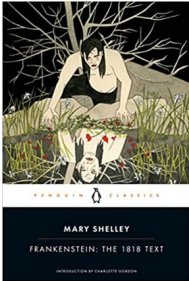




# Lambda Sci-Fi

## DC Area Gaylaxians



### Frankenstein; or The Modern Prometheus By Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley Discussed March 2005

## Discussion Questions

1. Good Lord! The life of Mary Shelley, the author of *Frankenstein*, sounds almost fabricated. Her mother dies shortly after delivering Mary, her father publishes a book about her mother's suicide attempts and the couple's sex lives (this is in 1798!), she elopes with poet Percy Bysshe Shelley at age sixteen, she has three children who die, her stepsister commits suicide, her husband Percy drowns in a boating accident, she contracts smallpox and she dies at age 53 after several strokes. What a life! How do you think her life's experiences impacted *Frankenstein; or The Modern Prometheus*?
2. When *Frankenstein; or The Modern Prometheus* was first published in 1818 -- anonymously -- it was a big hit. What do you think produced a successful interest in the book? Victor Frankenstein's attempt and failure to play God? General fear that the dead can be revived and be even more powerful than the living? Can we squeeze in a GLBT-related question here -- can Frankenstein the monster's status as an outcast or an outsider be readily compared with experiences of GLBT people?
3. Victor Frankenstein certainly has clear hindsight. His chapter-by-chapter revelation of his tale spells out his doom. For example, the final sentence in Chapter II - before young Victor trots off to university in the following chapter - he reflects that "destiny was too potent, and her immutable laws had decreed my utter and terrible destruction." How does Shelley's method of unfolding the plot impact your reading of the book?
4. Frankenstein the monster, in Chapter XXIV, acknowledges that he is even in worse shape than Satan ("the fallen angel"). Both creature and creator seemed damned. Do you think that either Frankenstein ever had an opportunity of redemption?
5. Literature plays a focal role in the lives of Mary Shelley, Victor Frankenstein and Frankenstein the monster. The monster reads *Paradise Lost*, *Plutarch's Lives* and *Sorrows of Werter*. What teacher would not want a student like that? His creator, Victor, reads works by Cornelius Agrippa and Albertus Magnus. When you read trash like that, what do you expect? No surprise that he ended with a doomed lifestyle. How does literature impact the plot?