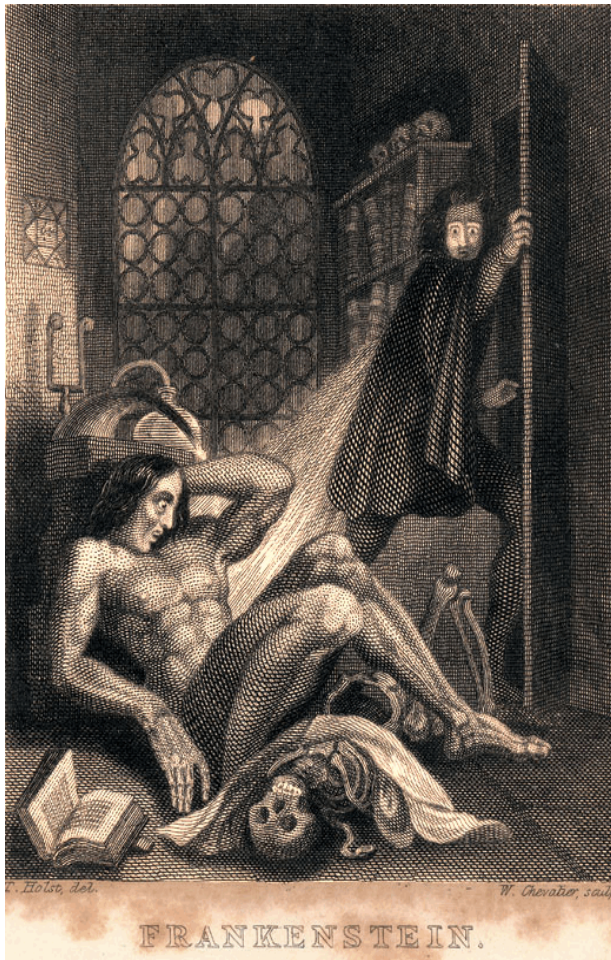
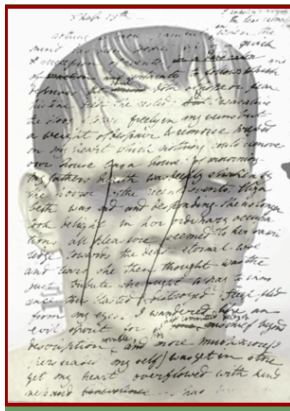


Background to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*



Theodore Von Holst
Frontispiece to Mary Shelley, Frankenstein published
by Colburn and Bentley, London 1831
Steel engraving in book 93 x 71 mm

All that the Thunderer wrung from thee



Mary's authorship
constantly questioned

Subtitled: *Or, the Modern Prometheus*

Example of Using Promethean Myth "Prometheus"

(1816, George Gordon, Lord Byron)
contains classic Byronic Hero

TITAN! to whose immortal eyes
The sufferings of mortality,
Seen in their sad reality,
Were not as things that gods despise;
What was thy pity's recompense?
A silent suffering, and intense;
The rock, the vulture, and the chain,
All that the proud can feel of pain,
The agony they do not show,
The suffocating sense of woe,
Which speaks but in its loneliness,
And then is jealous lest the sky
Should have a listener, nor will sigh
Until its voice is echoless.

Titan! to thee the strife was given
Between the suffering and the will,
Which torture where they cannot kill;
And the inexorable Heaven,
And the deaf tyranny of Fate,
The ruling principle of Hate,
Which for its pleasure doth create
The things it may annihilate,
Refus'd thee even the boon to die:
The wretched gift Eternity
Was thine--and thou hast borne it well.

Was but the menace which flung back
On him the torments of thy rack;
The fate thou didst so well foresee,
But would not to appease him tell;
And in thy Silence was his Sentence,
And in his Soul a vain repentance,
And evil dread so ill dissembled,
That in his hand the lightnings trembled.

Thy Godlike crime was to be kind,
To render with thy precepts less
The sum of human wretchedness,
And strengthen Man with his own mind;
But baffled as thou wert from high,
Still in thy patient energy,
In the endurance, and repulse
Of thine impenetrable Spirit,

Which Earth and Heaven could not convulse,
 A mighty lesson we inherit:
 Thou art a symbol and a sign
 To Mortals of their fate and force;
 Like thee, Man is in part divine,
 A troubled stream from a pure source;
 And Man in portions can foresee
 His own funereal destiny;
 His wretchedness, and his resistance,
 And his sad unallied existence:
 To which his Spirit may oppose
 Itself--and equal to all woes,
 And a firm will, and a deep sense,
 Which even in torture can descry
 Its own concentr'd recompense,
 Triumphant where it dares defy,
 And making Death a Victory.



Richard Cosway
Prometheus circa 1785-1800
 Pen and brown ink
 on paper, 225 x 184 mm



Henry Fuseli
Prometheus 1770-1771
 Pen and ink on paper, 150 x 222 mm



Fuseli's "The Nightmare" (1779; inspired by bad porkchop?) - inspiration for *Frankenstein*? (Mary's mother had affair w/Fuseli)

19th-Century Popular Adaptations

9 plays adapted during 19th Century

Most popular: “Presumption, or the Fate of Frankenstein” (1823 theatrical adaptation that focuses on lab & thus begins focus on scientific “It’s alive!” rather than Shelley’s narrative)



Note: see *Romantic Circles* edition of this play with images of the cast:
<http://www.rc.umd.edu/editions/peake/>

20th Century Popular Culture:

90 movies

17 tv-movies

8 made for video

22 tv series

3 video games

Internet Movie Database

(<http://us.imdb.com/>)



“Young Frankenstein” (Gene Wilder & Mel Brooks, 1974)

Previous page Images from “Gothic Nightmares,” Tate Britain online exhibit
(<http://www.tate.org.uk/britain/exhibitions/gothicnightmares/rooms/room2.htm>)