

## THE POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY OF HORROR IN MARY SHELLEY'S *FRANKENSTEIN*

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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,” but omits *Frankenstein* from his analysis.<sup>2</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?

Mary Shelley inherited a usage of the Gothic that, in contrast with the expectations of many modern readers, foregrounded history and geography. As Chris Baldick and Robert Mighall have shown, Renaissance humanists used “Gothic” to refer scornfully to the architecture of northern European barbarians (as they viewed them), with particular reference to the Germanic and the medieval, but late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century English Protestant writers typically set their “Gothic” fictions in Catholic southern Europe, while keeping the term's crucial association with the archaic and oppressive.<sup>3</sup> “Gothic,” therefore, was implicated in shifting regional-

ist, nationalist, and sectarian mythologies, but it was characteristically used to align the author and reader with the supposedly enlightened, against the anachronistic and benighted. “The present study,” Robert Mighall writes, “will challenge the notion that settings in the Gothic are its most dispensable properties, by observing how various historical and political factors help to shape the narrative material and determine those settings.” He excludes *Frankenstein*, however, from the history of Gothic and from his own treatment, on the ground that its greatest horrors are the product of enlightenment and a projected futurity rather than “legacies from the past.”<sup>4</sup> I suggest, by contrast, that Mary Shelley’s novel is an astute extension and complication of the political geography of Gothic, as applied to the spread of revolutionary ideas, and revolution itself, in Europe and beyond since the mid-seventeenth century. She complicates the Gothic fear of being pulled back into a despotic past by exposing the despotic residue which, in her view, can shadow—but not stop—a potentially liberating, progressive process. At a time when the Congress of Vienna had just given official status to a reactionary interpretation of the French revolutionary era and a reactionary reconstitution of Europe as a whole, Mary Shelley imagines a liberal alternative through the geographical subtext of a European Gothic fiction. She anticipates Percy Bysshe Shelley’s “A Philosophical View of Reform” (1819) by opting for an international and comparatist frame of reference, invoking a relatively long-range perspective, and urging the need for the dominant forces of society to abandon Restoration intransigence in favor of fundamental reform—a liberal version of enlightenment—as the only alternative to the spread of violent revolution.<sup>5</sup>

#### I. INGOLSTADT AND NORTHERN ICE

Lee Sterrenburg first showed why Mary Shelley chose Ingolstadt in Bavaria, as the place where Victor Frankenstein brought the monster to life.<sup>6</sup> An influential ultraconservative cleric, the Abbé Augustin Barruel, whose *Memoirs, Illustrating the History of Jacobinism* Mary and Percy read on their honeymoon, had claimed that the French Revolution was the product of a conspiracy of intellectuals originating in that university town. The novel’s indebtedness to Barruel is even more extensive than Sterrenburg suggested. When Adam Weishaupt founded a secret society called the “Illuminees” at Ingolstadt on 1 May 1776, he “formed a monstrous digest,” in Barruel’s words, of the various kinds of subversive thinking

already current in the Enlightenment, much as Victor Frankenstein combines an assortment of body parts to form his monster.<sup>7</sup> Like Victor, Weishaupt led a double life at the University of Ingolstadt: distinguishing himself in respectable academic pursuits while secretly, in the privacy of his rooms, pursuing an invisible project. Both men took intellectual shortcuts: Weishaupt, unable to endure delay, recruited disciples by pretending to have a new “code of laws” that he had not yet formulated, while Victor Frankenstein makes an eight-foot giant, rather than a creature of normal human size, for the same reason (81; vol. 1, chap. 3). Weishaupt’s secret society then infiltrated the Freemasons, penetrated France, enlisted the Duke of Orléans, and spawned the Jacobins, “that disastrous monster” which would wreak “days of horror and devastation.” But the details of the conspiracy’s growth are as mysterious as the comings and goings of Frankenstein’s creature: “The monster has taken its course through wildernesses, and darkness has more than once obscured its progress.”<sup>8</sup> This sentence, remarkably, is Barruel’s, not Mary Shelley’s, although it would, except for its neuter pronoun, be as suitable in the novel. No killing occurred at Ingolstadt in either version, but the monster formed in that place eventually causes multiple killings elsewhere. In borrowing from Barruel, Mary Shelley accepts his metaphoric equivalence between the French Revolution and a monster, together with his assumption that ideas can have profound social and political consequences. She also assimilates Barruel’s suggestion that the conspiratorial secrecy and deceptiveness in which the monster was formed foreshadow major flaws in its socialization. But she adds a sympathy for the monster and an entrance into his thought-processes wholly lacking in the Abbé’s diatribe against the Enlightenment and revolutionary change. She uses a conservative text as a sourcebook for political geography but without accepting its ideology.

Rather than constituting an exception, her method in treating Ingolstadt instantiates her systematic procedure in this novel. For example, her creature not only shares a birthplace with the French Revolution, but also a scene of putative endings. St. Petersburg is the address from which Walton sends off his first letter on the first page of the novel, and St. Petersburg was understood to be Napoleon’s initial destination in his fateful Russian campaign of 1812.<sup>9</sup> The novel’s subtitle—“*The Modern Prometheus*”—would have invoked Napoleonic associations for a contemporary audience. As Paulson observes, “Napoleon was associated with Prometheus by Byron and his own propaganda machine.”<sup>10</sup> Victor’s pursuit of the

monster across Russia, as “the snows thickened, and the cold increased in a degree almost too severe to support” (227; vol. 3, chap. 7), would recall for readers in 1818 the Napoleonic army’s desperate retreat from Moscow by a northern route as a severe early winter began in November 1812: “The Russian winter, which began on the 7th with deep snow, greatly added to their difficulties and sufferings, and their bulletins acknowledge the loss of many men by cold and fatigue in their night bivouackings.” Victor, like the Grand Army, forages for food, and lacks the Russian natives’ ability to endure the temperature: “amidst cold that few of the inhabitants could long endure, and which I, the native of a genial and sunny climate, could not hope to survive” (228; vol. 3, chap. 7). The “sledge” (57; vol. 1, letter 4), chosen by Victor and later by the monster for transportation (228; vol. 3, chap. 7), repeats the vehicle reportedly used by Napoleon when he left his army in Russia and headed secretly back to Paris: he “set off in a single sledge under the title of the Duke of Vicenze.”<sup>11</sup>

The French army was never trapped amidst ice floes in the Arctic like Victor, his creature, and the men on Walton’s ship. But the atmosphere of baffled movement, wintry disorientation, and despair which envelops the novel’s characters is a figurative counterpart to the plight of Napoleon’s retreating forces. A celebrated account of the latter, published in France in 1824, supports the connection. The Count de Ségur, Napoleon’s Quartermaster-General on the Russian Campaign of 1812, invokes the metaphor of a ship on a sea of ice to describe the French decision to throw into a Russian lake the trophies of the conquest of Moscow: “There was no longer any question of adorning or embellishing our lives, but merely of saving them. In this shipwreck, the army, like a great vessel tossed by the most violent storm, was throwing overboard on a sea of ice and snow everything that might encumber it or delay its progress.”<sup>12</sup> Although Mary Shelley could not have read Ségur when she wrote the 1818 *Frankenstein*, she and the Count were drawn to similar symbolic seascapes to represent the same momentous historical events.

Against the novel’s final setting of Northern ice, one contrasting image has striking force: the monster’s planned suicide by fire on the book’s final two pages. The comparable historical image is the burning of Moscow by the Russians, as the Napoleonic army prepared to settle into it for winter quarters.<sup>13</sup> The monster’s announced motive—that his “remains may afford no light to any curious and unhallowed wretch, who would create such another as I have been” (243; vol. 3, chap. 7)—resembles the Russian action insofar as it

immolates something priceless of one's own to deny use of it to another. The novel is not proposing that the monster represents the anti-Napoleonic forces of the Czar. Rather, the creature's trajectory from birth in Ingolstadt to death by fire, amidst Northern ice, is a figure for the history of the French Revolution. Not only Napoleon's victorious career, but also the revolutionary age itself seemed to have met its fatal blow in the flames of Moscow and the consequent retreat. With the Grand Army now severely reduced in size and morale, Napoleon's days were numbered. His message in this period was the same as the monster's inscription on trees and stone: "My reign is not yet over" (226; vol. 3, chap. 7). But for the Emperor of the French, the end was in sight. The dominant powers, which had assembled at the Congress of Vienna, sought to convince the world that the French Revolution itself was now finally over.

