Making Monsters:

Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein

... Monster Making...

When Victor Frankenstein animates the lump of flesh and skin and bones that he has assembled in his “filthy workshop of creation,” he brings to life body horror. While the Gothic Romances of the 1790s associated horror with locale, Frankenstein’s monster makes flesh itself Gothic and Shelley, therefore, maps out a new geography of terror and finds fear to be a by-product of embodiment rather than a trick played upon the body by the mind. Although Frankenstein is not always classified as a Gothic novel (it is often identified as science fiction), I begin my history of Gothic with this novel because of its preoccupation with bodily monstrosity and because, in some senses, the story of the conflict between Frankenstein and his monster, an author and his creation, resonates with the history of the novel itself.

The importance of Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein (1816) within the Gothic tradition, modern mythology, the history of the novel, and a cultural history of fear and prejudice cannot be emphasized too strongly. Frankenstein not only gives form to the dialectic of monstrosity itself and raises questions about the pleasures and dangers of textual production, it also demands a rethinking of the entire Gothic genre in terms of who rather than what is the object of terror. By focusing upon the body as the locus of fear, Shelley’s novel suggests that it is people (or at least bodies) who terrify people, not ghosts or gods, devils or monks, windswept castles or labyrinthine monasteries. The architecture of fear in this story
is replaced by physiognomy, the landscape of fear is replaced by sutured skin, the conniving villain is replaced by an antihero and his monstrous creation, and the antihero as well as his offspring are both writers and readers. Meanwhile, the heroine, who in the Gothic Romance was transported from one prisonlike structure to another, is now a metaphor for the domestic prison that threatens to entrap Frankenstein and keep him from his solitary, Faust-like enterprise. She is also metonymically linked to the monster, however, since the grotesqueries of the human form are linked, in this novel, to an extreme fear of feminine sexual response.  

Frankenstein's monster has attained mythic status within both the popular imagination and the critical project of literary history. Exhaustive studies of Frankenstein have read the monster's symbolic value in terms of sex, gender, and class. The monster, in various readings then, is literature, women's creativity, Mary Shelley herself; the monster is class struggle, the product of industrialization, a representation of the proletariat; the monster is all social struggle, a specific symbol of the French Revolution, the power of the masses unleashed; the monster is technology, the danger of science without conscience, the autonomous machine. As Franco Moretti so aptly states, like Dracula, Frankenstein's creature is a "totalizing monster" — one, in other words, who threatens to never be vanquished, one immune to temporary restorations of order and peace. Totalizing, of course, does not mean essential. Essential monstrosity makes monstrosity an integral feature of very specific bodies; totalized monstrosity allows for a whole range of specific monstrosities to coalesce in the same form. 

The "totalizing monster," a modern invention, threatens community from all sides and from its very core rather than from a simple outside. The chameleonic nature of this monster makes it a symbol of multiplicity and indeed invites multiple interpretations. One critic, Marie-Helene Huet, in The Monstrous Imagination, has made the obvious but necessary connection between monstrosity and prodigious generativity. Huet argues that monstrosity within Romanticism tells of "the dark desire to reproduce without the other" and represents art as the resulting progeny of unnatural reproduction. In general, however, various critics have attempted to narrow the scope of monstrosity in Frankenstein in order to theorize fear and a semiotic of horror. Such critical accounts tend to exclude or de-emphasize the monster's status as hybrid in favor of specific class- or gender-inflected readings. In any attempt to fix monstrosity, some aspect of it escapes unread. Moretti, for example, having
named the monster as “totalizing,” also makes a strong case for the monster as the proletariat, “a collective and artificial creature” (85). Describing Frankenstein himself as the bourgeois subject conscious of “having produced his own grave-diggers” (86), Moretti goes on to suggest that Frankenstein and his monster are unable to play out their proper roles as owner and worker because, for Shelley, “the demands of production have no value in themselves, but must be subordinated to the maintenance of the moral and material solidity of the family” (90).

Moretti understands the technology of the monster narrative to be one which subordinates class to family but in fact it is crucial to recognize that monsters play precisely upon the boundaries that seem to neatly delineate family from class, personal from economic, sexual from political. Owner and worker relations, in other words, are precisely played out in family relations; the narrative of family is indeed the sentimentalized version, or in this case the gothicized version, of class struggle and race war. Shelley’s Frankenstein confirms, in fact, that the construction of the monster facilitates rather than emanates from the construction of “the family.” The family, indeed, in this novel, is as fragmented and incoherent as the monster himself and it only takes on a glow of authenticity in the absence of all family members. Hence, at the outermost frame of the novel we have a reader, Mrs. Saville, Walton’s sister, a married woman who rests comfortably at home in England. Mrs. Saville represents the way that home and family exist as imaginary limits to the narratives of voyage and discovery. At the innermost frame of the novel, of course, we have a picture-perfect family but the family in question represents domestic bliss as the union of a European man (Felix) and his subjugated Oriental bride (Safie). As Joseph W. Lew comments in an article, “The Deceptive Other: Mary Shelley’s Critique of Orientalism in Frankenstein,” this family represents itself as the safe haven of the Oriental woman from the barbarity of the East.

When Moretti does touch briefly upon the fact that the monster of class may also be representative of other forms of monstrosity, he seems unable to recognize the full significance of the potentiality of any one form of othering to become another. He remarks upon Frankenstein’s fear that his monster, if given a mate, will bring a “race of devils” into the world; Mary Shelley, according to Moretti, at her most reactionary, turns the class other, the proletariat, into a “race of devils” and so, he claims, she transforms a historical product into a “natural” and immutable category. But Moretti has also transformed one category into another.
Making Monsters

here; he has assigned class to the order of the artificial and he has natu­ralized race. A reading of Gothic monstrosity attuned to the specific technology of monsters demands that identity itself be read as a con­structed category, one that depends heavily upon the mutual and inter­dependent constructions of race, class, and gender.5

The very project of interpretation in this novel, I am saying, is complex and unstable and it is this instability, in part, that generates the infinite interpretability of the monster. As Daniel Cottom writes: “Fran­kenstein’s monster images the monstrous nature of representation.”6 The monster defies definition just as the novel itself seems to challenge neat generic categories. The question, What is it? in other words, has to be directed both at the book and the monster. Indeed, the connection be­­tween the two is made perfectly clear by Mary Shelley in her introduc­tion when she dubs her book “my hideous progeny” and bids it “go forth and prosper.” The question that haunts the monster, Who am I? is re­peated in critical gestures toward the novel that ask, What is it? The answer, of course, lies in the impossibility of pinning definition to this peculiar form.

