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Frankenstein, or the rebirth of science through literature

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Section 6:

Did You Know?

Frankenstein, or the rebirth of science through literature

Sarah Huggett

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*¹, one of the most compelling tales of gothic horror, has recently been described as "perhaps the most famous work of medical science fiction"². Although references to specific methods are veiled in the text, the late-18th and early 19th centuries were thriving with scientific advances in particular the birth of neuroscience and the emergence of sensational experimentation on the effects of electricity on neuromuscular function, which no doubt inspired Shelley to write her gruesome story. The imprint of science on literature has long been recognized through the literary genre of Science Fiction, but it is interesting to note that science can even claim to be "stranger than fiction": a search in Scopus for this phrase in titles, abstracts, and keywords returns 58 papers spanning from 1859 to 2010.

Useful links:

1. Shelley, M. (1818) *Frankenstein* (London: Harding, Mavor & Jones).
2. Kaplan, P.W. (2004), "Mind, brain, body, and soul: a review of the electrophysiological undercurrents for Dr Frankenstein", *Journal of Clinical Neurophysiology*, Vol. 21, No. 4, pp. 301–304.