

A NOISE WITHIN'S 2019-2020 REPERTORY THEATRE SEASON

AUDIENCE **GUIDE**

FRANKENSTEIN

By **Nick Dear** from the novel by Mary Shelley

Directed by **Michael Michetti**

AUGUST 11 - SEPTEMBER 8



Pictured: Kasey Mahaffy, Frankenstein. Photo by Daniel Reichert.

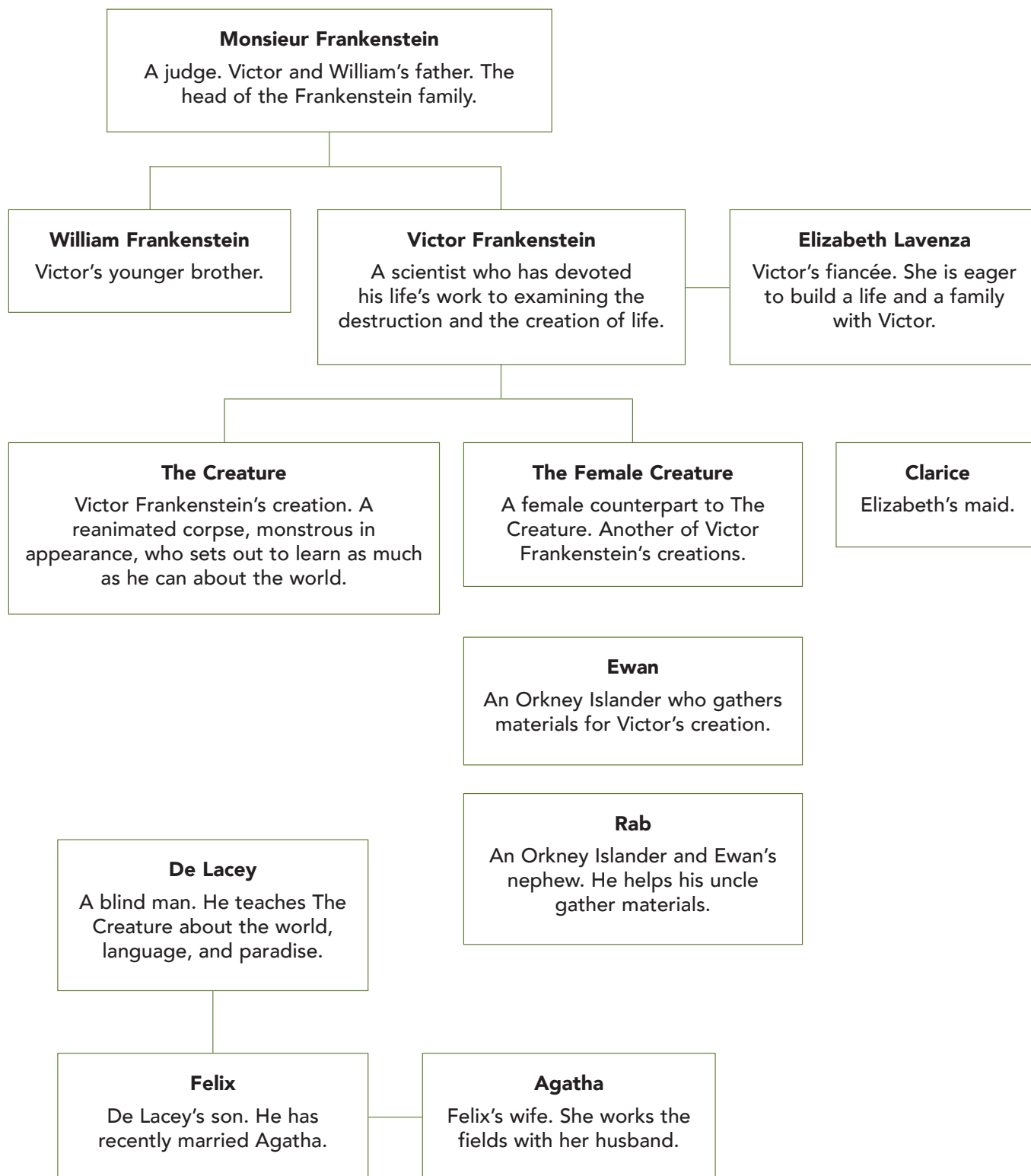
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CHARACTER MAP



SYNOPSIS

It is a dark night in 1818, and Victor Frankenstein has been at work on his latest project: reanimating a corpse. In a sudden flash, Victor's work becomes a success—the corpse comes to life. However, the sight of Victor's creation is something terrifying. Immediately fearful of what he has created, Victor runs from his grotesque, newly animated Creature. As he flees, Victor throws his cloak at the Creature, and the cloak lands on the Creature's head, which momentarily blinds him, giving Victor the opportunity to escape.

Armed with only the cloak Victor left behind, the Creature begins to explore this strange new world. He wanders through the town of Ingolstadt, where he encounters a number of townspeople, who, out of fear, begin to throw stones at him, and drive him away.

The Creature makes his way out of the town and into the woods. While sitting against a tree, the Creature begins to fidget with the cloak, and finds a battered journal in cloak's pocket. He examines the journal, but cannot make sense of it, ultimately deciding to stuff the journal back into the cloak pocket.

As he wanders through the woods, the Creature stumbles upon a cottage. The cottage belongs to De Lacey, an elderly blind man. Because he is unable to see, De Lacey does not shy away from the Creature. Instead, he begins to teach the Creature how to speak, read, write, and analyze the way the world works.

Months pass as De Lacey and the Creature continue their daily lessons. However, as the Creature learns more about the world, he begins to feel increasingly lonely. The Creature wants a companion with whom he can experience the world, a companion he can love.

One day, De Lacey insists that the Creature meet De Lacey's son and daughter-in-law. He promises that the two will love the Creature as much as De Lacey, himself, does. However, when De Lacey's son and daughter-in-law arrive at the cottage, the sight of the Creature shocks them, and they drive the Creature out of their home. In retaliation, the Creature sets De Lacey's cottage on fire with De Lacey, his son, and his daughter-in-law still inside.

While studying with De Lacey, the Creature began to read the journal he found inside his cloak's pocket. From what he could gather, the journal belonged to a man named Victor Frankenstein from Geneva. The Creature decides to set out to find Victor, hoping that Victor will be able to create a companion for him.

When he arrives in Geneva, the Creature happens upon a group of children playing. He approaches one of the boys and learns that the boy is William Frankenstein, Victor's brother. In order to get Victor's attention, the Creature decides to kidnap and kill William. When William's body is discovered surrounded by pages ripped from Victor's journal and rumors of a monster running through town spread, Victor quickly deduces that his creation is responsible for William's murder, and he goes to hunt the Creature down.

