OCR
RECOGNISING ACHIEVEMENT

English Reading List

Introductions and Suggested Reading

These Introductions and Annotated reading lists are intended for teachers preparing to teach this text for the first time for Unit F661 in the OCR GCE AS Level in English Literature, though some materials may be shared directly with students. Most of the concerns highlighted address literary, biographical, historical or other contextual concerns, as indicated in the margin (AO4). Others point to critical approaches that may be juxtaposed with the candidate's own (AO3). Very occasionally, some help is given exploring the text (AO2) though it is assumed that this work will be carried on in centres.

It is the intention that most of this material will be found directly relevant to AS study, teachers are reminded that Assessment Objectives do not directly establish the quality of an answer, but only assist to place it accurately within an assessment band. It follows that no marks are given directly for demonstration of AOs and that unless properly assimilated into the candidate's discussion, undigested lumps of contextual material may often inhibit rather than enhance an answer.

The brief suggestions for further reading will need to be filtered by teachers before they are presented to students; I would, however, recommend a general textbook on the novel, regardless of your choice of text. This is Jeremy Hawthorn, *Studying the Novel* (Arnold), which first appeared in 1985, and has been frequently updated and reprinted. Hawthorn's sense of the history of the novel is astute, his use of examples informative and unthreatening. He is impatient of jargon, and his definition of key-terms ('realism', modernism') is accessible. Here is a sample of his method. Here he tests the value of successful viewpoint choice:

I have tried to find good audio-book readings of all the novels, convinced that they aid student comprehension more than is generally realised. I also hope teachers will find my views of film versions helpful. No area of A Level study has improved as much as performance-criticism, where film and television versions (in the case of novels) are viewed by candidates as critical readings of the base-text. Obviously this process will be short-circuited if candidates think of filmed novels merely as pale substitutes for reading, or worse, as substitutes.

Please note that where editions of texts are suggested, these are only recommendations. OCR does not specify editions of texts to be used, and F661 is a closed-text examination.

Possessed by Romantic Daemons

Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley is an author twice possessed: by the daemon of English Romanticism, which has tended to view her as an impressionable but marginal teenage member of the Shelley-circle; and, as the 'author of *Frankenstein*', by the monstrous 'afterlife' of her own 'hideous progeny' on stage, screen and in popular culture. It is as if one of the novel's many achievements has been (as the Creature hounded Frankenstein) to consume the life of its author. From the beginning, as we shall see, there were whispers that Mary's husband Percy had co-written the novel and perhaps even conceived it. Mary's 'intentions' (not that these are worth much in criticism) have been regularly ignored and sometimes contradicted in re-imaginings of her book. For instance, Mary wished the Creature to criticise, philosophise, theologise, using the challenging pages of Milton as his base-text: popular culture has reduced his eloquence to a few grunts of anger and pain. The moral of her blazingly ambiguous book has been conveniently and very conservatively re-packaged. As Jay Clayton writes, 'most readers come away from the book with an overwhelming impression of the dangers of scientific hubris.' Mary Shelley's novel has perpetually, almost since publication, needed to be rescued not from its critics but from its consumers. And perhaps it is too late in the day for that.

AO4
Literary and cultural contexts

Percy Shelley: Frankenstein's Hidden Creator

'Shelley the great atheist has gone down by water to eternal fire,' was one of the nastier obituaries attracted by Percy Shelley's drowning off the Italian coast in 1822. Almost unknown as a poet at that date, what reputation Shelley possessed depended on the notoriety of his more unorthodox opinions: (among others) vegetarianism, Irish independence, the murderous intransigence of the Home Secretary, nudism and free-love. He had been regularly false to his wife Mary, not least with the wife of one of his closest friends. Yet after his death, the author of *Frankenstein* worked tirelessly to procure her dead husband a place among the English poets, campaigning for a generation against the family wish that Percy's literary work should be suppressed, and finally, in 1839, edited the four volume edition of his poems (plus an extra two volumes of essays and letters) that would ensure Shelley's voice would be recognised as the most radical and lyrical of the English Romantics. It would be fair, then, to say that Mary became Percy's literary midwife, a determinant of his reputation if not of the content of his literary remains. But would it be equally reasonable to press a case that Percy in some way co-wrote *Frankenstein*, the time-bomb novel that grew out of the ghost story contest at the Villa Diodati in summer 1816, and which has proved more challenging and involving, in the academy and the cinema-screen, than anything Percy ever wrote? He provided, certainly, a kind of scientific aura in which the novel was produced: he regularly turned his studies into laboratories, experimented with chemistry, galvanism and (famously) a Van de Graaf generator, becoming addicted at Oxford to making his hair stand on end. To judge from his essay on the novel, published after his death, he sympathised profoundly with its political interests: the effect of nurture on nature, its ultimate refusal to discriminate between, or even to identify, perpetrator and victim. He surely discussed the novel with his wife as it was being written. And he also provided material for the MS, and made at least 5,000 alterations. The most recent study of the 1816-17 MS, now in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, by its editor Charles Robinson, calculates that 4-5,000 of the novel's 72,000 words are actually by Percy, and posits an intriguing image of Mary and Percy passing the manuscript draft between them, each responding to the ideas of the other. Not that Percy's contributions are always for the better. He prefers highly literary, Latinate diction and sometimes introduces political digressions. Percy, if his juvenile Gothic novels, *Zastrozzi* and *St Irvyne* are anything to go by, was not good at managing a plot.

