula*, by Bram Stoker, was not published until 1897.

Plays and Screen Productions of Frankenstein

Shortly after the publication of Frankenstein first theatre adaptations of the novel appeared although at that time the novel was widely criticised for being subversive and atheistic. William Beckford, writer of fantasy and travel literature, called it "the foulest Toadstool that has yet sprung up from the reeking dunghill of the present times." (Baldick 1990: 56). Stage adaptations of Frankenstein were intended as commercial productions that should only entertain the audience. The writers of these adaptations had to bear in mind the conservative majority of their audience and therefore tried to include a morale which would satisfy less liberal views.

The title of the first Frankenstein stage adaptation, Richard Brinsley Peake's *Presumption: or the Fate of Frankenstein* (1823), clearly signals that it presents a morale fit for a conservative audience. Nonetheless so-called "friends of humanity" (Baldick 1990: 58) started a moral campaign appealing to fathers of families to boycott the play. Under such pressure the management announced the play with the following statement, "The striking moral exhibited in this story is the fatal consequence of that presumption which attempts to penetrate beyond prescribed depths, into the mysteries of nature." (Baldick 1990: 58). In order to appeal to his audience Peake changed the original plot of the novel. He introduces an assistant to Frankenstein, the bumpkin Fritz, who "prepares the audience to interpret the tale according to received Christian notions of sin and damnation by telling them that 'like Dr Faustus,

my master is raising the devil' (Baldick 1990: 59). Immediately after Frankenstein has created the Monster he begins to regret his doings, when he describes its ugliness and wants to "extinguish the spark which I have so presumptuously bestowed." Other minor changes - Victor is in love with Agatha de Lacey, who falls victim to the Monster; Elizabeth becomes Victor's sister - were simply made to fit the play into the genre of melodramatic romantic theatre. But the most significant changes are the omission of the Walton subplot and - even more important - the muteness of the Monster. Peake made it a brutish creature with an infant's mind and unable to speak. It does not develop human emotions and is only capable of rage and violence. In Peake's version the Monster is no longer "a sensitive critic of social institutions" but has been "assimilated firmly into the traditional role of the monster as a visible image of presumptuous vice" (Baldick 1990: 59).

Mary Shelley attended one of the performances but found that "the story was not well managed" (Baldick 1990: 58). This opinion is quite understandable considering the fact that the original's wide range of possible interpretations had been removed in favour of a moralistic reading of Frankenstein.

Other stage adaptations took this simplification to an even farther extent when Victor Frankenstein was made more egotistic and ruthless by turning him into a typical mad scientist figure. This was the case in Henry Milner's *Frankenstein or the Man and the Monster* (1826), a minor work, which nevertheless is still known for being the first version that showed the creation/awakening of the Monster. In Shelley's novel the actual creation is only described in a few lines:

"It was on a dreary night of November that I beheld the accomplishment of my toils. With an anxiety that almost amounted to agony, I collected the instruments of life around me, that I might infuse a spark of being into the lifeless thing that lay at my feet. It was already one in the morning; the rain pattered dismally against the panes, and my candle was nearly burnt out, when, by the glimmer of the half-extinguished light, I saw the dull yellow eye of the creature open; it breathed hard, and a convulsive motion agitated its limbs." (Shelley 1992: 56)

In Peake's *Presumption the Monster* is still created off-stage. At the end of the first act Frankenstein disappears to his laboratory. A servant watches him through a window, but runs off frightened when Frankenstein cries, "It lives!" A horrified Frankenstein reappears on stage when suddenly the Monster himself, throwing down the laboratory's door, rushes on stage and presents his monstrosity to the audience. Like Mary Shelley Peake did not reveal the secret how Frankenstein animates his Monster.

Milner, however, provides exact stage directions for the creation scene in *Frankenstein or the Man and the Monster*:

"Laboratory with bottles and chemical apparatus. First sight of the monster an indistinct form with a black cloth...music....A colossal human figure of a cadaverous livid complexion, it slowly begins to rise, gradually attaining an erect posture. When it has attained a perpendicular position, and glares its eyes upon him, he starts back with horror." (Milner 1. iii 1826)

In subsequent years many stage and film productions of Frankenstein would present similar creation scenes.

