

MAN-MADE MONSTERS

By Dr. Bob Curran

Story Angles

1. We've all heard about the Frankenstein creature. But did such a monster really exist?

The name Frankenstein has come down to us, through Mary Shelley's novel, as the shambling man-monster with the bulbous head, a bolt through his neck and elongated arms. It is supposedly made from remnants of the dead. However, we have to remember that "Frankenstein" is actually the name of its creator and not of the monster itself. So did such a strange genius actually exist – was there in effect a man who could have provided a model for Mary Shelley's demented creator? Well yes there was – in fact there were several who might have been the template for Victor Frankenstein. And there was one extremely colourful in particular, based in London, who experimented with the dead in an attempt to bring them back to some form of life. Not only that but there was also a mysterious and eerie figure – an heir to the Frankenstein name - who is said to have worked in the laboratories of Castle Frankenstein on ghastly experiments. The book discusses both these historical figures and several more in an examination of their attempts to raise the dead.

2. Is it true that certain alchemists created life in medieval times?

Much of the science that we know is often born out of the early efforts of the medieval and early modern alchemists. Many of these were mysterious men and it was rumoured that some of them had created life in their alembics and sealed jars. Some of their names have passed into legend – Robert Fludd, Nicolas Flamel (made famous by the first Harry Potter book and film) and John Dee. Indeed there were rumours of secret societies of such man who were clandestinely creating life (using particular secrets that had been passed down by early Hebrew and Islamic scholars) in order to overthrow the recognised establishment. But just how true were these stories? *Man Made Monsters* examines such claims and sees whether there is any truth in them. Who knows what has been lurking out there for hundreds of years.

3. Is the idea of the Jewish Golem simply a myth or a reality?

Perhaps no part of Jewish folklore has been more persistent than that of the Golem – the shambling man of clay which only the holy rabbis could bring to life. The tale has been passed down almost since Old Testament times and was even current as late as World War II when it is said to have taken momentous revenge on the Nazis who were persecuting the Jews in Prague. But has it any basis in reality? And what is its relation to Adam Kadmon, the first prototype of man that God made before he created Adam, according to ancient Hebrew tradition? Was there really *something* created by the Maharal of Prague which later turned against the Christians in the city and had to be confined? Is it still there? *Man Made Monsters* explores the concept of the Golem, right down to the present day and the traditions which surround it. It also provides a fascinating insights into the portions of Hebrew mysticism from which the tradition of the Golem springs.