A02 and A04
Literary comparison and allusion

Prometheus Bound

Frankenstein is subtitled *The Modern Prometheus*.
The reference is to the creator rather than the creature he creates, and refers to the most accomplished and imaginative of the Greek Titans (eventually displaced by the 'true' Gods), who moulded human beings from clay (like Victor) and bestowed upon them the dangerous but enabling gift of fire. Prometheus was an important figure for Romantic thinkers responding to the French Revolution. He became the ideal of a 'creative rebel', often cruelly persecuted for his vision and achievements, most notably by being chained to a rock in Caucasus and visited daily by an eagle which ripped out and ate his liver. But whereas Prometheus was an immortal being, whose liver regrew nightly, the despots of the early nineteenth century, with their cruel prisons and laws, killed their victims permanently. In Percy Shelley's 'speculative drama' *Prometheus Unbound* (1818), written close to the composition of *Frankenstein*, Prometheus the 'Good Titan' is presented with studied blasphemy as a Christ figure, suffering so that the whole creation may be restored and enabled; and much more effective at sacrificing himself than Christ, who also appears in Percy's poem, is described as a shadowy figure, 'a youth, with patient looks, nailed to a crucifix.' As so often, Mary Shelley's conception of Prometheus enters into dialogue or even debate with her husband's: where his Prometheus is a victorious prophet, setting free the Music of the Spheres, Mary's Victor is a much more equivocal figure, creating but eventually ashamed of his creation: a haunted, hunted man, damaged and damaging.

A02 and A04
Literary comparison and allusion

Father of Frankenstein

The most important source and analogue for that book-haunted novel, *Frankenstein*, is a 1794 novel by Mary Shelley's father, William Godwin, *Things are as they Are, or The Adventures of Caleb Williams* (1794). One of the most significant radical texts of the 1790s, a pungent analysis of the workings of power, and a study of psychological doubling to rival the relationship between Victor and the Creature. It is also one of the first thrillers in the language, and, like *Frankenstein*, a classic novel of pursuit. As Victor sprints to the Nemesis that will be his reuniting with the creature so Falkland hopes to recapture his servant Caleb in the hope that he can extinguish the secret of his guilt: Caleb knows that his master is a murderer, and could, if he so chooses, bring him to the gallows, thus ending the corrupt regimen Falkland represents. The difference between the two novels is chiefly that Falkland sins by taking life, Victor arguably by creating it; and that whereas the Creature is corrupted by the callousness of his creator, Caleb remains fundamentally innocent, despite the vindictiveness of his alter ego. The novel is available in Oxford World Classics. Recent criticism of *Frankenstein* invariably maps the politics of the novel against the thinking of Mary's father.

