



Frankenstein, Creation and Monstrosity (Critical Views)

By Stephen Bann

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Some of the most significant currents in modern intellectual and cultural history pass by way of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818). By choosing in her book as a guiding theme the idea of the scientist who creates a monster, she both revives for the Romantic period the traditional link between scientific experiment and natural magic, and makes her own contribution to the debate on the difference between "creation" and "production" that was flourishing among the natural scientists of her time.

Frankenstein thus signals a remarkable integration of the broad issues of contemporary science and culture within the form of a popular fiction. In this way, it stands at the head of a productive tendency which is marked, over the coming century, by related works like Bram Stoker's *Dracula* and H. G. Wells's *The Island of Doctor Moreau*. Common to all these works is a fascination with the ethics of creation, and the phenomenon of monstrosity, which provokes interesting questions about the place of the monster in Western visual culture.

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Editorial Review

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About the Author

Stephen Bann is Professor of Modern Cultural Studies at the University of Kent at Canterbury.

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