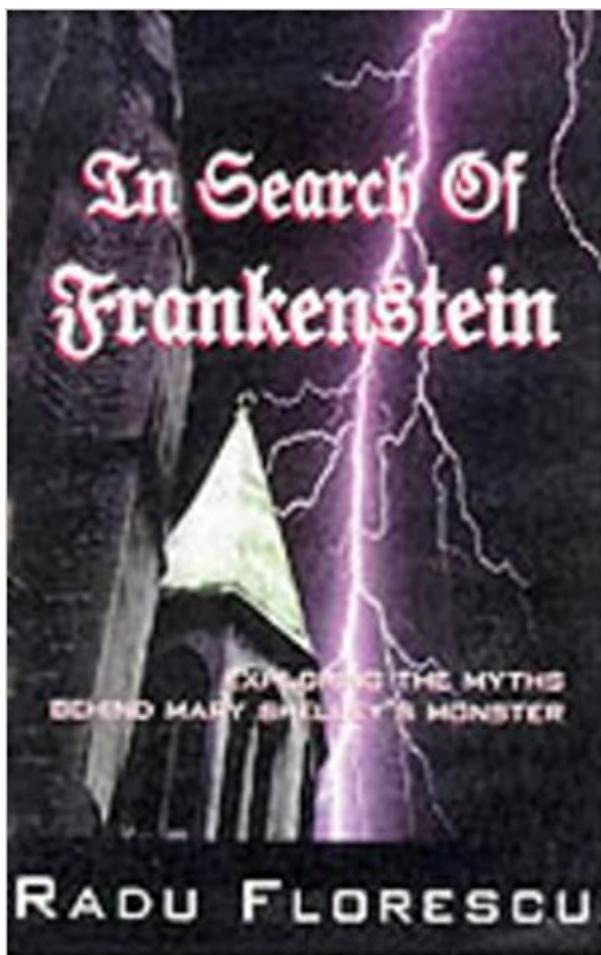


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# In Search Of Frankenstein Exploring The



## **Synopsis**

What is the link between Mary Shelley's 1818 novel and the history and myth surrounding the barons Frankenstein - a respected German noble family that inhabited the Castle Frankenstein on the top of Magnet Mountain near Darmstadt from the early middle ages. All is explored in this fascinating and highly detailed book by an expert on Eastern European history author Radu Florescu leaves no stone unturned in his search for this legendary monster.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Florescu (emeritus, European history, Boston Coll.) covers very little new material in his examination of the myths behind the creation of Shelley's famous novel. Most chapters rehash extensively studied topics, although "Castle Frankenstein and the Alchemist Dippel" does offer some original ideas about the Frankenstein family. Florescu develops a thesis based on "what ifs" surrounding the infamous summer of 1816 and the Byron-Shelley coterie. Although the work includes images of the Shelley circle as well as an impressive Frankenstein filmography, the comprehensive bibliography of sources is rarely alluded to, enhancing the sense that this work is speculative in nature. Florescu aimed to write something that fell between an academic and a popular study, but this doesn't really work as either. Recommended only for large public libraries and academic libraries in which many undergraduates study Frankenstein. *?Kim Woodbridge, "The Scientist," Philadelphia*Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This book is by Radu Florescu, who co-authored the more successful (and still in print) "In Search of Dracula." In Search of Frankenstein is an investigation of the historical roots of the iconic Frankenstein, a story that was - famously - born in Mary Shelley's nightmare. Because of the veritable treasure trove of historical and cultural information available to be mined as possible fodder for Bram Stoker's creation, the Dracula book is more likely to be enjoyed by the fans of that novel, whereas, this book is much more likely to be enjoyed by fans of the author, Mary Shelley. The most interesting elements of this quick read are the character studies of the literary band of travellers consisting of Lord Byron, Dr. John Polidori (author of 'The Vampyre: A Tale"), Percy Bysshe Shelley and Mary Shelley and Mary's stepsister Claire Clairmont. A major source for this aspect of the book is "History of a Six Week's Tour," written mostly by Mary Shelley. The 'History' also contains a poem by Percy Bysshe Shelley: Mont Blanc. The reasons that this is the most interesting part are (1) The strong impression that Florescu gives that the story of how the novel, Frankenstein, came to be is as much myth-making as the novel itself, and (2) there just isn't that much solid or useful information on any historical foundation of the novel. Yes, there was an aristocratic German family named Frankenstein. Yes, there was a controversial theologian, doctor and alchemist, named Johann Conrad Dippel, who was born at Castle Frankenstein. The bulk of connecting these things to the creation of the novel is based on the possibility that the Shelleys MAY have heard about these things during their travels. This is not at all implausible, and of course, the name 'Frankenstein' must have come from somewhere, but that's pretty much the beginning and end of it. Florescu falls back again and again on the relationships between and among the members of the travelling party, as there's really not that much else to write about. All in all, I enjoyed this book.

seems to think this is fiction. Its not...but its not quite history either.

The Frankenstein myth, or story, existed long before Hollywood and Boris Karloff got to it. In Mr Florescu's fine book, he has searched out and actually found the sources for these tales and the actual Castle Frankenstein where some of these stories had their beginning. There's the legend of Georg von Frankenstein and the "dragon monster" that terrorized the locale and how he did battle with it. There's another story that dates from the early 18th Century about the alchemist Dippel who claimed to have been able to create gold from base metals and also dabbled in the creation of an artificial man. Both these stories and a few others, Mr Florescu more than aptly proves, were more

than likely the influence on Mary Wollstonecraft when she and the English poet Shelley had made their excursion down the Rhine. Fascinating history of the whole area and of the lives of Mary, Shelly and Byron living together in Switzerland. I highly recommend this book to anyone who is as intrigued as I am by such people and events. Don't pass this one up!

The author was at a considerable disadvantage when he went in search of Frankenstein - there is no one historical figure who corresponds to Victor Frankenstein the way Vlad Tepes corresponds to Dracula. He solves this quandry by spending most of the book in search of Mary Shelley's travel itinerary instead, which can be interesting, but also as dreadfully boring and stuffy as any early English travelogue. Celebrity gossip about Percy and Byron is used to fill in extra pages - again interesting, but not what the cover promised. Overall, this was not the book I'd hoped for, a book that explores the history of the mad scientist concept as thoroughly as the vampire has been covered. It may still be worth reading, but only if you know what you're getting into.

This is a very well researched book, but not what I expected. I went into it thinking it would be like the "In Search of Dracula" book(s) by the same author and it is not. It basically delves into Mary Shelly's past and tries to disprove that the book and the title came to her in a dream vs. her actually just putting together local folklore. I don't quite know if the author is trying to accuse her of plagiarism or what but it is not a book like his Dracula non fiction works. If you are interested in delving into a writer's psyche and possibly finding how a very popular story came about then this book is for you. If you want to know about the Frankenstein family in depth as he did Dracula, this book is not for you.

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