

**“FRANKENSTEIN; OR, THE MODERN PROMETHEUS” IS THE MOST
UNIQUE MASTERPIECE OF FANTASTIC THE WORLD**

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Annotation

Mary Shelley's “Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus” stands as a seminal work in the realm of fantastic literature, blending elements of gothic horror and science fiction. In this article author analysis origin, impact of society, structure and key features of the novels.

Key words: exploration of hubris, contrasting viewpoints, an innocent, genre conventions.

Introduction

In the annals of fantastic literature, few works stand as prominently as Mary Shelley's "Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus". Published anonymously in 1818, this novel transcends its Gothic origins to emerge as a pioneering masterpiece that blends elements of horror, science fiction, and philosophical inquiry. Shelley's narrative of ambition, creation, and moral consequence continues to captivate readers, challenging societal norms and exploring the very essence of humanity. As we delve into the depths of this unique tale, we uncover not only a gripping story of scientific hubris but also a profound exploration of existential themes that resonate across centuries.

Main part

Mary Shelley's "Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus" stands as one of the most unique masterpieces in the realm of fantastic literature. Published anonymously when Shelley was just 21 years old, the novel emerged from a literary contest among friends that included luminaries such as Lord Byron and Percy Bysshe Shelley, Mary's husband. It is often regarded as the first science fiction novel, as it explores the moral and ethical implications of scientific experimentation in a way that was groundbreaking for its time.

The subtitle "The Modern Prometheus" alludes to the Greek myth of Prometheus, who stole fire from the gods to benefit mankind, only to suffer eternal punishment. Similarly, Victor Frankenstein harnesses the power of electricity and chemistry to create life, yet he is unprepared for the consequences of his actions. This comparison underscores Shelley's exploration of hubris and the unintended consequences of scientific discovery.

The novel's narrative structure, employing multiple perspectives and framed within the epistolary form (letters and journal entries), allows Shelley to delve into the psychological depths of her characters.¹ Victor Frankenstein's obsessive pursuit of knowledge and his subsequent horror at his creation's appearance mirror Shelley's own contemplations on the moral responsibilities of scientists and the dangers of unrestrained ambition.

Moreover, "Frankenstein" was influenced by the intellectual and cultural milieu of the early 19th century, known as the Romantic period. Shelley's novel reflects Romantic ideals such as the sublime, the power of nature, and the individual's quest for meaning and identity.² These themes are woven into the fabric of the story, enriching its philosophical underpinnings and resonating with readers who continue to grapple with issues of human ambition and the limits of scientific progress.

The novel's legacy extends beyond literature into various artistic and cultural spheres. Countless adaptations, from stage plays to Hollywood films, have reinterpreted Shelley's tale, each offering new insights into its enduring relevance. The creature, often portrayed sympathetically despite its monstrous appearance, has become a symbol of societal alienation and the consequences of neglect and abandonment.

Methodology

We analyze some of its key aspects in depth:

Narrative Innovation and Structure

Shelley employs a complex narrative structure that includes multiple framing devices such as letters, diary entries, and firsthand accounts. This epistolary format allows Shelley to present different perspectives and layers of storytelling, enriching the reader's understanding of the characters and their motivations.³ The use of different narrators, including Victor Frankenstein himself and the creature he creates, provides contrasting viewpoints on the moral and ethical dilemmas central to the novel. This narrative technique enhances the depth of characterization and invites readers to empathize with both protagonist and antagonist.

Exploration of Scientific Hubris

At its core, "Frankenstein" explores the consequences of unchecked scientific ambition. Victor Frankenstein's relentless pursuit of knowledge and power leads him

¹ Smith, A. (2007). *Gothic Literature*. Edinburgh University Press Ltd. George Square, Edinburgh

² Burke, E. (2001). *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*. Project Gutenberg. https://www.gutenberg.org/files/15043/15043-h/15043-h.htm#A_PHILOSOPHICAL_INQUIRY

³ Ballesteros, A. (1998). *Narciso y el doble en la literatura fantástica victoriana*. Colección Monografías. Cuenca: Ediciones de la Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha.

to defy natural order and create life artificially. This act of creation, however, brings unforeseen consequences and moral quandaries that haunt him throughout the novel. Shelley critiques the Romantic-era fascination with scientific discovery by portraying Frankenstein's experiment as a cautionary tale. The novel raises questions about the ethical responsibilities of scientists and the potential dangers of playing god.

Themes of Alienation and Identity

Central to the novel is the theme of alienation, both of Victor Frankenstein and his creature. ⁴Victor becomes increasingly isolated as he becomes consumed by his scientific pursuits, neglecting personal relationships and ethical considerations. The creature, abandoned and rejected by its creator and society, grapples with its own identity and existence. Shelley explores the creature's yearning for acceptance and its transformation from an innocent being into a vengeful figure as a result of its mistreatment by humans.

Cultural and Historical Context

Written in the early 19th century during the Romantic period, "Frankenstein" reflects the intellectual and social concerns of its time. It critiques Enlightenment ideals of progress and reason, instead emphasizing the importance of human emotion, nature, and the limitations of scientific knowledge. The novel also engages with contemporary debates on the ethics of experimentation, the fear of the unknown, and the consequences of industrialization and technological advancement.

Legacy and Cultural Impact

"Frankenstein" has left an indelible mark on literature and popular culture, influencing countless adaptations, films, and artistic interpretations. The image of the monstrous creature, often misunderstood and misrepresented, has become iconic, symbolizing the dangers of alienation and the consequences of scientific hubris. The novel's exploration of existential themes continues to resonate with readers, prompting reflection on the human condition, societal norms, and the ethical dilemmas posed by scientific progress.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Mary Shelley's "Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus" remains a seminal work that continues to provoke thought and inspire creativity. Its exploration of ethical dilemmas, complex characters, and profound themes ensures its place not only as a masterpiece of fantastic literature but also as a timeless reflection on human nature and the consequences of scientific discovery.

It remains a timeless masterpiece that transcends genre conventions to provoke thought and inspire discourse on themes of ambition, creation, and the consequences

⁴ Shelley, M. (2008). Frankenstein. Wordsworth Editions Limited. Hertfordshire.

of human endeavor. Its narrative complexity, thematic richness, and cultural relevance ensure its enduring status as a seminal work of fantastic literature.

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