

Alasdair Gray, *Poor Things*

1. *Poor Things* uses Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* as its "foundational" text. How might this choice help us interpret issues of gender and/or nation as they play out in *Poor Things*? Were you able to identify any references to other literary texts? What might Gray be arguing concerning the literary past, and more specifically, Scotland's relationship to the canon of British Literature?
2. What are the various modes of writing found in the text, and why does Gray employ this strategy? What purpose does the introduction and appendix of "Notes Historical and Critical" serve? How does the novel explore the ways in which fiction informs (or even constructs) reality and our understanding of history? How might this connect to issues of (Scottish) national identity?
3. How do the accompanying illustrations (from the medical text, *Gray's Anatomy*) and portraits of the main characters contribute to our reading and interpretation of *Poor Things*? What is the portrait of Bella Baxter meant to represent (p. 45)? How is it different from the other portraits?
4. How does the character of Bella compare to any of the women characters we've encountered in *Possession* and *Alias Grace*? In what ways might Bella's character subvert or reinforce Victorian views of female sexuality? How should we read Bella's apparent amnesia? Whose version of her character should we believe? Or, does it even matter whether Bella is "fact or fiction"?
5. How might we characterize the various men in the text? What roles do they play in relation to Bella? Why is Bella the only major female character in *Poor Things*? How is masculinity connected to national identity in this novel?