Victor finds the Creature outside of town, and when the two meet, the Creature implores Victor to create a female companion for him. After some persuasion, Victor agrees to make a companion for the Creature on the condition that the Creature and his future companion leave society alone forever.

In order to create a female companion for the Creature, Victor departs to the remote Orkney Island. After working tirelessly, Victor successfully animates a Female Creature. The Creature falls instantly in love with his new companion. However, Victor begins to fear the destruction that might occur should two creatures exist in the world, especially if those two creatures are in love. He decides to destroy the Female Creature. This shatters the Creature's heart. Broken and angry, the Creature vows to take revenge.

Shaken, Victor travels back to Geneva to marry his fiancée, Elizabeth. However, the Creature's promise of revenge keeps him on edge.

The night of the wedding, Victor confesses to Elizabeth that he has created a monster, and that he has lured the monster to the house in order to kill him. Victor takes a pistol, and leaves to find the Creature. While Victor is gone, the Creature sneaks into Elizabeth's room. Hearing a commotion from her room, Victor returns just in time to see the Creature kill Elizabeth. As the Creature leaves, Victor swears that he will never leave the Creature be. Victor vows that he can bring Elizabeth back to life, but his family refuses to let him near her body.

As the play ends, the Creature and Victor find themselves in the Arctic Circle, on the polar ice-cap—they have followed each other to the end of the world. And they continue on, both haggard and weary, both together, and both alone. ♦

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: **MARY SHELLEY**

Mary Shelley, author of *Frankenstein: or, the Modern Prometheus*, was born on August 30, 1797 as Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin. Her mother, Mary Wollstonecraft, an author and famous defender of women's rights, died eleven days after Mary was born. Mary grew up with her father, William Godwin, a radical philosopher, and five semi-related siblings.

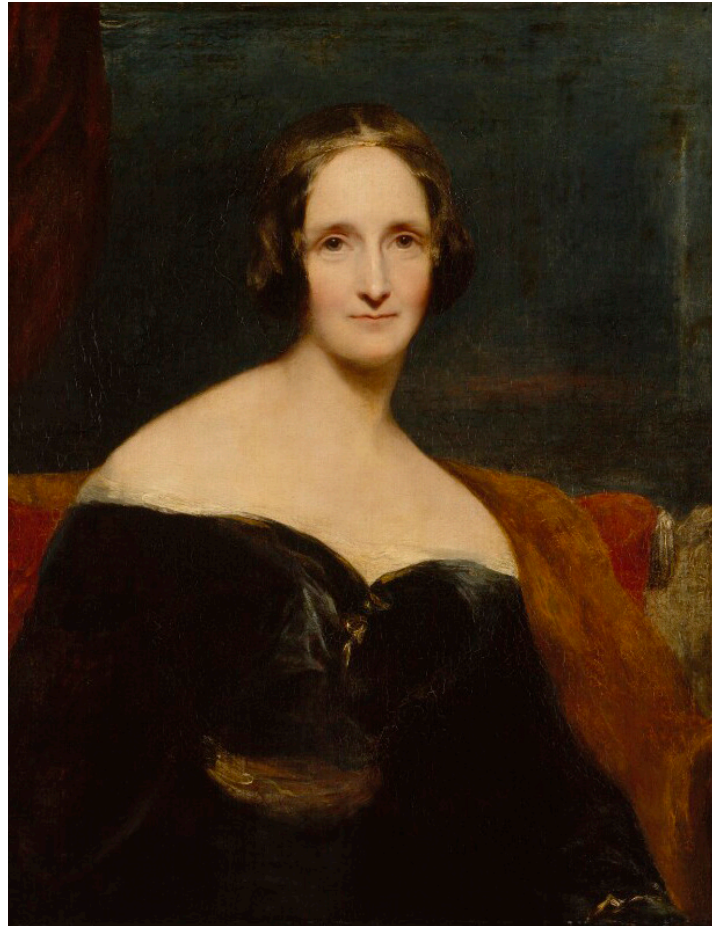
Shelley had a somewhat unconventional upbringing. While she attended a small, private elementary school as a child, she received her most important education at home. As a philosopher, journalist, and author, William Godwin set high intellectual standards for his children. It was from this intellectually electric environment that Shelley gained the confidence to question social norms. Her education at home was broad—Shelley studied history, mythology, literature, French, and Latin. In 1811, William Godwin described Shelley as “singularly bold, somewhat imperious, and active of mind. Her desire of knowledge is great and her perseverance in everything she undertakes, almost invincible.”

In November of 1812, Mary met Percy Bysshe Shelley, a poet and philosopher, when he came to visit the Godwin home. However, it was not until 1814 that Mary and Percy began to grow close. Quickly, they fell in love, and the two, accompanied by Claire Clairmont, Mary's step-sister, ran off to travel Europe.

By the time Mary and Percy returned to England from their trip in September 1814, Mary was pregnant. Mary's first daughter was born two months prematurely and died after just twelve days. In January 1816, Mary gave birth to a healthy baby boy she named William, after her father.

Later that year, Mary, Percy, and Claire travelled to Geneva, Switzerland for the summer. There, they stayed with Lord Byron, a famous British poet, and his friends. The summer in Geneva was particularly stormy and proved an excellent backdrop for a ghost story-writing contest. During this contest, Mary struggled with a bout of writer's block until, one night, she woke from a nightmare. Mary describes a scene from her dream: “I saw a 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.” This was the inspiration for her first novel, *Frankenstein: or, the Modern Prometheus*.

When Percy and Mary returned to England after their summer in Geneva, the two married, and on September



“Mary Shelley” by Richard Rothwell 1840

2, 1817, Mary Shelley gave birth to her second daughter, Clara Evernia Shelley, while she and Percy were travelling in Italy. Clara grew ill and died of dysentery shortly after her first birthday.

In 1818, Shelley published *Frankenstein: or, the Modern Prometheus* anonymously, with a dedication to William Godwin, her father. Initially, critics believed that the novel was written by a man, and many assumed that Percy Bysshe Shelley might be the author. It was not until a later edition of the novel was published that Mary Shelley revealed that she had written the work.

The Shelleys remained in Italy after the publication of *Frankenstein*, and while they were in Rome, their son, William, died of malaria in 1819. The loss of both of their children caused a considerable amount of strain in the Shelleys' relationship. While in Florence in November 1819, Mary gave birth to her fourth, and only surviving child, Percy Florence Shelley. However, 1822, Mary

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: **MARY SHELLEY** CONTINUED

suffered another great loss when Percy Shelley drowned in a storm while sailing. Although she was devastated, Mary's dedication to writing did not falter. In fact, she quickly began to edit and publish her late husband's works in *The Liberal*, a political magazine, and within a year of Percy's death, she wrote and published a work of her own, *A Tale of Passions*.