But was it? In the novel's last line, the monster is "lost in darkness and distance," producing a sense of obscurity and open possibility, rather than certainty. The monster's inscription echoes beyond Napoleon's fate to suggest the possible return of revolutionary violence. The novel uses the idea of a recently completed French revolutionary history as a point of departure for a sustained confrontation with the international legacy of revolution, including its promise, its violence, its possible continuance, and its geographical emplacement.

## II. GENEVA

For the Byron-Shelley circle, Geneva was above all the city of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the deeply flawed but uniquely prophetic and instigative intellectual father of the French Revolution. During the sojourn of Lord Byron, Mary Shelley, and Percy Shelley there in 1816, they read and wrote about him extensively. Geneva was also the site of actual revolutionary events in both 1768 and 1794. Mary's three and a half months in and near the city gave her an incentive to read about its history and an opportunity to draw upon the living memory of natives and long-time residents. *Frankenstein* puts this geographically specific material to use.

Frankenstein's monster commits his first murder—the killing of Victor's youngest brother, William—just outside the ramparts of Geneva in Plainpalais (98–99, 102–3; vol. 1, chap. 6), to which Mary had attributed political significance in *History of a Six Weeks' Tour*:

To the south of the town is the promenade of the Genevèse, a grassy plain planted with a few trees, and called Plainpalais. Here a small obelisk is erected to the glory of Rousseau, and here (such is the mutability of human life) the magistrates, the successors of those who exiled him from his native country, were shot by the populace during that revolution, which his writings mainly contributed to mature, and which, notwithstanding the temporary bloodshed and injustice with which it was polluted, has produced enduring benefits to mankind, which all the chicanery of statesmen, nor even the great conspiracy of kings, can entirely render vain. From respect to the memory of their predecessors, none of the present magistrates ever walk in Plainpalais.<sup>14</sup>

Both Frankenstein's creature and revolution engage in "temporary bloodshed and injustice," which readily invite a response of wholesale condemnation. That is precisely the response given to the Genevèse political executions in the source most readily available to an English reader of the early nineteenth century: Francis d'Ivernois's *A Short Account of the Late Revolution in Geneva*.<sup>15</sup> Ivernois, like Barruel, was an emigré who had settled in England, but unlike the Abbé, he had credentials as a political moderate: a supporter of the Genevèse revolutionary settlement of 1768, he was the principal historian of that earlier revolution, in which his father had been a major participant. In an emigré society of monarchists, the younger Ivernois was a republican who supported a somewhat extended franchise, but he thought universal suffrage inevitably caused mob rule. He was entrusted by the Genevèse government with negotiating a treaty with France, when Geneva was under siege by a French army in 1792. In July 1794, while Maximilien Robespierre was at his height of power, an uprising occurred in Geneva, instigated partly by France and partly by disenfranchised residents of the city-state. A Revolutionary Tribunal now preempted the constitutional government. Under the influence of intimidation by "the savage multitude," and without credible judicial proceedings or evidence of violation of law, according to Ivernois, the Tribunal executed eleven persons, including at least four magistrates, two of whom were ex-syndics or presidents of Geneva. Ivernois sums up these events—including the executions which Mary Shelley links to Plainpalais and to William's murder—as a "work of horror" or "horrors."<sup>16</sup> Mary Shelley, whose only son at the time was also a child named William, registers the horror; in that sense, she is no apologist for murder. But she refuses to demonize the revolution or the monster: the first, she claims "has brought enduring

benefits to mankind,” and the second, she gives a sympathetic hearing on the basis of Rousseau’s revolutionary philosophy.

Plainpalais is the site of a monument to “the glory of Rousseau,” whose “writings mainly contributed to mature” the revolution of France as well as Geneva. By locating the novel’s first murder at a spot consecrated to the memory of the prophet of revolution, situated just outside the city where he was born and bearing its own history of revolutionary bloodshed, Mary Shelley establishes an equation between the monster’s murders and revolutionary violence. Although some recent critics position this novel in a conservative direction, her explicit ruminations about Plainpalais suggest otherwise.<sup>17</sup> *Frankenstein* itself is sympathetic to the monster of revolution and, as David Marshall and James O’Rourke have shown, is pervaded by the philosophy and literary precedent of Rousseau.<sup>18</sup> Even the murder of the child William is seen through a largely Rousseauvian lens. Following the Genevese philosopher’s revolutionary premise, that all human beings are naturally good, Mary Shelley claims that the monster is naturally good as well, but society has imposed its evil ways upon him.<sup>19</sup> As in Rousseau’s state of nature, the creature’s first feeling toward others is pity: he stops stealing food from the De Laceys “when I found that by doing this I inflicted pain on the cottagers,” and he gathers wood for their fire to save them labor (137; vol. 2, chap. 4). When his first effort to tell his story is brought to a traumatic end with an unmerited beating by Felix De Lacey, he refrains from striking back though “I could have torn him limb from limb” (160; vol. 2, chap. 7). He saves the life of a “young girl” who has fallen into a stream, only to be shot by her male companion (165; vol. 2, chap. 8). Biased people torment him solely because of his appearance, but he has still not harmed or sought to harm any of them, and he yearns for acceptance in some kind of social unit. He concludes that his only chance for a friend is to talk to a child who is “unprejudiced” because society has not yet corrupted him (166; vol. 2, chap. 8). Young William, however, turns out to be already the product of an artificial and malignant society: he labels the creature with visual stereotypes—“monster,” “ugly wretch,” and “ogre”—and pulls social rank upon him by insisting that his father is “a Syndic” (167; vol. 2, chap. 8). The creature is finally stained by the social evil that already infects William. By killing the boy, he shows the extremity of social wrong that surrounds him, and he illustrates the need in the novel’s implied system of values for profound social and political change, in the direction of greater inclusiveness. But he

never ceases to have a core of natural goodness, as his final remarks about his persistent craving for “love and fellowship” attest (243).

Before committing his first murder, the creature resorts on one occasion to violence of a lesser kind. When he learns that he will never get a second chance to try to gain the friendship of the De Laceys because they have permanently abandoned the cottage in fright, he burns the unoccupied structure down at night (163; vol. 2, chap. 8). This episode bears a striking resemblance to a famous event in the revolutionary history of Geneva. In January 1768 the city faced a constitutional crisis, as the patricians who controlled the Small Council were locked in dispute with the General Council of Burghers about the respective rights of each body and how restrictively citizenship should be defined. One night a public building burned to the ground, and it was believed by many that the burgher faction set the fire. The patricians agreed to a major constitutional compromise, which secured the public peace. The incinerated structure was a theater built by the patricians in defiance of the burghers’ view, articulated by Rousseau in his *Letter to M. d’Alembert on the Theatre* (1758), that such an institution would corrupt Geneva’s republican manners and morals with aristocratic decadence.<sup>20</sup> The first revolution in the post-Enlightenment West—and the first to bear the imprint of Rousseau—had, as one of its central events, a nighttime conflagration similar to that which Mary Shelley uses as the first act of violence by a Genevese thinker’s creation.<sup>21</sup> A happy outcome followed in the city-state in 1768: patrician accommodation and a more inclusive political order, which lasted until royalist France imposed the reactionary Black Code on Geneva in 1782. In *Frankenstein*, on the other hand, continued rejectionism and exclusion make bloodshed inevitable.

