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The Elusive *Frankenstein*, Laura Nicosia and James F. Nicosia xiii

In this introductory essay, volume editors Laura and James Nicosia discuss the important points of each chapter that follows, helping readers to quickly locate those articles most related to their specific interest in Shelley's novel.

On *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus*: The Enduring and Cultural Significance of Shelley's Novel, Laura Nicosia and James F. Nicosia xxvii

Laura and James Nicosia trace how Frankenstein has become embedded into our culture as well as its continuing effect on readers today in this vivid presentation of Mary Shelley's famous novel.

Like Mother, Like Father, Like Daughter: A Look into the Lineage and Life of Mary Shelley, Ryan Summerbell xliii

Mary Shelley's was a life marred by tragedy and loss, and Ryan Summerbell's biography discusses how the daughter of two of history's earliest activists came to be as she was, what crucibles led to the forging of her creative soul, and how the inherited strength and determination from those around her shaped a gifted mind into something capable of touching the hearts and minds of whomever read her work.

Critical Contexts

- The 1818 and 1831 Editions of *Frankenstein*: Lessons in Authorship, Bookselling, and Textual Scholarship, Wendy C. Nielsen 3

The authoritativeness of Mary Shelley's 1818 edition of Frankenstein reveals the novel's relatively new place in the Western canon of great books. In this historical context essay, Wendy Nielsen discusses how appreciation for the text's instability gives readers the confidence to approach literary interpretation creatively.

- Authorship and Influence in the Critical Reception of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus*, Amy Leshinsky 18

Early reception of Frankenstein, reviewed in the United Kingdom by a handful of publications like the Quarterly Review, Knight's Quarterly, and Edinburgh Magazine, documents the novel's Godwinian influence, questionable morality, and attractive descriptive passages. Mary Shelley's response to adaptations of her work also played a role in the early reception of the novel, chronicled here by Amy Leshinsky.

- Conjuring Sympathy: Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and the Facilitation of Interactive Reading, Edward Yang 38

Frankenstein's composition is dependent upon the presence of three primary narrators: Captain Robert Walton, Victor Frankenstein, and the creature. Edward Yang discusses how the presence of multiple narrative voices naturally draws attention to the relationship they may have with one another, and how each of the primary narrators in Frankenstein makes every attempt to exercise control over the story being shared. For Shelley, Yang argues, storytelling seems to be an interactive event, in which the reader plays a crucial role.

- Can the Subaltern Reclaim the Father's Tongue?: Shakespeare's Caliban and Shelley's Creature, Livia Sacchetti 59

Both Mary Shelley and William Shakespeare frame the problematic relationship between an oppressed creature and its oppressor within the context of language and, specifically, the creature's ability to speak their "lapsed" father's tongue and reclaim their identity in the process. In this comparative reading, Livia Sacchetti discusses how the correlation between a father figure and an oppressor illuminates the power dynamic intrinsic to domination: one that imposes control through the systemic and epistemic establishment of superiority.

Critical Readings

- “It’s Fronken-steen!”: Re-righting Wrongs in Parodies of *Frankenstein*,
Amy Coles 79

Boris Karloff’s famous portrayal of Frankenstein’s creature in James Whale’s 1931 adaptation has indelibly transformed our perception of Shelley’s character, but Karloff’s creature is merely the first step in the evolutionary process leading to the popular understanding of Frankenstein today. Whale’s film is a palimpsest, built upon with each new imagining of Shelley’s story. Karloff’s green skin, bolted neck, and raised arms provide the most famous visualization of Frankenstein’s creation, and this image has led to what is referred to as a “Frankenstein Network,” in which “adaptations flow forth continually at an unparalleled rate,” each building on the myth of the last. However, in this essay Amy Coles explains how straight-faced adaptations like Whale’s have produced a more heinous creature, or at the very least a god-like creator, whereas parodies, for all their subversion, not only critique this, but correct it. The irony of these parodies is that by responding to adaptations such as Whale’s and mocking his misinterpretation of Frankenstein, they inadvertently produce a creature closer to Shelley’s.

- Monster Mash: Universal Pictures and *Frankenstein* on Film,
Gabrielle Stecher 99

This critical reading essay by Gabrielle Stecher situates Shelley’s novel within the context of literature-to-film adaptations and how literary texts are transformed or translated into other forms of media. Focusing on the 1931 adaptation produced by Universal Pictures starring Boris Karloff as the monster, this chapter discusses how Frankenstein and its spinoffs would become part of the studio’s “Classic Monsters” franchise produced in the 1930s and beyond. Examining how the image of Frankenstein in the twentieth-century public imagination became conflated with Boris Karloff’s portrayal reveals how deeply perception of the monster was altered, even for readers of Shelley’s text.

