

Interdisciplinary Research in Gender

HISTORIES OF SENSIBILITIES

**VISIONS OF GENDER, RACE, AND EMOTIONS IN
THE GLOBAL ENLIGHTENMENT**

Edited by

Isabel Burdiel, Ester García Moscardó,
and Elena Serrano



Histories of Sensibilities

Histories of Sensibilities: Visions of Gender, Race, and Emotions in the Global Enlightenment explores the historical and plural character of sensibility in the Global Enlightenment.

From Tahiti to New Orleans to the Mariana Islands; to Lima, Geneva, London, Oviedo, or Venice, the book investigates how sensibility was brandished by different ethnic, political, and cultural groups to define their identities; how cross-cultural and cross-chronological encounters reconfigured ideas of gendered selves; how sexuality was used to empower or subjugate non-European ethnicities; and how the circulation of theories about the origin of emotions and taste reinforced or challenged hegemonic ideas of masculinity and femininity.

With a primary focus on Southern Europe and the Hispanic World, areas still not well-charted, this edited collection explores the varied forms in which notions of sensibilities circulated within Europe and between Europe, the Americas, and the Hispanic-Asian Pacific, questioning normative and diffusionist views.

Histories of Sensibilities is aimed at postgraduate students and scholars researching the histories of literature and science, cultural studies, the history of emotions, gender studies, and women's history; as well as scholars of Hispanic studies, Latin-America studies, and European studies.

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the Global Enlightenment

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11 Entangled Sensibilities and the Broken Circulation of Mary W. Shelley's *Frankenstein*

Gender, Race, and Otherness*

Isabel Burdiel

In considering what constitutes a “classic”, Italo Calvino came up with numerous definitions – some more ironic in tone than others – stating, for example, that “a classic is a book that has never finished saying what it has to say” and one which prompts an endless dust cloud of critical opinions but continues to shake off their detritus. He also defined as classics those books which “come down to us bearing upon them the traces of readings previous to ours, and bringing in their wake the traces they themselves have left on the culture or cultures they have passed through” and those “we find all the more new, fresh, and unexpected upon reading, the more we thought we knew them from hearing them talked about”.¹ Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley’s *Frankenstein, or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818) is one such book.

This is a work dismissed by canonical literary critics for more than 150 years as a happy, but half-accidental, mixture of Gothic, allegorical, and Romantic elements, whose success was due to its early adaptation for the theatre and, later, the cinema. For years, its lack of literary merit was simply taken for granted. Its author, barely out of adolescence, was assumed to have been little more than a kind of passive, kaleidoscopic reflection of the many significant characters who peopled her cultural background, past and present. These included two poets whose work not only won them fame in their own right (something denied to her) but has long been firmly established in the Romantic canon, namely her husband, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and Lord Byron. And nearby, of course, hovered the ghostly figures of her parents – radical philosopher William Godwin and pioneer of Anglo-Saxon feminism Mary Wollstonecraft.

As a political historian, I see *Frankenstein* as a work that enables boundaries to be crossed in a way long considered dangerous by academia precisely because it has demonstrated its ability to travel from *high culture* to *popular culture* and back again. The story of its long and tortuous circulation allows us to explore the slippery territory that lies at the intersection between history and fiction by pointing out the importance of taking into account that which did not happen but was imagined and socially disseminated.

The aims of this chapter fall within these areas of interest with regard to the nature and transcultural and transhistorical forms of circulation of “that

which only fiction can express”, to use a formulation coined by Hermann Broch and later explored by many others.² I want to discuss what Mary Shelley’s fiction contributed to the self-reflectiveness of a period crucial to the origins of Western modernity at the key moment marking both the zenith and twilight of the “Romantic Revolution”. Aware of the multiple possible readings of *Frankenstein*, I shall focus on what seems to me to be a pivotal aspect of Mary Shelley’s novel: the tension, connections, and hierarchical shifts to be found between the normative discourse of Enlightenment sensibility and the Promethean will of the Romantic hero.

The hero in this case, Victor Frankenstein, obsessed with his desire to reinvent humanity, becomes criminally insensible not only to the suffering and fate of his creature but to *reasonable affections*, to the idea of the “affective circle” imagined by the sentimentalists of the eighteenth century.³ That circle was based on concentric spaces of sociability mutually dependent on one another for the reinvention (and redemption) of humanity: from the family to the local community to wider political and moral society. Victor Frankenstein’s failure – crucially referred to in the novel as an aesthetic failure – is essentially a profound violation of the basic rules of the eighteenth-century sensibility, whose dreams had originally prompted his scientific undertaking. More disturbingly, in fact, what unleashes the story and the tragedy is not only a failure in Victor’s sensibility, but to a large extent, its opposite if we think of the strength of the connection – at the very core of the notion of sensibility of the time – between moral judgement and aesthetic judgement; between the beautiful and the good, the ugly and the perverse.

This aesthetic and moral tension is what sets the tale and its disastrous consequences in motion – and it is precisely what impacted the text’s circulation (or lack thereof) during the Romantic era and the nineteenth century in general. I shall therefore attempt to explore a more far-reaching debate on the evolution and/or revolution represented in historical terms by the uncertain and full of ambivalences movement away from an Enlightenment sensibility understood as fundamental to sociability, and towards a sensibility based on the celebration of a Romantic self at odds with or resistant to sociability. Away from a self that saw itself as part of the wider society and towards a self intent on rebelling against the idea of that society as the ultimate moral and emotional mandate.⁴ This is an ongoing debate – concerning a more general conception of historical change – and one for which, as I hope to demonstrate, Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* offers significant avenues of exploration and analysis that challenge dichotomies traditionally seen as clear-cut.

At some point in the final decade of the eighteenth century, Victor Frankenstein, a student with an interest in the natural sciences – a subject then known as “natural philosophy” – conceives the possibility of discovering the origins and workings of life itself and thereby creating a human being:

Life and death appeared to me ideal bounds, which I should first break through, and pour a torrent of life into our dark world. A new species would bless me as its creator and source; many happy and excellent natures would owe their being to me. No father could claim the gratitude of his child so completely as I should deserve theirs.⁵

The creature he cobbles together from parts of different corpses, chosen for their beauty, unexpectedly turns out to be monstrous once brought to life: "His limbs were in proportion, and I had selected his features as beautiful. Beautiful! – Great God!"⁶ Despite his outer ugliness, however, the newly created being demonstrates from the start the goodness of his feelings, his sympathetic instincts, his need for affection, and his enormous thirst for knowledge about his own origins and the world around him. His secret readings of Goethe, Rousseau, Volney, Plutarch, and Milton – a carefully constructed Romantic canon – educate his sensibility, and thus his humanity. In fact, what is so fascinating about the creature is that he turns out to be far more human, not to mention more articulate and cultivated, than his creator, a man who denies him the slightest hint of recognition or affection.