In order to raise her son, Mary returned to England in 1823. She continued her work as a writer, publishing her own short-stories and poems as well as Percy Shelley's works in prominent London journals and periodicals. During this period, Shelley wrote *The Last Man*, one of the first ever post-apocalyptic novels, set in the 21st century, which was published in 1826. Over the next two decades, Mary wrote three more novels, contributed essays to journals, and continued to publish her late husband's writings.

Throughout the last decade of her life, Mary began to suffer from intense headaches as well as pain and paralysis in her arm. She continued to work through her headaches and pain until 1848 when her health quickly began to deteriorate. On February 1, 1851, Mary Shelley died of a brain tumor in her home in London. ♦

Edited from:

Bennet, Betty T. "Shelley [Née Godwin], Mary Wollstonecraft (1797–1851), Writer | Oxford Dictionary of National Biography." (1797–1851), Writer | Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, 9 Nov. 2017, www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-25311.

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ABOUT THE ADAPTOR: **NICK DEAR**



"Nick Dear" by Nobby Clark

Nick Dear is a British playwright and screenwriter who has garnered great success for his adaptations of classic literature for the stage and the screen. He was born in Portsmouth, England on June 11, 1955. He grew up along the south coast of England in Southampton, and he attended the University of Essex, where he earned a Bachelor of Arts in Comparative European Literature in 1977.

During his time at the University of Essex, Dear was cast as the Second Murderer in a production of *Macbeth*. Because of this experience, Dear quickly realized that he was not going to be an actor. Instead, he became interested in playwrighting, and by the time he graduated, he had written his first play.

After leaving the University of Essex, Dear moved to Yorkshire in northern England. There, he worked odd jobs while he wrote a series of plays for BBC Radio and began to write scripts for the stage. Dear's professional breakthrough came in 1986 when the Royal Shakespeare Company produced Dear's play, *The Art of Success*, in Stratford-upon-Avon. Since this landmark production, Dear has sustained a full-time career as a playwright and screenwriter.

After the successful run of *The Art of Success*, Dear adapted a number of classic works including Maxim Gorky's *Summerfolk*, Molière's *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, and Toriso de Molina's *The Last Days of Don Juan*.

Dear's writing was met with great popular success in 1995 when his first film for television, *Persuasion*, based on Jane Austen's novel of the same name won a BAFTA (British Academy of Film and Television) award. Because of its critical success, *Persuasion* was screened in cinemas around the world.

In 2003, Dear joined the writing team for the long-running British television series, *Agatha Christie's Poirot*, which chronicled the life of Agatha Christie's fictional character, Detective Hercule Poirot. Dear wrote a number of episodes for the series, including the series' finale.

In 2011, Dear's adaptation of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* premiered at the National Theatre in London. Starring Benedict Cumberbatch and Jonny Lee Miller and directed by Academy Award winner, Danny Boyle, this production was a hit.

Dear currently lives in London with his wife, Penny Downie, where he continues to write. ♦

Edited from:

"About Nick Dear." Nick Dear Biography, nickdear.com/about.html.

THE HISTORY OF *FRANKENSTEIN*: A TIMELINE

- 1760s** The Industrial Revolution begins in Europe. New technology is developed to streamline the production of clothing, food, and other goods. Cities grow at a rapid rate. This is the setting of *Frankenstein*.
- 1770s to early 1880s**—the Romantic Movement in art and writing emerges. Works produced in this era tend to reject industrialization in favor of nature's beauty.
- 1797** Mary Godwin, future author of *Frankenstein: or, the Modern Prometheus*, is born on August 30th as Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin to Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin. Mary Wollstonecraft dies eleven days later from puerperal fever.
- 1812** Mary Godwin meets Percy Bysshe Shelley, a poet and philosopher.
- 1816** Mary Godwin and Percy Shelley travel to Geneva, Switzerland for the summer and stay with Lord Byron. During this their stay, Byron proposes a ghost story writing contest. Mary Godwin begins to write *Frankenstein: or, the Modern Prometheus* as her submission to the contest. On December 10 of this year, Mary Godwin marries Percy Shelley. Mary takes Percy's last name and becomes Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley.
- 1817** Mary Shelley completes *Frankenstein*.
- 1818** *Frankenstein: or, the Modern Prometheus* is published anonymously. Critics initially assume that the novel is Percy Shelley's work. In June, Mary reveals that she is the author in a letter to the critic Walter Scott.
- 1822** In May, Percy Bysshe Shelley drowns in a sailing accident.
- 1851** Mary Shelley dies at the age of 53.
- 1910** The first film adaptation of *Frankenstein* is produced by the Edison Company. The silent film is twelve minutes long.
- 1931** *Frankenstein*, starring Boris Karloff as Frankenstein's creature, premieres. This film features the infamous line: "It's alive!"
- 1935** *Bride of Frankenstein* premieres as a sequel to the 1931 film. Boris Karloff reprises his role as Frankenstein's creature.
- 1957** Terence Fisher's film, *The Curse of Frankenstein*, premieres.
- 1973** Marvel Comics introduces the *Frankenstein* myth into the Marvel Universe when they begin to publish *The Monster of Frankenstein* comic books.
- 1974** Comedians Mel Brooks and Gene Wilder write and produce *Young Frankenstein*, a film parody of the *Frankenstein* story.
- 1994** Kenneth Branagh directs Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* starring Robert De Niro as the Creature.
- 2007** *Young Frankenstein*, a musical by Mel Brooks based on his 1974 film opens on Broadway. The same year, *Frankenstein*, the musical by Mark Baron and Jeffrey Jackson, opens Off-Broadway.
- 2011** Nick Dear's adaptation of *Frankenstein* opens at the National Theatre in London. The production stars Benedict Cumberbatch and Jonny Lee Miller.
- 2015** *Victor Frankenstein*, starring Daniel Radcliffe and James McAvoy, premieres.

THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION: THE BACKDROP TO *FRANKENSTEIN*

Until the mid-18th century, most of the world's population lived in small, rural, farming communities. There, families were responsible for producing their own food, clothing, furniture, and tools. Anything a family needed, they made at home either by hand or with the help of simple machines. However, around 1750, new technologies and manufacturing processes began to develop. The development of powered and specialized machinery meant that the production of goods became easier, cheaper, and faster.

This change in manufacturing gave way to a dramatic shift in the world's geographical, cultural, and economic landscape—a shift we still feel in contemporary society—known as the Industrial Revolution.