- Politics of the Eye and Ear in *Frankenstein*, Jinhyung Kim 118

In this essay, Jinhyung Kim considers how the narratorial consciousness—and, therefore, the reader’s—of Shelley’s Frankenstein favors the visual over the auditory by examining the creature’s encounter with the De Lacey family. The senior De Lacey,

who can hear but not see, proves the better judge of the creature's motives, saying, "[T]here is something in your words, which persuades me that you are sincere." This is, indeed, a correct judgment, as the creature's initial approach to humanity aims for nothing more than friendship. As soon as vision becomes involved, however, the outcome is brutal: De Lacey's children see nothing more than a monster whose appearance causes instant chaos, as Agatha faints, Safie rushes out of the cottage, and Felix charges forward to protect his father, who is unable to prevent the ensuing tragedy.

“Hate the wretched”: Orientalism and Otherness in *Frankenstein*,
Lindsay Katzir 136

Frankenstein's lasting appeal is often attributed to its exploration of universal themes such as the nature of creation, the pursuit of knowledge, the consequences of ambition, and the era's valuation of family and friendship—themes that are undoubtedly central to the human experience. Although these themes have long captured the attention of scholars and educators, they do not fully encompass the rich complexity of the novel. In particular, the themes of Orientalism and otherness are often overlooked, as Lindsay Katzir illustrates in this chapter. These elements are important because they offer not only valuable insights into nineteenth-century Western perceptions of the East, but they also address concerns about cultural identity and exclusion that continue to resonate in our globalized world.

“A blot upon the earth”: A Waste Studies Approach to Mary Shelley's
Frankenstein, Laura Davies 154

Ecocritical interpretations of Frankenstein have illuminated the ways in which Shelley's novel is concerned with the relationship between humankind and the environment, focusing particularly on the landscapes we find within it: the lakes and mountains of Switzerland, the De Lacey's woodland cottage, Victor Frankenstein's workshop on the remote Orkney islands, and the frozen Arctic North across which Walton, Frankenstein, and the Being traverse. In this essay, Laura Davies discusses how one emergent field within the broad discipline of ecocriticism—waste studies—can open a relational perspective in especially helpful new ways, providing a valuable double focus on the historical moment in which Shelley was writing and our present time of ecological crisis.

The Moon, the Mountains, Lightning, and Ice: Nature's Characters in *Frankenstein*, An Ecocritical Lens, Lisbeth Chapin 172

In another essay focused on ecocriticism, Lisbeth Chapin offers a portrait of how every natural scene and detail in Shelley's famous novel is described by its effects on the characters, integrated into their emotions and thoughts no less than if the trees, waters, birds, soil, snow, mountains, lightning, ice, and moon were speaking characters. Nature is inextricably linked to the characters in Frankenstein, even to the novel's very beginning, that summer in Geneva when several literary luminaries gathered around the fire on the unseasonably cold, rainy evenings reading German ghost stories aloud until George Gordon, Lord Byron challenged each to write their own. Shelley's novel dramatizes the turmoil of the period—meteorologically, politically, socially—through the characters and the environment to which they respond. The dark, cold days of that stormy summer, the lightning itself warning by its power of the terrifying implications of those experiments, stirred a story into being whose myth resounds for us still.

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* as a Dystopian Classic, Hisashi Ozawa . . 192

*Mary Shelley's Frankenstein has established its status as a classic of science fiction and has repeatedly appeared in debates on its relevant area, utopian/dystopian literature. However, Hisashi Ozawa relates how many utopian/dystopian studies spare only a few pages for this work, without providing concrete or careful analysis. In fact, Frankenstein is full of dystopian images, including Victor Frankenstein's nightmare that human beings will be threatened by the monsters he creates. Frankenstein thus becomes a dystopian classic that presages two subsequent pieces of dystopian fiction—Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*.*

Who (or What) Am I? Existential Dilemmas in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*; or, the *Modern Prometheus* and Robert Louis Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, Tammie Jenkins 211

Humankind faces existential dilemmas where not only their own mortality but also their own personhood, interpersonal relationships, and nature are threatened. Psychology considers that existential dilemmas occur when individuals experience a crisis in which they question their life's meaning and purpose in the world. In this essay, Tammie Jenkins discusses how authors such as

Mary Shelley and Robert Louis Stevenson have integrated this consideration into their texts in ways that enable each to explore and navigate the human condition from multiple points of view. Shelley's Frankenstein and Stevenson's Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde have embedded existential dilemmas in their texts that they manifest through their characters' internal and external dualities.

