



Frankenstein: A Cultural History

By Susan Tyler Hitchcock

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A lively history of the Frankenstein myth, tracing its evolution from a Romantic nightmare to its prominence in today's imaginative landscape.

Frankenstein began as the nightmare of an unwed teenage mother in Geneva, Switzerland, in 1816. At a time when the moral universe was shifting and advances in scientific knowledge promised humans dominion over that which had been God's alone, Mary Shelley envisioned a story of human presumption and its misbegotten consequences. Two centuries later, that story is still constantly retold and reinterpreted, from Halloween cartoons to ominous allusions in the public debate, capturing and conveying meaning central to our consciousness today and our concerns for tomorrow. From Victorian musical theater to Boris Karloff with neck bolts, to invocations at the President's Council on Bioethics, the monster and his myth have inspired everyone from cultural critics to comic book addicts. This is a lively and eclectic cultural history, illuminated with dozens of pictures and illustrations, and told with skill and humor. Susan Tyler Hitchcock uses film, literature, history, science, and even punk music to help us understand the meaning of this monster made by man. 68 illustrations

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Literary historian Hitchcock (*Mad Mary Lamb: Lunacy and Murder in Literary London*) leads readers on a guided tour of *Frankenstein* appearances in this colorful and consistently entertaining narrative. The history begins, appropriately, with the monster's unlikely creation by Mary Shelley as a result of a ghost story challenge (also taken up by John William Polidori, whose tale of a vampire would later inspire Bram Stoker). Hitchcock then lays bare the publishing world of the 19th century, a veritable Wild West of unauthorized stage adaptations, parodies and continuations in which *Frankenstein* thrived. James Whale's Karloff classic gets its due, as do the disturbing and innovative 1910 Edison Company production and the 1952 live television broadcast starring a drunk Lon Chaney Jr. Running throughout the book is the parallel story of the invocation of Frankenstein in the public discourse as a metaphor for subjects ranging from the Crimean war to genetically modified organisms. While some *Frankenstein* dilettantes might find the narrow focus of the book somewhat tedious, there are enough strange and delightful anecdotes to keep most readers engaged. B&w illus. (Oct.)

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About the Author

Susan Tyler Hitchcock's last book was *Mad Mary Lamb: Lunacy and Murder in Literary London*. Married with two children, she lives near Charlottesville, Virginia.

Users Review

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Mandy Conway:

People live in this new day of lifestyle always try to and must have the extra time or they will get large amount of stress from both way of life and work. So , if we ask do people have free time, we will say absolutely of course. People is human not only a robot. Then we ask again, what kind of activity are there when the spare time coming to you of course your answer will certainly unlimited right. Then do you try this one, reading books. It can be your alternative within spending your spare time, the book you have read is actually Frankenstein: A Cultural History.

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