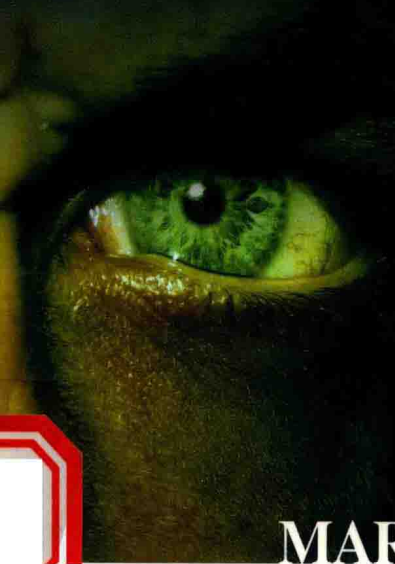


COLLINS
CLASSICS



MARY SHELLEY
Frankenstein

FRANKENSTEIN

Mary Shelley

COLLINS
CLASSICS

Harper Press
An imprint of HarperCollins Publishers
77-85 Fulham Palace Road
Hammersmith
London W6 8JB

This edition published 2010

Mary Shelley asserts the moral right to be
identified as the author of this work

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN-13: 978-0-00-735096-4

Printed and bound in Great Britain by Clays Ltd, St Ives plc



Mixed Sources

Product group from well-managed
forests and other controlled sources
www.fsc.org Cert no. SW-COC-001806
© 1996 Forest Stewardship Council

FSC is a non-profit international organisation established
to promote the responsible management of the world's forests.
Products carrying the FSC label are independently certified to assure
consumers that they come from forests that are managed
to meet the social, economic and ecological needs of present
and future generations.

Find out more about HarperCollins and the environment at
www.harpercollins.co.uk/green

Life & Times section © Gerard Cheshire
Classic Literature: Words and Phrases adapted from
Collins English Dictionary
Typesetting in Kalix by Palimpsest Book Production Limited,
Grangemouth, Stirlingshire

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced,
stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means,
electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise,
without the prior permission of the publishers.

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or
otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out or otherwise circulated without the
publisher's prior consent in any form of binding or cover other than that
in which it is published and without a similar condition including
this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

History of Collins

In 1819, Millworker William Collins from Glasgow, Scotland, set up a company for printing and publishing pamphlets, sermons, hymn books and prayer books. That company was Collins and was to mark the birth of HarperCollins Publishers as we know it today. The long tradition of Collins dictionary publishing can be traced back to the first dictionary William published in 1824, *Greek and English Lexicon*. Indeed, from 1840 onwards, he began to produce illustrated dictionaries and even obtained a licence to print and publish the Bible.

Soon after, William published the first Collins novel, *Ready Reckoner*, however it was the time of the Long Depression, where harvests were poor, prices were high, potato crops had failed and violence was erupting in Europe. As a result, many factories across the country were forced to close down and William chose to retire in 1846, partly due to the hardships he was facing.

Aged 30, William's son, William II took over the business. A keen humanitarian with a warm heart and a generous spirit, William II was truly 'Victorian' in his outlook. He introduced new, up-to-date steam presses and published affordable editions of Shakespeare's works and *Pilgrim's Progress*, making them available to the masses for the first time. A new demand for educational books meant that success came with the publication of travel books, scientific books, encyclopaedias and dictionaries. This demand to be educated led to the later publication of atlases and Collins also held the monopoly on scripture writing at the time.

In the 1860s Collins began to expand and diversify and the idea of 'books for the millions' was developed. Affordable editions of classical literature were published and in 1903 Collins introduced 10 titles in their Collins Handy Illustrated Pocket Novels. These proved so popular that a few years later this had increased to an output of 50 volumes, selling nearly half a million in their year of publication. In the same year, *The Everyman's*

MARY SHELLEY

Library was also instituted, with the idea of publishing an affordable library of the most important classical works, biographies, religious and philosophical treatments, plays, poems, travel and adventure. This series eclipsed all competition at the time and the introduction of paperback books in the 1950s helped to open that market and marked a high point in the industry.

