

Topic: *Frankenstein*

Course Title: Allusions

Paper: CC9

Semester: 4

Teacher: Anuradha Mukherjee

Department: English

Allusions and References

- **Prometheus**

There is a reason why the title of the 1818 text of *Frankenstein* is

Frankenstein;

OR,

The Modern Prometheus

Prometheus is a mythical figure from Greek mythology. He is the most famous Titan, a supreme trickster, remembered as the Titan who brought or stole fire for mankind. When Prometheus stole fire for mankind, Zeus was so outraged that he had Prometheus bound to a rock and sent an eagle to devour his immortal liver. The liver would grow each day, thus keeping Prometheus alive and suffering forever. His name “**Forethinker**”

reflects his intellectual side and he **created mortals** out of **clay**. Aeschylus in *Prometheus Bound* portrays him as the Preserver of mankind who brought fire and civilization for mortals on earth. It is this aspect of Prometheus as the forefather of Science and Technology, the Creator of mortals out of clay that is at play in *Frankenstein*. Mary Shelley likens Victor Frankenstein to Prometheus (and God) because he is not only a man of science but also the creator of a living Creature. Victor follows the footsteps of Prometheus and is similarly doomed to suffer forever.

[Liver, in ancient Greece, was regarded as the seat of human emotions. It was regarded as the seat of passion in Renaissance physiology as well]**

- *Paradise Lost*

There are repeated references to Milton's *Paradise Lost* in the text. In fact, the Creature finds a copy of the text in wilderness and it becomes his favourite. He often cites from *Paradise Lost*, identifying himself with Adam (God's first creation) as he is Victor's first creation (thereby linking Victor to God). He also argues that he is like Satan- who was banished and abandoned by God- because Victor Frankenstein has abandoned him for no fault of his. There is also an overlapping when Victor Frankenstein likens himself to Satan- forever suffering and alone in his struggle. He says, “ **I am chained to eternal Hell.**”

- *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*

There are references to Coleridge's *Rime* beginning with Robert Walton, who directly cites from the poem. In fact, Robert Walton,

the sea-bound explorer traveling towards the North Seas is like the solitary mariner, roaming, though not doomed. Coleridge's mariner was doomed for eternity for mindlessly killing a friendly albatross. The mariner watched everyone around him die, while he is damned forever. In

Frankenstein, Victor is like the solitary ancient mariner, who helplessly watches his loved ones die and his life becomes an unending journey of suffering. Both Victor and the Creature are outcasts, with little or no normal contact with society.