Before spreading throughout the world, the Industrial Revolution began in Britain. There are a number of factors that set Britain up for industrial success. First, its land had many coal and iron ore deposits. These materials were essential to industrialization as they were used as power sources for machinery. Additionally, Britain was the world's leading colonial power at this time—the country had holdings from the Congo to the Caribbean, from India to America. Britain's colonies served as sources for raw production materials as well as marketplaces for its manufactured goods. As the demand for British goods increased, manufacturers sought out more cost-effective methods of production, which led to the rise of the factory system. As Britain became an increasingly prominent industrial power, many other European countries, as well as America, followed suit.

As industrialization grew in Europe, so did the demand for industrial workers. The prospect of well-paying, stable jobs prompted many families who had always lived in rural communities to move to city centers. Cities soon became more crowded than ever and were often unable to keep up with the influx of new workers arriving from the countryside. This often resulted in inadequate, overcrowded housing and polluted, unsanitary living conditions for many in the working class. These conditions gradually began to improve by the late 19th century when European governments began to institute various labor reforms and grant laborers the right to form unions.

The Industrial Revolution was also a time of rapid innovation and problem-solving—technologies continued to improve, and manufacturing became increasingly efficient. While innovation paved the way for the quick production of quality goods at low prices, concerns about the extent and seeming limitlessness of human innovation's power began to grow. Questions emerged: how much can humans manipulate nature? How far can

innovation go? How powerful are humans?

This is the backdrop to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. When Mary Shelley travelled to Geneva in 1816, and she overheard Percy Shelley and Lord Byron discussing new developments in electricity that might make it possible to reanimate the dead, she grew so concerned that she had a nightmarish dream about a scientist's experiment gone terribly wrong—a dream about what happens when humans have the power and scientific tools to manipulate nature. This dream ultimately became the inspiration for her novel, *Frankenstein: or, the Modern Prometheus*. ♦

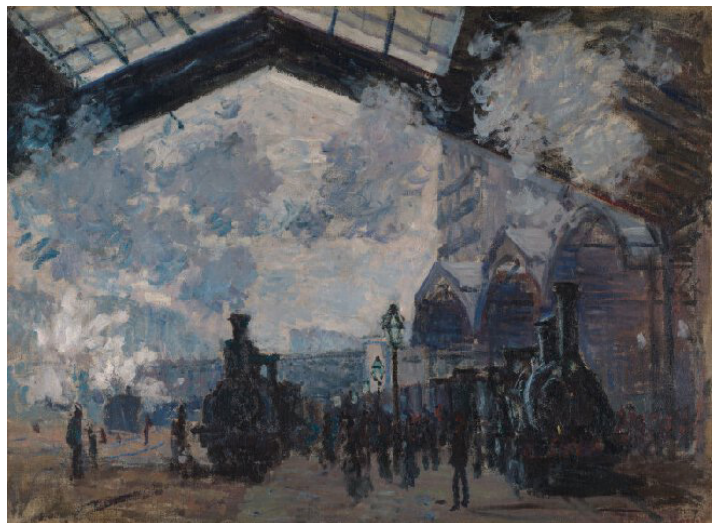
Edited from:

Editors, History.com. "Industrial Revolution." History.com, A&E Television Networks, 29 Oct. 2009,

www.history.com/topics/industrial-revolution/industrial-revolution.



"Coalbrookdale by Night" by Philip James de Loutherbourg 1901



"The Gare St-Lazare" by Claude Monet 1877

ROMANTICISM AND GOTHIC LITERATURE

ROMANTICISM

At the end of the 18th century, as the Industrial Revolution was reshaping the way clothing, food, and other goods were manufactured, logic, precision, certainty, and rational thought were at the forefront of society. Manufacturers were primarily focused on producing materials as quickly, efficiently, and cheaply as possible. Because of this, there was a shift in the role the individual played in society. Ever growing concerns of efficiency and profitability led to the devaluing of the individual in favor of a productive workforce in industrialized countries.

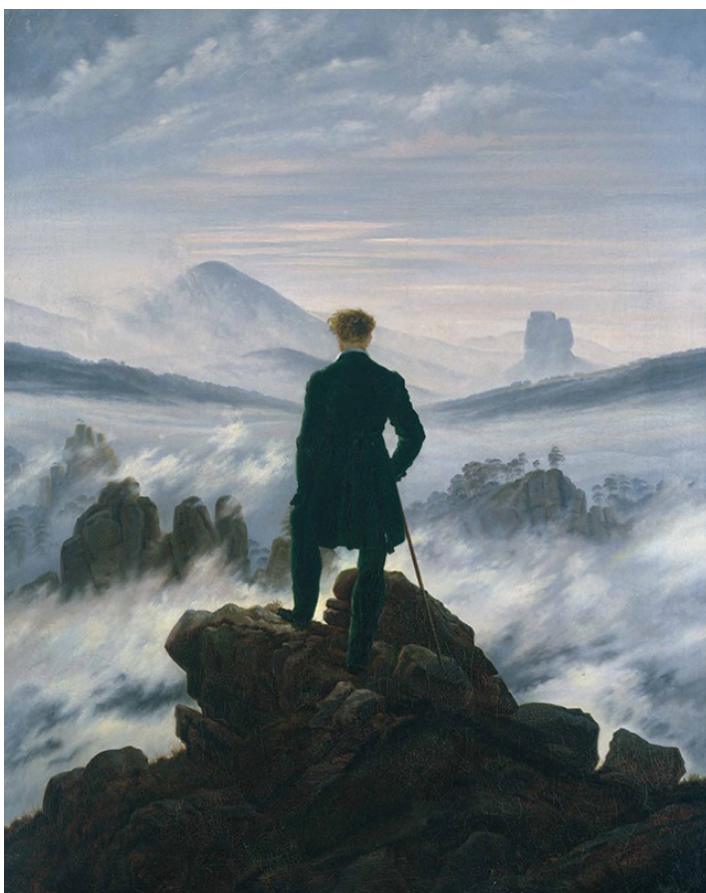
Romanticism in art and literature arose as a reaction to the Industrial Revolution's attitude towards the individual. Instead of embracing logic and order, Romantic artists and writers emphasized that emotions and senses were tools as important to understanding and experiencing the world as logic and reason. Romanticism embraced individuality and subjectivity to counter the excessive insistence on logical thought during the late 18th century through the 19th century. In doing so, Romanticism

celebrated individual imagination, intuition, and inspiration.

A number of common tropes can be seen in the visual art produced during the Romantic Movement. Because the world, and specifically Europe, was in a period of rapid cultural change, painters began to use current events as inspiration for their work to shed light on injustices they saw in society through dramatic compositions. At this time, heroes became a common subject in art—one person's struggle against the world. This trope addressed the power of the individual in a society that was quickly losing interest in individuality.