In a scene evoking that of Eve in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, the creature sees his reflection in a pool and recognises not his beauty, in this case, but his monstrosity, which is also mirrored in the horror and rejection with which he is greeted by anyone he tries to approach. He then directs his resentment against his father and creator, responsible for his existence and his misfortune: "I ought to be thy Adam; but I am rather the fallen angel, whom thou drivest from joy for no misdeed".⁷ In his thirst for revenge, he murders or causes the deaths of Frankenstein's family and friends. Excluded from the concept of what it is to be human, and conditioned by the horror his appearance awakens in people, when he first catches sight of his own reflection, he says, "I became fully convinced that I was in reality the monster that I am".⁸ The rejections to which he is subjected corrupt his natural sensitivity and turn him, eventually, into the monster others say he is: "Everywhere I see bliss, from which I alone am irrevocably excluded. I was benevolent and good; misery made me a fiend. Make me happy, and I shall again be virtuous".⁹ He will only find such happiness if Victor creates a female companion for him.

The links between sociability, sensibility, virtue, truth, and identity – typical of the eighteenth-century sentimental circle – inform the creature's account of the shaping of his identity and the violence into which he is forced.

If I have no ties and no affections, hatred and vice must be my portion; the love of another will destroy the cause of my crimes, and I shall become a thing, of whose existence every one will be ignorant. My vices are the children of a forced solitude that I abhor; and my virtue will necessarily arise when I live in communion with an equal. I shall feel the affections of a sensitive being, and become linked to the chain of existence and events, from which I am now excluded.¹⁰

Victor initially agrees to comply with his request but later changes his mind and destroys his second creation. At this, the monster issues a threat – “I shall be with you on your wedding-night” – which he ultimately executes by strangling Frankenstein’s bride, the gentle, faithful Elizabeth, who has suffered in silence her long separations from this modern Prometheus and his failure to meet his emotional obligations to her.¹¹

Frankenstein then embarks on a desperate quest to take the very life he has created. The longer this goes on, the more confused the identities of pursued and pursuer become. Indeed, on more than one occasion, both creator and creature use the terms “monster”, “victim”, “master”, and “slave”. No wonder people soon began to confuse the two characters and refer to the creature rather than the scientist as Frankenstein. The quest finally ends somewhere near the North Pole, where a sick and exhausted Victor Frankenstein dies. Now repentant, the monster mourns bitterly the death of the father who abandoned him and vows to put an end to his own life. At the conclusion of the novel, however, all we know is that the forlorn creature is “lost in darkness and distance”.¹²

The original 1818 edition of *Frankenstein* absorbs and imaginatively addresses the debate about the traumatic changes to what could be understood as (human) *sensibility* and *sympathy*, in the specific context of contemporary concerns about the consequences of the scientific and technological development linked to the Industrial Revolution and the resulting conflicts (most notably the Luddite movements between 1811 and 1816, a year before the novel’s conception), as well as the socio-political changes brought about by the French Revolution. As regards the ambivalent fascination with science in Romantic circles – an area beyond the remit of this chapter – it is worth remembering that it was Coleridge, whom Mary Shelley had heard recite *The Ancient Mariner* at her parents’ home, who made the phrase “second scientific revolution” famous when he used it in his *Philosophical Lectures* of 1819. Much discussed in the Shelley circle, this new science was dominated by Sir Humphry Davy’s work on chemical philosophy, the evolutionary biology of Erasmus Darwin, and the debate on the nature and effects of electricity, stemming in particular from the work of Joseph Priestley. The rapid scientific evolution had, in addition – and this is important to understand the context of the gestation of *Frankenstein* – an unprecedented popular impact with the proliferation of more or less scientific spectacles that attracted crowds.¹³

In recent years, increasing emphasis has also been placed on the influence that another seemingly minor upheaval may have had on Mary’s familial, social, and romantic life: the slave revolution in Haiti, then a French colony, which broke out in 1791 and turned into a 13-year bloodbath. For British radicals in general and abolitionists in particular, the events in Haiti and the revolutions that followed in Jamaica and elsewhere in the West Indies were

as significant as the French Revolution, giving rise to discussions about freedom and equality that ran more deeply and were harder to resolve because they involved the issue of racial difference.¹⁴ These thorny issues expanded into another major (and in this case scientific) debate in the aforementioned period of transition and entanglement between two models of sensibility by bringing together abolitionism, women's emancipation, race, and the dichotomy between "savage and civilised people" in a discussion about the boundaries of what it meant to be human that had begun in the seventeenth century, run through the eighteenth century, and continued for much of the nineteenth century.¹⁵

Mary Wollstonecraft, William Godwin, Mary Shelley, and Percy Shelley were all abolitionists, feminists, and what we would today call "animalists".¹⁶ They also refused to eat sugar because of the monstrous way in which it was produced. Behind the sweet taste of sugar lay the bitter taste of enslaved blood. "C'est à ce prix que vous mangez du sucre" wrote Voltaire in 1758.¹⁷ Shelley's vague physical descriptions of her monster, as well as the decision not to give the creature a name, which was very common in anti-slavery sentimental stories, suggest a racial distinction or an animalisation, or at least the possibility of one or the other:

I was, besides, endowed with a figure hideously deformed and loathsome; I was not even of the same nature as man. I was more agile than they, and could subsist upon coarser diet; I bore extremes of heat and cold with less injury to my frame; my stature far exceeded theirs. When I looked around, I saw and heard of none like me.¹⁸

A fundamental debate has long revolved around the question of whether or not *Frankenstein* is a conservative work in crucial areas such as its reaction to the political, scientific, and moral utopias of early feminism or abolitionism in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. There is certainly a tension here, one typical of the disillusioned children of the revolutionary generation. However, as I shall argue throughout this chapter, it is not the creation of the monster as such that makes Frankenstein's scientific operations questionable: it is the scientist's inability to take responsibility for the being he has created and to cherish any kind of *feeling* for him as a legitimate Other. Victor Frankenstein commits the same crime for which that other great political and social visionary Jean-Jacques Rousseau (so admired by Percy Shelley) was to become known throughout Europe: he abandons his offspring for an idea, for an abstraction that never fully comes to fruition, can never be perfect, never quite beautiful enough. A fundamental question, this last one, in a circle as aestheticist as that of the Shelleys.

Like Rousseau, Frankenstein betrays himself and his work by failing to acknowledge his creature as a human being, a sentient subject. He fails, in fact, to live up to the enlightened materialist philosophy he claims to profess, and – just like the humanity he wishes to reform and in whose name he has

initiated his creation – reveals himself to be in thrall to the oldest and most ingrained prejudices. The creature is rendered monstrous in the eyes of his creator not by his character traits (he is naturally good and humane) but by his ugliness (a mask, a representation). In this sense, and this sense alone, Victor Frankenstein's scientific utopia, the "dream of his reason", dissociated from the basic sensibility of the father-son bond, has created a monster.

There is no question here of imposing today's thinking on the past: these were very much concerns of the time. In 1823, the same year in which the first stage version of *Frankenstein* appeared, the British Foreign Secretary George Canning, who was opposed to slavery but favoured a process of gradually improving the lives of slaves, alluded to the work in a parliamentary debate to illustrate the potential danger and unforeseen consequences of a policy of sudden emancipation:

In dealing with the negro, Sir, we must remember that we are dealing with a being possessing the form and strength of a man, but the intellect only of a child. To turn him loose in the manhood of his physical strength, in the maturity of his physical passions, but in the infancy of his uninstructed reason, would be to raise up a creature resembling the splendid fiction of a recent romance; the hero of which ... [is] unable to impart to the work of his hands a perception of right and wrong.

