

# FRANKENSTEIN: A NOVEL BY MARY SHELLEY

Material prepared by Dr. Trayee  
Sinha for Post Graduate Semester  
2 Students

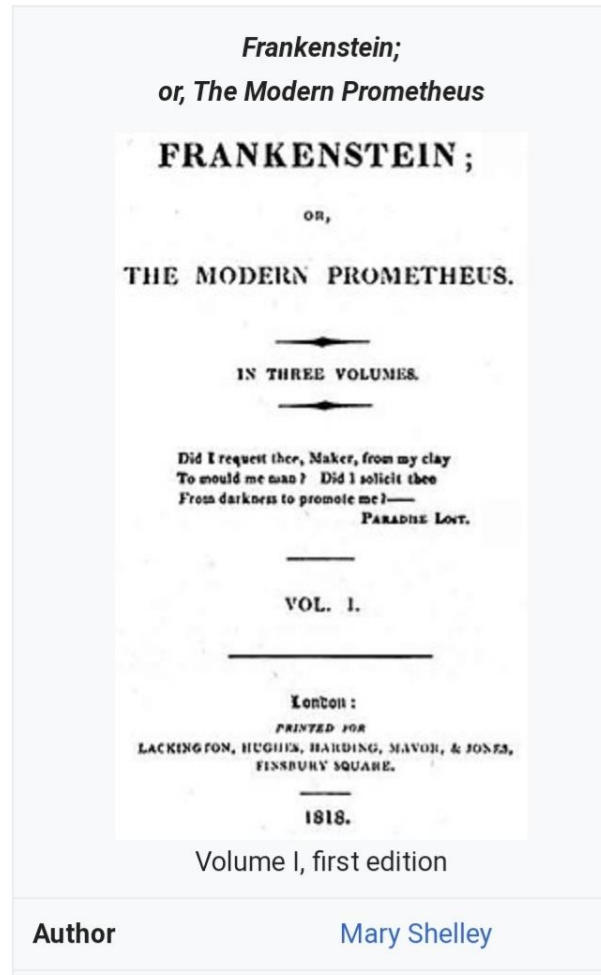
## FRANKENSTEIN AT A GLANCE

- A novel written by Mary Shelley, subtitled as *The Modern Prometheus* was published in London on January 1, 1818.
- Known as gothic novel.
- Elements of science fiction is evident.
- The first edition did not contain the writer's name.
- It is the second edition published in 1821 that bears Mary Shelley's name as the writer.

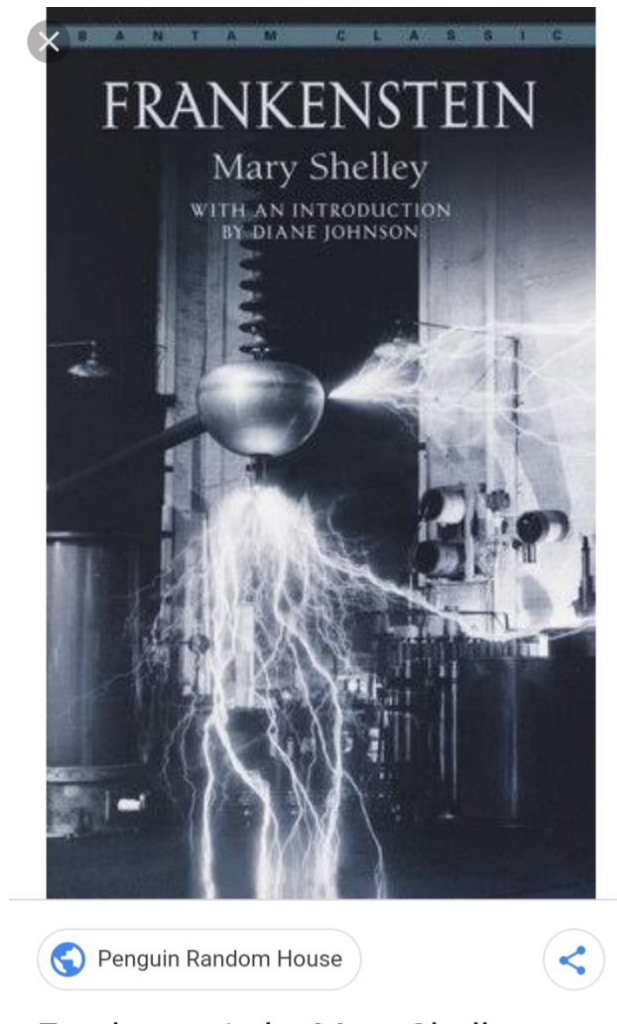
## SOURCES

- ◉ Promethean myth from Ovid.
- ◉ John Milton's *Paradise Lost*.
- ◉ Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*
- ◉ Frankenstein's character is inspired by Humphry Davy's book *Elements of Chemical Philosophy*.
- ◉ *Le Miroir des événemens actuels, ou la Belle au plus offrant* (1790): a political parable about scientific progress featuring an inventor named Frankéstein who creates a life-sized automaton.

# TEXT OF FRANKENSTEIN



# THE SAME TEXT FROM VARIOUS PUBLISHING HOUSES



# PENGUIN CLASSICS PUBLICATION



PENGUIN CLASSICS

MARY SHELLEY  
*Frankenstein: The 1818 Text*

Introduction by CHARLOTTE GORDON

## THE PLOT OF FRANKENSTEIN

- The novel narrates the story of Victor Frankenstein, a young scientist who creates a hideous sapient creature in an unorthodox scientific experiment. This young scientist creates the monster or the hideous creature, bearing his name. The author wrote this novel only at the age of 18, as young as her scientist.