The form of the novel is its monstrosity; its form opens out onto excess because, like the monster of the story, the sum of the novel’s parts exceeds the whole. Its structure, the exoskeleton, and not its dignified contents — philosophies of life, meditations on the sublime, sentimental narratives of family and morality, discussions of aesthetics — makes this novel a monster text. The monstrosity of Frankenstein is literally built into the textuality of the novel to the point where textual production itself is responsible for generating monsters.

Because definition is beside the point, then, the questions to direct at the monstrous book are (1) what exactly constitutes its productivity?, (2) how does it reproduce within the domain of interpretation?, and (3) are we, the readers, the “race of devils” that Frankenstein feared he would loose upon the world? I want to answer these questions by look­ing closely at the narrative form of the novel and then by suggesting that possibly the novel plays out an allegory of Gothic fiction itself, or that the Gothic plays out an allegory of the production of the novel. There are, of course, in this text, two monsters that Frankenstein attempts to bring to life, one male and one female. The aborted female monster can be read as the ugly popular fiction, Gothic fiction, that is always debased in relation to some notion of high culture. She is the body of work that is always “half-finished,” that inspires violence, and that literally is reduced
to pulp. This relationship between popularity and population (since the female monster represents precisely Frankenstein’s fear of a monstrous reproduction) needs to be thought through in relation to recent histories of the novel and to the main narrative of human versus monster that Frankenstein and his creation enact.

I suggest that the book presents itself not as the making of a monster but as the making of a human. In what ways does the monster construct Frankenstein, in other words? Who actually builds whom and who destroys whom? The construction of the human will frame my discussion of monstrosity throughout this book and in relation to this novel, I am concerned to link the construction of humanness to a split within the novel between popular and high culture but also to the dependent histories of race, nation, gender, and sexuality. The identity of a Frankenstein, in other words, always depends utterly upon the various lines of constructions that coalesce in his humanity. His humanness depends as much upon his status as male, bourgeois, and white as the monster’s monstrosity depends upon his yellow skin, his gargantuan size, his masslike shape, and his unstable gender. First, however, let’s look at the machinery, the textual machine, that generates meaning in Frankenstein.

Monstrous Forms

The framing device which structures Frankenstein skews perspective and complicates relations between author and narrator, author and readers, and between characters. The novel’s first frame (although “first” is a contested notion in this novel, and this frame is already preceded by the author’s introductions and an epigraph from Milton’s Paradise Lost) is a series of letters from Walton to his sister, Margaret Saville (whose initials, M.S., of course, suggest the conflation of author, Mary Shelley; and reader, Margaret Saville; and manuscript). Next, we read in Walton’s journal of his meeting with Victor and his transcription of Victor’s story. Within Victor’s story we read letters from Elizabeth and then the monster’s story. The monster recounts his discovery of Victor’s journal within his description of how he came to know himself as monstrous and human in his time spent with the De Laceys. We return finally to Walton’s ship, the Archangel, to Victor’s deathbed. Victor dies and the monster disappears into the darkness.

Frankenstein generates stories and narrative perspectives like a ma-
Making Monsters

Chris Baldick’s study, *In Frankenstein’s Shadow*, contrasts the construction of the monster from fragments of corpses to the structure of the novel as an aggregate of narrative pieces and furthermore, to the absorption and reproduction by Mary Shelley of a mass of literary influences from Milton to the writings of her mother and father. Baldick suggests that “there is a fund of literary sources upon which *Frankenstein* cannibalistically feeds.” Baldick’s notion of cannibalistic activity is, I think, extremely important to both *Frankenstein* and the Gothic genre in general. Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* also functions according to a model of consumption and production; it too assembles a writing machine from letters and journals, dictaphones and phonographs; it too feeds cannibalistically on its sources. The structures of both *Frankenstein* and *Dracula* activate and exemplify models of production and consumption which suggest that Gothic, as a genre, is itself a hybrid form, a stitched body of distorted textuality. This model also has obvious links to the capitalist structures that produced the novel as a commodity which brought income to writers and was paid for by (mostly middle-class) readers.

In order to explain the cannibalistic activity that I think is associated with Gothic form, I want to link Baldick’s comment about *Frankenstein’s* cannibalistic activity to a theory advanced by Nancy Armstrong in *Desire and Domestic Fiction* of the “omnivorous behavior” of the novel. I quote:

> [I]f, as I believe is the case, the novel contains the history of sexuality within it, then its own history—the history of fiction—is displaced along with that “other” history. Given the omnivorous behavior I am attributing to the novel, there is very little cultural material that cannot be included within the feminine domain. Consequently there is very little political information that cannot be transformed into psychological information.

Armstrong shows how “omnivorous behavior” in the novel means that domestic fiction participates in, rather than represents, the production of female subjects. Furthermore, by transforming political identities into sexual identities, political resistance is diffused by the novel and “the feminine domain” remains in bondage to a metaphysics of gender.

Gothic, I suggest, beginning with *Frankenstein*, is a textual machine, a technology that transforms class struggle, hostility towards women, and tensions arising out of the emergent ideology of racism into what look like sexual or psychosexual battles between and within individuals. The monster is consistently read as his maker’s alter ego, as his
unconscious, as the return of the repressed. Moretti, who otherwise concentrates on the materialist dimensions of the monster, claims that this figure cannot be adequately explained by recourse to economic or historical terms and he suggests that the monster is "the rhetorical figure" that both "expresses the unconscious content and at the same time hides it" (103). The monster as metaphor, still according to Moretti, transforms social and psychic fears ("the fear of monopoly capital and the fear of the mother") into other forms "so that readers do not have to face up to what really frightens them" (105).

Moretti's marxist-based notion that monsters allow for the expansion and enrichment "of the structures of false consciousness" differs significantly from the kind of transformation that I am noting in terms of Gothic technologies. Monsters, like the one Frankenstein builds, embody a multiplicity of fears and invite the reader to participate in charting the shapes and contours of each one. Most often, the postpsychoanalytic modern reader assumes that Gothic monstrosity occupies a privileged relation to a psychology of horror but this assumes the trans-historical availability of psychic interpretations and understandings of the self. The reason we can read the monster as a psychic structure is because the monster can take the imprint of that interpretation not because that interpretation most usefully describes monstrosity. Monsters appeal to readers and consumers because they represent in their very form the game of reading and writing, rewriting and telling, telling and interpreting. False consciousness is simply not an issue here because no reading is false. The cannibalism of the Gothic form, its consumption of its own sources, allows for the infinitude of interpretation because each fear, each literary source, each desire, each historical event, each social structure that the text preys upon becomes fuel for the manufacture of meanings.