A few years later, in 1848, Elizabeth Gaskell set in motion the confusion that persists today between the name of the creature and his creator when she wrote, in her best-selling novel *Mary Barton*, "The actions of the uneducated seem to me typified in those of Frankenstein, that monster of many human qualities, ungifted with a soul, a knowledge of the difference between good and evil". During the Crimean War, a *Punch* cartoon depicted "The Russian Frankenstein and his Monster", and there were various similar allusions used to represent the different factions involved in the Irish question.¹⁹

Indeed, throughout the great political upheavals of the British and Irish nineteenth century, *Frankenstein* was repeatedly put to metaphorical political use, employed as shorthand for any tension arising from the unintended, monstrous consequences of humane, universal, and sensitive social reform introduced, with the best of intentions, to the public sphere. The problem seems to lie in the "leap", in the inevitable disconnection between the realm of domestic virtues and sensibility and the ambition to regenerate and reinvent humanity. It is this converging of spheres that produces monsters. The socially oriented self of eighteenth-century normative sensibility becomes a Prometheus unbound, obsessed with his work and an end goal that justifies all the violence done to himself, to those around him, to reasonable sentiments, and to society as a whole. A change which was perceived at the time as the great Romantic revolution.

In Victor Frankenstein, and his scientific undertaking, the discussion about the scope and limits of Enlightenment and Romantic sensibilities in

relation to particular forms of social, political, aesthetic, and scientific engineering would be closely linked to reflections on a shared project of altering the foundations of the old society, a project described (by some) as aberrant, unnatural, and monstrous. The discussion about what makes us human, entitled to freedom, rights, and affection, brings together three issues and three movements that were closely connected to each other at the time, in both practical and symbolic terms. The nature and rights of women, the boundaries and characteristics of humanity, and the critique of forms of domination old and new: the dark and disturbing dimensions of Western expansion into the rest of the world. In Mary Shelley's work, that global stage stretches across Europe, from England to Switzerland and Germany, and onwards to the far reaches of the Arctic and even to the "vast wilds" of South America in which the hopeful monster promises to take refuge when Frankenstein creates a companion for him.

The gender, class, race, and aesthetic implications of such concerns are in turn linked, in my opinion, to the conflict between (but also the coexistence and hybridisation of) the dominant forms of masculinity of Enlightenment Sensibility and their subversion by the Promethean will of the Romantic hero, essentially in terms of the exaltation of (but also the criticism of and resistance to) a new masculinity, perceived as a disruptive, destructive influence on the domestic world of calm and reasonable affections. Since the 1970s, the history of women and gender has undoubtedly revitalised conventional readings of *Frankenstein*. One might expect an interpretation of the work as scientifically and politically reactionary to go hand in hand with the view that it glorifies a female domesticity based on self-sacrifice and suffering, in contrast to the dreams of male reason and men's immoderate behaviour in the public sphere. This is certainly true of *Frankenstein*, as has been amply written about, but such a reading runs the risk of being a reductive interpretation of the dialogic potential of Mary Shelley's work, particularly since I see it as a text at whose heart lies the issue of multiple representations of the relationship between sensibility and identity. How are monsters created? How are male and female identities created? How are separate spheres created and what are their consequences? Ideas that Shelley's mother, Mary Wollstonecraft, had developed extensively in her own work.²⁰

There are three more specific objections to the idea that in *Frankenstein* it is only or primarily women who represent the culture of eighteenth-century sensibility that is swept away by Victor Frankenstein, in his Promethean madness, and by the monster, in his thirst for revenge. First, Victor's best friend Henry Clerval, also killed by the creature, is, in fact, and much more clearly than the women around Victor, the embodiment of the sensitive, responsible, and reasonable domestic emotions and feelings, as too, broadly speaking, is Robert Walton, who makes the decision not to risk his men's lives in what he realises will be an impossible attempt to discover the North-West Passage.

Second, although I cannot explore this in depth here, I do wish to underline the fact that the women in *Frankenstein* are all sweet, docile, discreet, and beautiful. They all die at the hands of the creature precisely because they are submissive and never question Frankenstein's sanity. All are cast in the image of Rousseau's loving, tragic Julie. The only exception is the young Turkish woman Safie, who rebels and runs away to seek her freedom. And it is no coincidence that, having agreed to create a companion in order to get rid of the monster, Victor Frankenstein then destroys his second creation with the telling realisation that "she, who in all probability was to become a thinking and reasonable animal, might refuse to comply with a compact made before her creation. She also might turn with disgust from [the creature] to the superior beauty of man".²¹ The idea that a woman might conceivably refuse to abide by an agreement in which she had had no say is the real danger because such a refusal might lead to something more disturbing than reproduction or a challenge to male authority: a monstrous form of hybridisation.

Finally, and closely related to the allusion to Julie and the female monster, what Mary Shelley does with her nameless (but gendered) creature is to use and subvert the codes of the sentimental heroine, the resigned victim of the actions of others, by conceiving her (male and female) creatures as victims whose sensitivity is precisely what leads them to rebel (or threaten to do so in the case of the potential female monster) in a kind of emotional subversion of the classic codes of conduct of the sentimental novel.

It is no coincidence that it was a woman, still in her teens, brought up in a period and in an emotional and intellectual environment that straddled the Enlightenment and Romantic sensibilities, who managed to inspire simultaneous rejection, fear, and sympathy for her nameless creature. The strong sense of empathy that she succeeds in arousing stems largely from the emotional tension that runs through the whole work. This may not have been the main interpretation in the nineteenth century, but as early as 1824 one commentator wrote that justice was indisputably on the creature's side and acknowledged that he found his sufferings highly moving.²² In that respect, the young Mary Shelley's readings of Milton, Goethe, Rousseau, Coleridge, and so on (and her turbulent experiences in the emotionally volatile circle of Percy Shelley and Lord Byron) must clearly be taken into account to avoid assessing *Frankenstein* in too linear a fashion as (merely) a conservative cautionary tale, in both its production and its reception.

From all these perspectives, *Frankenstein* lies within one of the hot spots of the debate on the new humanitarianism as it was being reframed in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The construction of the idea of the natural rights of all human beings is rooted in Rousseau's maxim, and in the broad social reformulation of classical Cartesianism by "sentimentalism" and the sentimental novel of the Enlightenment. Hence, it was possible, and unsurprising, to suggest such strange (and counter-intuitive) things as the idea that we could all eventually enjoy the same rights and laws because

we could all, of our own free will, reach a reasoned agreement – that would remain in place throughout our lives – on what it is to be human.²³

To tell her story, Shelley used and subverted the tradition of the epistolary sentimental novel, arranging a series of concentric narratives in order (or disorder) around the letters that Robert Walton, a young explorer and scientist hoping to find the North-West Passage, writes to his sister back home in England. In them, he recounts the story told to him by Victor Frankenstein, who in turn tells the story of his monstrous creature who, finally, speaks for himself and pleads his own case. This narrative structure is central to the meaning of the work in that the great voyages of exploration of the time, with their associations of isolation, danger, and disturbing discoveries, are both a metaphor for and the reality of the so-called “romantic science”, which, according to Richard Holmes, can be symbolically bookended by Captain Cook’s first voyage, which began in 1768.²⁴

As Mary Douglas noted some years ago, any structure of ideas is vulnerable in marginal spaces.²⁵ Located far from the centre of the story and yet crucial to everything we are reading – the very reason all these voices are making themselves heard – is the absent presence of the recipient of these letters, Margaret Walton Saville (who shares her initials with Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley). To my mind, this (apparently silenced) voice demonstrates that the core of the story is not necessarily *inside*, at the centre, but outside, somewhere on the margins. And on those margins, as in Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, there waits a respectable woman in England, reading about what is happening outside, in the far reaches of the civilised world.