A02 and A04
Literary comparison and allusion

A02 Biographical context

Family Entanglements

It has frequently been argued that one of Mary's deepest motives for writing *Frankenstein* was to come to terms with the anxieties that complicated her relationship with both her parents. Mary's mother, the feminist polemicist Mary Wollstonecraft, died of fever induced by a retained afterbirth following Mary's successful delivery. It is surely possible that some aspects of the Creature's self-loathing may depend on Mary's own feelings of impotent guilt when she brooded on the death which had given her birth. Ellen Moers in *Literary Women* began a trend for examining the novel as the reflection of Mary the mother, as well as daughter. As the youthful mother of an 'illegitimate' daughter who lived only a few weeks (Percy could not marry her at first as he had another wife living). Mary experienced feelings of shame and frustration, and, inevitably, guilt. All of this finds its way into the novel when Victor is revolted by the 'filthy' business of generating his progeny, and abandons him like a mother in the grip of post-natal depression. One extreme reading takes the novel to explore masculine disgust at 'the power of woman' to create life, a 'Promethean heat' denied to the male. But the darkest of all these family cupboards is opened more obviously in Mary's novella, *Matilda*, than in *Frankenstein*, though several critics (e.g. Leila May) have discerned incestuous undertones in our novel, too. *Matilda* remained unpublished until 1959. It deals with the persecution of its heroine by an incestuous father (there is a graphic scene where he shuffles to the door of her bedroom), and Godwin, who may have thought the story too close to home, forbade publication. The illicit, mutually destructive relationship between 'parent and child' in *Frankenstein* may thus share a common emotional source with the later story, *Matilda*.

The Texts of Frankenstein

Most modern editions reprint the 1831 text of the novel, incorporating Mary Shelley's final emendations. The 1818 edition on which the two Shelleys originally worked forms the basis of Marilyn Butler's Oxford World's Classics edition of 1993. This editor's preference is for this shorter, rougher more radical text of the novel, not least because (perhaps under Percy's influence?) its science more toughly reflects innovations in chemistry and electrical theory in the late eighteenth century. The 1831 text tends to view Victor more as a Renaissance Magician than an Enlightenment Scientist, more Faust than Prometheus. This text adds long speeches that typify and implicitly criticise scientific overreaching. On the other hand, the 1831 text provides deeper internal treatment of Victor's character, and this text is more fluently, if sometimes more emotively written. Butler's edition incorporates all of the 1831 changes as an appendix, making them conveniently available to the student. The 1831 text is also available from World's Classics, ed. M.K. Joseph (1998), and in a convenient student-friendly edition from Oneworld Classics (2008). Which version is chosen as a basis for study is up to personal taste, though the 1831 text is more generally familiar. OCR will not set questions that privilege knowledge of one text over the other, or which require you to have studied both.

These critical introductions to the work of Mary Shelley have much in them of value to an AS student.

Mary Lowe Evans, *Mary Shelley*, Twayne, (1993).

Esther Schor, *The Cambridge Companion to Mary Shelley* (2003).

Narrators and Narrative in the Gothic Novel

Gothic fiction typically, like Frankenstein, makes use of a sequence of strongly differentiated narrators. A similar technique will be encountered in James Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824) where the same narrative events are told over from the points of view of omniscient narrator and protagonist; in Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820), which presents a string of short-stories and novellas inside a framing narrative; and in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) which introduces the story via two strongly contrasted narrators and impresses virtually every character to tell part of the story along the way. In the 1860s, Wilkie Collins revived the technique for his 'novels of sensation', and Bram Stoker adopted it from Collins for *Dracula* (1897). In the same year, Henry James 'frames' his ghost story, *The Turn of the Screw*, behind the opinions of its audience sitting round a Christmas fire. The purpose of fracturing and delaying narrative in this way, and introducing so many versions of back-story, is partly to stress the relativity of all human viewpoints and opinions and how insecure is our hold on the 'truth' about any series of matters; but another value of multiple voices and introduced documents – letters, for example, journals, bills of sale and birth certificates – is that they carry an air of verisimilitude.

Further Reading on the Gothic Novel:

David Punter, *The Literature of Terror* (rev. 1996).

Fred Botting, *Gothic* (1999).

A02
Narrative method;
A04
Literary contexts

Allusion in Frankenstein

Textual reference in *Frankenstein* is subtle and complex. For instance, when Frankenstein urges the mariners to come with him and capture the Creature, some critics think Mary Shelley is deliberately echoing a passage in Dante's *Inferno*. In that passage, Dante's Ulysses is exhorting his sailors to pursue 'knowledge' on a voyage of philosophic discovery. The similarity to Frankenstein, embodiment of the Romantic ego sailing through 'strange seas of thought alone' is clear. But Dante's Ulysses is not presented favourably. This is hell, and he has been placed in a ditch reserved for those who give bad advice. Did Mary intend similar condemnation of Victor by making this allusion? This is the speech as it occurs in a contemporary translation of Dante:

Oh, brothers!' I began, 'who to the west
Through perils without number now have reach'd;
To this the short remaining watch, that yet
Our senses have to wake, refuse not proof
Of the unpeopled world, following the track
Of Phoebus. Call to mind from whence ye sprang:
Ye were not form'd to live the life of brutes,
But virtue to pursue, and knowledge high.'
With these few words I sharpened for the voyage
The mind of my associates that I then
Could scarecely have withheld them.'