Frankenstein's monster in particular, since he is given a voice, complicates the cannibalistic narrative structure by participating in it even as he is revealed as a product and a symbol of that structure. The narrative frames, furthermore, allow us to trace the transformations that take place in Gothic of racial, sexual, historical, and psychological into metaphoric, of productive into representative. Furthermore, the Gothic form is implicated in the monstrosity it produces because, as a mutation of classic realism, it is regarded as an ugly, clumsy, and fantastical genre. And the monster—like the "zoophagous" Renfield in Dracula who desires "to absorb as many lives as possible" by eating cats that have eaten mice that
have eaten spiders that have eaten flies—the monster can be broken down into the lives and forms he has absorbed.

Eve Sedgwick's discussion of the trope of "live burial" has obvious significance to a theory of Gothic's cannibalistic nature. Sedgwick writes: "If the story-within-etc. represents the broadest structural application of the otherwise verbal or thematic convention of the unspeakable, it has a similar relation to the convention of live burial." Sedgwick is interested in charting a topography of Gothic where a certain spatial relation pertains to the tropes of inside and outside, live burial, and the unspeakable in Gothic. Gothic, then, according to Sedgwick, is marked by a doubleness of space created violently by the destruction of boundaries. One space (inside, silence, nightmare) encroaches or feeds upon another (outside, speech, experience) as the difficulty of telling becomes a part of the act of confession. Ultimately, for Sedgwick, language performs the operations of the uncanny so that the unspeakable is buried alive within the speakable, one story lies buried in another, one history produces and buries others.

In *Frankenstein* it is identity itself which is buried alive, or rather which is figured as live burial. The epigraph to the novel, Adam's question to God in book 10 of *Paradise Lost*, "Did I request thee, Maker, from my Clay /To mould me Man?" already conceives of the human as something that has been built, in this instance by God from clay. Obviously, the relationship between Victor Frankenstein and his monster parodies the relationship between God and Adam/Satan/Eve but it also replaces a divine relation with a secular one. The epigraph sets *Frankenstein* up against the most authoritative creation myth in Western culture but it is crucial to note that the novel is not comparing itself to the creation story but rather to its literary recounting in Milton's epic poem. Origins, in *Frankenstein*, are always literary or textual rather than religious or scientific.

Furthermore, the question posed by the epigraph emphasizes the problem of definition—what is human? what is a human relationship? how do we recognize humanity? These become questions that this novel directs specifically at the problem of form. In this novel the monster is not human because he lacks the proper body—he is too big, too ugly, disproportionate. He is also a question directed at nature; Frankenstein had hoped to discover "nature's secrets" with his creation but his monster is no answer to nature's mysteries, so-called, he is simply another question. He is the body that produces the natural and the human as
power relations and his is the body that uses up natural and human
remains in order to recycle flesh into scientific invention.

By marking Gothic as cannibalistic, as an essentially consumptive
genre which feeds parasitically upon other literary texts, I want to draw
attention to the violence with which the form erases boundaries and
consumes stories and lives in order to produce fear. The production of
fear is, therefore, the result of a technology that simultaneously produces
an epistemological crisis. The reading subject (but also the characters
and seemingly the writer) of the Gothic is constructed out of a kind
of paranoia about boundaries: Do I read or am I written? Am I monster
or monster maker? Am I monster hunter or the hunted? Am I human
or other? For the modern reader such questions might seem to circle
around sexual identity, Who/what do I desire? But nineteenth-century
monstrosity confounds the possibility of a single answer to the question
of identity. If we read *Frankenstein* as a story about repressed homoerotic
desire, for example, we risk not reading it as a story about childbirth; and
if we only read it as a “birth myth,” we miss the narrative of class.

Narrative resolution in Gothic fiction, of course, usually resolves
boundary disputes by the end of the novel by killing off the monster and
restoring law and order but fear lingers on because after all, in *Franken­
stein* the monster as subject is produced through the reading of texts. The
monster comes to knowledge, self-knowledge, by reading the books he
finds at the De Laceys’ and finding himself in his own drama of identi­
fication. After reading *Paradise Lost*, for example, he is compelled to ask
whether he is another Adam “apparently united by no link to any other
being in existence.” But, he concludes, “I considered Satan as the fitter
emblem of my condition” (129). Feminist critics have also noted a re­
markable resemblance between the monster and Eve. Notice, however,
that nothing is gained by fixing the monster to one of these identities.
While the epigraph to Shelley’s book suggests strongly that, in his drama
of creation, the monster is indeed Adam, asking, like Adam, “Did I
request thee, Maker, from my Clay / To mould me Man?” the feminist
reading that identifies bodily monstrosity with a fear of femininity de­
mands that the monster be stabilized as female; and the conventional
reading that understands the monster as flawed humanity makes him
into a kind of Satan figure.

The monster is always all of these figures. By his very composition,
he can never be one thing, never represent only a singular anxiety. His
formation out of bits and pieces of life and death, of criminals and
animals, animate and inanimate objects means that he is always in dan-
ger of breaking down into his constitutive parts. It is the propensity for
the monster to deconstruct at any time, to always be in the process of
decomposition, that makes it/him/her a fugitive from identity and a
model for the Gothic reader.

It is also a kind of ahistorical desire on the part of the modern reader
that seeks an answer to the question of identity in the form of the mon-
ster. By demanding that the monster round out our definitions of “hu-
man” (either by representing a polar opposite or by showing “real hu-
manity”) we also remake the monster as alien, as other, as difference. The
monster, in fact, is where we come to know ourselves as never-human, as
always between humanness and monstrosity. Just as, for the monster,
paradise is always lost in Frankenstein, so, for the reader, humanity—
humane treatment of others, justice, etc.—is always beyond our reach.