However, what is sent to this woman – the epitome of the civilised world linked to the culture of sensibility and the ideology of domesticity – is not a single story (or voice) with a definitive moral meaning. What she receives are a series of overlapping and conflicting voices. She receives questions that undermine the very possibility of establishing any kind of unambiguously true or virtuous moral or political judgement on the relationship between sensibility and humanity.

In fact, and to underline the point that my interpretation is not conditioned by current thinking, it was precisely this moral ambiguity that caused a scandal in Shelley’s own time. The novel had no sooner been published than, in April 1818, the prestigious *Monthly Review* condemned it as “An uncouth story, in the taste of German novelists, trenching in some degree on delicacy, setting probability at defiance, and leading to no conclusion either moral or philosophical”. The *Quarterly Review*, in a piece printed immediately after an article entitled “The Congo Expedition – African Discoveries”, expanded on the same idea: “Our taste and our judgement alike revolt at this kind of writing, and the greater the ability with which it may be executed the worse it is – it inculcates no lesson of conduct, manners, or morality”.²⁶ Aside

from its conservative nature, the concern expressed by both publications was fundamentally well directed.

In that mix of ambivalent values and conflicting narratives, there lies perhaps one of the keys to both *Frankenstein's* historicity and its ability to have become an enduring myth. The structure of the work, as a series of concentric narratives, works beautifully in this respect. Each narrative challenges the one before, and at the heart of them all can be heard a voice saying that the real problem lies in calling Victor Frankenstein's creature a monster. The latter's enlightened creator – the first to do this – becomes the first culprit. It is not, then, the dream of reason that creates the monster: it is sleepless reason that rejects its creation and, in doing so, ends up renouncing itself.

The story received by Margaret Walton Saville, and by Shelley's readers, is not a linear narrative with a beginning, a middle, and an end and a single narrator who makes sense of every detail. It is told by several different overlapping and conflicting voices who struggle to make themselves understood, to justify themselves, to reveal their ambitions and their failures, experiences, and feelings. To tell their stories within history. This perhaps demonstrates the impossibility of answering those old ontological and epistemological questions: what is that which exists, and how do we know that what appears to exist, really does so?

Who is responsible for the monstrous creation that results from the best of intentions? Where does innocence end and guilt begin? What happens when utopias become dystopias (in the world of emotions, sensibility, and reason too)? What happens when our actions, our emotions, and great collective and personal hopes have unforeseen and undesired consequences? Is it possible to be guilty and innocent at the same time, like the monster, like Victor Frankenstein himself? Is the respectable English lady who receives the letters and the world she represents (the empire, the civilised and domestic world) the solution, the last refuge, or the prime culprit?

The ambiguous or contradictory answers to these questions open up an unsettling angle of reflections on the possibility of the monstrous potential for exclusion and violence within what we call Sensibility, Truth, or Identity (as capitalised concepts, absolute and exclusive). Might there not be several true but mutually incompatible answers to the same question or solutions for the same problem? For it is true, and indeed this lies at the heart of the plot, that the creature becomes violent, *truly* monstrous, when his story, his truth, his self, his human sensibility and identity are denied in the name of another truth, another story, other forms of sensibility. A proposal – that of the conventional nature of what we call *truth* – which, as Isaiah Berlin wrote years ago, lies at the root of the Romantic “revolution”.²⁷ That same revolution shattered the Classical, and very eighteenth-century, relationship between ethics and aesthetics: now the beautiful could be bad and the ugly could be good. This in turn affects the ultimate meaning of Rousseau's “I feel, therefore I am”, words in which he was convinced human identity was anchored. What were the forms and limits of that identity, the hidden ghosts, the voices



Figure 11.1 Image of the poster of the lecture “Monstrous progeny” given at the BBVA Foundation on 24 May 2018. (Design: La Factoría de Ediciones)

silenced by the received sensibility and also by the Romantic Prometheus’ struggle against it? To what extent does Victor Frankenstein betray the genuinely rebellious, revolutionary myth of Prometheus by continuing to abide by the conventions that justify the horror of and will to destroy the Other, so similar and yet so different? (Figure 11.1).

In my view, however, restricting ourselves to a postmodern celebration of this chorus of multiple voices and meanings merely reinforces the conventional and complacent metaphors relating to the timelessness and “enduring myth” aspect of Mary Shelley’s story, and to the very existence of timeless, acultural fears or monsters.²⁸ We historians know that texts, and more precisely narratives, mean different things in different temporal, cultural, social, and political contexts. Therein lies (or does not lie) their transtemporality or transculturality.

The history of *Frankenstein* readings, of the way the novel circulated (or did not circulate) outside Great Britain, has yet to be written. Is *Frankenstein* (the original text) a global myth or one of significance only in the Western or the English-speaking world? Under what conditions has it acquired (or not acquired) mythical status; when and how has it done so? Jeremy Adelman has recommended that global history should distance itself from complacent assumptions about the circulation of texts and experiences in order to encompass and analyse the importance of that which does NOT circulate, texts and people that do not travel, are not really connected, or only in very ambiguous and broken ways.²⁹

At this stage in my research, I believe I can argue the following: Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, today considered the epitome of Romantic sensibility,

was NOT part of nineteenth-century European Romantic culture in a broader sense. It was part of that culture, if in fairly equivocal and marginal terms, in Great Britain and Ireland – and in the United States (where it made less impact but enjoyed a certain level of popularity), whose experience and timeline of Romanticism differed considerably from Europe's. Various reviews of the work were published in its country of origin, the tone of which I have reflected above, but which also included, for example, one written in glowing terms by Walter Scott, when it was believed that the anonymously published novel was the work of Percy Shelley.³⁰ However, *Frankenstein* reached a far wider audience in the popular milieu of “illegitimate theatre”, a term referring to all those London playhouses that had not been granted royal patents, as opposed to the Theatres Royal that enjoyed sole rights over staging the conventional comedies and tragedies of high culture. The illegitimate theatre was generally active in the summer months, outside the main theatrical season, and was only allowed to produce genres such as pantomime, spectacle (involving scenes of fire, natural disaster, etc.), farce, burlesque, melodrama, musical, and so on.

Following this pattern, *Presumption*, later rechristened *Presumption, Or, the Fate of Frankenstein*, was first staged at the English Opera House in 1823. It was a hit and, with minor alterations, ran almost uninterrupted until the 1850s, as well as being produced in New York in 1821 and at the Théâtre de la Porte Saint-Martin in Paris in 1826. This successful stage adaptation – treated with scorn by “serious” critics – had only a hint of what we would conventionally call Romanticism and was much closer in style to popular theatre from Gothic melodrama to the “melodramatic imagination” of the post-revolutionary nineteenth century. It contained a large dose of entirely stereotypical sensationalism, culminating in the avalanche that kills both the creator and his creature. It included a comic servant character (forebear of the famous Igor) and his equally comic wife; it silenced the monster and turned him into a being devoid of all traits of human sensibility, except for the musical numbers.³¹ This portrayal of him was later carried over into the proto-science fiction cinematic treatments of the story.