Nature became another common subject in Romantic art. During industrialization, nature was often thought of as little more than a source for raw production materials. To counter this sentiment, Romantic artists painted grand landscapes which portrayed nature's beauty and power as well as its unpredictability.

It was often the goal of Romantic artists and writers to evoke a feeling of the sublime—a feeling of awe mixed with terror—in viewers and readers. To this end, monsters and nightmares became increasingly prominent fixtures in Romantic art and writing. Often, these monsters embodied deep anxieties in society's collective psychology. The French poet, Charles Baudelaire, summarized the role of these anxieties as well as emotions in Romantic art well: "Romanticism is precisely situated neither in choice of subject nor in exact truth, but in a way of feeling."



"Wanderer Above the Sea of Fog" by Caspar David Friedrich 1817



"The Nightmare" by Henry Fuseli 1782

ROMANTICISM AND GOTHIC LITERATURE CONTINUED...

GOthic LITERATURE

As Romanticism—with its emphasis on subjectivity, unpredictability, and emotions—was on the rise, a new genre emerged in the literary world: Gothic literature. Often seen as a branch of the Romantic Movement, gothic literature employs many of the same devices as Romantic art to address the social issues of the Industrial Revolution.

Typically set against a pseudo-medieval background, the action in Gothic literature often takes place in remote large castles, monasteries, or ruins with secret passageways, dark corridors, dungeons, and trapdoors. The weather is nearly always stormy. Dark omens and supernatural forces run rampant in the world of Gothic literature. This setting appeals to an overarching atmosphere of mystery and terror.

The protagonists in Gothic literature tend to be isolated from society either physically or emotionally. Because of this, they often find themselves in defiance of other characters. This leads to narrative events where emotions are high, and drama is inevitable. ♦



"Liberty Leading the People" by Eugène Delacroix 1830

Edited from:

Seiferle, Rebecca. "Romanticism Movement Overview." The Art Story, The Art Story Contributors, 25 Sept. 2017, www.theartstory.org/movement-romanticism.htm.

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Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopædia. "Gothic Novel." Encyclopædia Britannica, Encyclopædia

Britannica, Inc., 18 Nov. 2015, www.britannica.com/art/Gothic-novel.

FRANKENSTEIN AND ROMANTICISM

“I busied myself to think of a story... One which would speak to the mysterious fears of our nature, and awaken thrilling horror—one to make the reader dread to look around, to curdle the blood, and quicken the beatings of the heart”—Mary Shelley, from her introduction to the 1831 edition of *Frankenstein: or, the Modern Prometheus*



Frontispiece to *Frankenstein: or, The Modern Prometheus* 1831 Edition

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein: or, the Modern Prometheus* is considered one of the prominent literary works of the Romantic Movement. A Gothic novel, Shelley's work poses a key question common among many artists during the Industrial Revolution: what happens when the quest for scientific progress becomes a more powerful drive than morality?

To address this fundamental question, Shelley appeals to the sublime—that is, through her writing, she creates a narrative atmosphere full of awe and curiosity as well as horror. Meant to inspire wonder as well as fear, the sublime is a fundamental device employed by many Romantic artists and writers to highlight the tension between innovation and destruction that emerged during the industrial enterprises of the 18th and 19th centuries.

In true Romantic fashion, Shelley's work is full of high levels of emotion. As Frankenstein's Creature becomes increasingly knowledgeable, we, as the audience, see him become a progressively emotional being. The more he learns about the world, the larger the Creature's capacity for complex emotions becomes. Over the course of the narrative, the Creature begins to feel everything from loneliness to rage, from love to revulsion. These emotions ultimately act as fuel for the Creature's actions.

Subjectivity, a key element of Romanticism, plays an important role in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. There is not a singular narrator in Shelley's original work. Rather, the narration shifts from Robert Walton, the captain of a North Pole-bound ship who finds Victor among the ice caps, to Victor Frankenstein, to Frankenstein's Creature, to Elizabeth Lavenza. The myriad of narrators provides accounts from many perspectives, and therefore limits the idea that there is a singular and objective truth to the narrative's events.

The subject matter of Shelley's work is distinctly Romantic and Gothic in nature. Victor Frankenstein wants to utilize science to manipulate the natural order of the world. Innovation, imagination, and inspiration are at the core of Victor's work to reanimate a corpse. However, once he has successfully reanimated the corpse, Victor becomes instantly frightened of his work, and he flees. In this sense, Victor's Creature embodies the Romantic fear of scientific progress jeopardizing humanity and human morality. ♦

THEMES

CREATION AND POWER

"What will be possible in the future, eh, Rab? Shall we gain the upper hand over sickness and disease? Have you any idea what we shall be capable of, if brilliant men are allowed to do our work?"—Victor

Throughout the novel and the play, Victor places a high value on the idea of scientific advancement for the greater good of humanity. Victor is a creator—he craves to take part in innovative experiments and rise to scientific challenges. Victor understands the potential science has to do good for the world when he tells Rab that scientific research could ultimately give humans an upper hand in curing sickness and disease.

However, Victor's scientific achievements soon begin to give him an inflated sense of importance and ability. Once he realizes that he is able to manipulate nature by creating life from lifeless matter, Victor grows power-hungry. His desire to serve the greater good through his scientific work is quickly eclipsed by his desire for god-like control. After successfully reanimating a corpse, Victor begins to equate himself to a god:

Victor: I found myself asking: where does the principle of life, the actual spark of life itself, where does it come from?

William: It comes from God.

Victor: Yes, but only from God?

William: I don't know.

Victor: Can a man be a god?

However, Victor's attempts to play God do not end well for him. As a result of his manipulation of nature, Victor loses both his brother and his wife to his creation. And for what? Victor's desire to create life is based in a selfish longing to test his own strength, to push the boundaries of his own limits and power. This becomes evident when the Creature asks why Victor set out to create him:

Creature: Why then did you create me?

Victor: To prove that I could!

KNOWLEDGE

"With all that I read, all that I learn, I discover how much I do not know. Ideas batter me like hailstones. Questions but no answers."—The Creature

The pursuit of knowledge drives the action in the story of *Frankenstein*. Victor is after the knowledge of how to create life, and the Creature is on a quest to learn as much as he can about the world. However, the more knowledge both Victor and the Creature acquire, the bleaker their world appears, and the more dangerous they become.

The Creature describes how his knowledge has given him the tools to cause great destruction:

"I have watched, and listened, and learnt. At first I knew nothing at all. But I studied the ways of men, and slowly I learnt: how to ruin, how to hate, how to debase, how to humiliate. And at the feet of my master, I learnt the highest of human skills, the skill no other creature owns: I finally learnt to lie."