William’s death is followed by another: the authorities in Geneva execute the innocent servant, Justine Moritz, for the crime. This fictional miscarriage of justice is rooted in Genevese political history. The revolutionary executions in Geneva in the summer of 1794 had been swiftly followed by Robespierre’s fall and execution, and the Thermidorean Reaction in Paris. Geneva too recoiled against radical excesses and sought scapegoats. Six weeks after Jacobinism seemed triumphant in Geneva, a reactivated Revolutionary Tribunal condemned four members of the radical Mountaineer faction to death although, according to Ivernois, “no positive evidence was adduced” to support the charges, and testimony was introduced implicating the judges in the crimes for which they condemned the defendants.<sup>22</sup> As



in Justine's wrongful execution, the institutional punishment for one fatal crime becomes another murder.

The only observer who behaves creditably at Justine's trial is Elizabeth Lavenza. While Victor Frankenstein remains silent, despite his knowledge of who killed William and his own responsibility for making that creature what he is, Elizabeth speaks eloquently in defense of Justine's character. But her testimony fails to overcome the "public indignation" against the defendant (111; vol. 1, chap. 7), and the guilty verdict follows. There is a precedent for this combination of male silence and admirable, though futile, female intervention amidst popular frenzy. Ivernois's account of the history of Geneva in the summer of 1794 includes this memorable episode:

One generous effort, indeed, was made by the women of Geneva (for the experiment was too hazardous for men to engage in), who, to the number of two thousand, went in a body to the Revolutionary Tribunal, to intercede for them ["the unhappy victims"]; but their tears and entreaties had no other effect, than that of exposing them to the brutal ridicule of the Judges, who ordered the fire-engines to be got ready, in order to administer what they profanely called, the rights [sic] of *Civic Baptism*.

Elizabeth speaks not merely for herself in Mary Shelley's book, but for a multitude of women who, in recent Genevese history, had bravely sought to inject generosity into a dehumanized political context—and who had been spurned for their efforts.

Justine's execution is, in one sense, highly untypical of Geneva's experience in 1794. Ivernois contrasts France's conduct with his own city's:

In one point indeed, and in one point only, the *French* are still without a rival; for out of no less than 508 persons, on whom different sentences were passed, on the late occasion, there was but *one* Woman, who was condemned to be imprisoned for life, for having given assistance, and forwarded letters, to some *French* Emigrants; and it is more than probable, that even this sentence was obtained by the influence and intrigues of the *French* Resident.<sup>23</sup>

The murdered females of *Frankenstein*, to the extent that they represent revolutionary executions of women, point to French rather than Genevese political history. Yet Geneva does not escape responsibility since its native son, Rousseau, hovers over French as well as Genevese practice, as the monster's involvement with Justine's death

reveals. He admits planting on the sleeping young woman the incriminating evidence—a necklace taken from William’s body—that led to her conviction (168; vol. 2, chap. 8). But he echoes Rousseau’s explanation of evil by shifting the blame onto society. It had deprived him of the love of women, such as Justine, because of his appearance, and through the “lessons of Felix, and the sanguinary laws of man,” it had taught him “how to work mischief” (168; vol. 2, chap. 8). Rousseau not only provides a philosophical defense, but a specific precedent for the monster’s deed. When Rousseau was about nineteen years of age, he stole a pink and silver ribbon and blamed an honest, young female servant named Marion for the theft. His accusation, he believes in retrospect, probably prevented her from finding another situation, and betrayed her into a life of misery and friendlessness.<sup>24</sup> In occupation, gender, innocence, and unjust fate, Justine is Marion’s mirror image. Rousseau professes excruciating remorse for this deed, as does Victor for his silence, but remorse fails to help the two young women. The legacy of Rousseau, including the treatment of women and the sidestepping of personal responsibility, is as Janus-faced and problematic for Mary Shelley, as it had been for her mother in *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. She is much indebted to the Genevese thinker, but she seeks a more balanced and inclusive way to rectify the social wrongs that he exposes.

The last murder to occur in Geneva or its environs is that of Alphonse Frankenstein, Victor’s father. He dies of an apoplectic fit, brought on by grief shortly after learning of Elizabeth’s murder (220; vol. 3, chap. 6). From the point of view of political geography, the two most important things about him are, first, that he was a syndic, as William tells the monster just before his own murder (167; vol. 2, chap. 8) and, second, that his death is the indirect result of the monster’s killing. Syndics were not merely high public officials, but chief executives, the apex of political authority in Geneva. Two of those executed by order of the Revolutionary Tribunal in the summer of 1794 were ex-syndics, like Alphonse, who has long since withdrawn from public life. To kill a syndic was the closest the republic of Geneva could get to the traditionally most horrendous crime of regicide, the act taken by the French National Convention in January 1793. Alphonse’s death in *Frankenstein* carries some of the traditional aura of a *ne plus ultra* insofar as it is a culmination of a relentlessly murderous logic, which carries us through a sequence of victims, beginning with “W” (William) and ending with “A” (Alphonse) in consistent reverse alphabetical order.<sup>25</sup> But the novel rejects both

the traditionalist view that killing the king is the ultimate crime and the radical view that regicide is a major ingredient in achieving a just society. Alphonse's end is anticlimactic, briefly told, and lacking in the emotional force and impact on the narrative of all the other monster-caused deaths in the book. Mary Shelley rejects the hierarchical premise that society's happiness depends chiefly on the presence or absence of a king, president, or syndic. She substitutes a more egalitarian model, in which the fate of a child, a servant, or a spouse may be at least as influential.

In the lives of the novel's major characters, the natural death of Caroline Beaufort Frankenstein, Victor's mother, just outside Geneva is more consequential than the death of his father. It helps motivate Victor to master the boundary between life and death by creating the monster, and, by a dream-logic that supplements the literal narrative, it becomes the book's first murder. Victor eliminates the role of the mother in the birth which he causes in his laboratory, and immediately afterwards—as if reaping the consequences—dreams of holding his own mother's corpse in his arms (85; vol. 1, chap. 4). She had died of scarlet fever in the same chapter as, and just one paragraph before, he left home to study in an all-male environment in Ingolstadt (72–73; vol. 1, chap. 2). The demarcation of this chapter so that these two events constitute a unified textual space implies an equation between them: his abandoning female companionship and input at this point is tantamount to killing her. It is the erasure of the mother, not the killing of the father/ruler, which plunges the world of *Frankenstein* into catastrophe. The prototype behind this entire process is the death of one's mother after, but in a sense because of, one's own birth—an experience that happened first to Rousseau in Geneva, and later to Mary Shelley in London. These events left the surviving offspring in situations fraught with a potential for matricidal guilt. Mary Shelley responded by foregrounding the positive value of the maternal role and striving intensely throughout her life to be the kind of mother her mother wanted to be. Rousseau and Victor, by the implied value system of this novel, exacerbated their guilt: Rousseau by taking his five newborn children from their mother and abandoning them to the Foundling Hospital; Victor, his fictional counterpart, by not only eliminating the role of the mother from the birthing process, but also by repeatedly abandoning the offspring.<sup>26</sup> Geneva's eighteenth-century political prophet, from the point of view of *Frankenstein*, has been the source for all of Europe of a salutary revolutionary inspiration—and of a model of society that reinforces

longstanding gender-based and dehumanizing suppressions and exclusions.

### III. ENGLAND AND SCOTLAND

Victor Frankenstein's "many months" (192; vol. 3, chap. 3) or "nearly a year" (194; vol. 3, chap. 3) in England and Scotland, while shadowed by the monster, are seemingly a respite from murder. Yet Victor agonizes over his fatal past and possible future, mulls over the seventeenth-century killings of King Charles I, Lord Viscount Falkland, and John Hampden (184–85; vol. 3, chap. 2), and physically destroys the female creature that he was laboring to complete on one of the Orkney Islands. The stay in Britain puts special emphasis on the role of the author's country in the development—and retardation—of modern revolutionary thought and practice.