What happened to the text outside England and other English-speaking countries? Here I shall take a transnational view encompassing the areas regarded since the eighteenth century as a decadent and emotional “South”, as opposed to an energetic and rational “North”.³² My reflections cover Italy, Spain, and Portugal in particular, along with three of the Latin American countries, in a European and American context that transcends the symbolic North-South border.

I have only been able to locate one nineteenth-century translation that remains fairly faithful to the original 1818 publication: the French version published in 1821 and attributed to Mme Shelley, niece (sic) of William Godwin, author of *La Justice Politique* and *Caleb William*, by the radical Parisian bookshop Chez Corréard. Incidentally, this bookshop was widely popular in Spanish liberal circles during the Liberal Triennium of

1820–1823.³³ The book was not published in the United States until 12 years later (Philadelphia, 1833), and then in the (author's own) extensively revised and far more conservative edition of 1831. This was a kind of "other text", which ironed out the more transgressive and iconoclastic connotations of the original in various key areas: there are warnings of a religious nature about the sacrilegious ambitions of science, absent from the 1818 edition; the cautionary tale aspects of pre-revolutionary and Promethean illusions are emphasised; there is more emphasised idealisation of a domestic world in which women embody eighteenth-century sensibility and find their rightful destiny as victims; Victor Frankenstein is to some extent exonerated of personal responsibility; and the compassion (and in a sense admiration) for his creature that runs throughout the 1818 edition is less explicit.³⁴

While not exhaustive, my research is extensive enough to suggest there were no translations into other languages in Europe or Latin America until well into the twentieth century, and that all such versions were based on the 1831 version. The anonymous text of 1818, whose fundamental aim, as asserted in its preface, was to deal with human passions, emotions, and feelings, through "the exhibition of the amiableness of domestic affection, and the excellence of universal virtue", was lost "in darkness and distance" for almost a century.³⁵

It was 1912 before the first of these later translations appeared – the German edition translated by Heinz Widtmann and issued in Leipzig by Max Altmann, who specialised in esoteric and occult publications and had also published Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. This came two years after the first film adaptation of the work in the United States: a 14-minute silent film, in which the science fiction and Gothic elements are foregrounded. Widtmann's translation is still available, reprinted as recently as 2020. The first Spanish-language edition also appeared in 1912, when Luis Costarias's translation was published in Argentina (La Nación, Buenos Aires); it remained the only Spanish version until a Chilean edition was issued in 1942. All subsequent European and American editions came after the release of the two great twentieth-century films that brought the book worldwide fame and were primarily responsible for creating the Western myth of Frankenstein with which we are familiar today: James Whale's *Frankenstein* (Universal, 1931) and Terence Fisher's *The Curse of Frankenstein* (Hammer Film Productions, 1957). As discussed below, this change of medium had a substantial influence on the interpretation of Mary Shelley's original story.

The 1944 Italian edition was translated by Ranieri Cochetti, who, in his introduction to the work, emphasised the supernatural elements (of which there are in fact none in Shelley's original) and categorised the tale as a typical and globally recognised *romanzo nero* in which "the incubus represents the most irrational and profound part of our being". Cochetti (who may have been familiar with psychoanalysis and with Eugenio Testa's now-lost 1920 film *Il mostro di Frankenstein*) honed in above all on the idea of parallel binaries and the splitting of the human soul. It is one of the most perceptive

early reviews, no doubt influenced by the timing of its publication at the end of the Mussolini régime, but does state that Victor Frankenstein “is as human as the monster is beyond nature” (“al di fuori della natura”), thus establishing a dialectic in which a sense of the “infernal” is transmitted between the creator and the creature.³⁶

The first edition printed in Spain (La Pléyade) also dates from 1944 and consists of a translation of the text by Simón Santainés and a short, anonymous introduction that erroneously states that before writing *Frankenstein*, Mary Shelley had penned such novels as *Valperga*, *Lodora*, and *The Last Man*, which were actually much later works. It calls *Valperga* a romantic tale perfected by William Godwin, and asserts that Mary was unlikely to have written *Frankenstein* “without the influence of her husband’s brilliance”. Clearly swayed by the tone of the 1931 film, the writer also considers the book to be “the masterpiece of the horror genre ... since it invests it with psychological depth through the description of tempestuous human passions, an aspect hitherto lacking in this kind of novel”³⁷ (Figure 11.2).

To end this brief survey, I shall just add that the first edition in Portuguese was published in Brazil, in 1957, and that although we know the first Mexican edition only appeared in 1967, the comic book *Pepín*, issued with the *Semanario Ilustrado*, had featured a cartoon entitled *Frankenstein* years earlier. In this Mexicanised version of Shelley’s story created by Francisco Casillas and Alfonso Tirado, the monster, explicitly referred to by the name of his creator, is always accompanied by his faithful dog Tirado. There is a good doctor (the creator, Dr José del Río) and an evil one, whose aim is to get hold of the monster for his own nefarious purposes. Meanwhile, the creature devours human beings and takes on local bullies such as El Ronco. These inadvertently funny strips were produced in 1937–1938 by Editorial Juventud of Mexico City, a branch of the firm established in Barcelona in 1923, which to this day continues to publish the most widely read children’s version of the Frankenstein story.³⁸

I am of course aware that the English and French versions were circulating long before the book’s publication in any other language and that it became a useful metaphorical touchstone for the press, primarily in stories about politics or scientific progress and its consequences. In a fascinating article about Spanish illustrators’ approaches to *Frankenstein*, Beatriz and Fernando González-Moreno point to the publication in a 1917 issue of the ultra-Catholic weekly *La hormiga de oro* of an item entitled “Las maravillas de la ciencia” (The wonders of science). This refers to a certain Dr Born of Breslau as a “modern Frankenstein” in its discussion of the surgical advances he had achieved, which included having created a live frog from the halves of two other frogs.³⁹

Even before news broke of this incredible achievement (certain versions of or allusions to the work do lean more towards comedy than horror), reports had appeared in the Spanish and Mexican press (and no doubt elsewhere in Europe and America) about a dinner given at the Covent Garden Theatre for



Figure 11.2 Illustration in *Frankenstein's* first Spanish edition, by Joan Palet Batiste. Source: Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein, novela*, trans. Simón Santainés (Barcelona: La Pléyade, 1944). Biblioteca Nacional de España.

Daniel O'Connell, in March 1844, shortly after the latter had been sentenced to serve a year in prison for conspiracy. On that occasion, the Irish leader had borrowed the Frankenstein metaphor for political purposes and, in the process, added to the confusion initiated by Mrs Gaskell between the creator and his creature. The version of the story that appeared in Spain's *El Corresponsal* (26 March 1844) was a fairly free translation of the original *Illustrated London News* report, according to which, after asserting that the conspiracy for which he had been convicted had been dreamt up by the judges, O'Connell had said:

One of our female authors of celebrity, in the fulness of her feminine imagination, has depicted to the world an imaginary being of extraordinary dimensions and of ferocious capacity, and has denominated that being "Frankenstein". That conspiracy which had been tried in Ireland was the Frankenstein of the law. [Great laughter.] As the one was uncouth of limb, unshaped in form, undefined and indefinite in nature, having nothing of humanity about it – so the other had nothing of law but its monstrosity.⁴⁰

The report on the same event printed in Mexico's *El Siglo Diez y Nueve* (7 June 1844), meanwhile, was based on information from its French office on 20 March 1844. Other European newspapers with an interest in the Irish question presumably did likewise.

