

H.L. MALCHOW

*Frankenstein's Monster and Images of Race  
in Nineteenth-Century Britain*

The Black stripp'd, and appeared of a giant-like strength,  
Large in bone, large in muscle and with arms a cruel length.<sup>1</sup>

It is now commonly accepted that the Gothic literary genre of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries represents, if remotely and unconsciously, the central tensions of an age of social liberation and political revolution. The themes of unjust persecution and imprisonment which are central to works like Matthew Lewis's *The Monk*, Charles Maturin's *Melmoth* or Eugene Sue's *The Wandering Jew*, together with the dilemmas of identity facing the liberated which permeate William Godwin's *Caleb Williams* or Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, obviously resonate with the events of an age that, as Chris Baldick has finely observed, witnessed humanity seizing responsibility "for re-creating the world, for violently reshaping its natural environment and its inherited social and political forms, for remaking itself".<sup>2</sup> Criticism in this vein has, however, focused almost exclusively on domestic themes—the "demonizing" of the proletariat in an era of industrial and political revolution, or the self-exploration and "nascent feminism" of authors like Mary Shelley and Charlotte Brontë. In contrast this essay will offer a racial reading of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* as a third level of interpretation which meshes with the Marxist and the feminist location of the novel in the social and psychological context of the times.

JOYCE CAROL OATES

*Frankenstein's Fallen Angel*

"Am I to be thought the only criminal, when all human kind sinned against me?"

—FRANKENSTEIN'S DEMON

Quite apart from its enduring celebrity, and its proliferation in numberless extraliterary forms, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* is a remarkable work. A novel *sui generis*, if a novel at all, it is a unique blending of Gothic, fabulist, allegorical, and philosophical materials. Though certainly one of the most calculated and *willed* of fantasies, being in large part a kind of gloss upon or rejoinder to John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, *Frankenstein* is fueled by the kind of grotesque, faintly absurd, and wildly inventive images that spring direct from the unconscious: the eight-foot creature designed to be "beautiful," who turns out almost indescribably repulsive (yellow-skinned, shriveled of countenance, with straight black lips and near-colorless eyes); the cherished cousin-bride who is beautiful but, in the mind's dreaming, yields horrors ("As I imprinted the first kiss on her lips, they became livid with the hue of death; her features appeared to change, and I thought that I held the corpse of my dead mother in my arms; a shroud enveloped her form, and I saw the grave-worms crawling in the folds"); the mad dream of the Arctic as a country of "eternal light" that will prove, of

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FRED V. RANDEL

*The Political Geography of Horror  
in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*

The monster who startles unsuspecting victims in Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's *Frankenstein* by his sudden and fatal appearance seems to them to come from nowhere. He steps out of the placeless space of our most terrifying nightmares. For many fans of the novel and its filmic adaptations, the murders of *Frankenstein* are likewise situated in a shadowy land of Gothic fantasy and thrill-provoking manipulations of our unconscious. Thanks to recent scholarship, however, many of the historicities of *Frankenstein*—its interactions with French Revolutionary era discourses about gender, race, class, revolution, and science—are now as recognizable to informed readers as its psychodrama.<sup>1</sup> But we have only begun to decipher the significance of the geography of this novel, the rationale for setting its horrors in particular places, arranged in a specific sequence. Franco Moretti's *Atlas of the European Novel 1800-1900* argues that "in modern European novels, what happens depends a lot on where it happens,"<sup>2</sup> but omits *Frankenstein* from his analysis.<sup>3</sup> Does it really matter that William Frankenstein dies at Plainpalais, Justine Moritz and Alphonse in or near Geneva, Elizabeth at Evian, and Henry Clerval in Ireland? Does Victor's trip through England and Scotland serve any purpose except to evoke personal memories of Mary and Percy Shelley? Why does the novel begin and end in Russia and the Arctic?

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