By 1826 Frankenstein had been dramatised in burlesque and melodramatic forms fifteen times. Even before first film versions appeared, Mary Shelley's creation was already popular in England and Europe. But by that time the "Frankenstein" myth had already been considerably changed. Mary Shelley herself changed her novel for the third edition (published in 1831) according to recent, more conservative readings and under the influence of the various stage adaptations. She strengthened the

cautionary element of the story, introduced galvanism and even inserted the word "presumption" from Peake's play into one of Victor Frankenstein's speeches.

Perhaps the longest-lasting and most memorable image of Frankenstein and his Monster was created in 1931, when Universal Pictures released what is now often praised as the definitive horror film: *Frankenstein*. In 1930 French-born director Robert Florey was hired by Universal to develop a new horror film as follow-up to the highly successful *Dracula*. The studio had bought the rights to Peggy Webling's theatre adaptation *Frankenstein: An Adventure in the Macabre*, which had become a huge success in London in the late 1920s. First test screenings with Bela Lugosi, who later turned down the role of the Monster, did not satisfy producer Carl Laemmle Jr and director James Whale was hired to replace Florey. Whale, an acclaimed director, chose 44-year old Boris Karloff as the Monster and together with make-up specialist Jack Pierce they created the most influential horror image of all times. The film opened on 4 November 1931 at the Mayfair Theatre in New York's Time Square and caused an immediate sensation. It was voted one of the films of the year by the *New York Times* and earned Universal Pictures \$ 12 million - the production cost only \$ 262 000. This made it even more successful than *Dracula*.



Cover of 1999 DVD release of Frankenstein



Boris Karloff as the Monster

When *Frankenstein* was re-released in the USA in 1937 Universal were forced to cut the scene in which the Monster kills the little girl Maria - undoubtedly one of the film's key scenes. Movie fans had to wait until 1985 to see a restored version of the film including all trimmed scenes.



Paul O'Flinn (1995: 33) argues that the Gothic novel aimed at a particularly middle-class audience whereas a film like *Frankenstein* is made for a mass audience. The shift in medium from written text to film results in the dropping of all narrative frames present in Mary Shelley's text. The confusing presentation and juxtaposition of several viewpoints (Walton's, Frankenstein's, the Monster's) would not be manageable in a film, at least not in a commercially orientated product like *Frankenstein*.

The first obvious change in the story is the dropping of the Walton-story. This results in a considerable narrowing of possible interpretations of the whole story. Since Walton's point of view is removed we only have Frankenstein's own experience left. This single point of view fits easily in a conservative model of science that warns us of setting mankind above nature or God's creation. Therefore the film serves as a reinforcement of conservative values and reactionary views, a tendency that has dominated Hollywood cinema up to the present.

Of course the most important changes from novel to film happened to the character of the Monster. In the novel the Monster is humanised whereas the film tries to dehumanise him. By making him a mute and violent fiend any chance of identification with him is gone. Boris Karloff's creature is a sub-human, barely capable of any other emotion than rage and violence. He responds only to simple orders, he grunts and shouts and cold-bloodedly kills Fritz and Waldmann. The Monster's crimes reach a climax when he kills the little girl Maria. (Contrary to that in the novel he saves a girl !)

The most significant changes concern the reasons for the Monster's evilness. In Mary Shelley's novel he is the product of his social circumstances. Although in the beginning the Monster means the people no harm they reject and attack him because of his hideous appearance. When he meets Frankenstein the Monster explains himself, "I was benevolent and good; misery made me a fiend. Make me happy, and I shall again be virtuous." (Shelley 1992: 100) In the film a new episode is added in which Frankenstein's assistant Fritz is supposed to steal a perfect brain but instead takes that of a criminal. By making the Monster's aggressive behaviour a result of an abnormal brain one of the novel's central ideas is completely removed.

The screenplay also includes a few more minor changes from the novel. Victor Frankenstein is now Henry Frankenstein, his friend Clerval is now called Victor. There are no more references to Elizabeth being Frankenstein's cousin. She is now simply his fiancée, which removes any suggestions of an incestuous relationship.