Before he begins to learn about the world, the Creature exhibits a child-like joy and innocence—he dances in the rain, and, on more than one occasion, spins round and round out of pure delight. It is only when he begins his education with De Lacey that the Creature becomes cynical, seeing corruption in the world.

The Creature's relationship with knowledge parallels the events in John Milton's *Paradise Lost*. In his lessons with De Lacey, the Creature reads Milton's epic poem about the creation of the world. Adam and Eve are among the central characters in *Paradise Lost*. They live happily in the Garden of Eden until Eve takes a bite of an apple from the Tree of Knowledge. Once she does, the world changes—she is given knowledge that changes her relationship with the world for the worse, permanently. Paradise is lost. Similarly, the Creature's relationship with his world transforms the more knowledge he acquires.

THEMES CONTINUED...

HUMANITY AND MONSTROSITY

"There are two schools of thought. One says that we are all made imperfect, and require the assistance of a higher authority—a deity—to overcome the sin of being born. The other school of thought—to which I subscribe—insists that when we leave the womb we are pure, that a babe in arms is untainted by sin, that evil is the product of social forces, and that God has nothing to do with how a man turns out, be it good or be it bad."—De Lacey

In his lessons with the Creature, De Lacey touches on the difference between the roles nature and nurture play in a person's development. De Lacey, here, explains that he subscribes to the belief that when a person is born, he or she is a "tabula rasa"—a blank slate. He believes that a person's character is shaped through nurture, that a person's experience with the environment is key to determining how that person ultimately turns out. In this sense, De Lacey believes that monstrosity is something that is learned in life, not something that a being is born with.

De Lacey's belief is unique in *Frankenstein*. Based on the way characters run from and attack the Creature, it is clear that they believe monstrosity is an intrinsic trait—one that a person or creature is born with. The basis of the Creature's perceived monstrosity is his looming and shocking appearance.

However, as the Creature learns about the world and about humanity, he becomes increasingly in touch with human emotions and human desires. He learns to love, to hate, to desire, and to grieve. As he learns more, he develops into an increasingly complex and complete being—he becomes increasingly human. However, his monstrous appearance continues to distinguish him as something other than human, something terrifying.

Conversely, Victor's appearance as a well-to-do young man grants him the privilege of being treated with decency by other characters. However, as he begins to mock natural processes, he proves himself to be quite monstrous. Victor's scientific ambition threatens and even kills those closest to him. His monstrosity is born out of his desire for control. ♦



Still from the 1931 film, *Frankenstein*, directed by James Whale

MYTHS IN ITS MAKING:

PROMETHEUS AND *PARADISE LOST* IN *FRANKENSTEIN*

MYTHOLOGY

Myths are culturally pervasive stories created to address or explain either a natural or a social phenomenon. While they are often associated with meddling gods, powerful goddesses, and great heroes, not all myths date from the days of ancient civilizations. Regardless of the age and origin of a myth, all myths set out to do one thing: to examine what it means to be human.

While Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein: or, the Modern Prometheus* is often considered a modern myth for its examination of ambition, knowledge, loneliness, and love, Shelley draws upon two well-known myths about creation and knowledge to frame her work: the ancient Greek myth of Prometheus as well as John Milton's *Paradise Lost*.

PROMETHEUS

The tale of Prometheus dates back to Ancient Greek mythology. During the world's creation, Prometheus had the task of designing mankind. He sculpted man out of a slab of clay, modeling his creation in the shape and form of the gods. Once he finished his work, Prometheus let mankind loose on the world. However, he noticed that men were the only beings without a gift from the gods: other creatures had powers of flight, strength, and speed. In order to make his creations the most powerful beings on earth, Prometheus formulated a plan. Despite Zeus's order that fire be kept exclusively for the gods, Prometheus shared the power of fire with mankind. With fire, men were able to thrive—they learned how to cook, how to make weapons, how defend themselves from other creatures, and how to survive harsh winters.

However, when Zeus discovered that Prometheus had given men fire, he devised plans to punish both Prometheus and mankind for their transgressions. Zeus sentenced Prometheus to be chained to a mountain for eternity. There, a bird would come each day to peck out Prometheus's liver. Because Prometheus was immortal, his liver would grow back overnight, only to be pecked out again the next day.

To punish man, Zeus created the first woman, Pandora. Before he sent her down from Olympus to Earth, he gave

her a box and a single instruction: under no circumstance should she open the box. However, curiosity eventually got the better of Pandora: she opened the box. As soon as she did, horrible creatures such as disease, famine, and hatred escaped out into the world where they still affect humanity today. The only creature Pandora was able to keep inside the box was hope. Shelley's work thematically parallels this myth so closely, that Shelley references the myth in the title of her novel.



"Prometheus" by Peter Paul Rubens 1636-1637

MYTHS IN ITS MAKING CONTINUED...

PARADISE LOST

John Milton's epic poem, *Paradise Lost*, details a biblical account of creation. Having fallen from God's good graces, Satan and his fellow fallen angels decide to corrupt God's latest creations—Adam and Eve. Innocent and curious, Adam and Eve both become increasingly interested in learning as much as they can about the world the longer they spend in Paradise. Satan sees Adam and Eve's curiosity as a window of opportunity—something he can use to enact revenge upon God. Sensing Satan's plan, God sends the Archangel, Raphael to Earth to warn Adam and Eve. While there, Raphael recounts to Adam and Eve the rebellion Satan led against God when God decided to make Jesus, not Satan, his second-in-command. Satan's rebellion against his leader and his creator ultimately failed, and he and his army were cast out of Heaven. Before returning to Heaven, Raphael reassures Adam that he has all the knowledge that he will ever need, and that there are some things humans are not meant to know.

Nevertheless, Eve soon stumbles upon Satan disguised in the form of a talking serpent. Eve questions how the serpent learned to speak—in her time in Paradise, she has not heard any other creatures talk. Satan, as the serpent, tells Eve that he learned to speak after eating a fruit from the Tree of Knowledge—the tree God has instructed Adam and Eve to avoid. Still, curiosity gets the best of Eve, and she approaches the Tree of Knowledge and takes a bite of one of its fruits. As punishment for Eve's disobedience, God tells Adam and Eve that they must now know pain and suffering.