After Justine has been killed for the death of William, Elizabeth
mourns for her lost vision of the “human”:

“When I reflect my dear cousin,” said she, “on the miserable death
of Justine Moritz, I no longer see the world and its works as they
before appeared to me. Before I looked upon the accounts of vice
and injustice, that I read in books or heard from others, as tales of
ancient days or imaginary evils; at least they were remote, and more
familiar to reason than to the imagination; but now misery has
come home, and men appear to me as monsters thirsting for each
other’s blood.” (92–93)

This is a remarkable statement of an antisentimental view of human
nature which is all the more powerful in that it comes from Elizabeth,
the representative of family and community in the novel. Elizabeth very
accurately describes how the human is a complicated structure that de-
pends at least in part upon a vision of progress from past “vice and
injustice” to present equity and humanity; she recognizes that “tales
of . . . imaginary evils” construct a vision of false harmony within a
present tense; and finally she acknowledges that “now misery has
come home, and men appear to me as monsters.” The bleeding of one category
into another that we have noted as a feature of Gothic takes on a very
significant function here. Elizabeth really gives us the key to Shelley’s
narrative in this speech. Monster seeps into the category of man as justice
miscarries and misery comes home. It is the human that falls into doubt
at this crucial moment; it is the human that seems to be a patchwork of
morality, criminality, subterfuge, and domesticity, and one which barely holds together. Elizabeth, indeed, at crucial moments in the narrative fails to distinguish between man and monster and this becomes the new role of the heroine in Gothic. Where the heroine fails to distinguish, the distinction fails to hold. So, in Dracula, as we will see, Lucy and Mina are both seduced by the vampire and they fail to distinguish between his bite and the proper penetrations of their husbands and fiancés.

The production of the monster by Frankenstein throws humanness into relief because it emphasizes the constructedness of all identity. While superficially this novel seems to be about the making of a monster, it is really about the making of a human. It is also about the destruction of otherness, the unmaking of monstrosity that is demanded by the sentimental narrative of conquest, voyage, and discovery. Frankenstein’s relationships with Clerval and Walton, his dependence upon other men for his own masculinity, means that he must repudiate both the monster’s plea for empathy and the possibility of a female monster.

Visual Horror and Narrative

Beautiful! — Great God! His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath; his hair was of a lustrous black, and flowing; his teeth of a pearly whiteness; but these luxuriances only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes, that seemed almost of the same colour as the dun white sockets in which they were set, his shrivelled complexion and straight black lips. (57)

Frankenstein’s monster’s skin barely covers his interior — the monster is transparent. The features that should make him beautiful, furthermore, “lustrous black” hair and “teeth of a pearly whiteness,” look hideous because they are out of place in relation to the “watery eyes” and “shrivelled complexion.” The monster is both skintight and “shrivelled,” he has beautiful features set next to extreme ugliness. The whole impression is underscored by the “straight black lips” — evidence of a lack of internal circulation, evidence of the borrowed nature of all of his most necessary features. All in all, the monster is the obscenity of the surface, unwatchable, a masterpiece of a horror that cannot be viewed without terror.

It is no surprise that Frankenstein is the granddaddy of Gothic film horror. The horror film, after all, depends upon a certain degree of un-
Making Monsters

Watchability. Cinematic horror also asks that the monster become a kind of screen onto which the spectator's fears are projected. In a way, Frankenstein establishes the preconditions for cinematic horror and for horror to become cinematic by, making the monster's monstrosity so definitively visual. Only a blind man can accept the monster uncritically in this novel and, in a way, the blindness of old De Lacey represents also the blindness of the reader. We are disposed as readers to sympathize with the monster because, unlike the characters in the novel, we cannot see him. Once the monster becomes visible within contemporary horror films, monstrosity becomes less and less recuperable.

The monster in Frankenstein establishes visual horror as the main standard by which the monster judges and is judged. The most central episode in the novel, the narrative of the De Lacey family, establishes visual recognition as the most important code in the narrative of monstrosity. The story of the De Laceys is buried within the monster's story, their story is a subset of his, but his story (history) becomes a model of history itself as he learns of "the strange system of human society" and of "the division of property, of immense wealth and squalid poverty; of rank, descent, and noble blood" (120).

Just as the monster reads Paradise Lost as "a true history," so "true history" is reduced to the story of one family at the innermost recess of the novel. True history and fiction trade places so that the story of the family replaces the story of nations; and the narrative of the body replaces the history of creation; and the significance of visual codes becomes greater than that of heritage. The fiction of the monster replaces the history of discovery and invention that first Walton and then Frankenstein try to tell. And through these series of substitutions, the "true history" of the world boils down to the monster's reading list, a quirky canon of stories for underdogs, and a tale of subjectivity as a self-knowledge that inheres to the human.

But humanity as well as monstrosity, in this novel, depends upon visual codes for its construction. The women in Victor's family, Elizabeth, Caroline, and Justine, in their roles and fates in the novel, suggest the contradictions which lie at the heart of any attempt to distinguish definitively between human and monster. Elizabeth is rescued by Caroline from a peasant family. Caroline notices Elizabeth in the poor family's cottage because "she appeared of a different stock" (84). Elizabeth is "thin and very fair" while the peasant children are "dark-eyed, hardy little vagrants" (84). Indeed, it happens that Elizabeth is of "different stock"
and the daughter of a nobleman, fit, therefore, for adoption. Caroline adopts Justine also but Justine must remain a servant since her heritage reveals no nobility. Birth, then, or blood rather, separates one woman from another and prepares one for marriage and the other for service. But notice that the difference between the noble and the debased is clearly exhibited in this instance upon the surface of the body—Elizabeth stands out from the rest of her poor family because she is thin and fair.

The class designation implied by “different stock,” because it is a distinction based upon blood, exemplifies very well how, as Moretti suggests, “racial discrimination” springs from the narrative. Moretti, as we noted, finds racial discrimination in *Frankenstein* to be a way of transforming class into a natural and immutable category, but as the difference in status between Elizabeth and Justine shows, the transformation is more complicated than this. By emphasizing that Elizabeth stands out from the “dark-eyed, hardy little vagrants” in the peasant family, Shelley betrays a class-biased belief that not only is nobility inherent but aristocratic class coincides with aristocratic race and is therefore visible. Race discrimination, indeed, displaces or at least supplements class hierarchies in this narrative partly because the theme of visible monstrosity demands that identity be something that can be seen. The monster, as we know, represents the threat not of a new class but of a new race of beings.