In 1853, another Mexican newspaper, the right-wing *El Universal*, writing about its liberal rival *El Siglo Diez y Nueve*'s critical stance on General Santa Anna during his final presidential mandate of 1853–1855, castigated the paper for looking to the past and conjuring "bloodstained ghosts from the grave to fight for its cause", adding, "it will be no wonder if, in the end, like another Frankenstein, *El Siglo* sees those ghosts turn against it in anger".⁴¹ Sixty years later, *The Mexican Herald* – an English-language newspaper published in Mexico City between 1895 and 1913, during the authoritarian rule of Porfirio Díaz, with the aim of advancing a programme of modernisation modelled on and backed by the United States – wrote the following about the suffragette movement:

Suffragette militance seems to be a sort of Frankenstein for it is now said that the number of incendiary and fanatical women has dwindled to less than forty. The army that formerly broke windows, set fires and put acid in pillar boxes has disappeared.⁴²

Again, although not exhaustive, my searches have not uncovered many other references to or reviews of Mary Shelley's novel in the nineteenth-century Spanish or Latin American press, in other words, before the release of the film versions some decades later. At this stage, the story remained an essentially Anglo-Saxon phenomenon. When Whale's film came out in Spain in 1932, not only did it not revive interest in the original novel, it hid it away

behind a conventional horror movie about a scientist, driven half-mad by his obsession, and a diabolical, monstrous creature. Moreover, in the year of its Spanish release, barely half a dozen reviews of the film appeared, although it was undoubtedly a box-office hit that thrilled the nation's cinema-goers.⁴³ As a curious side note, however, the famous and openly misogynist Spanish writer Pío Baroja included the following exchange in a dialogue he wrote several years later, portraying an encounter with a seemingly cultured lady on a train. She begins with a question:

“Did you see *Frankenstein*?” “No”. “Well, that was something original”. “Not really. *Frankenstein* is a novel by the wife of the English poet Shelley, published in the early nineteenth century”. “Really? I didn’t know that”. “Yes, they say he helped his wife write it”.⁴⁴

The much-celebrated transtemporality and transculturality of *Frankenstein*, in the contexts set out above, were ruptured, thanks to a systematic amputation of the intensely dialogic dimension of the original text. This kind of appropriation is fundamental in accurately calibrating what we mean by “the *Frankenstein* myth”.

I shall end with a brief summary of what has been altered or lost in the stage and screen versions of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley’s novel. First, and by no means least significantly, there is the question of readership, as the story has been made available to a popular, mass audience. Second, and this is closely connected to the previous point, there is the treatment of time and the past by horror movies (and their precursor, horror theatre, with its varying degrees of comic content) – they subvert the modernity of the setting, the narrative, and the philosophy of Shelley’s text by emphasising or, more accurately, creating the anachronistic atmosphere of a world shrouded in Gothic fog, a world in which science and magic overlap. Much the same can be said, incidentally, of Universal’s other great horror film of 1931, *Dracula*. Third, the narrative form is substantially altered, since neither the plurality of voices and alternative truths nor the concentric narratives, both of which – as noted above – are essential features of Mary Shelley’s story, translate well to stage or screen.

Fourth, there is the impact on content: in the canonical Whale-Karloff film version, there are fundamental omissions and modifications. Robert Walton, the explorer who writes the letters, vanishes – and with him, the possibility of a different kind of scientist, different models of technological progress and personal moral responsibility (and, crucially, sensibility) from those represented by Victor Frankenstein. As for the monster, who speaks more eloquently than anyone else in the novel, he is completely silenced because his cinematic incarnation is mute. Moreover, his brain is now the wrong brain: that of a murderer – a telling aspect in an era (the late nineteenth and early twentieth century) regarded as “the neurological age”, that of “brainhood ideology”. An age in which the brain, rather than the emotions, was seen as

the basis of individuality and personality, the somatic limit of the self; the brain took the place of the soul and/or the capacity to feel as the essential requirement of what it means to be human. As Peter O'Flinn has written: "the novel makes [the monster] human, while the film makes him sub-human".⁴⁵

In the fifth and final place, as I have tried to show in the first part of this chapter, the latest twist in the process of transhistorical appropriation of Mary Shelley's original text – from the final few decades of the twentieth century to the present day – has turned it into a kind of postmodern myth that should be analysed as such. On the one hand, as regards its audience, because it involves *Frankenstein's* return to high, specifically academic culture. On the other, at the same time, it supposes the work's posthumous, transtemporal (Romantic) canonisation and the restoration of its transgressive, critical, and dialogic potential.⁴⁶ It is no coincidence, of course, that this process of canonisation has taken place in the context of the debate about exactly how the Western literary canon is constructed and its historical procedures of exclusion and inclusion. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, now (significantly) in its original 1818 version, feeds popular culture back into that high culture, blurring or confusing the boundaries between the two.

This process is a key theme in a book such as this, dealing with the histories of sensibility and the implications for race, gender, and otherness in the Global Enlightenment.⁴⁷ Its analysis tells us much about the strong situated character of sensibility.⁴⁸ What makes the past a foreign country is that difference in the nature of sensibility: there they feel differently. That is why I propose – as a colophon to this chapter – the interest of studying in depth the projection of *Frankenstein* between the nineteenth and twenty-first centuries and, especially, the conditions of its recovery by poststructuralist and postcolonial criticism as a fundamental mechanism for its transtemporal circulation between popular culture and high culture.

In December 2017, looking ahead to the novel's bicentenary year, Richard Holmes stated with alarm in the *New York Review of Books* that *Frankenstein* was "out of control".⁴⁹ A Google search of the name returns over 60 million hits, more than *Macbeth*.⁵⁰ Since it was first published on New Year's Day 1818, it has never been out of print. In English alone, there are more than 300 editions of the original novel, more than 650 comics, 100 films, and so on. In 2018 and 2019, Danny Boyle's 2011 production of the stage adaptation at London's National Theatre was screened in cinemas the world over. The off-Broadway and UK stagings of Mark Baron and Jeffrey Jackson's musical adaptation were very well received. In May 2018, an original new stage version, directed by Carme Portaceli, was premiered at the Teatre Nacional de Catalunya in Barcelona. Haiffaa al-Mansour's uneven but interesting biopic (*Mary Shelley*) also dates from the bicentenary year, while in Kenneth Branagh's film version, starring Robert De Niro and Helena Bonham-Carter,

the phenomenon of intellectualising the myth and giving the monster *greater sensibility* takes second place to a heightened version of the psychological and sentimental struggle between Victor Frankenstein and his creature (as they fight over the latter's companion).

