

## *Frankenstein* as a Social Construct

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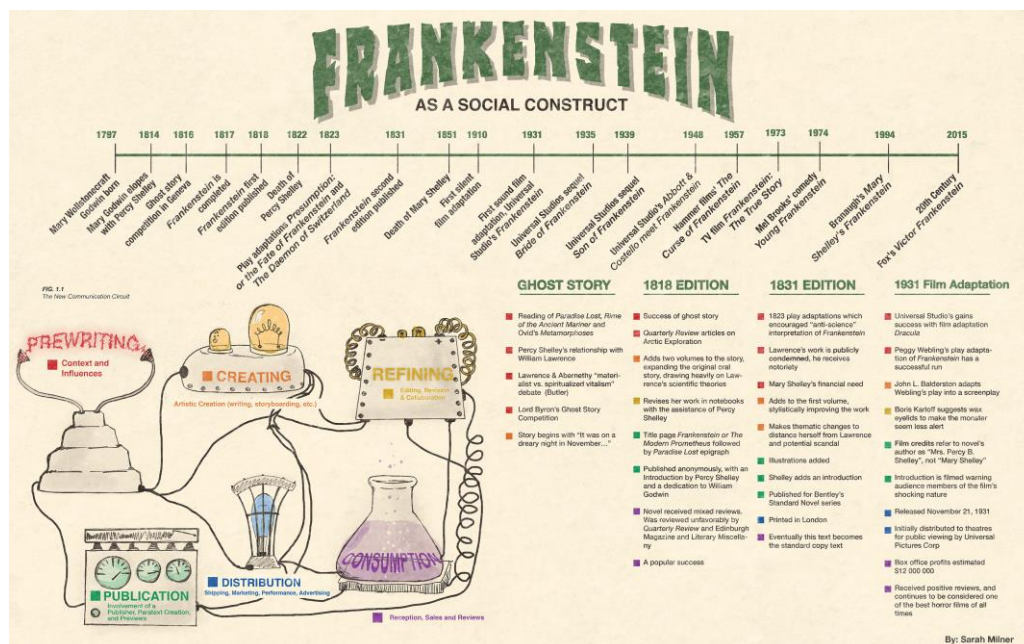
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# FRANKENSTEIN AS A SOCIAL CONSTRUCT

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Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* was initially published in 1818. Since then, the story of Frankenstein's disastrous experiment has become a fixture in popular culture, due largely to the various adaptations that have been made. The first known adaptation of her novel is Richard Brinsley Peake's *Presumption; or the Fate of Frankenstein*, which was published before Shelley's second edition of *Frankenstein*. *Presumption* is significant for having introduced the most common divergences from Shelley's text. Such changes remained popular in following play adaptations of *Frankenstein*, including Peggy Webling's twentieth-century version, which was optioned by

Universal Studios for their 1931 film. Although these early adaptations contain various elements of the contemporary Frankenstein mythology, certain details, such as the character Igor and the monster's friendliness towards children, were added by subsequent adaptations.

*Frankenstein* demonstrates the larger process by which texts develop narratives through a collective understanding of the work, which differs from the original information contained in the initial text. Respected classic novels such as *Pride and Prejudice*, *Oliver Twist*, and *Dracula* have been given contemporary relevancy via play and film adaptations, which have developed the respective stories into cultural icons. The stories and characters have become common knowledge, yet this knowledge is comprised of various remediated texts, many of which creatively diverge from the source material.

This poster illustrates the process through which the story of *Frankenstein* has developed into a cultural icon, through a reimagining of Robert Darnton's communication circuit. While Darnton's diagram is a cycle representing the process of book publishing, my diagram is a stripped-down circuit in which all stages of text production and consumption have the potential to interact and/or influence each other. The top row represents stages in the private sphere, while the bottom row represents the text's interaction with the public. I have included examples from four versions of *Frankenstein* to demonstrate how each stage functions, and the potential for each stage to have continued influence on future editions as the story continues to be remediated.

NOTE BIOGRAPHIQUE

Sarah Milner is a graduate student at Trent University, where she is in her second year of the English (Public Texts) M.A. Her thesis, "Frankenstein: the Man, the Monster, and the Myth" examines the evolution of the Frankenstein story, from Mary Shelley's novel to the contemporary popular culture icon. This research examines the thematic and narrative differences between these remediated texts in order to identify the ways in which Hollywood film impacts Western ideology.

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