This film also established the concept that the Monster was brought to life by means of electricity. In this and most of the succeeding films the creature is exposed to lightning or some other electrical

source in order to give it life. This idea may be taken from Mary Shelley's introduction to Frankenstein, where she mentions galvanic experiments, and from chapter two of the novel (1818 edition), which contains a discourse on electricity and magnetism.

Mel Brook's parody Young Frankenstein (1974), starring Gene Wilder in the role of the young Frankenstein, was beautifully photographed - Brooks used many archaic optical devices, including the old 1:85 aspect ratio for height and width of the frame. The film received an Academy Award nomination for its script. Among its highlights is the scene in which Peter Boyle as the monster visits bearded blind man Gene Hackman, and barely manages to survive Hackman's hospitality. Kenneth Branagh's film Mary Shelley's Frankenstein (1994) was faithful to the book.

The director himself was Frankenstein and Robert De Niro played the monster under a heavy mask.

Frankenstein films:

- FRANKENSTEIN, 1931, dir. James Whale
- THE BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN, 1935, dir. James Whale
- SON OF FRANKENSTEIN, 1939, dir. Rowland W. Lee
- THE GHOST OF FRANKENSTEIN, 1942, dir. Erle C. Kenton
- FRANKENSTEIN MEETS THE WOLF MAN, 1943, dir. Roy William Neill
- HOUSE OF FRANKENSTEIN, 1944, dir. Erle C. Kenton
- HOUSE OF FRACULA, 1945, dir. Erle C. Kenton
- ABBOT AND COSTELLO MEET FRANKENSTEIN, 1948, dir. Charles D. Barton
- THE CURSE OF FRANKENSTEIN, 1957, dir. Terence Fisher
- I WAS A TEENAGE FRANKENSTEIN, 1957, dir. Herbert L. Strock
- FRANKENSTEIN '70, 1958, dir. Howard W. Koch
- THE EVIL OF FRANKENSTEIN, 1964, dir. Freddie Francis
- FURANKENSHUTAIN TAI BARAGON, 1965, dir. Inoshiro Honda
- FRANKENSTEIN MEETS THE SPACE MONSTER, 1965, dir. Robert Gaffney
- FURANKENSHUTAIN NO KAIJA, 1966, dir. Inoshiro Honda
- JESSE JAMES MEET'S FRANKENSTEIN'S DAUGHTER, 1966, dir. William Beaudine
- FRANKENSTEIN CREATED WOMAN, 1967, dir. Terence Fisher
- FRANKENSTEIN MUS BE DESTROYED, 1969, dir. Terence Fisher
- THE HORROR OF FRANKENSTEIN, 1970 dir. Jimmy Sangster

- DRACULA VERSUS FRANKENSTEIN, 1971, dir. Al Adamson
- DRACULA, PRISONER OF FRANKENSTEIN, 1972, dir. Jesús Franco
- ANDY WARHOL'S FRANKENSTEIN, 1973, dir. Paul Morrissey, Antonio Margheriti
- BLACKENSTEIN, 1973, dir. William A. Levey
- FRANKENSTEIN AND THE MONSTER FROM HELL, 1973, dir. Terence Fisher
- FRANKENSTEIN'S CASTLE OF FREAKS, 1973, dir. Robert H. Oliver
- FRANKENSTEIN: THE TRUE STORY, 1973, dir. Jack Smight
- YOUNG FRANKENSTEIN, 1974, dir. Mel Brooks
- VICTOR FRANKENSTEIN, 1975, dir. Calvin Floyd
- FRANKENSTEIN'S ISLAND, 1982, dir. Jerry Warren
- THE BRIDE, 1985, dir. Franc Roddam
- GOTHIC, 1986, dir. Ken Russel
- DOCTOR HACKENSTEIN, 1989, dir. Richard Clark
- FRANKENHOOKER, 1990, dir. Frank Henenlotter
- FRANKENSTEIN UNBOUND, 1990, dir. Roger Corman
- FRANKENSTEIN: THE COLLEGE YEARS, 1991, dir. Tom Shadyac
- FRANKENSTEIN: THE REAL STORY, 1992, dir. David Wickes
- MARY SHELLEY'S FRANKENSTEIN, 1994, dir. Kenneth Branagh

If you have read the entire story you may be able to answer the following quiz.