The class gradations implied by the adoptions of Elizabeth as daughter and Justine as servant, then, hint at a tension within Shelley’s writing between class, race, and gender. Both women are marked by their class (and class marking may be understood as race marking) in ways that make their Gothic fates inevitable. Elizabeth, as obviously middle class, must be sacrificed to the monster, and Justine, a lower-class servant, must stand in for the monster in the trial for the murder of William. On a certain level she doubles the female monster whose fate is always to be less than human. Configurations in the novel of class and gender, in fact, turn class into proletariat, gender into woman and oppose the two in relation to the monster. In other words, the only category that remains unmarked in the novel, the only category that seems “natural” is that of the bourgeois male and he, in the form of Victor and Walton, consequently comes to embody the human.

Visual codes by the end of the century in Gothic fiction came to signify predispositions for crime or sexual aberration. As we will see in
Stevenson’s *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and Stoker’s *Dracula*, bad bodies are easily identifiable and demand expulsion. But criminal anthropology of the 1890s also made essential connections between outward appearance and inward essence and it is here that we can discuss a ripple of Gothic form across a variety of scientific, cultural, and social narratives. While visual horror in *Frankenstein* is the reason that the monster must live his days in exile, in fin-de-siècle Gothic visual horror is the sign of a criminality that will demand expulsion. The difference between Frankensteinian horror and fin-de-siècle horror is, I will be arguing, a result of different conceptions of subjectivity. Gothic narratives in fiction, science, and social science combined to produce evil or criminality as a seed planted deep within an interior self. But how did the self come to be associated with interiority and how did truth come to be represented by a deep structure of subjectivity? One answer surely lies in the eruption of “sexuality” in the nineteenth century, a discourse and a technology which, as Foucault says, proliferates across disciplines. “The nineteenth century and our own,” he writes, “have been rather the age of multiplication: a dispersion of sexualities, a strengthening of their disparate forms, a multiple implantation of ‘perversions.’”

While we have generally accepted Foucault’s repudiation of the “repressive hypothesis” — of the claim, in other words, that Victorian culture repressed sexuality and replaced it with a highly regimented moral code — it has been less clear as to exactly how the production of sexualities came to look like repression. Also, how is it possible, as he claims, “to constitute a sexuality that is economically useful and politically conservative” and yet to make this constitutive process seem “natural”? The answer some theorists have come up with is, the novel. David Miller, for example, in *The Novel and the Police*, argues that the Victorian novel in its form and themes confirms “the novel-reader in his identity as ‘liberal subject’” — as a subject, in other words, who considers him- or herself to be free. He writes: “Such confirmation is thoroughly imaginary, to be sure, but so too, I will eventually be suggesting, is the identity of the liberal subject, who seems to recognize himself most fully only when he forgets or disavows his functional implications in a system of carceral restraints or disciplinary injunctions.” The imaginary nature of the subject is closely related, therefore, to the subject’s imagination; it is precisely when reading, when engaging with fictional realities, that we consider ourselves removed from the hustle and bustle of politics and economics and discipline. But the novel becomes a privileged place for
the production of sexuality because it creates sex as a narrative secret that is simultaneously disclosed and buried by language, by literary form, and by novelistic themes.

The Gothic monster is an excellent example of the secret of sexuality that is both hidden and revealed within the same text. But the monster is also an example of the way that sexuality is constructed as identity in a way that ignores all other identifying traits (race, class, and gender to name a few). In *Frankenstein* the monster is pre-sexual, his sexuality, in other words, does not constitute his identity. But that is not to say that sexual aberration is missing from Shelley’s definition of monstrosity: simply, sexuality is always a part of other identifying traits. For example, the monster’s status as sexual outlaw and social pariah are mutually dependent. The endeavor of Frankenstein to first create life on his own and then to prevent his monster from mating suggests, if only by default, a homoerotic tension which underlies the incestuous bond. Frankenstein’s voluntary exclusion from friends and family in pursuit of the secret of creating life also hints at the sexual nature of Victor’s apparent withdrawal from all social intercourse. His creation of “a being like myself” hints at both masturbatory and homosexual desires which the scientist attempts to sanctify with the reproduction of another being. The suggestion that a homosexual bond in fact animates the plot adds an element of sexual perversity to the monster’s already hybrid form.

In a feminist reading of Shelley’s novel, Anne Mellor discusses the homoeroticism of the relationship between monster and author as part and parcel of patriarchal scientific ambition. Mellor argues that Victor is “engaged upon a rape of nature, a violent penetration and usurpation of the female’s ‘hiding places,’ of the womb” and, she suggests, “in place of a heterosexual attachment to Elizabeth, Victor Frankenstein has substituted a homosexual obsession with his creature.” Mellor’s interpretation of Victor Frankenstein’s relation to his monster concludes that its homoerotics mask an implicit desire to create a race of men and, indeed, a world without women. Such a reading, however, runs the risk of sounding homophobic and misunderstands the relationship between homosexuality, textuality, and patriarchy.

In *Between Men* Eve Sedgwick attempts to define male homosocial desire in relation to homosexuality, homophobia, and the gender system. Her antihomophobic analysis leads her to deny “that patriarchal power is primarily or necessarily homosexual (as opposed to homosocial), or that male homosexual desire has a primary or necessary relation
Sedgwick's project—the disassociation of male homosociality from specifically male homosexual practices—allows us to distinguish between the activities of a persecuted sexual minority and the social relations between men upon which a system of dominance, patriarchy, rests. Since homophobia acts, then, as a control or check on all relations between men, the appearance of doubles and persecutory thematics in Gothic tells us more about fear than desire. As Sedgwick eloquently phrases it, "... paranoid Gothic is specifically not about homosexuals or the homosexual; instead heterosexuality is by definition its subject" (116). This claim corresponds very well to my claim that the novel is not about the making of a monster, its subject is the construction of humanness.

Sexual perversity and homosexual panic alone are not enough to characterize monstrosity. Sedgwick confirms that homophobia has a particular relation to the fear of femininity and that both play a part in class formations. Thus, the aristocracy, for example, a class in decline in the nineteenth century, may be feminized in relation to the "vigorous and productive values of the middle class" (93) and certain behaviors previously associated with aristocrats (as Sedgwick puts it, "effeminacy, connoisseurship, high religion" [93]) come to mark the homosexual. The sexually perverse can, in this way, be linked to a corrupt class (as it almost always was in early Gothic novels by Anne Radcliffe and Horace Walpole) and bad blood joins one to the other. But it is important to note the importance of race also within this topography of monstrosity; in the nineteenth century bad blood was becoming less and less a feature of old families and declining aristocrats and more an indicator of racial undesirability.