Victor's visit is partly a representation of transnational influences and misunderstandings, in the development of subversive thinking in Europe during the eighteenth century. After promising to make a female mate for the monster, Victor visits England in order to tap the knowledge of "the most distinguished natural philosophers" (183; vol. 3, chap. 2). At this stage, Victor reenacts the French Enlightenment's indebtedness to English science and politics, especially Voltaire's stay in England from 1726 to 1728, which resulted in his *Lettres Philosophiques* (1734), where the celebration of Sir Isaac Newton, John Locke, and English liberty was used to criticize established French practices and institutions.<sup>27</sup>

But in London Victor swiftly finds "an insurmountable barrier placed between me and my fellow-men." His mental state becomes "sorrowful and dejected," afflicted by "extreme anguish" (183; vol. 3, chap. 2), "tormented" by thoughts of the monster's revengeful plots against him and his family, "guiltless" yet cursed (187; vol. 3, chap. 2). He journeys to Derbyshire (186; vol. 3, chap. 2), among other places, and responds to the hospitable invitations of a "person in Scotland" (184; vol. 3, chap. 2), a "Scotch friend" (186; vol. 3, chap. 2), with much less than "the good humor expected from a guest" (187; vol. 3, chap. 2). He craves solitude and eventually finds it on a remote and almost uninhabited island, where he can go about his work "ungazed at and unmolested" (188; vol. 3, chap. 2). In each of these instances, Victor relives Rousseau's tormented visit to England from 1766 to 1767. The latter had been invited by the cosmopolitan Scotsman, David Hume, and he stayed most of the time at a house in Wooton, Derbyshire, isolated from society. His mental condition was unstable,

partly because he had been subjected to fierce personal attacks, public condemnations, outlawing, and even stoning on the continent, and he imagined plots by nearly everyone, including his friends, against him. He and Hume had a much publicized quarrel, as a result of mutual misunderstandings and Rousseau's frenzied and unfounded suspicions.<sup>28</sup> He fantasized about the period in 1765, when he withdrew from society to the Island of Saint-Pierre in the middle of Lake Bienné in the Neuchâtel region, as the happiest period in his life and celebrated it at length in his *Confessions* and *Reveries of the Solitary Walker*.<sup>29</sup> Rousseau's recoil against society is itself a form of identification with and adaptation of an English cultural model of individualism, pushed toward solipsism: in the *Confessions* he explicitly resolves to be another Robinson Crusoe and, in the process, he alienates himself from his British hosts. He reveals what Mary Shelley would see as a defective grasp of human interdependence behind his—and his English prototype's—reconceptualizations of politics and society.

Victor's stay in Oxford constitutes a meditation on English revolutionary history, from the point of view of a narrator who is himself subject to the author's criticism. He lingers nostalgically over the "spirit of elder days" in the Oxford of Charles I and his beleaguered royalist forces and followers, between 1642 and 1645: "This city had remained faithful to him, after the whole nation had forsaken his cause to join the standard of parliament and liberty." The beheading of "that unfortunate king" in January 1649 is the imminent event that looms over an Oxford of "peculiar interest" (184; vol. 3, chap. 2) to Victor, as he reconstructs it. He finds in the king's environment a mirror of his own mood of anxious waiting for an inevitable catastrophe. Instead of drawing practical lessons for himself about what might have been—and what might be—done differently to minimize bloodshed, as Mary Shelley's royalist source, Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon's *History of the Rebellion*, attempts often to do, he aestheticizes the scene, making its "ancient and picturesque" college buildings and their "lovely" (185; vol. 3, chap. 2) natural setting into a still visible correlative for an irremediably doomed circle. Victor's naming of "the amiable Falkland" and "the insolent Goring" (184; vol. 3, chap. 2) on the royalist side implies a large moral spectrum within that faction, with much unintended reference to his own ambiguous moral personality. Clarendon, whose history Mary Shelley referred to unmistakably in her manuscript version of the Oxford passage, had vividly portrayed Lucius Cary, Viscount Falkland's brilliance, ideal-

ism, absolute integrity, and courage in the years up to his death in battle, as well as George, Lord Goring's irresponsibility, treachery, and insolence, ending in his ignominious desertion and flight.<sup>30</sup> But, from Mary Shelley's point of view, neither character represents a viable option, granted the historical transformation occurring in his time. Both are stuck within too many of the assumptions of a no longer viable, absolutist order. Victor's romantic antiquarianism and morally equivocal life-history replicate what the duo jointly exemplify. The British section of *Frankenstein* faults the monster's creator and recent British society, not for excessive radicalism but for not being radical enough.

Before leaving the Oxford area, Victor sees another spot sacred to English Civil War history, but this one is potentially exemplary for his own life:

We visited the tomb of the illustrious Hampden, and the field on which that patriot fell. For a moment my soul was elevated from its debasing and miserable fears to contemplate the divine ideas of liberty and self-sacrifice, of which these sights were the monuments and the remembrancers. For an instant I dared to shake off my chains, and look around me with a free and lofty spirit; but the iron had eaten into my flesh, and I sank again, trembling and hopeless, into my miserable self. (185; vol. 3, chap. 2)

For the only time in Britain, Victor here experiences the possibility of liberation. Mary Shelley relies on Clarendon's character sketch of John Hampden but not his underlying evaluation of the man. Clarendon pays eloquent tribute to Hampden's reputation for probity and courage, his sagacity and yet modesty in debate, and his unique rapport with the people of England: "He was indeed a very wise man, and of great parts, and possessed with the most absolute spirit of popularity, that is, the most absolute faculties to govern the people, of any man I ever knew." But as an opponent of the radical parliamentary Independent group, in which Hampden was (with John Pym) a co-leader, Clarendon thinks him a subtle deceiver, pretending moderation but instigating root and branch extremism behind the scenes: "he had a head to contrive, and a tongue to persuade, and a hand to execute, any mischief."<sup>31</sup>

For Mary Shelley, as for her father and husband, Hampden was the supreme English model of political leadership. William Godwin, in his *History of the Commonwealth* published six years later, would treat him as the greatest hero of his period and "one of the most

extraordinary men in the records of mankind.”<sup>32</sup> Percy Shelley, in his “Philosophical View of Reform,” would rank Hampden as one of the four greatest Englishmen of all time, the only one not a major writer.<sup>33</sup> Unlike Charles I, Falkland, and Goring, he had a profound sense of his historical moment, and of the possibilities and promise of radical change. In contrast to Rousseau and Victor, he had a firm grasp of social and political reality, and an unbroken bond with the people. In contrast with Rousseau and Victor, whose irresponsibility toward their offspring is notorious, he was thought so suitable a mentor for a young person that he was proposed by the parliamentary forces as a tutor for the Prince of Wales (later, Charles II), then ten years old—a window on Hampden’s remarkable character that Godwin will emphasize.<sup>34</sup> Hampden first came to public notice by defying an absolutist monarchy and refusing to pay thirty shillings for a tax, imposed by the king without the consent of parliament. He died courageously in battle against a royalist army in 1643 before having an opportunity to participate in the execution of the king.<sup>35</sup> He is *Frankenstein’s* ideal male revolutionary.

Mary composed the passage about him in October 1817, when she visited his monument in the church at Great Hampden, Buckinghamshire, with her father.<sup>36</sup> In the England of 1817, Hampden was not merely a subject of antiquarian interest. The principal vehicle of organized popular agitation for parliamentary reform and working people’s economic relief was the Hampden Clubs, named after the seventeenth-century parliamentary leader and founded by Major John Cartwright in 1812. The first national meeting of Hampden Club delegates was held in London in January 1817, and it was linked to the presentation of a petition, signed by a half million to a million and a half persons, calling for annual parliaments, universal manhood suffrage, and vote by ballot.<sup>37</sup> Percy recalls the episode vividly in “A Philosophical View of Reform”: “The people were then insulted, tempted, and betrayed, and *the petitions of a million* of men rejected with disdain.” Like the monster addressing Victor for the first time in the Alps earlier in the book, these people craved a hearing.<sup>38</sup> In February and March repressive legislation, including the Seditious Meetings Act and the suspension of *Habeas Corpus*, drove the reform movement underground and crushed the Hampden Clubs. The trip to Greater Hampden by Mary Shelley and her father and the insertion of a paragraph celebrating Hampden into the novel was, in late 1817, a political act implying just the reverse of the conservatism now sometimes attributed to *Frankenstein*.