Dante, *Inferno*, Canto 26 110-20, translated Henry Carey (1818).

> A02
> Literary allusion
> A04
> Literary contexts

Frankenstein and Milton

Did I request thee, Maker, from my clay
To mould Me man? Did I solicit thee
From darkness to promote me?

The novel's epigraph is from *Paradise Lost* (Book X, ll. 743-5) and is described in the text of the novel as 'Adam's supplication to his creator.' Milton's Book X is very far-reaching. Addison commented that it contained 'a greater variety of persons in it than any other in the whole poem… like the last Act of a well-written Tragedy.' In it various characters come to terms with the implications of the fall of humanity. Adam, aware of his death, and therefore doubly aware of his solitude, blames his creator, as the Creature blames Victor, for his present and future sufferings. But *Paradise Lost* means more to the Creature than a source of opportunities to brood on his own misfortune. It is the book that teaches him to read, he believes it 'true history', for him it has the force of scripture. And the Shelleys make sure he reads it as a true Romantic, as the work of a great proponent of liberty and liberalism, and in the same spirit as Blake, who believed 'Milton was secretly of the Devil's Party without knowing it' *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1794). The Creature, too, comes to believe 'Satan the fitter emblem of my condition' than God.

AO2
Literary reference
AO4
Literary Context

The Mother of Science Fiction

Frankenstein is not Mary Shelley's only fiction about the reanimation of apparently lifeless human clay. The Magazine story '*Roger Dodsworth: The Reanimated Englishman*' (1826) is a contribution to a series of articles about the possible revival of corpses which have fallen into glaciers and have been cryogenically preserved within them. This is the fate of Shelley's hero, Dodsworth, and once brought back to life he is on the brink of becoming an invaluable resource for historians, as he has observed at first hand the life of previous centuries. Another Mary Shelley novel frequently classed as Science Fiction, or 'Speculative Fiction', at any rate, is the one most frequently read after *Frankenstein*, and most worth reading, *The Last Man* (1826). This is a dystopian fantasy where the humanist spirit dwindles by disease until only its last frail representative, 'the last man', is left. The book retains its power to move and involve the reader, but is not really recommended to AS readers, partly on account of the disparate nature of its two halves, partly because of its length, partly because the opening constitutes a *novel à clef* with portraits of Shelley and Byron that requires some knowledge of Romantic contexts to appreciate.

AO4
Literary
contexts

Frankenstein and the Critics

> *'I am not only witty in myself but the cause that wit is in other men'*
> (Shakespeare, *Falstaff* in 2H4).

> *'The Fact the novel proved to be such a fertile ground for so many different critical schools has no doubt led to its installation as the most frequently taught canonical novel written by a woman in the early nineteenth century'*
> (Diane Long, *Hoeveler*).

> *'Frankenstein is a product of criticism, not a work of literature'*
> (Fred Botting).

Frankenstein has proved hospitable to the full range of critical approaches that have dominated the academy since at least the 1970s. This makes it relatively easy for an AS student to foreground the views of other readers (AO3). In the next sections I mean to show briefly how some of these approaches operate on the novel: feminist, liberal-humanist, psychoanalytic and Marxist.

AO3
Opinions
of different
readers

The Creator Bride: Frankenstein and the Feminists

A03 Opinions of different readers

Frankenstein was published anonymously in 1818.
Its author chose to suppress both her identity and her gender. The likely reason for this was that as a youthful author making a first attempt, she wanted to keep out of the shadows of her gifted writer-parents, William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft, and of her notorious radical poet husband Percy Shelley, into whose circle Lord Byron, most celebrated poet and probably Englishman of his age, had recently been introduced. Feminist critics have generally seen Mary's disappearance into anonymity as a disabling rather than an empowering move. For one thing it enabled her husband to attach a preface to the book which can be construed as making claims for his own authorship. At any rate the absence of Mary's name on the title-page confirms for many the marginal status of aspirant female writers at this time. The most striking and enduring of the many feminist critiques of the novel is that of Ellen Moers in *Literary Women* (1976) who argues that the book embodies a male fantasy of creation, arrogantly usurping the female roles of gestation and birthing. Throughout the novel, feminist critics argue, 'domestic' or 'wifely' situations are viewed as both demeaning and vulnerable, from Victor's refusal to grant the Creature a bride to the Creature's unflinching 'clean sweep' of the domestic nests that shelter Elizabeth and Justine. As Sarah Goodwin has argued 'violence is at the heart of every home in the novel.' From this point of view it might be argued that though Mary decided to suppress her own identity in the novel, she went on to write a radical indictment of the forces of patriarchy and domesticity that pressured her to do so.

Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (1979).

Anne K. Mellor, *Mary Shelley: Her Life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters* (1988) [Critical Biography].

A03
Opinions of other readers

Mad Science?

As a study in the workings of science (and/or a work of science fiction?) *Frankenstein*, as in so many other ways, seems to tug in contrary directions. Especially in the 1818, text Victor figures as a questing, Romantic figure, pushing the boundaries of knowledge to their limits, devouring the implications of recent discoveries in chemistry and electronics, and conquering new territory for both sciences. Yet the popular construction of this has been to view the novel as a cautionary tale, a warning against the rule of men in white coats and their dehumanised worship of concept and speculation. This has also been the tendency of liberal-humanist readings of the novel. Victor becomes Faust, selling his soul, and, worse, the souls of those close to him in the quest for redundant or dangerous knowledge. Both readings have ample textual warrant. As in Marlowe's *Dr Faustus* the hero seems at times arrogant dupe, at times heroic victim. *Frankenstein*, as Kingsley Amis points out, is the type of innumerable stories in which the 'artificial creation turns and rends its master.' Our views of such creation are, perhaps, bound to be double edged. Amis also reminds us that the science fiction trade term for the Creature is 'android'. This makes his kinship with the replicants of Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* (on which Ridley Scott's film *Bladerunner* is based) and the emoting robots of Spielberg's *AI* abundantly clear.

Romantic Doubling

Like so many Gothic novels, *Frankenstein* generates much of its dramatic action by splitting its protagonist into two parts. The secondary being, or *doppelgänger*, usually a ghost or other apparition, is an expressionist figure, a projection of the hero or heroine's inner life onto the outer world. As the setting of the novel is already reflecting or embodying those emotions, the Gothic novel quickly becomes a strongly solipsistic form. 'I do not doubt,' writes Frankenstein, 'that he [the Creature] hovers near the spot which I inhabit' (1831, ch. 23). Frankenstein cannot get away from his creation, cannot destroy him or reabsorb him, and the two become painfully inseparable, the Creature often framed by windows that for all the world resemble mirrors. Most striking of all these moments of mutual recognition comes in the Brocken scene (1831, ch. 10). The 'Spectre of the Brocken', a gigantic shadow of the observer projected on the cloudbank opposite the sun, was a favourite subject for Romantic writers, including Shelley, whose early narrative poem *Alastor: or the Spirit of Solitude* (1816) comprises a collection of versions of the poet's ego 'writ large'. Coleridge's late poem, '*Constancy to an Ideal Object*', makes the Brocken phenomenon apply to all lifelong quests that have their origin in personal obsessions: we do not know the shadow we pursue is ultimately created by our own imagination. In *Frankenstein*, the Double who haunts Victor appears on the screen of the mountain clouds both to pursue and be pursued by his Creator. It is instructive that popular culture has stabilised this errant conflation of observer and observed. To many, Creator and Creature are known indiscriminately as 'Frankenstein'. David Collings draws our attention to the many psychoanalytic shadowings and doublings within the novel, noting 'the many resemblances between the narrators Mary Shelley and Margaret Saville (the woman who receives Walton's letters and whose initials are M.S.), Mary Shelley and Walton, Walton and Victor, Victor and the Monster, the Monster and Safie and Safie and Mary Shelley.' Many stage adaptations, since the later nineteenth century, have cast similar looking actors in the roles of Frankenstein and Creature to remind audiences of the affinity between them; a recent spin is the decision of Danny Boyle's 2011 National Theatre production to alternate the actors Benedict Cumberbatch and Johnny Lee Miller in the roles on different nights.