This is one of the novels Frankenstein's Creature reads and frequently refers to throughout Shelley's novel and Nick Dear's adaptation. While the Creature sees the parallels between himself and Adam, he eventually confesses that it is the character of Satan with whom he identifies most. ♦



"Adam and Eve" by Jean Gossart 1520

“IT’S ALIVE!”: THE SCIENTIFIC IMPACT OF *FRANKENSTEIN* ON CONTEMPORARY SCIENCE

In the 200 years since its initial publication, Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein: or, the Modern Prometheus*, has become a staple in literature, film, and contemporary media. From a twelve-minute silent film to a Marvel Universe comic book series, Shelley’s work has been adapted countless times into films, plays, musicals, and parodies. This is because Shelley’s original story of a science experiment gone awry hits upon truths and anxieties as universal and relevant in contemporary society as they were in 1818.

The pursuit of knowledge and truth as it is explored in *Frankenstein* is an essential narrative in our collective cultural framework. As humans, we are constantly striving for increased understandings of our world and of ourselves as well as for progressive change. We often turn to science and technology for tools to help us gain those new understandings and enact those progressive changes. However, as Shelley so perceptively demonstrates in her work, scientific and technological advancement can lead to morally and ethically ambiguous circumstances.

We see this moral and ethical ambiguity frequently in contemporary scientific and technological initiatives. From fears about the negative side effects of consuming genetically modified produce to the moral questioning behind stem cell research, whenever traces of human manipulation of natural biological processes can be seen, the morality of an experiment becomes a point of great contention. “Who are we to interfere with nature?” many arguments against the morality of genetic modification ask.

The fears associated with biological modification have become intrinsically linked with Mary Shelley’s work. Terms such as “Frankenfood” and “Frankenswine” have been used to describe seemingly monstrous and dangerous scientific experiments. One such Frankenstein-esque experiment was detailed in the March 1997 issue of *Time Magazine*. Dr. Ian Wilmut had successfully created Dolly, a sheep, by cloning her from another adult sheep’s cell. In *Time*, political commentator Charles Krauthammer described Dr. Wilmut’s experiment as “cataclysmic” in its manipulation of nature. When the same science used to clone Dolly was used four years later to create five

cloned female pigs, Lisa Lange, a spokeswoman for PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) called the experiment “Frankenstein-like.” That “Franken” has made its way into the vernacular used to describe science that appears to thwart nature speaks to the power and universality of Shelley’s narrative.

While Shelley’s work provides a powerful narrative context for thinking critically about humanity’s interference with natural and biological processes, it is also an example of the power of narrative as a tool to shape cultural values about a subject. Arthur Caplan, a bioethicist at New York University discusses the power of myths in determining reactions to scientific advancements:

“You have to be very careful about deploying these powerful myths. There’s no reason to believe that technology, in general, is inherently dangerous or out of control. Not only that, *Frankenstein* can narrow our focus to biological and reproductive science. Other technologies, weaponized satellites and military technology, those don’t attract the same kind of criticism.”

Regardless of one’s beliefs about the morality and ethics of a given topic of scientific research and experimentation, one thing is clear: the science-fiction story Shelley developed during her stay in Geneva has had a profound impact on the opinions we collectively hold about advances in biological sciences. ♦

Edited from:

Levinovitz, Alan. “The Curse of Frankenstein: How Archetypal Myths Shape the Way People Think About Science.” *The Conversation*, 27 Mar. 2019, theconversation.com/the-curse-of-frankenstein-how-archetypal-myths-shape-the-way-people-think-about-science-42077.

IN SICKNESS AND IN HEALTH: FRANKENSTEIN AND MODERN HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Ever since Mary Shelley had a nightmare in which she saw a scientist successfully bring a corpse to life, her novel, *Frankenstein*, has had a profound impact on medicine and the ethics of medical advances. While on the surface, Shelley's gothic story of a pieced-together corpse reanimated reads as science fiction, the ideas of reanimation and melding are actively at work in modern medical practices such as resuscitation and organ transplants. What separates Shelley's horror story of reanimation from the modern practice of resuscitation has to do with ethical framework of the procedures. While Dr. Frankenstein sets out to push the boundaries of human power by exploring ways of *creating* life, modern medical professionals push the boundaries of human power by exploring the most effective ways of *preserving* life.

Hippocrates, a physician and teacher who lived during the Classical period of ancient Greece, wrote about the ethics of medical practices. In his work, *Of the Epidemics*, Hippocrates describes the work of a physician:

"The physician must be able to tell the antecedents, know the present, and foretell the future—must mediate these things and have two special objects in view with regard to disease, namely, to do good or to do no harm."

That is, it is the job of the physician to be able to identify the causes of any illness or condition, to diagnose the symptoms a patient is actively currently experiencing because of the causes, and to recognize the best course of action to take in treating the illness or condition. Throughout these diagnostic steps, it is of the utmost importance that the physician only decides on treatments that either do not harm the patient or are in the best interest of the patient.

Hippocrates' description of the work of a physician separates Dr. Frankenstein's work from the work of modern medical professionals. In a hospital room or in an ambulance when a patient's heart rate flatlines, it is not

uncommon for a team of doctors and nurses to rush in a defibrillator, place the defibrillator pads on the patient's chest and shout "clear" before sending an electrical current into the patient's body through the defibrillator pads to resuscitate and revive the patient. This medical procedure falls under Hippocrates' stipulation that it is the job of the physician to do good. However, when Dr. Frankenstein reanimates a corpse that has been dead for some time simply to test the limits of his own intellect and power, he does so not for the good of his creature, but for his own good.

Similarly, when a patient is experiencing the failure of a vital organ, a surgical organ transplant procedure in which the patient's current organ is replaced with the organ from a deceased organ donor is often chosen as the best course of action. Organ transplants are lifesaving procedures that are conducted in the best interest of the patient. Conversely, Dr. Frankenstein's decision to piece together organs from various corpses, particularly when he creates a female partner for his creature, is done in large part to prove just how far his power of reanimation extends.

While the work that modern medical professionals do may appear similar to the work that Dr. Frankenstein conducts in Mary Shelley's story, modern medical professionals are taught to put a patient's quality of life at the forefront of the decisions they make in their diagnoses. Dr. Frankenstein is interested only in expanding the domain of what he can control—in expanding his power. ♦

Edited from:

Shmerling, Robert H. "First, Do No Harm." Harvard Health Blog, 14 Oct. 2015, www.health.harvard.edu/blog/first-do-no-harm-201510138421.

THE ROLE OF NEGLECT

IN THE CREATURE'S PSYCHOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT

CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT AND NEGLECT

In psychology, child neglect is defined as any act or omission by a caregiver that deprives a child of basic and age-appropriate needs. Neglect encompasses abandonment and lack of supervision as well as failure of a caregiver to attend to necessary emotional or psychological needs, provide necessary education, medical care, nourishment, shelter, and clothing. The deprivations associated with neglect typically result in severe and persisting physical or psychological harm.