But Victor cannot sustain his momentary identification with the Hampden model; by the end of the paragraph he relapses into a politically passive pathology. He is still in such a state when he happens upon the Lake Poets in Cumberland and Westmoreland, “men of talent” “who almost contrived to cheat me into happiness” (186; vol. 3, chap. 2). These influential British intellectuals figure as male sirens who lure people away from decisive political engagement. It will take more than aesthetic pleasure, according to Mary Shelley’s pointed (but reductive) put-down, to break out of the chains.

On “one of the remotest” Orkney Islands in Scotland, Victor will learn that the monster has secretly accompanied him throughout his travels in Britain (188; vol. 3, chap. 2.). Yet the monster has killed no one during this period. This interruption of bloodshed has two distinct referents. If the excluded and oppressed believe their problems are being seriously addressed, as the monster does while Victor works on making a female creature, they will feel no need for violence: this is an argument for political and social reformation, an expression of hope. On the other hand, the remission of killing points to a historical reality: revolution never happened in Britain in the 1790s. There were no executions by revolutionary tribunals, but neither did significant progressive change occur in Britain during this period. The country lurched into reaction and repression. Ultimately, in the book’s narrative, what gets killed is the female creature. The explanation for why and how she dies is rooted in the political geography of England and Scotland in this novel.

Victor makes his decision to kill her, while suffering the pathological effects of the island existence celebrated by Defoe and Rousseau. His “solitude” (188, 189; vol. 3, chap. 2) is not just a matter of miles from population centers. He is psychologically remote from the few impoverished inhabitants of the island, whose misery facilitates his isolation by numbing their awareness. He sinks into anxiety, speaking repeatedly of his fear. He will soon let his boat drift at sea, like Rousseau on the lake surrounding his island.<sup>39</sup> He stifles the compassion which had once made him agree to provide the monster with a female companion. In this state, his reasoning is as unbalanced as his emotions.

His analysis of the possible catastrophic consequences of letting loose a female monster on the world depends on two fallacious premises: that a creature’s appearance is an accurate indicator of his or her moral state, and that both male and female monsters can be



expected to be “malignant” (190; vol. 3, chap. 3) and “wicked” (192; vol. 3, chap. 3). While the monster’s earlier narrative had shown him to be naturally good but forced into crime by a biased and exclusionary society, Victor now assumes, in opposition to Rousseau, that both creatures must be naturally depraved. To prevent “terror” (190; vol. 3, chap. 3), he, therefore, reinforces the mistreatment that drove the monster into crime in the first place. By couching his uncompromising rejectionism in the vocabulary of high-minded altruism toward future generations, he reverts to the historically obtuse posture of saintly absolutism taken by Charles I. Like Goring, he is a treacherous and insolent promise-breaker. He fails to measure up to Hampden’s precedent of adopting new insights and placing himself in the vanguard of history.

By tearing up the female creature, Victor kills society’s best hope for deliverance. In Mary Shelley’s fiction, she holds the potential of restoring human balance to an all male social formation, by substituting love and caring for repulsion and irresponsibility. She offers human connectedness in place of island disjunction. Her prototype is the author’s mother, Mary Wollstonecraft, whose version of revolutionary ideology, in her daughter’s estimation, was the best of what Britain had to offer during the 1790s. Wollstonecraft was sensitive to the wrongs suffered by people excluded from social acceptance and political voice, by reason of gender and class, while also affirming and practicing the nurturing processes that Victor and Rousseau conspicuously failed to cultivate. The description of the female creature’s murder reenacts in displaced and inverted form the circumstances of Mary Wollstonecraft’s death, shortly after her daughter’s birth. Instead of a physician unsuccessfully picking the pieces of a retained placenta out of the birth canal, as occurred after Mary Shelley’s birth, Victor dismembers the yet uncompleted female creature and drops the pieces into the sea.<sup>40</sup> As we read the account in the novel, the grown-up offspring of that 1797 birth is telling the horrific story of a quasi-abortion in which her mother was aborted. The agonizing nature of the event has personal roots, but it affects an entire civilization.

When Victor places the “relics” (194; vol. 3, chap. 3) of the riven female form into “a basket,” “cast” it into the sea, and “listened to the gurgling sound as it sunk, and then sailed away from the spot” (195; vol. 3, chap. 3), he is enacting a nightmare transformation of what Moses’s mother did with him when he was three months old: “And when she could not longer hide him, she took for him an ark of

bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch, and put the child therein; and she laid it in the flags by the river's brink." Unlike Victor, she carefully sealed up the container to keep the water out and placed it near the edge of a river where it would be likely to be found. The Pharaoh's daughter found the child, "had compassion on him," and named him Moses "[b]ecause I drew him out of the water."<sup>41</sup> Victor, lacking such compassion, does precisely the reverse. In the Bible, Moses would lead his people out of bondage. In *Frankenstein*, the female creature had the same potential for liberating a society. Her ending recalls not only Mary Wollstonecraft's catastrophic demise in her most productive years, but also the near simultaneous destruction of her reputation and the elimination from public discourse in Britain of the point of view which she championed. The silencing of her emancipatory voice has, in Mary Shelley's estimate, been climactic in a series of obstructions and choices which have prevented Britain, despite its seventeenth-century revolutionary legacy, from exerting a decisive positive role in the era of the French Revolution.

#### IV. IRELAND

Just after the novel's treatment of an event of 1797, the monster murders Victor's friend, Henry Clerval, in Ireland. This outbreak of violence is Mary Shelley's representation of the bloody Irish rebellion of May to September 1798. Unique among the important settings in *Frankenstein*, Ireland is not chosen by Victor: a storm drives him there at night, and he assumes when he lands that he is still in England or Scotland. His first human encounter forces him abruptly to change his premises:

"Why do you answer me so roughly?" I replied: "surely it is not the custom of Englishmen to receive strangers so inhospitably."

"I do not know," said the man, "what the custom of the English may be; but it is the custom of the Irish to hate villains." (197; vol. 3, chap. 3)

In this exchange, the book posits a new sense of culture clash; previous transitions from Bavaria to Geneva to Britain lacked this sharply contrastive rhetoric. Upon seeing Henry's corpse, Victor is startled to learn that the monster's murderousness—and his own unwitting causality—have reached in an unexpected direction: "Have my murderous machinations deprived you also, my dearest Henry, of

life?” (200; vol. 3, chap. 4). The question points, on one level, to historical fact. The most likely landing-places for Victor’s boat are Northern Ireland or County Mayo: he is blown to the Irish coast from the Orkneys by a high north-east wind (196; vol. 3, chap. 3), which becomes a “strong northerly blast” (198–99; vol. 3, chap. 4). If he lands in Ulster, his trip points to the role of the United Irishmen in preparing Ireland for revolution. Founded in Belfast, but extending their influence during the next few years over much of Ireland, the United Irishmen distributed selected writings by such authors as Locke, Voltaire, Rousseau, Constantin-Francois de Chasseboeuf, comte de Volney, Godwin, and Thomas Paine to a wide Irish readership.<sup>42</sup> Victor now resembles the European intellectuals who flirted with or actively promoted radical ideas at home, but were aghast when overseas colonies chose to apply Enlightenment notions of human rights to their own condition. Revolutionary leaders in France, for example, recoiled against the revolutionary aspirations of black slaves in Haiti.<sup>43</sup> The alternate likely landing point for Victor’s boat is the Killala region of Mayo, where French forces landed in 1798 to give military support to the Irish rebellion and were ultimately defeated.<sup>44</sup> Most English admirers of Locke, Godwin, and Paine drew back from supporting a French invasion coupled with an Irish rebellion. Murder in Ireland, therefore, adds to *Frankenstein* the reminder and prospect of revolutions and imperial conflicts multiplying throughout the empires of Britain and other European powers. Imperialism and philosophies of popular sovereignty were an explosive mix. Clerval’s death extends the book’s implied political geography of horror to Asia, Africa, and the Americas, as well as to the rebellious subjugated people across the Irish Sea.<sup>45</sup>