1. Who is convicted of the murder of Victor's younger brother, William?

- (A) Alphonse Frankenstein
- (B) Victor Frankenstein
- (C) Justine Moritz
- (D) Frankenstein's monster

2. Who is accused of the murder of Henry Clerval?

- (A) Victor Frankenstein

- (B) Robert Walton
- (C) Frankenstein's monster
- (D) Justine Moritz

3. To whom do the townspeople take Victor after Henry is murdered?

- (A) M. Kempe
- (B) His father
- (C) Professor Waldman
- (D) Mr. Kirwin

4. What is the name of the professor at Ingolstadt who first teaches Victor the methods of modern science?

- (A) Krempe
- (B) Clerval
- (C) Waldman
- (D) Beaufort

5. With what is Walton obsessed?

- (A) Creating life
- (B) Reaching the North Pole
- (C) Finding a passage to the East
- (D) Discovering the source of the Earth's magnetism

6. Where does Victor first have a conversation with his monster?

- (A) In Victor's apartment in Ingolstadt
- (B) In a field outside of Geneva
- (C) On a desolate island off Scotland
- (D) In a hut on a glacier near Montanvert

7. What does the monster want Victor to do to heal his loneliness?

- (A) Create a female monster to be his companion
- (B) Accept him into his family
- (C) Destroy him
- (D) Work to make him appear less hideous

8. How does Walton meet Victor?

- (A) They work in the same laboratory on an island off Scotland
- (B) Walton escorts Victor northward in pursuit of the monster
- (C) Walton finds Victor on the northern ice and nurses him back to health
- (D) They are students together at Ingolstadt

9. How does Victor's mother die?

- (A) She drowns in a river
- (B) The monster strangles her
- (C) She catches scarlet fever from Elizabeth
- (D) She is executed for murdering William

10. Who takes care of Victor when he falls ill after creating the monster?

- (A) Elizabeth
- (B) Henry
- (C) Alphonse
- (D) M. Waldman

11. How does the monster learn to speak?

- (A) By listening to Felix teach Safie his language
- (B) By reading Victor's journal of his creation of the monster
- (C) Victor teaches him

(D) He doesn't; he is born knowing how to speak

12. To which character(s) in *Paradise Lost* does the monster compare himself?

(A) Adam and Eve

(B) Satan

(C) Adam

(D) Adam and Satan

13. Why does Victor accompany Henry Clerval on a voyage to England and Scotland?

(A) For entertainment

(B) To track down and destroy the monster

(C) To work on creating a female monster

(D) To study science

14. What does the monster think causes Felix, Agatha, and De Lacey to be unhappy?

(A) The death of De Lacey's wife

(B) The loss of Safie

(C) Poverty

(D) His own presence

15. Which of the following is NOT one of the alchemists that Victor studies in his adolescence?

(A) Cornelius Agrippa

(B) Lucretius

(C) Albertus Magnus

(D) Paracelsus

16. What do Elizabeth and Alphonse assume is the source of Victor's unhappiness?

(A) Disappointment in his studies at Ingolstadt

- (B) Guilt about creating a monster
- (C) Grief over the death of Beaufort
- (D) Lack of desire to marry Elizabeth

17. How does Victor react to seeing Henry's corpse?

- (A) He has no reaction
- (B) He denies that he is the murderer
- (C) He cries
- (D) He falls into a long, feverish illness

18. To whom does Walton address his letters?

- (A) Victor Frankenstein
- (B) Margaret Saville
- (C) Elizabeth Lavenza
- (D) Justine Moritz

19. The Frankensteins' family home is in

- (A) Luxembourg
- (B) Geneva
- (C) Chamounix
- (D) Ingolstadt

20. Victor Frankenstein attends university in

- (A) Ingolstadt
- (B) Geneva
- (C) Edinburgh
- (D) Paris

21. Which of the following books is NOT one of those read by the monster?

- (A) *Paradise Lost*
- (B) *The Sorrows of Werter*
- (C) *Plutarch's Lives*
- (D) *The Inferno*

22. Why are Felix, Agatha, and De Lacey so poor?

- (A) They were born poor
- (B) Safie's father stripped them of their fortune
- (C) The French court took their fortune and exiled them from France for helping Safie's father escape prison
- (D) Felix spent the family's money courting Safie