The opposition between homosexuality and sociopolitical otherness can be made quite clear in terms of a belief in the inherent evil of certain groups of people. Hannah Arendt, in The Origins of Totalitarianism, makes the brilliant observation that crimes (the crime of being homosexual, the crime of being of the wrong race, i.e., Jewish) are turned into vices when a society is intent upon establishing a "world of fatalities." In such a world Jews, for example, and homosexuals are bound by birth to their anomalous status and, as Arendt writes: "The seeming broad-mindedness that equates crime and vice, if allowed to establish its own code of law, will invariably prove more cruel and inhuman than laws, no matter how severe, which respect man's independent responsibility for his behavior" (82). The opposition between crime and
Skin Shows

vice is extremely important to an examination of Gothic monstrosity. Frankenstein's monster argues that his "vices are the children of a forced solitude" (147) but Victor thinks his monster, by virtue of his filthy form, was made to sin. Indeed, the equivocation between these two positions is unique to Frankenstein for, in the Gothic novel at the end of the nineteenth century, monsters are always born bad.

The homosexual subplot in Frankenstein props up an analogy between mixed blood and inherent perversity and suggests that while the "paranoid Gothic" is sustained on one level by a fear of sexuality between men, it also evinces a belief in the fixity of social relations and positions. Whatever disturbs these relations, this pattern, is "dirty" or "filthy" matter which must be excluded. But in Frankenstein the complexity of the monster—it walks, it talks, it demands, it pursues, it rationalizes and shows emotion—confuses the politics of purity in which every dirty thing is marked and will pollute if not eliminated. The monster mixes humanity with physical deformity, a desire for community with an irreducible foreignness, great physical strength with femininity.

We recall that Frankenstein agrees to make the monster a mate because he has been somewhat moved by his creation's eloquent pleas for tolerance. When the monster confronts his maker amid the sublime scenery of the Alps, he moves his author to feel compassion and "a wish to console him" (147) but the sight of the monster still provokes horror: "when I saw the filthy mass that moved and talked, my heart sickened, and my feelings were altered to those of hatred and horror." This sequence plays out what is, in the context of the novel, a by now familiar opposition between language and vision in which the visual registers horror while language confers humanity. Peter Brooks suggests that, in this episode, "we have an instance of what we might call, in the terms of Jacques Lacan, the imaginary versus the symbolic order." Brooks makes monstrosity thus an exclusion from signification and meaning; the monster may never accede into the symbolic, he is forever trapped by his hideous appearance in the imaginary.

But monstrosity is not simply a matter of appearance, and perhaps the opposition between language and vision is more entangled than the model of "imaginary" and "symbolic" may imply. It is precisely in the realm of the symbolic, in the realm of language, of course, that monstrosity and humanity emerge as inseparable. The episode in which Frankenstein talks himself out of creating a female monster, for example, is remarkable for the way that it reconstructs the monster's monstrosity
not simply as a visual production but as the place where the not-human is inscribed. The monster represents the inscription of the not-human through monstrosity, he is its textual form, his autobiography is the history of Gothic, as we shall see.

Sitting in his laboratory one evening during his efforts to make his monster a mate, Frankenstein ponders what he is doing. He begins to reason with himself about the morality of his new labors and he considers, “she might become ten thousand times more malignant than her mate,” and “she might turn in disgust from him to the superior beauty of man;” finally, “one of the first sympathies for which the daemon thirsted would be children, and a race of devils would be propagated upon the earth” (165). Here all compassion has been transformed into mistrustful fear. Frankenstein has not heard the monster’s story at all and now he translates it into a demonic desire to populate the earth with a new race.

Of course, Frankenstein is here engaged in what Freud would call “projection,” the paranoid process by which “an internal perception is suppressed, and, instead, its content, after undergoing a certain degree of distortion, enters consciousness in the form of external perception.”

Was it not Frankenstein himself who had hoped that his scientific breakthrough would make him the creator of a new species? “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” (54). Projection literally transforms the monster into a screen, a place for the reinscription of monstrosity. While I will return to Freud’s theory of “the mechanism of paranoia” in a later chapter, it is well to note here the mechanization of the human subject with relation to his conscious and unconscious behaviors.

Every time Frankenstein constructs his creation as monstrous, he renders invisible, immutable, and ineffable his own humanity. The self-evident nature of the “human” is constructed in Gothic as the destruction or inscription of the other. Visibility, I have been arguing, is the index of monstrosity in Frankenstein even as invisibility and ineffability imply humanity. Because of its readability, monstrosity allows us a peek at the construction of otherness out of the raw materials of racial undesirability, class definition, family ties, sexual perversity, and gender instability. The monster, therefore, by embodying what is not human, produces the human as a discursive effect. The human in Frankenstein, of course, is the Western European, bourgeois, male scientist. But mon-
Sfrsorsiy, I suggested early on, is inextricably bound to textuality, to the novelistic in particular, and so it is not surprising to discover that the history of Gothic monstrosity or embodied fear overlaps significantly with the history of the novel.

*Pulp Fiction*

The scene in which Victor decides to destroy the female monster is the most horrific, and indeed cinematic, episode in the novel. Unlike the first experiments which led Victor to discover the principle of life, the enterprise of building a female monster holds no romance for the scientist. When he first discovered “the cause of generation,” Victor experienced “delight and rapture” (52) which only gave way to horror when he confronted the ugliness of his creation. Now, making a female, Victor finds every part of his work ugly and describes it as a “filthy process” (164). While, in the original experiments, Victor envisioned himself as a father to a “new species” and dreamed of achieving immortality, the idea of his monsters reproducing now seems like a curse that would cause “a race of devils to be propagated upon the earth” (165). As the thought occurs to him, the monster appears at the window and his “ghastly grin” resolves Victor to “destroy the creature on whose future existence he depended for happiness” (166).

In the aftermath of the destruction of the monster’s mate, Victor sits frozen in his room and feels as if he is trapped in a nightmare. He hears steps approaching the door and wants to flee the inevitable meeting with the monster. Victor describes his inability to move: “I was overcome by the sensation of helplessness, so often felt in frightful dreams, when you in vain endeavor to fly from an impending danger” (167). After he had animated the male monster, Victor also suffered from nightmarish sensations and the scene of Elizabeth’s murder on their wedding night by the monster takes on nightmarish proportions. After running in horror from the ugliness of his newly animated creation, Victor dreamt that he was embracing Elizabeth but his first kiss brought “the hue of death” to her features which then were transformed into those of his dead mother: “A shroud enveloped her form, and I saw the grave-worms crawling in the folds of the flannel” (58). In the hideous dismemberment of the female monster, Victor reenacts this scene from his nightmare; the bride-to-be (Elizabeth/the female monster) takes the nightmarish form of the dead mother. The meaning of Victor’s dream is here clearly revealed to him—
Elizabeth merges with his mother in the nightmare not just as some oedipal fantasy but rather because monstrosity and maternity, in Victor’s view, threaten always to join forces to reproduce a “race of devils.”

