

MAN-MADE MONSTERS

Mankind as Supreme Creator?

By Dr. Bob Curran

Since earliest times the idea of creating life for themselves both fascinated and appealed to our ancestors. Such a thing would put Mankind on a level with the Supreme Creator and would certainly mark the pinnacle of human achievement. But there was one concern. What if the life that was created was not as perfect as that created by the Divine? What if it was monstrous, unstable and unpredictable? What if it turned on Mankind? This was the fear that lurked (and indeed still lurks) at the back of the human mind. But despite such concerns, there were across the years that certain individuals had actually somehow managed to create life through various means. Tales of rabbis who created a form of life from inert clay; mysterious inventors who made startling men of brass; dark alchemists who had spawned creatures in the bottom of sealed jars flowed around the world, gathering exaggeration and wonder as they went. Once again, the old fears came to the fore as the authorities feared that creatures were being created which might threaten the very foundations of established society. There were rumours that secret societies were flourishing, each with the capability of creating life which could either deliberately or inadvertently threaten the world. Such a premise has passed from the realms of pseudo-science and folklore into literature and cinema, demonstrating our enduring fascination and fear with the subject – Mary Shelley’s classic *Frankenstein* being only one example. Even today such age-old terrors have resurfaced as Mankind takes its first hesitant steps between folklore and actual science into the field of genetic cloning with the creation of Dolly the Sheep.

In an intriguing book **Dr Bob Curran** explores the concept of Mankind’s attempts to create life and the “scientific” struggle to bring the dead back to life. Along the way there are some fascinating insights into the early world of the evolving sciences. For example was there, he asks, *really* a Victor Frankenstein? Did somebody really attempt to bring the dead back to life in monstrous form? Are robots a relatively modern concept or did mechanical creatures and men stalk the ancient world, guided by prehistoric computers? Was the Golem of Prague rather **more** than a Jewish myth? And what might have crawled out of a container in the corner of the alchemist’s laboratory?

Covering the span of history from earliest times until modern scientific experimentation, the book examines both the lore and the actual experience of the quest to create life and the myriad fears that have surrounded it. It will appeal to those who are interested in the evolution of science, the development of the concept of monsters or indeed in our own deep-seated fears. Step with us now into the dark corners of the human mind and the human imagination and see what might be lurking there – what we, ourselves, have created.