23. What is the monster's reward for saving a girl from drowning?

- (A) He is shot
- (B) He is given a meal and a room to place to stay
- (C) He is beaten and chased away
- (D) He is cursed and ignored

24. Why doesn't Victor protect his wife, Elizabeth, from the monster's attack on the night of their wedding?

- (A) He does not think the monster will come
- (B) He thinks that Elizabeth can protect herself
- (C) He misunderstands the monster's warning
- (D) He does not love Elizabeth any more

25. What does Walton do after Victor dies?

- (A) He continues toward the North Pole
- (B) He remains stuck in the Arctic ice

- (C) He returns to England
- (D) He pursues Frankenstein's monster

Suggestions for Further Reading

Bann, Stephen (editor). *Frankenstein, Creation, and Monstrosity*. London: Reaktion Books, 1994.

Bennett, Betty. *The Mary Shelley Reader*. Oxford: O.U.P.

Botting, Fred. *Gothic*. London: Routledge, 1996.

----- . *Making monstrous : "Frankenstein", criticism, theory*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991.

Branagh, Kenneth. *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein: The Classic Tale of Terror Reborn on Film*. Edited by Diana Landau. London: Pan, 1994.

Donawerth, Jane. *Frankenstein's Daughters: Women Writing Science Fiction*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1997.

Ketterer, David. *Frankenstein's Creation: The Book, the Monster, and Human Reality*. Victoria: University of Victoria, 1979.

Levine, George, and Knoepfmacher, U. C. (editors). *The Endurance of Frankenstein: Essays on Mary Shelley's Novel*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979.

Marshall, Tim. *Murdering to Dissect: Grave-robbing, Frankenstein, and the Anatomy Literature*. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1995.

Patterson, Mary K. *The Monster in the Mirror: Gender and the Sentimental/Gothic Myth in Frankenstein*. Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1987.

Spark, Muriel (1997): *Mary Shelley*. Barcelona, Lumen. (en castellano)

See also:

Mary Shelley: A Biography by R. Glynn Grylls (1938); *Child of Light* by Muriel Spark (1951); *Mary Shelley* by Eileen Bigland (1959); *Ariel Like a Harpy* by Christopher Small (1972); *Mary Shelley* by William Walling (1972); *The Frankenstein Legend* by Donald Glut (1973); *The Annotated Frankenstein* by Leonard Wolf (1977); *Moon in Eclipse* by Jane Dunn (1978); *Mary Shelley* by Harold Bloom (1985); *Approaches to Teaching Shelley's Frankenstein*, ed. by Stephen C. Behrendt, Anne Kostelanetz Mellor (1990); *Mary Shelley: Her Life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters* by Anne K. Mellor (1990); *Hideous Progenies* by Steven Earl Forry (1990); *Frankenstein: Mary Shelley's Wedding Guest* by Mary Lowe-Evans (1993); *Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley: An Introduction* by Betty, T. Bennett (1998); *Frankenstein Creation and Monstrosity*, ed. by Stephen Bann (1995); *In Search of Frankenstein* by Radu Florescu (1997); *Mary Shelley: Frankenstein's Creator: First Science Fiction Writer* by Joan Kane Nichols (1998); *Frankenstein: Case Studies in Contemporary Criticism*, ed by Johanna M. Smith (2000); *Readings on*

Frankenstein, ed. by Don Nardo (2000); *Mary Shelley: Bride of Frankenstein* by Miranda Seymour (2001) - bibliography *Mary Shelley* by W.H. Lyles (1975)

About Milton's *Paradise Lost* you can read:

Evans, J. Martin. *Milton's Imperial Epic: "Paradise Lost" and the Discourse of Colonialism*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1996.

Fish, Stanley. *Surprised by Sin: The Reader in Paradise Lost*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1998.

Shawcross, John T. *With Mortal Voice: The Creation of Paradise Lost*. Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 1982.

Walker, Julia M. ed. *Milton and the Idea of Woman*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1988.

Zunder, William ed. *Paradise Lost: John Milton*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999.

You can also get information about Aeschylus from:

Conacher, D.J. *Aeschylus' Prometheus Bound: A Literary Commentary*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980.