The next day Victor returns to the laboratory and surveys the scene: “The remains of the half-finished creature, whom I had destroyed, lay scattered on the floor, and I almost felt as if I had mangled the living flesh of a human being” (170). Like the aftermath of a massacre in a modern splatter film, blood and flesh carpets the ground. Woman is reduced to a “half-finished creature” that man may take apart but not assemble. The making of a womb, apparently, challenges Victor with a scientific feat that he simply cannot and will not perform. He can build a man from the corpses of animals and humans but fashioning a woman demands that he construct and enervate a subject that is, in its future function at least, all body. The material horror of the female monster with her female genitals enrages and terrifies the scientist, he tears her limb from limb and scatters her flesh upon the ground.

The vision of Victor wrestling with the female flesh of the monster has the horrifying effect of a primal scene. The act of reproduction becomes here a bloody mess of dismemberment, a deconstruction of woman into her messiest and most slippery parts. As we noted in relation to the lumpen body of the male monster, the monster’s body always is in a state of decomposition, it constantly threatens to unravel, to fail to hold together. In this scene deconstruction becomes a bloody act of violence, and a gendered violence at that.

The destruction of the female monster resembles, I noted, a primal scene. And yet, the mutilation of the female body is not satisfactorily explained by psychoanalysis. In a more productive discussion of female mutilation, Klaus Theweleit, in Male Fantasies, explains “two distinct processes at work in the acts of murder” carried out by fascist male soldiers on women. The first process equates assault with “a symbolic sexual act” and the second involves what he calls “the pleasurable perception of women in the condition of ‘bloody masses.’”21 Although Theweleit is discussing a particular historical phenomenon, his discussion of the soldiers’ attitudes towards the mangled bodies of their female victims does have some bearing upon a discussion of Frankenstein’s bloody murder of the female monster. Suggesting that the Freudian model of castration can only partly explain the impulse to murder defenseless women, Theweleit notes that once a woman has, within a certain psychological process, been stripped of all signs of identity, she can
be “reduced to a pulp, a shapeless, bloody mass” (196). Far from being an erotic process, the dehumanization of woman, or indeed of any object—and this is something which Theweleit does not emphasize enough—the pulverizing of a body, even a monstrous body, is an act of radical indifference, an act which disregards the sexuality, indeed the physicality, of the flesh. Thus, while, as I have claimed, the violent destruction of the female monster may take on the proportions of a primal scene to the one who watches (the monster who views the flesh, in a way, as his flesh and blood), to the one who kills, the act of murder is merely a moral necessity, a compulsion to save the world from the contaminating potential of a “race of devils.”

The murder of Elizabeth by the monster and the destruction of the female monster by Victor Frankenstein confirm that monstrosity is in the eye of the beholder. Both Victor and his monster have murdered, one out of moral compulsion, the other out of a frustrated desire for vengeance. The difference between the two acts seems slight and yet one, Victor’s, is perhaps more terrifying and more revealing of the eventual direction of a politics of purity. The culmination of the process of dehumanization, whether it be directed towards monsters or men (and the difference between the two is merely a matter of perspective), produces a radical indifference towards the other as embodied subject. Victor views both the monster and his “half-finished” mate as “filthy mass,” form without definition, desexualized matter, dirt. The only course of action which he feels can right the disturbed balance of the natural order is extermination. Victor pursues his “vampire” to the ends of the earth, finding only his own death in the arctic wasteland.

The bloody destruction of the female monster by Frankenstein has to be read alongside the sentimental narrative of family that centers upon Elizabeth and as a kind of metanarrative about Gothic itself. Elizabeth, indeed, pays in full for her fiancé’s murderous desire, becoming a substitute for the female monster as the monster now directs his vengeance towards her. “I shall be with you on your wedding night,” the monster warns his maker, as femininity and monstrosity are now merged into a single image of the desired woman. The domestic woman and the wild woman are both offered up as sacrificial victims to the masculinist narrative of discovery, invention, and competition.

The story of the female monster—a story within a story within a story—folds Gothic back upon itself. While certainly the image of one story folded into another suggests pregnancy, as Moers’s essay on “female gothic” argues, this is also a structure that firmly dissociates itself
from the organic, the natural, and the reproductive. One story folded within another also signifies the machinic, the productive, the technological. The female monster—as basically the heart of the narrative beast, the central story in a spiraling narrative that spins into infinity—the female monster is the fleshy center that never speaks but always haunts the articulate narrative. She is at the opposite end of a structure that, as we recall, is framed by the invisible reader, Margaret Saville, and beyond that, of course, by the author herself, Mary Shelley.

When Frankenstein destroys the female mate of his monster, we witness an overdetermined moment that narrativizes the problem of definition embedded in the novel and the problem of population/popularity that makes the Gothic novel, as I am about to discuss, a feared symbol of mass culture. The female monster is mass like her mate, whom Frankenstein describes as a “sickening mass,” and she becomes pulp as he grinds her flesh into oblivion. The fiction of pulp in this novel becomes a history of fiction and of its relation to gender and popular culture.

In a fascinating article on intersections of high and low culture within the Gothic, Bradford Mudge discusses the feminization of popular culture in the nineteenth century. Mudge makes provocative connections between the discourse on popular fiction and nineteenth-century discussions of prostitution. The coincidence of “the rise of the novel” with a growing population of female writers and readers has not always been acknowledged by conventional literary histories, Mudge suggests. To ignore gender when discussing a history of the novel, however, is to misunderstand the ways in which the growing tension between a high and a low culture at this time was inseparable from the growing participation of women in literary production and consumption.

Mudge cleverly links the intellectual threat that male critics felt from women’s literary labor to the sexual threat posed by prostitutes to middle-class morality and he links both to a critique of capitalism: “Like eighteenth- and nineteenth-century prostitutes, who were both victims and perpetrators of entrepreneurial capitalism, women’s novels enacted a transgression while upholding the very standard they transgressed: romance, domestic, and Gothic novels all competed successfully in a literary market that deplored market success as a criterion of value.” The popular novel, in such a discourse, is gendered as female, it is debased by the fact that it pleasures too many readers, and it is abused by the marketplace even as it prospers there. Mudge calls this the “feminization of popular culture.”