Conservative Victorian Englishmen regularly turned the monster of *Frankenstein* into a patronizing figure for troubles in Ireland.<sup>46</sup> But it is not generally recognized that the monster, as originally conceived by Mary Shelley, already included Irishness in his hybrid composition. An earlier text resonates behind the creature’s first self-initiated action in the novel:

He held up the curtain of the bed; and his eyes, if eyes they may be called, were fixed on me. His jaws opened, and he muttered some inarticulate sounds, while a grin wrinkled his cheeks. He might have spoken, but I did not hear; one hand was stretched out, seemingly to detain me, but I escaped, and rushed down stairs. (86; vol. 1, chap. 4)

## Compare Gulliver's first personal encounter with a Yahoo:

The ugly Monster, when he saw me, distorted several Ways every Feature of his Visage, and stared as at an Object he had never seen before; then approaching nearer, lifted up his fore Paw, whether out of Curiosity or Mischief, I could not tell: But I drew my Hanger, and gave him a good Blow with the flat Side of it.<sup>47</sup>

Jonathan Swift and Mary Shelley tell of a monster who gestures to signal a wish for friendship, but gets contemptuously rebuffed by the title character. Gulliver will accurately read the extended hand or foreleg as a token of friendship when the dominant Houyhnhnms employ it, or when he uses it himself.<sup>48</sup> The Yahoo's "distorted" face, in this light, may be as much a "grin" as the facial expression on Frankenstein's creature. But Gulliver fails to penetrate cultural differences far enough to translate the body language of the Yahoos reliably or to see their positive humanity. Swift's characterization of these savage creatures was in part his own conflicted representation of the indigenous Irish population that he lived among, condescended to, and courageously defended.<sup>49</sup> As in *Frankenstein*, a refusal of sympathy toward a friendly monster provokes a hostility, which is social and political as well as individual. Where Swift writes of a mob of Yahoos gathering around Gulliver, climbing a tree above him, and discharging their excrement on his head, Mary Shelley imagines a murder which recalls a widespread rebellion.

She alludes to, but rises above, then current English stereotypes about Ireland. The book's first sentence about the place is a concentrated example of a process that will recur during Victor's two months there: "It had a wild and rocky appearance; but as I approached nearer, I easily perceived the traces of cultivation" (196; vol. 3, chap. 3). First impressions focus on "rude" (197, 201; vol. 3, chap. 3, 4) appearances and behavior, "frowning and angry countenances," "ill-looking" faces (197; vol.3, chap. 3), the look of "brutality" (202; vol. 3, chap. 4). In the most influential account of the 1798 Irish rebellion available to Mary Shelley, the loyalist Sir Richard Musgrave explains that "[i]t was a peculiar favour from heaven to send a civilized people," that is, the English, among the Irish to govern them and thus save them from their "savage," "ignorant and bigoted" ways.<sup>50</sup> A recent historian sums up Musgrave's epithets characterizing the uprising: "Musgrave's aim was . . . to paint the rebels in the most unflattering light possible. Terms like 'rabble', 'barbarous', 'ignorant',

'fanatic', 'horrid', 'cruel', and 'vulgar' pepper his descriptions of the United Irishmen and especially their Catholic manifestations."<sup>51</sup> Mary Shelley, however, keeps speaking of a quite different Ireland, evident on closer examination. Victor's initial hostile reception and the witnesses' testimony supporting his arrest turn out to be reasonable human responses to the available information. The Irish magistrate's persistent quest for the facts and his concern for Victor's well-being lead the latter to revise his first impressions of the inhabitants: "These were my first reflections; but I soon learned that Mr. Kirwin had shewn me extreme kindness" (202; vol. 3, chap. 4). It is significant that the magistrate's surname is neither English nor Scottish, but unambiguously Irish.<sup>52</sup> Mary Shelley temporarily posits, then decisively discredits, the stereotypes about the Irish that supported England's colonial dominance. The novel's treatment of Ireland, like its treatment of other places and the monster himself, suggests that violent revolution can best be averted by recognizing the humanity of stereotyped groups, hearing their complaints, and genuinely addressing their grievances.

#### V. EVIAN

The last of the direct homicides in the novel is the monster's strangulation of Elizabeth Lavenza Frankenstein at Evian, on the night of her wedding to Victor (214–18; vol. 3, chap. 5, 6). The place is a short boat trip from the wedding site at Geneva, but so are other lakeside retreats. Why the murder occurs at Evian, rather than elsewhere, is a function of political geography. Percy Shelley provides the essential gloss in one of his sections of *History of a Six Weeks' Tour*, the collaborative project with Mary published just before *Frankenstein*: "The appearance of the inhabitants of Evian is more wretched, diseased and poor, than I ever recollect to have seen. The contrast indeed between the subjects of the King of Sardinia and the citizens of the independent republics of Switzerland, affords a powerful illustration of the blighting mischiefs of despotism, within the space of a few miles."<sup>53</sup>

The King of Sardinia was the title held since 1720 by the ruling member of the House of Savoy, and, as a result, Savoy itself had come to be called Sardinia. By introducing Sardinian or Savoyard Evian into the narrative, Mary Shelley is establishing an implicit contrast with one of the "independent republics of Switzerland," namely Geneva. The latter had won its independence from the duke and

bishop of the House of Savoy in the 1530s and declared itself Protestant in reaction against Catholic Savoy in the same decade. In 1602 Geneva had victoriously repulsed a sneak attack by the Duke of Savoy's forces, who had placed their scaling ladders against the city walls. This event, called the "Escalade," is a much commemorated defining episode in the history of the republic. Geneva was admitted to the Swiss Confederation in 1814, just before Percy and Mary Shelley made literary and political use of a contrast between free Swiss Geneva and absolutist, Sardinian Evian.<sup>54</sup>

When *Frankenstein* was written and first published, the Sardinian regime was especially obnoxious to European liberals: King Victor Amadeus III had led a coalition of Italian rulers against the French Revolution in the 1790s, and after 1802, Victor Emmanuel I became a symbol of conservative resistance to Napoleon by holding out against the Emperor of the French on the island of Sardinia, where he was protected by the British fleet. He was a big winner at the Congress of Vienna, regaining Piedmont, Nice, and Savoy, including most of the south shore of Lake Geneva, and acquiring Genoa at the same time. He would rule autocratically, until a popular revolution forced him to abdicate in favor of his brother in 1821. For the Shelleys in 1816–1818 the Kingdom of Sardinia was a distillation of the most reactionary politics of the European Restoration.

Unlike the earlier murders in the novel, the killing of Elizabeth does not represent some past political execution or revolution. It is an image of an impending future. Revolution, from this point of view, looms within the most conservative European states: not only the Kingdom of Sardinia, but also Austria, Britain, Prussia, and Russia. Although the rulers do their best to keep their populations uninformed about or hostile to the ideas of Rousseau and other protorevolutionary thinkers, the novel suggests that a monster has been let loose which can never again be confined within any set spatial boundary. Although this vision is expressed through fictions of horror, it is not necessarily pessimistic. *Frankenstein*, like the novel incompletely named in Mary Shelley's dedication page to her father—*Things as They Are; or, The Adventures of Caleb Williams* (46)—traces the disastrous consequences of faulty political assumptions held by society as a whole. If those assumptions, "things as they are," can be peaceably changed and the pleas of the stereotyped and downtrodden can begin to be heard, revolutionary violence, according to Mary Shelley's novel, can be averted. As Percy Shelley would write, in his "Philosophical View of Reform," there are only two

options for society in the post-Waterloo period: “Despotism” inevitably followed by “Revolution”; or else “Reform.”<sup>55</sup>