HarperCollins is and has always been a champion of the classics and the current Collins Classics series follows in this tradition – publishing classical literature that is affordable and available to all. Beautifully packaged, highly collectible and intended to be reread and enjoyed at every opportunity.

Life & Times

About the Author

In 1817 Mary Shelley published a travelogue, detailing a six-week tour of Europe with her husband Percy. Whilst on that tour they visited Castle Frankenstein, on the Rhine, and heard disturbing tales of an occupant who had lived at the castle 100 years before and experimented with human corpses, trying to bring them back to life with alchemy. English society was also familiar with experiments carried out by Italian scientist Giovanni Aldini in the first years of the 1800s, attempting to restore life to corpses with electricity. They resulted in horrifying animations as the muscles contracted over the bones. A year after her tour, Shelley published *Frankenstein*, her Gothic masterpiece.

Shelley wrote a number of subsequent novels, but her husband's fame as a poet rather overshadowed her achievements, so that her other works became forgotten. Nevertheless, she was a professional writer for the remainder of her life and her achievements have been reassessed in recent years. *Frankenstein* was such a powerful and thought provoking story that it set the benchmark for horror and it also encapsulated the mindset of the wealthy classes at that time – a class to which the Shelley's belonged. They were comfortable enough to spend their time reading and writing, as opposed to doing 'real work', and they had the spare time to wonder and ponder the meaning of life.

Frankenstein

The novel owes a great deal to the scientific progress and discoveries about electricity at the time. In the late 18th century an Italian scientist, named Luigi Galvani, had shown that frogs legs could be 'brought back to life' by stimulating the muscles with electrical sparks. A fellow Italian scientist, named Alessandro Volta, subsequently built the first electric cell, so that further experimentation could be carried out.

MARY SHELLEY

By the turn of the 19th century, it was common knowledge among the educated classes that scientists were trying to fathom the essence of life – what it was that kept an organism alive. Perhaps unsurprisingly, those with more extravagant imaginations began to wonder about the consequences of such scientific investigations. Might it be possible to bring people back to life with a jolt of electricity? Might it be possible to assemble a person from component parts and bring them to life? At the time it seemed that anything might be possible because things weren't understood well enough to know where to draw the line.

This was the environment and starting point for Mary Shelley's fictional creation Frankenstein's monster, whose life is described in her 1818 Gothic novel *Frankenstein*. Victor Frankenstein himself is a scientist in the mould of Galvani and Volta. Through his abundant enthusiasm for science he creates a monster by using electricity to bring a cadaver back to life. The monster is evidently larger and stronger than a normal person. Although Frankenstein does not divulge the details, the implication is that he fabricated the monster by hand and made it oversized so that he could physically tailor it together. When he brings it to life he is immediately horrified by what he has created, but the deed is done so he flees the scene.

The story begins and ends in the Arctic as the majority of the novel is told aboard a ship by way of explanation for Frankenstein's predicament. In essence the tale is a warning that meddling with nature is not a part of the natural order of things and that it will end in tragedy. Frankenstein is ultimately destroyed by his own creation and the monster then destroys itself because it has the sensibilities of a human and does not want humanity to know of its existence.

The genre of Gothic fiction to which *Frankenstein* belongs is a curious blend of romance and horror, which began in the late half of the 18th century. The Gothic writers played with the readers' imaginations by introducing grotesque and disturbing elements to their stories. They were often set in Medieval castles, hence the term 'Gothic' and incorporated dungeons, torture devices, the supernatural and so on.

In the case of Mary Shelley, she wrote *Frankenstein* following a vivid and terrifying dream in which an embryonic idea filled out into a lifelike story. There is a Castle Frankenstein in Germany, where Johan Conrad Dippel practiced alchemy and experimented with bodies prior to the discoveries of Galvani and Volta. It is evident that Shelley visited, or had at least heard tale of the castle whilst on a European tour with her husband and the seed for her novel was planted. However, Shelley was mindful of her place as a female writer and never admitted the influence of the castle, despite it being glaringly obvious, for the sake of maintaining a reputation for originality.

The foundation for *Frankenstein* was a frightening marriage of baleful tales of experiments with corpses in a Gothic castle and fascinating advances in the science of electricity. Frankenstein fashions a creation from body parts, he uses electricity to bring it to life, the creature is both human and monster, it sets out to destroy its creator.