There are two monsters, I have said, in *Frankenstein* and these two
Skin Shows

monsters, one male and one female, certainly symbolize different kinds of narratives. But the different narratives in *Frankenstein* do not simply break down into sentimental and Gothic, as at least one critic has suggested.\(^{24}\) The female monster represents, in a way, the symbolic and generative power of monstrosity itself, and particularly of a monstrosity linked to femininity, female sexuality, and female powers of reproduction. For this reason we can read the female monster as a representative of exactly that threat that Mudge associates with popular culture in nineteenth-century England. While the male monster educates himself and argues eloquently with his maker, the female monster repels Frankenstein before he has even brought her to life. The male monster represents a sublimity which is missing from the female monster and while he becomes part of his author's identity, she threatens her maker with his own dissolution.

Terry Lovell, in *Consuming Fiction*, also challenges prevailing accounts of the rise of the novel within literary history. Lovell goes to work on Ian Watt's "seminal formulation of the thesis that the novel per se is essentially realist and bourgeois."\(^{25}\) Lovell argues convincingly that we cannot identify the bourgeois novel only with realist conventions because it was clear that, between 1770 and 1820, bourgeois readers were also consuming vast quantities of Gothic Romance novels. Furthermore, she, like Mudge, points to the inadequacy of any history of the novel which does not account for the fact that women made up the majority of both writers and readers during the nineteenth century.

The rise of the novel, it is generally agreed, is linked to the development of capitalism. With the decline of literary patronage and the emergence of an anonymous literary marketplace, the novel was both commodified and produced according to the needs of capitalist ideology. However, by only identifying literary realism with capitalism, Lovell claims, theorists like Watt fail to account for the fact that "capitalism is Janus-faced." She writes:

> When the capitalist producer has his eye to his own management and work force, the qualities he likes to find and encourage are the classic bourgeois virtues—thrift, efficiency, hard work, frugality. But when he turns his attention to the purchaser of his commodities he may be happy to find a different creature, with money in wallet or purse and in a frame of mind to spend. . . . Bourgeois respectability and the contingencies of capitalist production create one kind of persona, capitalist consumption another. (31–32)
Capitalism, in other words, is dependent upon contradictions and therefore plural in form; it demands an incoherent middle class with many different desires.

The Gothic novel, within Lovell's scheme, is a bourgeois form which caters to the consumer (rather than to the producer) and therefore celebrates voluptuous excess and extravagance. We might take Lovell's argument one step further. As she points out, "consumer" was not exactly the right word for the book reader in the early nineteenth century because books were not exactly commodities (51). In order to cater to the consumer, then, the Gothic had to first produce the consumer and furthermore, produce the consumer as a productive identity. Since, later in the century, writers like Robert Louis Stevenson would write Gothic novels to earn some cash on the side and enable themselves to keep working on the less lucrative masterpieces, we must conclude that somewhere along the line the reader of fiction did become an active consumer. Gothic, I suggest, acted like an advertisement for the novel and *Frankenstein* was its most effective form. *Frankenstein* sells reading to a public and advertises interpretation by presenting the text as a monster that must be identified, decoded, captured, and consumed.

*Frankenstein* does precisely teach readers to read and encourages readers to think of themselves as readers and to take pleasure in the activity. Because the text is presented to the reader as a puzzle and because, as Lovell points out, "the narrative lacks . . . any character who can stand in for the imputed reader" (59), reading becomes an activity that generates its own pleasures, the pleasures of the text. The novel, then, as a commodity, as a form of knowledge, can be called Gothic when and where it locates its own function as a monstrous productivity and connects that function to a host of fears associated with popularity, population, consumerism, mass culture, femininity, the foreign, class wars, and sexual perversion.

The reduction of the female monster to pulp gives us a very literal metaphor for the threat of female monstrosity as opposed to the threat figured by male monstrosity. The pulp that Frankenstein scatters about his laboratory floor is the female monster, is female monstrosity. It is both a fleshy sexuality that Frankenstein originally fled from by leaving his home, his mother, and his bride to be and also formless flesh that refuses to become human. The power of the male monster is that it does precisely become human and so it makes humanity intrinsic to a particular kind of monstrosity and vice versa. The female monster cannot be human because it is always only an object, a thing, "unfinished."
If we extend this analysis of the female monster's metaphoric value, it is possible to argue for the female monster as pulp fiction within the allegory of literary production that Shelley has given us. We are entitled to read the novel as allegory because her introduction makes the connection for the reader between book and monster, maker and author. The book that the female monster represents is not the book that we read, it is the popular narrative that escapes into popular consciousness as the myth of Frankenstein. It is formless and endlessly repeatable.

_Gothic Realism_

Looking ahead to twentieth-century Gothic horror, a narrative that resides almost exclusively in popular cinema, one finds that the female monster lives on as the victim of male violence who is endlessly constructed and destroyed, violated and remade. For example, the female monster may be traced to the discarded flesh of Buffalo Bill's victims in _The Silence of the Lambs_ (1991); since this murderer is only interested in female skins, he dumps the flesh within into his bathtub like garbage. Or she is the transvested mother in Hitchcock's _Psycho_; with the mother long dead, Anthony Perkins becomes his mother but keeps her remains in a basement. She is the dead grandmother in _The Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2_ who sits above ground with her chain saws across her chest keeping watch over the family fortunes. The female monster is a pile of "remains," the leftover material, the excess of the narrative, the excess that renders the narrative Gothic. Interestingly enough, in the conventional Gothic novels of the 1890s, the male monster dominates as an almost heroic figure, the female monster is present on the margins but she does not signify in her own body the power of horror, she signifies its limits, its boundaries.

To trace the female monster in the time that intervenes between _Frankenstein_ and the modern horror film, we have to search the basements and the attics of the nineteenth-century realist novel. She is Bertha Mason in _Jane Eyre_, the ghost of Cathy in _Wuthering Heights_, she is often the prostitute or lower-class servant. And in the novels of Charles Dickens, the female monster inhabits the heart of the city as Nancy, as the woman who lures men to evil ends. Although the Gothic itself after Shelley seems to disappear for eighty years as a distinct genre, it lives on throughout the nineteenth century as the dark heart of a realism that is always, to some degree, Gothic.