By the time the second edition of *Frankenstein* is published in 1831, the rightist political meaning of “Evian” has been blurred by the 1821 uprising in Sardinia, and the resignation of an especially reactionary monarch. Yet the kingdom would not become even a constitutional monarchy until 1848. Mary Shelley now has seen firsthand the rising popular tide of Italian nationalism, which is directed not against Sardinia but against a more reactionary and unwanted regime—Austria. Accordingly, she supplies a new political emphasis surrounding Elizabeth’s life and death, while leaving the murder itself at Evian. She cannot credibly transport the newlyweds to Austrian territory in the time required by the monster’s threat—“*I shall be with you on your wedding-night*” (193; vol. 3, chap. 3)—granted that the wedding itself has to take place in Geneva, the home of Victor’s father and the bride. In 1831, therefore, Mary gives Elizabeth origins in Austrian-controlled Lombardy and a honeymoon destination in the same area. Her father becomes an Italian nobleman from Milan who “exerted himself to obtain the liberty of his country.” His fate points an accusatory finger towards the Hapsburg empire: “Whether he had died, or still lingered in the dungeons of Austria, was not known.” Victor’s mother finds the young child living with Italian peasants near Lake Como in Lombardy. As the wedding approaches, Victor’s father persuades the Austrian government to restore to her a “part” of her confiscated “inheritance,” a small villa on Lake Como, where the couple will go “immediately after our union,” though “sleeping that night at Evian,” in order to “spend our first days of happiness beside the beautiful lake near which it [the villa] stood.”<sup>56</sup> The narrative and the lovers strain toward the idyllic Italian lake but find themselves trapped in a reality—Evian—that falls fatally short of such a recovery. The restoration of Italian liberty is the political prize that hovers just out of reach. In this seemingly temporary state of deprivation, murder, signifying revolution, erupts. The cautionary lesson is much the same as in 1818, but the narrative means have become more complex, as Mary Shelley attempts to adjust her story to altering political realities. Alphonse Frankenstein’s successful negotiation with the Austrians suggests a potential for nonviolent progress, but the novel implies that if change does not come very quickly, it will be too late to prevent catastrophe.

*Frankenstein’s* selection and sequence of places represent the international and destabilizing phenomenon of spreading Enlighten-

ment ideas and revolutionary impulses in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In contrast to Moretti's model of the solidification of the boundaries and structures of existing nation-states in the nineteenth-century European novel, Mary Shelley's book depicts forces that cannot be confined by the political control or geographic space of French or British power.<sup>57</sup> From initial plotting, at least in reactionary eyes, in Ingolstadt, Bavaria, and by a son of the independent city-state of Geneva, through early outbreaks in French-speaking Europe, with special emphasis on the Genevese manifestations, to abortive British attempts to develop the revolutionary tradition further, followed by a bloody and portentous uprising in the overseas colony of Ireland, to a threatening cataclysm within the homeland of the bulwarks of European reaction, the author systematically places her Gothic horrors within the geographical and political particularities of European and world history. Like Percy Shelley, she views revolutionary thinking and practice as an informed, critical observer and liberal sympathizer who wishes to prevent both continued injustice and revolutionary violence, by motivating readers to overcome their prejudices sufficiently to accept fundamental reform.

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Some important contributions to the large scholarly literature are: Lee Sterrenburg, "Mary Shelley's Monster: Politics and Psyche in *Frankenstein*," in *The Endurance of Frankenstein*, ed. George Levine and U. C. Knoepfelmacher (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1979), 143–71; Ronald Paulson, *Representations of Revolution (1789–1820)* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1983), 239–47; Paul O'Flinn, "Production and Reproduction: The Case of *Frankenstein*," *Literature and History* 9 (1983): 194–213; Mary Poovey, *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer* (1984; reprint, Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1985), 114–42; Anne K. Mellor, *Mary Shelley: Her Life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters* (1988; reprint, New York: Routledge, 1989); Joseph W. Lew, "The Deceptive Other: Mary Shelley's Critique of Orientalism in *Frankenstein*," *Studies in Romanticism* 30 (1991): 255–83; H. L. Malchow, *Gothic Images of Race in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1996), 9–40; and Marilyn Butler's introduction to Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's *Frankenstein or The Modern Prometheus: The 1818 Text* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1994), ix–li.

<sup>2</sup> Franco Moretti, *Atlas of the European Novel 1800–1900* (London: Verso, 1998), 70.

<sup>3</sup> See Chris Baldick's introduction to *The Oxford Book of Gothic Tales* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1992), xi–xxiii. See also Robert Mighall's introduction to *A Geography of Victorian Gothic Fiction: Mapping History's Nightmares* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1999), xiv–xix, 1–26.

<sup>4</sup> Mighall, 26, xx.

<sup>5</sup> Paulson proposed that *Frankenstein* "was to some extent a retrospect on the whole process of maturation [of the revolutionary scenario] through Waterloo, with



the Enlightenment-created monster leaving behind its wake of terror and destruction across France and Europe" (239), but he did not develop the implications of this insight for the novel's specific settings.

<sup>6</sup> Sterrenburg, 155–57.

<sup>7</sup> Abbé [Augustin] Barruel, *Memoirs Illustrating the History of Jacobinism*, trans. Robert Clifford, 2nd ed., 4 vols. (London, 1798), 3:2, 9–10, 15–16. Percy Bysshe Shelley used Clifford's translation of Barruel: his copy of the second volume is in the Berg Collection of the New York Public Library, as pointed out in the annotation to *The Journals of Mary Shelley 1814–1844*, ed. Paula R. Feldman and Diana Scott-Kilvert (1987; reprint, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1995), 18–19, where Mary's reading of Barruel is also recorded. M. W. Shelley, *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*, ed. D. L. Macdonald and Kathleen Scherf, 2nd ed. (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 1999), 81–82; vol. 1, ch. 3. Unless otherwise noted, all further citations will be of this edition of the 1818 version, and will hereafter be cited parenthetically by page number, followed by the volume and chapter numbers.

<sup>8</sup> Barruel, 4:30 ("code"), 3:414 ("disastrous monster"; "days"), 4:2 ("The monster"). For an elaboration on the concept of "code of law," see Barruel 4:30–4:32. On Weishaupt's double life, see Barruel, 4:22–23.

<sup>9</sup> *Annual Register, or a View of the History, Politics, and Literature, For the Year 1812* (London, 1813), 173. I am indebted to Ray Garcia for his insight into the relevance of Napoleon's Russian Campaign to the ending of *Frankenstein*.

<sup>10</sup> Paulson, 245.

<sup>11</sup> *Annual Register, 1812*, 178 ("Russian winter"), 180 ("single sledge").

<sup>12</sup> Philippe-Paul, Comte de Ségur, *La Campagne de Russie*, 2 vols. (Paris: Hachette, 1960), 2:116; Count Phillippe-Paul de Ségur, *Napoleon's Russian Campaign*, trans. J. David Townsend (Cambridge, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin, 1958), 178–79.

<sup>13</sup> Mellor suggests that "the creature's funeral pyre" refers to "the final coup de grâce of the French Revolution, Bonaparte's coup of 18–19 Brumaire (November 9–10, 1799)" (238). But *Frankenstein's* detailed chronological focus on the personal and political events of the 1790s, which has been demonstrated by Mellor and Charles E. Robinson, is supplemented by its political geography, which extends the novel's time frame to, for example, events in Ingolstadt in 1776 and Russia in 1812. Incidents in this novel can have more than one chronological referent. Compare with Mellor, 54–55, 233, 237–38, and Charles E. Robinson's introduction to M. Shelley's *The Frankenstein Notebooks*, ed. Robinson, 2 parts comprising vol. 9 of *The Manuscripts of the Younger Romantics: Shelley* (New York: Garland, 1996), 9.1:lxv–lxvi.