Shelley described Frankenstein, the man, as the 'modern Prometheus' because the eponymous Greek god is the creator of mankind, and he is associated with light and fire, alluding to the electricity. She clearly wanted to express the idea that playing God results in Frankenstein's own demise.

At the time that Shelley wrote her novel, people were very interested in the occult and other belief systems that countered Christianity. They saw that science was beginning to reveal how and why the world worked, so the logical conclusion was that science might open doors that should remain closed for fear of the consequences.

There is an age-old recognition that science can be put to good or evil use, depending on the motives of scientists. Frankenstein, through his own burning curiosity, cannot resist the temptation of seeing whether he can find the secret to life. His intentions are good in his own mind, but the results are manifestly evil and Shelley's tale is a cautionary one.

In a pre-Darwinian world, people tied science and religion together, rather than seeing science as a way of constructing the

MARY SHELLEY

world in the absence of religion. The consequence was that using science to delve too deep could only have the effect of unleashing elements from the dark side. That is Frankenstein's big mistake, he unleashes the forces of evil on his family and ultimately on himself.

In this way, Shelley's story reaches a climax with both Frankenstein and his creation dying. Frankenstein can no longer interfere with the natural order of things with his crazy scientific experiments and the personification of evil removes itself from causing more terror by allowing the good side of its own personality to prevail.

Of course, the underpinning theme of good versus evil has always been a successful and popular formula for story telling. It satisfies a tendency in the human mind to compartmentalize things, elements, components, phenomena in life into two boxes. We enjoy the experience of being mentally assaulted by evil events, but we derive the most pleasure from seeing good restored in the end.

The influence of *Frankenstein* continues to filter down the two centuries since it was written, not least because it is a perfect example of its genre. Even though we now know that corpses cannot be sewn together and sparked to life, it doesn't stop our imaginations from suspending their disbelief and becoming fully immersed into this dark tale.

FRANKENSTEIN

VOLUME ONE

LETTER 1

To Mrs Saville, England.

St Petersburg, Dec. 11th, 17—.

You will rejoice to hear that no disaster has accompanied the commencement of an enterprise which you have regarded with such evil forebodings. I arrived here yesterday; and my first task is to assure my dear sister of my welfare, and increasing confidence in the success of my undertaking.

I am already far north of London; and as I walk in the streets of Petersburg, I feel a cold northern breeze play upon my cheeks, which braces my nerves, and fills me with delight. Do you understand this feeling? This breeze, which has travelled from the regions towards which I am advancing, gives me a foretaste of those icy climes. Inspirited by this wind of promise, my day dreams become more fervent and vivid. I try in vain to be persuaded that the pole is the seat of frost and desolation; it ever presents itself to my imagination as the region of beauty and delight. There, Margaret, the sun is for ever visible, its broad disk just skirting the horizon, and diffusing a perpetual splendour. There — for with your leave, my sister, I will put some trust in preceding navigators — there snow and frost are banished; and, sailing over a calm

sea, we may be wafted to a land surpassing in wonders and in beauty every region hitherto discovered on the habitable globe. Its productions and features may be without example, as the phenomena of the heavenly bodies undoubtedly are in those undiscovered solitudes. What may not be expected in a country of eternal light? I may there discover the wondrous power which attracts the needle; and may regulate a thousand celestial observations, that require only this voyage to render their seeming eccentricities consistent for ever. I shall satiate my ardent curiosity with the sight of a part of the world never before visited, and may tread a land never before imprinted by the foot of man. These are my enticements, and they are sufficient to conquer all fear of danger or death, and to induce me to commence this laborious voyage with the joy a child feels when he embarks in a little boat, with his holiday mates, on an expedition of discovery up his native river. But, supposing all these conjectures to be false, you cannot contest the inestimable benefit which I shall confer on all mankind to the last generation, by discovering a passage near the pole to those countries, to reach which at present so many months are requisite; or by ascertaining the secret of the magnet, which, if at all possible, can only be effected by an undertaking such as mine.

