

# Temporary tunnel vision

Literature, Russian Literature



Temporary tunnel vision can be caused by a variety of catalysts such as high levels of adrenaline, the consumption of alcohol, and a lack of blood in the brain. Despite being a common and relatively harmless phenomenon, tunnel vision is typically associated with two things: birth and death. Some people believe that tunnel vision during death is like traveling through the birth canal before they are reborn into a new life.

The complex relationships between birth, life, and death is considered in works by Edgar Allan Poe, Mary Shelley, and other authors. In both Poe's story *The Premature Burial* and Shelley's novel *Frankenstein*, the ideas of helplessness after birth as well as the responsibility one has of their own creations are discussed.

Both Mary Shelley and Edgar Allan Poe spend a considerable amount of time discussing the responsibility people have for the life they produce or reproduce. Despite the obvious parallel of the creation of the monster *Frankenstein* with the restoration of Mr. Stapleton in *The Premature Burial*, Shelley and Poe differ in their depiction of the creator's response to the life they conceived. In Shelley's novel, Victor Frankenstein is repulsed by his creation and therefore leaves it to fend for itself. This ultimately leads the monster to despise mankind and seek to destroy its maker. The experimental student in Poe's story, however, urgently assisted Mr. Stapleton after he returned from the dead and restored him to health until he could rejoin society.

The contrasting results of the same experiment rear the question of nature versus nurture. Would Frankenstein's experiment have been as successful as

the resuscitation of Mr. Stapleton had Frankenstein cared for the creature rather than rejecting it? Although the two works have different endings, they ultimately draw the same conclusion: nurture is just as important if not more important than nature, and the treatment of impressionable pupils intensely affects their future development.

In both *The Premature Burial* and *Frankenstein*, the woes of being abandoned in a new world are examined. Poe reflects on the terror of catalepsy and sleep paralysis. The feeling of weakness and disorientation is similar to Mary Shelley's depiction of Frankenstein's monster after it comes alive. Poe's visions of eternal darkness mirrors the emptiness the creature felt in the darkness and solitude of its hovel, and in both Poe's and Shelley's works, the subject is helpless and afraid. The only way Poe came back to reality was through human contact, and this illustrates the gravity of the monster's mental state.

It's rejection from society and human compassion has left it utterly defenseless, and unlike Edgar Allan Poe, the monster does not have anyone caring for it or teaching it. In addition, Poe at least had the fortune of remembering the events leading up to his paranoia after he was reborn from his trance, but Frankenstein's monster did not have such a privilege. This further depicts the injustice that has been granted upon the monster because of his complete lack of resources and knowledge of the world.

With the controversy regarding abortion, adoption, and contraception, the themes originating in *Frankenstein* and supported by *The Premature Burial* provide a new perspective on the issue. Just because life can be created

doesn't mean it should be in every situation, and according to the work of Mary Shelley and Edgar Allan Poe, if one does not have the means to support something of their creation, it would be more ethical to refrain from creating said being at all. Does this mean that abortion, adoption, and contraception are all valid preservers of life? Despite the difficulty in discerning a correct answer, the works of these early authors produce important concepts to be considered when discussing these issues.