<sup>14</sup> M. W. Shelley and P. B. Shelley, *History of a Six Weeks' Tour* (1817; reprint, Oxford: Woodstock, 1989), 101–2. The quoted passage is from M. Shelley's letter, dated 1 June 1816, and included within the *History*. The parallel with *Frankenstein* is noted by Jeanne Moskal in her edition of M. W. Shelley's *Travel Writing*, vol. 8 of *The Novels and Selected Works of Mary Shelley* (London: Pickering, 1996), 46. The editor documents incorporations of sentences by P. B. Shelley but finds no evidence that the passage about Rousseau and revolution was the work of anyone but M. W. Shelley. *Six Weeks' Tour* was published less than two months before *Frankenstein*. For the chronology of publication, see Robinson's introduction to *The Frankenstein Notebooks*, xc–xci. The location of Plainpalais is shown on a 1770 map of Geneva,

inside the front cover of *Histoire de Genève*, ed. Paul Guichonnet (Toulouse: Privat, 1974).

<sup>15</sup> Francis d'Ivernois, *A Short Account of the Late Revolution in Geneva; and of the Conduct of France Towards That Republic, From October 1792, to October 1794, in a Series of Letters to an American*, 2nd ed. (London, 1795).

<sup>16</sup> R. R. Palmer, *The Age of the Democratic Revolution*, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1959–1964), 1:111–39, 2:398–402. Ivernois, 22–36, 24, 29.

<sup>17</sup> Poovey, 114–42; Mellor, 70–88, 137; William Veeder, *Mary Shelley and Frankenstein: The Fate of Androgyny* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1986).

<sup>18</sup> David Marshall, *The Surprising Effects of Sympathy: Marivaux, Diderot, Rousseau, and Mary Shelley* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1988), 135–233; James O'Rourke, "'Nothing More Unnatural': Mary Shelley's Revision of Rousseau," *ELH* 56 (1989): 543–69.

<sup>19</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *A Discourse on Inequality*, trans. Maurice Cranston (Harmondsworth, Eng.: Penguin, 1984), 98–102.

<sup>20</sup> Palmer, *Age of Democratic Revolution*, 1:111–39, 2:398–99; Rousseau, *Politics and the Arts: Letter to M. d'Alembert on the Theatre*, trans. Allan Bloom (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1960), 113–37.

<sup>21</sup> In M. W. Shelley's novel, however, the De Lacey cottage is in "Germany," not Geneva (150, 158; vol. 2, chap. 6, 7). It is, on one level, an idealization of the honeymoon cottage on Lake Uri, in German-speaking Switzerland, that Mary and Percy had sought in 1814: see M. W. and P. B. Shelley, *History*, 45.

<sup>22</sup> Ivernois, 46–50; Palmer, 2:401–2.

<sup>23</sup> Ivernois, 25–26, 42.

<sup>24</sup> Rousseau, *The Confessions*, trans. J. M. Cohen (Harmondsworth, Eng.: Penguin, 1953), 86–88; O'Rourke, "Mary Shelley's Revision of Rousseau," 559–62.

<sup>25</sup> Veeder identifies the pattern of reverse alphabetization, but explains it psychoanalytically as M. W. Shelley's device to critique Victor's (and P. B. Shelley's) negative Oedipus complex (152–53).

<sup>26</sup> Rousseau, *Confessions*, 17–19, 320–22, 332–34.

<sup>27</sup> Voltaire, *Letters on England*, trans. Leonard Tancock (Harmondsworth, Eng.: Penguin, 1980).

<sup>28</sup> Jean Guéhenno, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, trans. John and Doreen Weightman, 2 vols. (London: Routledge, 1966), 2:160–203.

<sup>29</sup> See Rousseau's *Confessions*, 587–602; and Rousseau, *Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, trans. Peter France (Harmondsworth, Eng.: Penguin, 1979), 81–91. M. W. Shelley read both works between 1815 to 1817 (see her *Journals*, 89, 94, 101, 670).

<sup>30</sup> "Among others," she wrote, "we regarded with curiosity the press [Clarendon Press] instituted by the author of the history of the troubles" (M. W. Shelley's *The Frankenstein Notebooks*, in Manuscripts of 9.2:459–61). Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon, *The History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England Begun in the Year 1641*, ed. W. Dunn Macray, 6 vols. (1888; reprint, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958), 3:178–190, 2:294, 2:314–15, 3:400, 3:402–04, 3:444–45, 4:23–27, 4:34–37, 4:49–103. Mary read Clarendon's history between late September and late October 1816 (see her *Journals*, 93, 96, 654).

<sup>31</sup> Clarendon, 3:63, 3:64.

<sup>32</sup> William Godwin, *History of the Commonwealth of England*, 4 vols. (London, 1824–1828), 1:11.

<sup>33</sup> P. B. Shelley, *Political Writings*, ed. Roland A. Duerksen (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1970), 140.

<sup>34</sup> Godwin, *History of the Commonwealth*, 1:14–15.

<sup>35</sup> Clarendon, 1:85–86, 3:61.

<sup>36</sup> M. W. Shelley, *Journals*, 181–82; M. W. Shelley, *Frankenstein Notebooks*, xc.

<sup>37</sup> E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963; reprint, New York: Random House, 1966), 84, 191, 607–19, 631–49.

<sup>38</sup> P. B. Shelley, *Political Writings*, 147. On the cultural politics of mountains in this novel, see Fred V. Randel, “*Frankenstein*, Feminism, and the Intertextuality of Mountains,” *Studies in Romanticism* 24 (1985): 515–32.

<sup>39</sup> Rousseau, *Confessions*, 594; book 12.

<sup>40</sup> Godwin, *Memoirs of the Author of “A Vindication of the Rights of Woman”* (1798; reprint, New York: Garland, 1974), 176.

<sup>41</sup> Exodus 2.3, 2.1–10.

<sup>42</sup> Kevin Whelan, *The Tree of Liberty: Radicalism, Catholicism and the Construction of Irish Identity 1760–1830* (Notre Dame, IN: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1996), 63, 59–96.

<sup>43</sup> Malchow, 11–12.

<sup>44</sup> Richard Musgrave, *Memoirs of the Different Rebellions in Ireland, From the Arrival of the English: Also, A Particular Detail of That Which Broke Out the 23d of May, 1798; with the History of the Conspiracy Which Preceded It* (1801), ed. Steven W. Myers and Delores E. McKnight, 4th ed. (Fort Wayne, IN.: Round Tower Books, 1995), 526–93.

<sup>45</sup> See Lew, 255–83, and Malchow, *Gothic Images of Race*, 9–40, both of whom demonstrate the presence in *Frankenstein* of systematic allusions to European imperialistic involvements in Asia, Africa, and the West Indies, but they do not relate Clerval’s murder to these themes.

<sup>46</sup> Sterrenburg, 168–69; Malchow, 34–35.

<sup>47</sup> Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver’s Travels*, ed. Paul Turner (1986; reprint, Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1998), 216.

<sup>48</sup> See Swift, 216, 217, 219, 274.

<sup>49</sup> See Swift, 351n.

<sup>50</sup> Musgrave, 4–5.

<sup>51</sup> Whelan, 138.

<sup>52</sup> Patrick Hanks and Flavia Hodges, *A Dictionary of Surnames* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1988), 298.

<sup>53</sup> P. B. and M. Shelley, *History of a Six Weeks’ Tour*, 116.

<sup>54</sup> See the 9th ed. of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* under “Geneva,” “Savoy”; see also the 15th ed. of *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica: Macropaedia* under “Geneva”; and the 15th ed. of *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica: Micropaedia* under “Savoy, House of.” Also, see R. R. Palmer and Joel Colton, *A History of the Modern World*, 2nd ed. (New York: Knopf, 1962), 170–71, 413–17, 480.

<sup>55</sup> P. B. Shelley, 132 (“Despotism”; “Revolution”; “Reform”). See also 113–14.

<sup>56</sup> M. W. Shelley, *Frankenstein* (1831), 35, chap. 1 (“exerted”; “Whether”), 191, chap. 22 (“part”; “inheritance”), 192, chap. 22 (“immediately”; “sleeping”; “spend”). For the Lake Como episode, see 34–35, chap. 1, from this edition.

<sup>57</sup> Moretti, *Atlas of the European Novel*, 11–73.