These reflections have dispelled the agitation with which I began my letter, and I feel my heart glow with an enthusiasm which elevates me to heaven; for nothing contributes so much to tranquillize the mind as a steady purpose – a point on which the soul may fix its intellectual eye. This expedition has been the favourite dream of my early years. I have read with ardour the accounts of the various voyages which have been made in the prospect of arriving at the North Pacific Ocean through the seas which surround the pole. You may remember that a history of all the voyages made for purposes of discovery composed the whole of our good uncle Thomas's library. My education was neglected, yet I was passionately fond of reading. These volumes were my study day and night, and my

familiarity with them increased that regret which I had felt, as a child, on learning that my father's dying injunction had forbidden my uncle to allow me to embark in a seafaring life.

These visions faded when I perused, for the first time, those poets whose effusions, entranced my soul, and lifted it to heaven. I also became a poet, and for one year lived in a Paradise of my own creation; I imagined that I also might obtain a niche in the temple where the names of Homer and Shakespeare are consecrated. You are well acquainted with my failure, and how heavily I bore the disappointment. But just at that time I inherited the fortune of my cousin, and my thoughts were turned into the channel of their earlier bent.

Six years have passed since I resolved on my present undertaking. I can, even now, remember the hour from which I dedicated myself to this great enterprise. I commenced by inuring my body to hardship. I accompanied the whale-fishers on several expeditions to the North Sea; I voluntarily endured cold, famine, thirst, and want of sleep; I often worked harder than the common sailors during the day, and devoted my nights to the study of mathematics, the theory of medicine, and those branches of physical science from which a naval adventure might derive the greatest practical advantage. Twice I actually hired myself as an under-mate in a Greenland whaler, and acquitted myself to admiration. I must own I felt a little proud, when my captain offered me the second dignity in the vessel and intreated me to remain with the greatest earnestness so valuable did he consider my services.

And now, dear Margaret, do I not deserve to accomplish some great purpose? My life might have been passed in ease and luxury; but I preferred glory to every enticement that wealth placed in my path. Oh, that some encouraging voice would answer in the affirmative! My courage and my resolution is firm; but my hopes fluctuate, and my spirits are often depressed. I am about to proceed on a long and difficult voyage,

the emergencies of which will demand all my fortitude: I am required not only to raise the spirits of others, but sometimes to sustain my own, when theirs are failing.

This is the most favourable period for travelling in Russia. They fly quickly over the snow in their sledges; the motion is pleasant, and, in my opinion, far more agreeable than that of an English stage-coach. The cold is not excessive, if you are wrapped in furs – a dress which I have already adopted; for there is a great difference between walking the deck and remaining seated motionless for hours, when no exercise prevents the blood from actually freezing in your veins. I have no ambition to lose my life on the post-road between St Petersburg and Archangel.

I shall depart for the latter town in a fortnight or three weeks; and my intention is to hire a ship there, which can easily be done by paying the insurance for the owner, and to engage as many sailors as I think necessary among those who are accustomed to the whale-fishing. I do not intend to sail until the month of June; and when shall I return? Ah, dear sister, how can I answer this question? If I succeed, many, many months, perhaps years, will pass before you and I may meet. If I fail, you will see me again soon, or never.

Farewell, my dear, excellent Margaret. Heaven shower down blessings on you, and save me, that I may again and again testify my gratitude for all your love and kindness.

Your affectionate brother,

R. WALTON

LETTER 2

To Mrs Saville, England.

Archangel, March 28th, 17-.

How slowly the time passes here, encompassed as I am by frost and snow! yet a second step is taken towards my enterprise. I have hired a vessel, and am occupied in collecting my sailors; those whom I have already engaged, appear to be men on whom I can depend and are certainly possessed of dauntless courage.

But I have one want which I have never yet been able to satisfy; and the absence of the object of which I now feel as a most severe evil. 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. I shall commit my thoughts to paper, it is true; but that is a poor medium for the communication of feeling. I desire the company of a man who could sympathise with me; whose eyes would reply to mine. You may deem me romantic, my dear sister, but I bitterly feel the want of a friend. I have no one near me, gentle yet courageous, possessed of a cultivated as well as of a capacious mind, whose tastes are like my own, to approve or amend my plans. How would such a friend repair the faults of your poor