The problems that stem from neglect are broad and long-lasting. They include poor impulse control, social withdrawal, problems with coping and regulating emotions, low self-esteem, pathological behaviors such as tics, tantrums, stealing, self-punishment, poor intellectual functioning, and low academic achievement.

The effects of childhood neglect were studied in Romanian orphanages by psychologists in 2000 in what became known as the Bucharest Early Intervention Project. This project sought to examine the effects of early institutionalization and neglect on brain and behavior development in children. In order to measure the effects of early institutionalization on development, the psychologists involved in the project began to assess 136 children ages 6 months to 3 years old who had been living in an orphanage since birth. They then randomly assigned half of the children to move into Romanian foster families, while the other half remained in the institution.

Over the subsequent months and years, the researchers returned to Bucharest to assess the development of the children placed with foster families as well as the children assigned to remain in the institution. They also assessed a control group of children who had never lived in an institution. The researchers found that the children who were born into institutions—children who were essentially born into neglect—showed delays in cognitive function, motor development, and language as well as deficits in socio-emotional behaviors and experienced more psychiatric disorders. The effect of being born into neglect seemed to even alter typical patterns of electrical activity in the brains of the children born into institutions as measured by EEG recordings.

For the children who were moved from institutions to foster care, the picture was brighter. These children showed improvements in language, IQ, and social-emotional functioning. They were able to form secure attachment relationships with their caregivers, and they made dramatic gains in their ability to express emotions.

FRANKENSTEIN'S CREATURE AND NEGLECT

De Lacey: Why is [the moon] sad?

Creature: Because it is solitary.

De Lacey: Why are you sad?

Creature: Because with all that I read, all that I learn, I discover how much I do not know. Ideas batter me like hailstones. Questions but no answers. Who am I? Where am I from? Do I have a family?

As soon as Victor Frankenstein sees his creature come to life, he abandons him. Left alone to fend for himself, the Creature struggles to figure out the workings of the world and, specifically, the workings of human society. As he grows and learns about his environment, the Creature begins to exhibit a number of the behavioral effects that are typically associated with childhood neglect. Without a caregiver figure present at the start of his journey in his new life, the Creature has an increasing level of difficulty controlling his emotional reactions to events—in a fit of anger, we see him burn down a home with three people inside. He also has difficulty with impulse control as we see when he makes a snap decision to kidnap and kill William Frankenstein in order to get Victor's attention. The Creature begins to manipulate those he encounters and becomes increasingly withdrawn from society over the course of the play.

While the Creature certainly exhibits horrifying behaviors and commits terrible acts throughout the play, those behaviors and acts are likely, at least in part, rooted in the neglect he experienced at the start of his life. Immediately shunned by not only Victor but also the townspeople of Ingolstadt, the Creature is constantly in search of a companion. The solitude he feels in response to the neglect he experiences drives many of the choices he makes over the course of the narrative. ♦

Do you believe that Victor neglected his Creature?

To what extent is the Creature responsible for his actions?

Edited from:

Weir, Kirsten. "The Lasting Impact of Neglect." Monitor on Psychology, American Psychological Association, 2014, www.apa.org/monitor/2014/06/neglect.

and

Editors. "Child Neglect." Psychology Today, Sussex Publishers, www.psychologytoday.com/us/conditions/child-neglect.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

BOOKS

Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft, et al. *Frankenstein*. Oxford University Press, 2008.

Turney, Jon. *Frankenstein's Footsteps: Science, Genetics and Popular Culture*. Yale University Press, 2000.

ARTICLES

Feldman, Paula R. "Probing the Psychological Mystery of *Frankenstein*." *Approaches to Teaching Shelley's Frankenstein*, 1990.

Haynes, Roslynn D. "Frankenstein: The Scientist We Love to Hate." *Public Understanding of Science*, vol. 4, no. 4, 1995, pp. 435–444.

Laurence, Rebecca. "Culture - Why Frankenstein Is the Story That Defines Our Fears." BBC, BBC, 13 June 2018, www.bbc.com/culture/story/20180611-why-frankenstein-is-the-story-that-defined-our-fears.

Queralt, Maria Pilar. "How A Teenage Girl Became the Mother of Horror." *How Frankenstein and Its Writer Mary Shelley Created the Horror Genre*, National Geographic, 29 Apr. 2018, www.nationalgeographic.com/archaeology-and-history/magazine/2017/07-08/birth_of_Frankenstein_Mary_Shelley/.

FILM

Frankenstein (1910) directed by J. Searle Dawley

Frankenstein (1931) directed by James Whale

Bride of Frankenstein (1935) directed by James Whale

Young Frankenstein (1974) directed by Mel Brooks

Mary Shelley's Frankenstein (1994) directed by Kenneth Branagh

ONLINE RESOURCES

Frankenstein: or, The Modern Prometheus full text from Project Gutenberg: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/84/84-h/84-h.htm>

Mary Shelley: A Biography (National Theatre): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E4p96vql3zA>

Frankenstein Part I: Crash Course Literature: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SyyrwoCec1k>

Frankenstein Part II: Crash Course Literature: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hRDjmyEvmBI>

Coal, Steam, and the Industrial Revolution: Crash Course World History: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zhL5DCizj5c>

ABOUT A NOISE WITHIN

A NOISE WITHIN A Noise Within produces classic theatre as an essential means to enrich our community by embracing universal human experiences, expanding personal awareness, and challenging individual perspectives. Our company of resident and guest artists performing in rotating repertory immerses student and general audiences in timeless, epic stories in an intimate setting.

Our most successful art asks our community to question beliefs, focus on relationships, and develop self-awareness. Southern California audiences of all ages and backgrounds build community together while engaging with this most visceral and primal of storytelling techniques. ANW's production of classic theatre includes all plays we believe will be part of our cultural legacy. We interpret these stories through the work of a professional resident company—a group of artists whose work is critical to their community—based on the belief that trust among artists and between artists and audience can only be built through an honest and continuing dialogue. Our plays will be performed in rotating repertory, sometimes simultaneously in multiple spaces, and buttressed by meaningful supporting programs to create a symphonic theatrical experience for artists and audience.

In its 27 year history, A Noise Within has garnered over 500 awards and commendations, including the Los Angeles Drama Critics' Circle's revered Polly Warfield Award for Excellence and the coveted Margaret Hartford Award for Sustained Excellence.

More than 45,000 individuals attend productions at a Noise Within annually. In addition, the theatre draws over 18,000 student participants to its Education Program. Students benefit from in-classroom workshops, conservatory training, subsidized tickets to matinee and evening performances, post-performance discussions with artists, and free standards-based study guides.

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