- Cartesian Creations: *Frankenstein* and *The Island of Dr. Moreau* in Perspective, Sakti Sekhar Dash 228

*As Mary Shelley's novel gradually took shape, it developed as an organic form influenced by the literary and scientific ideas of its time—a blend of the Gothic, the Romance, and scientific inquiry. Critics like Brian Aldiss consider it to be the first science fiction novel in its pursuit of the implications of science upon humanity's future. The idea of a scientist altering the laws of the natural world to create a new life form proved to be a role model for subsequent writers of science fiction. H.G. Wells's *The Island of Doctor Moreau* is one such work that shares striking similarities with Shelley's novel. Much like Victor Frankenstein, Doctor Moreau seeks to bend the natural laws to his will. In this chapter, Sakti Sekhar Dash discusses how their ambitious attempts mirrored the Renaissance and Enlightenment's pursuit of scientific learning to a point where the laws of the natural world seemed to hold little import.*

- Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* as Feminist Speculative Fictions, Sarah Weiger. 247

It is no accident that both Mary Shelley's Frankenstein and Margaret Atwood's Oryx and Crake begin with references to Samuel Taylor Coleridge's supernatural ballad "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner." In this essay, Sarah Weiger relates how both novels grapple with that poem's themes of ambition and error, hubris, and supernatural terror. Each also features characters destined to repeat their tales of woe, desperate for the kind of moral repair afforded by narrative revelation. But the similarities between the two novels go well beyond these thematic ones. Margaret Atwood's Oryx and Crake is a twenty-first-century retelling of Mary Shelley's novel, and both books are powerful feminist, speculative, and science fictions situated at the dawn of the Anthropocene.

The Mirror Effect: Exploring Humanity through Cadaverous Creatures and Composite Beings in *Frankenstein* and the *Unwind* Dystology, Danielle Russell 271

The legacy of Mary Shelley's Frankenstein is foregrounded in Neal Shusterman's Unwind dystology. In this chapter, Danielle Russell points out the ways in which Shusterman's texts share Shelley's ethical concerns about the dangers of scientific "progress." Alive, but denied the kind of life granted to other beings, Shelley's and Shusterman's pair of creations are anomalies struggling against their outcast status. The creature and Cam Comprix grapple with identity issues as they are forced to defend their right to exist, raising questions about what it is to be human, and where life begins and ends. Though they can descend into the monstrous identities imposed upon them by others, how they are judged reveals more about those they encounter than about themselves, allowing the creature and Cam to function as litmus tests for humanity.

"Sew me together yourself": Hypertext and the Female Monster in *Frankenstein* and *Patchwork Girl*, Callie Ingram 290

Just like the monster at the center of Mary Shelley's tale has been parodied worldwide, the so-called "bride of Frankenstein" has also become a cultural touchstone. Though she does not exist as a fully realized character in the original novel, the female monster of Frankenstein has been reimagined throughout popular culture. While many adaptations have emphasized her existence as a "bride" and companion to Victor's monster—an Eve to his Adam—several literary works have sought to explore the distinct power and significance of the female monster beyond this supporting role. This essay by Callie Ingram explores how Shelley Jackson's Patchwork Girl adapts the original Frankenstein tale from a feminist perspective, formally and conceptually expanding the potentiality of the female monster and of author Mary Shelley herself for an early digital readership.

Mary Shelley's Daughters: Female Creativity and Identity in *Frankenstein*, *Foster*, and *The Book of Goose*, Elissa Greenwald 311

Like her creature, Mary Shelley grew up without a mother: her mother, feminist writer Mary Wollstonecraft, died eleven days after giving birth to her. The daughter grew close to her father, but when she eloped with his friend Shelley at sixteen, she was as cut adrift from parental guidance as her fictional creature. As

mother and daughter, Shelley was particularly aware of the perils of giving birth, the form of creation exclusive to women. By contrast, literary creativity, the legacy of both her writer parents, gave her agency and control. Elissa Greenwald discusses how two recent novels about girls deprived of parental guidance, like the creature in Frankenstein and Mary Shelley herself, describe different paths of self-fashioning while clearly demonstrating their debt to Shelley’s work. In Claire Keegan’s Foster (2010) and Yiyun Li’s The Book of Goose (2022), girls who have been rejected or neglected by their parents find pathways to love that nurture their self-esteem.

“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”: The Pedagogical Value of Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* in the Age of Artificial Intelligence, Eman Halimeh. 330

Beyond the Gothic elements and figurative appeal, a reevaluation of Shelley’s work reveals the intersection of classic literature, technology, and the quest for knowledge in the age of artificial intelligence. In this essay, Eman Halimeh argues that it is no longer enough to view Mary Shelley’s work as a cautionary tale of scientific hubris and the ethical implications of creation. Rather, it has become imperative to recognize the coalescence of the human and technical systems. Nowhere is this exploration more crucial than within the classroom. By viewing Victor Frankenstein’s creature as the embodiment of algorithmic learning systems, teachers and students alike gain insight into the consequences of unchecked ambition, and the repercussions of neglecting an individual’s responsibility to uphold technological ethics.

Resources

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