

Through pervasive allusion to such texts as *Faust* and *Paradise Lost*, *Frankenstein* situates itself within a distinguished literary tradition of myths of sinful knowledge. As the novel's subtitle, *The Modern Prometheus*, suggests, *Frankenstein* pays homage to the genre's Classical origins. It is perhaps less obvious that Mary Shelley's engagement with Classical literature extends beyond the comparison of the two eponymous life-givers. In this paper, I show that the materiality and atomism of Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* provide a scientific and poetic model for Victor Frankenstein's quest to animate a sentient being through the recombination of pillaged body parts. Lucan's *Bellum Civile* provides a second Classical archetype for Shelley's monster, and allusion to these two epic poems colors the ethics – as well as the science – of necromancy.

Victor Frankenstein's exploration of "the deepest secrets of creation" is described through the language and imagery of Lucretian physics. Shelley conspicuously personifies *natura*, and the repetition of "material" throughout the episode invokes the fleshly materialism of Epicurean philosophy, which had recently experienced a revival of sorts in Romantic Britain. The monster's amalgamation of limbs evokes the atomistic recombination of Lucretian *anatomy*, and I show that verbal echoes throughout the passage confirm Lucretius as a source for Shelley. The value of Lucretius for Shelley is ethical, as well as scientific, for Frankenstein interrupts his creation narrative with an excursus on the virtues of Epicurean philosophy and the pursuit of *ataraxia*.

Furthermore, allusion to Lucan (whose poetics are no less materialist than those of Lucretius) augments the novel's construction of monstrosity, as well as its ethical condemnation of necromancy as an act against *natura*. I show that Frankenstein's monster recalls the corpse reanimated by Erichtho, both in aspect and behavior, at his naissance and again when he vows to ascend his own funeral pyre in the novel's final lines. Allusion to this macabre scene in the *Bellum Civile* stains the Lucretian atomism of the monster with the grotesque. Through this intertextual strategy, Shelley's narrator denounces his scientific breakthrough as *nefas*. From their trembling *membra* to their silence and inarticulate utterances, the two monsters do not merely resemble one another; each is constructed as a mirror image of his Promethean creator. The traits and mannerisms shared between Erichtho, the corpse, Frankenstein, and his monster invite a reading of Victor Frankenstein as an Erichtho figure – the abominable creator of his own monstrous reflection.