A03 Readings of different critics

'Treat a Person Ill, and He Will Become Wicked'

(Percy Shelley, '*Essay on Frankenstein*')

Frankenstein readily yields to political readings. It can be seen as a study in the causes and progress of the oppression of the individual. Throughout the book, opportunities for democratic improvement and moral self-regulation, as defined in Godwin's book *Political Justice* (1794), are checked by agents of tyranny. Sometimes, as in Frankenstein's case, or the case of the Creature, victim and oppressor share the same skin. Note how the De Laceys, exiled by a cruel political regime, turn against the Creature's overtures of friendship on account of his 'otherness.' All this is evidence of how deeply the corruption is rooted. So Marxist critics fasten upon the Creature as victim, but in their case he is more significant as an agent of political change, perhaps (though some may find this reading reductive) as an embodiment of the proletariat. Alienated from his fellow workers, indeed from all humanity, he shapes his revenge, and a consequent rearrangement of society, in a spirit of Marxist inexorability. His chief victims, it is noteworthy, are a group of bourgeois ladies, and his retributive brutality is always focussed on those close to his arch-enemy, his hubristic and tyrannical creator.

Frankenstein: Film and Audiobook

Nineteenth century dramatisations of the novel abounded, some greatly successful, almost invariably depriving Mary Shelley's eloquent Creature of his power of speech. The process was carried on the first significant film version (Edison Company, 1910) which did not supply the 'Monster' with captions. The screen's most iconic Creature, huge, slow, contemplative Boris Karloff, made his emotions so accessible and so poignant that words seemed superfluous to his performance, and so influential has Karloff's achievement proved that the silencing of the Creature has persisted in almost every later adaptation, so that whereas Mary's creation started out as a gifted rhetorician and Miltonist, the Monster of popular culture, following Karloff, struggles to utter a few damaged monosyllables. James Whale's *Frankenstein* of 1931 and *The Bride of Frankenstein* of 1935, the films which nurtured Karloff's definitive performance, are best regarded as displaced segments of the same work, rather than film and sequel, as each depends on different aspects of the original novel. The latter film is infinitely superior entertainment, from the brilliant prologue evoking the ghost-story contest at Villa Diodati, where Elsa Lanchester's elfin Mary settles down to tell the captive poets her story, to the supercharged laboratory scene at the film's climax, full of insectivorous filaments, glowing arcs, soaring kites and a score that seems played on an electrocardiograph. The Bride emerges from swaddling bands with an electric cone of hair and turns out to be Elsa Lanchester too. By casting the same actress as the book's creator and its most significant female creation, we are reminded yet again of the role that doubling plays in this book of doubles. Both films go beyond the call of duty to empathise with the creatures and compassionate their sufferings, never more than in the episodes of Karloff's tender symbiosis with his blind friend in Bride (sometimes held to symbolise the tentative steps towards gay intimacy in the 1930s – Whale was gay). Perhaps because Karloff is so charismatic, Frankenstein himself becomes by contrast remote and quizzical. The actor Colin Clive was slowly succumbing to alcoholism, bringing a touch of self-loathing to a performance otherwise characterised by mannered frenzy. 'The character,' writes David Thomson, 'is no longer as sympathetic as he might have been.' At any rate he seems out to give mad scientists a bad name, begetting a more Einstein look-alike figure, called simply 'The Mad Scientist', in the later Universal horror flick *The House of Frankenstein* (1944). Though Karloff appears in this film (as the scientist) he doesn't play the Monster, having pulled out after *Son of Frankenstein* (1939). Mute, marginalised and malicious, the Monster of this film lacks the pathos and moral appeal of the first two films in the sequence.

AO4
Context
AO3
Film as adaptation

Of many spoofs, continuations, remakes and reworkings of the original novel, the most astonishing, to my mind, is Mel Brooks's *Young Frankenstein* (1974). Gene Wilder's scientist is not, like Clive's, a tight-lipped baby-god, but a warmly satisfied Jewish mother, delighted when his/her beloved only child (all his own work) can lurch a few bars and sing a few notes of Fred Astaire's '*Putting on the Ritz*' (Youtube). If all adaptations of Frankenstein sympathise with the creature and keep his creator at arms-length, it is nice to find one where both seem to bask, for a few frames at least, in mutual pleasure, doing their best at a parent-and-kid talent show. In 2003, Robert Winston presented *Frankenstein: Birth of a Monster* for BBC (55 minutes). This is a partly-dramatised biographical account of the gestation of the novel and provides a useful introduction to the Shelley circle for AS students. Winston's approach is psychological, finding in the novel's depiction of 'solitude' evidence of the trauma 'too much death' in her family had inflicted on Mary.

Frankenstein is available unabridged on MP3 and CD from Tantor Audiobooks.