In Spain, one of the great films of the final years of the Franco dictatorship was Victor Erice's *El espíritu de la colmena* (The Spirit of the Beehive), in which a young girl – having seen the Whale film at a village cinema in 1940, just after the end of the Spanish Civil War – becomes obsessed with Frankenstein's creation and gives aid to a republican soldier fleeing the Francoist forces, believing him to be the monster. Whether intentionally or not, Gonzalo Suárez's extraordinary and subtle film *Remando al viento* (Rowing with the Wind, 1988), starring Hugh Grant and Lizzy McInnerny, closely reflects feminist and psychoanalytical readings of the association between Mary Shelley herself and Victor Frankenstein's tortured creature. Sandra Hernández does so in a far more explicit fashion in her recent and well-received graphic novel (Bang Ediciones, 2023) in which Victor Frankenstein is a woman.

Beginning in the 1960s–1970s, and with particular momentum from the 1980s onwards, a strange hybridisation has therefore taken place between so-called “high” and “popular” culture, as well as between written and visual culture. The emergence of what has become known as cultural studies, ever since art and science, history, and literature began to transgress their conventional boundaries, has resulted in this ghost story of the early 1800s being brought back to life in an environment unthinkable in its day and for much of the twentieth century. Academia (itself so prone to creating the myths it claims to despise) is now turning its attention to trying to decipher the mystery of this short novel, written in the already *foreign country* of the early nineteenth century, and is rediscovering a surprisingly self-aware, elaborate, complex, and flexible work. Today, *Frankenstein* appears in courses on ethics, philosophy, and political, cultural, and scientific history; in debates about feminism and women's history, gender, and race, and the historical shaping of modern femininities and masculinities; and in discussions of bioethics, gene editing (CRISPR), transgenics, stem cell research, AI, chemical and nuclear weaponry, drones, and so on.

As a result of this reconversion process, *Frankenstein* (the book) is today not only enjoying global circulation, no longer confined to the Anglo-Saxon world, it is also expanding its life and meanings as a vehicle for disseminating ideas and political, scientific, and cultural agendas as relevant now as they were when the novel was first published.⁵¹ They are now, almost without exception, steeped in the post-Romantic sensibility that characterises our era, preoccupied as it is with questions relating to the diversity of humanity, the porosity of its limits, the possible forms of sensibility and identity – and to our ambivalence towards Reason and Truth, and even Science, as objective concepts. From all these perspectives, the iconic status of Mary Shelley's work is a modern cultural construct. Yorgos Lanthimos's carnivalesque and

postmodern version of the myth of *Frankenstein* (*Poor Things*, 2023) is its latest cinematographic spin.⁵²

Therefore, this kind of academic criticism (and its far-reaching repercussions on theatre and film) – if we are talking about transtemporal and transcultural forms of appropriation and circulation of Enlightenment and Romantic texts (and sensibilities) – should not just be seen as a historiographical reference but should undergo historical analysis in its own right. That would enable us to address the shifting meanings and means of circulation of the Frankenstein myth, which are as fractured and ambivalent as the current discussions about the darker and more dangerous meanings of Rousseau's *je sens, donc je suis*.

Notes

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- 1 Italo Calvino, "Italiani, vi esorto ai classici", *L'Espresso*, 28 June 1981 [translated by Patrick Creagh in *The New York Review of Books* 33, no. 15, 9 October 1986] and *Perché leggere i classici* (Milan: Mondadori, 1991), 13–20.
- 2 Guy Scarpetta, "La littérature, miroir de l'histoire? Ce que seuls les romans peuvent dire", *Le Monde Diplomatique*, 30 March 2003. François Dosse, *Les vérités du roman. Une histoire du temps présent* (Paris: Les Éditions de Cerf, 2013). This theme is discussed at length in Isabel Burdiel, "Lo que las novelas pueden decir a los historiadores. Notas para Manuel Pérez Ledesma", in José Álvarez Junco et al., *El historiador consciente* (Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2015), 263–282.
- 3 Sarah Knott, *Sensibility and the American Revolution* (Williamsburg: University of North Carolina Press, 2009) and Mónica Bolufer, "Reasonable Sentiments. Sensibility and Balance in Eighteenth Century Spain", in *Engaging Emotions in Spanish Culture and History*, eds. Luisa Elena Delgado, Pura Fernández, and Jo Labanyi (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2015), 21–38.
- 4 Tim Blanning, *The Romantic Revolution* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson 2011) and Andrea Wulf, *Magnificent Rebels: The First Romantics and the Invention of the Self* (London: John Murray, 2022) – to mention two well-known recent works, both of which, in particular the former, argue in terms of a sudden leap, or a revolution, with which I do not fully agree.
- 5 All quotations from *Frankenstein* included here are taken from the Oxford World's Classics version, edited by Nick Groom: Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein. 1818 Text* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 34.
- 6 Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein. 1818 Text* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 37.
- 7 Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein. 1818 Text* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 70–71.
- 8 Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein. 1818 Text* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 82.
- 9 Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein. 1818 Text* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 71.
- 10 Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein. 1818 Text* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 109.
- 11 Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein. 1818 Text* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 127. For more on the implications of this threat, see Mary Lowe-

- Evans, *Frankenstein: Mary Shelley's Wedding Guest* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1993).
- 12 Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein. 1818 Text* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 172.
- 13 S.H. Vasbinder, *Scientific Attitudes in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1976) broke new ground in exploring the image of science in *Frankenstein*. See also *Frankenstein: Annotated for Scientists, Engineers, and Creators of All Kinds* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2017).
- 14 Matt Clavin, "Race, Rebellion, and the Gothic. Inventing the Haitian Revolution", *Early American Studies* 5, no. 1 (2007): 1–29.
- 15 Silvia Sebastiani, "A 'monster with human visage': The orangutan, savagery, and the borders of humanity in the global Enlightenment", *History of the Human Sciences* 34, no. 4 (2019): 80–99. Karen Sánchez-Eppler, "Body Bounds: The Intersecting Rhetorics of Feminism and Abolitionism", *Representations* 24 (1988): 28–59.
- 16 David Lewes, *A Brighter Morn. The Shelley Circle's Utopian Project* (Oxford: Lexington Books, 2003).
- 17 Voltaire, *Candide*, in *Romans et contes*, ed. R. Pomerai (Paris: Flammarion, 1969), 222. Alan Coffee, "Frankenstein and Slave Narrative: Race, Revulsion and Radical Revolution", in *Creolizing Frankenstein*, ed. Michael Paradiso-Michau (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2023). For the gender connotations of the sugar industry, see Marta Manzanera's chapter in this volume, and Julie L. Holcomb, "Blood-Stained Sugar: Gender, Commerce and the British Slave-Trade Debates", *Slavery and Abolition* 35, no. 4 (2014): 611–628. There is an interesting quotation from Coleridge on how the blood of slaves was sweetening English food in Carlos Jauregui, *Canibalia. Canibalismo, antropofagia cultural y consumo en América Latina* (Madrid: Iberoamericana, Frankfurt, Vervuert, 2008), 278. Brycchan Carey, *British Abolitionism and the Rhetoric of Sensibility* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 40.
- 18 Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein. 1818 Text* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 87. Marie Mulvey-Roberts, "Mary Shelley, Frankenstein and Slavery", *Dangerous Bodies: Historicising the Gothic Corporeal* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), 52–91. Elizabeth Young, *Black Frankenstein. The Making of an American Metaphor* (New York: New York University Press, 2008).
- 19 Nick Groom, ed., Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein. 1818 Text* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), XLIX; Elizabeth Gaskell, *Mary Barton. A Tale of Manchester* (London: Penguin, 2012); and Anne K. Mellor, *Mary Shelley. Her Life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters* (New York and London: Methuen, 1988), 113–114.
- 20 I discuss Wollstonecraft's ideas on monstrosity and the female condition in Isabel Burdiel, ed., *Mary Wollstonecraft. Vindicación de los Derechos de la Mujer* (Madrid: Cátedra-Clásicos del Feminismo, 2018, [1994]).
- 21 Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein. 1818 Text* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 125.
- 22 Anon. *Knights Quarterly*, August–November 1824: 195–199.
- 23 David Marshall, *The Surprising Effects of Sympathy. Marivaux, Diderot, Rousseau, and Mary Shelley* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1988). Julio Seoane Pinilla, *Del sentido moral a la moral sentimental. El origen sentimental de la identidad y la ciudadanía democrática* (Madrid: Siglo XXI, 2004). Siep Stuurman, *The Invention of Humanity. Equality and Cultural Difference in World History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017).
- 24 Richard Holmes, *The Age of Wonder. How the Romantic Generation Discovered the Beauty and Terror of Science* (New York: Harper and Collins, 2008).
- 25 See, in particular, Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge, 2002 [1966]).