- ◉ The novel's genesis became closely associated with procreation and gestation in that later account of Mary Shelley, and spoke to her anxieties concerning her parentage, and her own parenting.
- ◉ Gothic literature frequently concerns itself with silence, with inarticulacy, with the moments when manuscripts and letters become unreadable, effaced by time, or when heroines are silenced by imprisonment, enforced marriage or death. This is certainly the fate of the majority of female characters in the 1818 edition of *Frankenstein*. Their stories are all narrated through the lens of the male narrators.



Gothic fiction's origin is attributed to the English author Horace Walpole with his 1764 novel *The Castle of Otranto*. Gothic fiction tends to place emphasis on emotion and a pleasurable kind of terror, serving as an extension of the Romantic literary movement that was relatively new during Walpole's time.

Gothic fiction as a literary genre originated in England in the second half of the 18th century where, following Walpole, it was further developed by Clara Reeve, Ann Radcliffe, William Thomas Beckford and Matthew Lewis. The genre had much success in the 19th century, as witnessed in prose by Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and the works of Edgar Allan Poe as well as Charles Dickens with his novella *A Christmas Carol*.

- ◉ *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus* succeeds in resolving the contending hermeneutics of the ‘female gothic’. At the level of authorship, although the 1818 Preface seems to over-write the female authorship of the novel, the framework's silent addressee determines which testimonies survive and are transmitted unmutilated.

Even more crucially, *Frankenstein* participates in the culture of a female Gothic tradition through what remains silent in the novel. Whereas a Radcliffean heroine such as *The Mysteries of Udolpho*'s Emily St Aubert swoons in order to avoid overt confrontation with her worst fears, the equivalent of the female Gothic swoon in *Frankenstein* erupts through the novel's layers, forcing its readership throughout the ages to make the connections between male solitude, the disposability of the female and the novel's very repression of sexual desire. Anne K. Mellor reads this in relation to the very disposability of all the female characters in the novel, arguing that:

## ELEMENTS OF SCIENCE FICTION

- ◉ The monster, Victor's reaction itself is a kind of scientific achievement around which the plot is designed.
- ◉ The protagonist, Victor is a scientist and driven by ambition of scientific curiosity.
- ◉ The novel shows the dangerous aspects of modern scientific world.
- ◉ The author has presented how the scientific investigation goes beyond human control due to the excessive focus on it. His invention leads to the destruction of human beings.

The death of Elizabeth Lavenza Frankenstein on her wedding night draws our attention to the fact that female sexuality is at issue here. The denial of all overt sexuality in the surface texture of the novel - Walton is alone, writing to his beloved...sister; Victor's mother marries her father's best friend, to whom she becomes a devoted and dutiful daughter/wife; even Felix and Safie meet only in an entirely public, chaster, domesticated space - forces the more powerful erotic desires in the novel to erupt as violence. The repression of sexual desire, in the male as well as the female, generates monstrous fantasies. (Mellor, Mary Shelley, 118)

# CHARACTERS OF FRANKENSTEIN

- ◉ Victor Frankenstein
- ◉ The Creature
- ◉ Captain Robert Walton
- ◉ Mrs. Margaret Saville
- ◉ Beaufort
- ◉ Caroline Beaufort
- ◉ Ernest
- ◉ Henry Clerval
- ◉ Justine Moritz
- ◉ Elizabeth Lavenza

- ◉ William
- ◉ M. Krempe
- ◉ M. Waldman
- ◉ De Lacey
- ◉ Agatha
- ◉ Felix
- ◉ Safie
- ◉ Mr. Kirwin
- ◉ Daniel Nugent



# FRANKENSTEIN THE MONSTER CREATED IN THE LABORATORY



- ◉ Frankenstein was no minor piece of genre fiction but a literary work of striking originality. In the 1970s, that interpretation was taken up by feminist literary critics who wrote about “Frankenstein” as establishing the origins of science fiction by way of the female gothic.
- ◉ Within the adventurers account, Frankenstein tells the story of his fateful experiment, which has led him to pursue his creature to the ends of the earth.

- ◉ The novel's structure meant that those opposed to political radicalism often found themselves baffled and bewildered by "Frankenstein", as literary critics such as Chris Baldick and Adriana Craciun have pointed out.
- ◉ If "Frankenstein" is a referendum on the French Revolution, as some critics have read it, Victor Frankenstein's politics align nicely with those of Edmund Burke, who described violent revolution as "a species of political monster, which has always ended by devouring those who have produced it".

- ◉ Mary Shelley took pains that readers' sympathies would lie not only with Frankenstein, whose suffering is dreadful, but also with the creature, whose suffering is worse.
- ◉ The art of the text lies in the way Shelley nudges readers' sympathy, page by page, paragraph by paragraph, even line by line, from Frankenstein to the creature, even when it comes to the creature's vicious murders, first of Frankenstein's little brother, then of his best friend, and finally of his bride.

- ◉ Sir Walter Scott found the most preposterous part of “Frankenstein”: “That he should have not only learned to speak, but to read, and for aught we know, to write- that he should have become acquainted with Werter, with Plutarch’s lives, and with Paradise Lost.
- ◉ The creature’s account of his education very closely follows the convention of a genre of writing far distant from Scott’s own.

- Among the many moral and political ambiguities of Shelley's novel is the question of whether Victor Frankenstein is to be blamed for creating the monster- usurping the power of God, and of women- or for failing to love, care for, and educate him.

Thank You