Grant, Michael. *Myths of the Greeks and Romans*. New York: New American Library, 1962.

WE B L I N K S

E-texts

[Frankenstein-Electronic Text Center, University of Virginia Library](#)

www.Gutenberg.net

www.literature.org

www.139.pair.com

[Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin Shelley](#) letters and journal.

www.english.uga.edu/~232/mws.letandjour.html

[Shelley's Frankenstein](#) Electronic Text Editions of the Novel. Works by Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin, Mary Shelley's Parents. ...

www.georgetown.edu/irvinemj/english016/franken/franken.htm –

[Online Literature Library - Mary Shelley](#) www.literature.org/authors/shelley-mary/ y

www.literature.org/authors/shelley-mary/frankenstein/

Movies

<http://members.aon.at/frankenstein/frankenstein-hammer.htm>

<http://members.aon.at/frankenstein/frankenstein-seventies.htm>

[Internet Movie Data Base:](#)

[Classics of Gothic Horror Cinema:](#) Brief overview of the genre of Gothic horror films from *Dr. Caligari* to *The Crow*.

[Dr. Geoff's Horror House:](#) History of Hammer Studios.

Cabinet of Dr. Casey: Huge horror site with everything from art to film to books.
History of Hammer Films: Another site about Hammer Studios.
Sexual Subversion: The Bride of Frankenstein: Another essay from Bright Lights by Gary Morris, concentrating on gay aspects of the film
www.horrorfind.com: Horror search engine
The Kenneth Branagh Compendium: All about K.B. and several articles about Frankenstein
Roger Ebert reviews Bride of Frankenstein: one of America's most important film critics
El Monstruo de Frankenstein (castellano) Web en la que se relata una breve historia del personaje de ciencia-ficción Frankenstein.
Frankenstein en el Cine (castellano)
Fragmento de la película Frankenstein de Mary Shelley (Real Player) (castellano)
Fragmento de la película Dr Frankenstein (Real Player) (castellano)

Comics, Musicals, etc:

http://members.aon.at/frankenstein/comic/marvel_comics.htm
John Balderston's Frankenstein: Website dedicated to Balderston's long-lost play
Frankenstein: the Musical: excellent musical written by Gary Cohen

Chronology-biography etc

Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley Chronology & Resource Site
www.english.udel.edu/swilson/mws/mws.html
www.english.udel.edu/swilson/mws/chrono.html
Mary Shelley - www.kirjasto.sci.fi/mshelley.htm
My Hideous Progeny: Mary Shelley's Frankenstein
home-1.worldonline.nl/~hamberg/
Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley Chronology & Resource Site -
www.rc.umd.edu/reference/mschronology/mws.html
The Desert Fairy: Popular site with essays on the novel *Frankenstein*. Excellent study resource.
My Hideous Progeny: Information on Mary Shelley. Contains a fully annotated text of *Frankenstein*.
The Immortal Frankenstein: Information on Shelley's novel. Currently offline.
ClassicNotes: Mary Shelley
www.gradesaver.com/ClassicNotes/Authors/about_mary_shelley.html
Mary Shelley Biography
people.brandeis.edu/~teuber/shelleybio.html
The Literary Gothic | Mary Shelley -. ...
www.litgothic.com/Authors/mshelley.html
Shelley's Frankenstein ...
www.georgetown.edu/irvinemj/english016/franken.html
Shelley's Frankenstein
About Mary Shelley and Frankenstein
El mito de Prometeo
Prometeo 1, Greek Mythology Link
Mini-Biografía de Mary Shelley: <http://www.usask.ca/english/frank/bio.htm>
The Origin of a Myth: Mary Shelley's Novel *Frankenstein*
members.aon.at/frankenstein/frankenstein-novel.htm
Mary W. Shelley Chronology & Resource Page
The Mary Shelley and Frankenstein Resource Center

Mary Shelley's Frankenstein Critical Essays www.mary-shelley-frankenstein.com/
ntserver.shc.edu/www/Scholar/neal/neal.html
www.kimwoodbridge.com/maryshel/essays.shtml
www.literatureclassics.com/authors/ShelleyMar/
A Research Paper by Orlin Damyanov