- 26 Monthly Catalogue, *Monthly Review, Or, Literary Journal. Art*, 19 April 1818: 439. *The Quarterly Review* (1818). Art. V: 379–385.
- 27 Isaiah Berlin, “The Apotheosis of the Romantic Will: The Revolt against the Myth of an Ideal World”, in Isaiah Berlin, *The Crooked Timber of Humanity: Chapters in the History of Ideas* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 219–252.
- 28 Paul O’Flinn, “Production and Reproduction: The Case of *Frankenstein*”, in *Frankenstein. Contemporary Critical Essays*, ed. Fred Botting (London: Macmillan, 1995), 21–47.
- 29 Jeremy Adelman, “What is Global History Now?”, AEON, 2 March 2017. <https://aeon.co/essays/is-global-history-still-possible-or-has-it-had-its-moment> Consulted 16 February 2023.
- 30 Walter Scott, *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* 2, March 1818: 613–620.
- 31 Douglas William Hoehn, “The First Season of Presumption, Or, The Fate of *Frankenstein*”, *Theatre Studies*, 26–27 (1979–1981): 79–88, and “Early Dramatic Versions of *Frankenstein*”, *Romantic Circles*, undated. <https://romantic-circles.org/editions/peake/apparatus/earlyversions.html>. Consulted 7 April 2023. Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination* (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995). Rohan McWilliam, “Melodrama and the Historians”, *Radical History Review* 78 (2000), 57–84.
- 32 Xavier Andreu and Mónica Bolufer, eds., *European Modernity and the Passionate South* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2023).
- 33 *Le Prométhée Moderne, Dédié à William Godwin, Auteur de la Justice Politique, de Caleb William, etc., Mme. Shelley, sa nièce. Traduit de l’Anglais par J.S.* *** (Paris: Chez Corréard, Libraire, Palais Royal, Galerie de Bois, no. 258, 1821). Gérard Dufour, “La Santa Alianza de los Pueblos. Liberales franceses y españoles en el Trienio Liberal”, *Pasado y Memoria* 22 (2021): 109–127.
- 34 Nick Groom, ed., “Appendix B. The Third Edition (1831): Substantive Changes”, in Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein. 1818 Text* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018) 178–198.
- 35 The preface was probably written by Percy Shelley, who expanded on this interpretation in his review of the book. I have no room to discuss that text here but it does merit further consideration. Nick Groom, ed., “Appendix C. On *Frankenstein* by Percy Bysshe Shelley”, in Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein. 1818 Text* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018) 199–200.
- 36 Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein* (Rome: Donatello De Luigi, 1944), 9–16.
- 37 Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein* (Barcelona: La Pléyade, March 1944). Cover and frontispiece illustrations by Palet; introduction (anon.), 5–6. Biblioteca Nacional de España, Signatura 4/17616. The earliest English edition held by the BNE is that published in 1922 by J.M. Dent & Sons, London, part of the Juan Benet archive. Cat. no. Juan 11/149761. Sede de Alcalá.
- 38 “*Frankenstein*”, in *Pepín. Semanario Ilustrado*, 53 and 70 (México City: Editorial Juventud, 1937–1938).
- 39 Beatriz González-Moreno and Fernando González-Moreno, “The Reception of *Frankenstein* in Spain by the Hand of its Illustrators”, *Spanish Journal of English Studies* 43 (2022): 11–38, <https://doi.org/10.24197/ersjes.43.2022.11-38>. “Maravillas de la Cirugía”, *La Hormiga de Oro* 34, no. 4 (27 January 1917): 23. Born’s work dated from 1894 and was continued, ultimately with extremely dubious implications, by the French surgeon Alexis Carrel.
- 40 *The Illustrated London News*, 16 March 1844.
- 41 *El Universal. Periódico Independiente*. Mexico, 3 May 1853.
- 42 *The Mexican Herald*, 13 August 1913.
- 43 *El Heraldo de Madrid*, 2 March 1932; *Caras y Caretas* (Buenos Aires), 27 February 1932; *Luz* (Madrid) 9 March 1932; *La Época* (Madrid), 11 March 1932; *Ahora* (Madrid), 19 January 1936.

- 44 Pío Baroja, "Locuras de Carnaval", *Ahora* (Madrid), 19 January 1936.
- 45 Fernando Vidal, "Frankenstein's Brain: 'The Final Touch'", *SubStance* 140, no. 45.2 (2016): 88–117. Paul O'Flinn, "Production and Reproduction: The Case of *Frankenstein*", in *Frankenstein. Contemporary Critical Essays*, ed. Fred Botting (London: Macmillan, 1995), 37.
- 46 Its acceptance into the Romantic canon owes much to Harold Bloom, "Frankenstein, or the New Prometheus", *Partisan Review* 32 (1965): 611–618. Groundbreaking in their day were G. Levine and U.C. Knoepfelmacher, eds., *The Endurance of 'Frankenstein': Essays on Mary Shelley's Novel* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1979); S.M. Gilbert and S. Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979); Harold Bloom, *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein: Modern Critical Interpretations* (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1985); and Chris Baldick, *In Frankenstein's Shadow: Myth, Monstrosity and Nineteenth-Century Writing* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987).
- 47 For a substantial discussion of its analytical context, see Mónica Bolufer and Elena Serrano, "Decentering the Enlightenment: Crossing Global and Gender Perspectives", *Entremons: UPF Journal of World History* 13 (2022): 66–99. <https://doi.org/10.31009/entremons.2022.i13.03>
- 48 Obviously, the reference is to L.P. Hartley, *The Go-Between* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1953).
- 49 Richard Holmes, "Out of Control", *New York Review of Books*, 21 December 2017.
- 50 Jill Lepore, "The Strange and Twisted Life of *Frankenstein*", *The New Yorker. Life and Letters*, 12 and 19 February 2018.
- 51 Carol Margaret Davison and Marie Mulvey-Roberts, eds., *Global Frankenstein. Studies in Global Science Fiction* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).
- 52 I thank Pablo Jauregui for bringing this latest film to my attention.

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