

*Imperial Monstrosities:  
"Frankenstein," the West Indies,  
and V. S. Naipaul*

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THE UNIQUE PLACE of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) in the canon has much to do with what it has engendered. Widely appropriated and transformed in popular culture, Shelley's tale of transgressive creation and vengeful destruction has also issued forth an unruly brood of high-culture interpretive and imaginative offspring. When discussions of feminism, nationalism, radicalism, and the family trace their lineage to the same parent-text as countless plays, political cartoons, novels, comic books, and films, the source takes on the aspect of an archetype.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the suggestiveness and adaptability of the Frankenstein story have caused it to be called "a metaphor for our own cultural crises" (Levine 3), a "modern myth" that has "imaginatively embraced some of the central and most pressing problems of modern history" (Baldick 1, 5).

One pressing historical problem and modern cultural crisis that *Frankenstein's* interpreters have largely overlooked, however, is that of British imperial slavery and its aftermath. Written at a time when the morality and economics of West Indian chattel slavery were long-standing subjects of anxious public debate, *Frankenstein* trades substantially in images and positions associated with that debate and with West Indian imperialism more generally. While it looks back to the anti-slavery discourses of its recent past, *Frankenstein* also reverberates through some later texts addressing the modern legacy of West Indian slavery and colonialism — primarily those of V. S. Naipaul. It does so almost imperceptibly, however. A tour through Naipaul's non-fiction unearths a handful of indirect allusions, and upon close inspection, his novella "A Flag on the Island" (1967) reveals its sustained parodic echoing of Shelley. If slavery and imperialism have hovered virtually unnoticed beyond

the edges of the critical feast that has long gathered around *Frankenstein*, the novel itself has been something of an uninvited guest at the latter-day postcolonial conversation.

## I

Critics who read *Frankenstein* for its engagements with contemporaneous political debates commonly see its politics as ambivalent. Chris Baldick and Lee Sterrenberg, for instance, historicize Mary Shelley's novel through debates about social justice and paternal rule that followed from the French Revolution. Images of monstrosity, dismemberment, and misbegotten reassembly were used by conservatives such as Edmund Burke to attack Jacobin efforts to create a new, egalitarian society. For Burke, the revolution was nothing short of a parricidal rebellion resulting from monstrous ingratitude. By contrast, Thomas Paine saw aristocracy as the monster, devouring younger children through the system of primogeniture. As Baldick sums it up, "Burke announces the birth of the monster child Democracy, while Paine records the death of the monster parent Aristocracy" (21). Shelley's mother, Mary Wollstonecraft, also linked monstrosity and social justice in her writings. She saw the gap between a decadent, luxurious court and the neglected masses as a monstrosity; any monstrous behaviour the rebellious Parisian crowd exhibited was "engendered by despotism, as retaliation" (22). If all this sounds dualistic and melodramatic, it is, as Sterrenberg states; he notes, however, that while Shelley was influenced by binary thinking, and invokes in her novel a dualistic world of good and evil, men and monsters, she subverts such polarities by translating them from the external world to internal psychology, blurring the binaries so that in "*Frankenstein*, the very act of perceiving and defining a monster has become problematic" (159). Shelley's readers are confronted with the question of which is more monstrous, the murderous "progeny" or the self-seeking "father" who unilaterally creates life only to disavow responsibility for it.

The vexed question of who is responsible for the sufferings of creator, creature, and innocent others in *Frankenstein* is often displaced by critics to questions of the multiple social, political, and intellectual contexts in which Shelley wrote her text and Victor

made his monster. The French Revolution is only one of many developments to which the novel has been related; others include the Scientific and Industrial Revolutions, post-Enlightenment progress and rationality, and Godwinian utopianism.<sup>2</sup> Shelley's over-determined characters may exemplify all these forces, but they may also be ambivalent reflections of another unstable, dualistic political debate. *Frankenstein* was written at a time when European expansion and rule over 'darker' places and races had long seemed part of the natural order to most Europeans — as aristocracy and monarchy had. While the inequities and exploitative hierarchies of aristocracy and the class system were being vigorously discussed, those of the West Indian slave system were also being interrogated on humanitarian and economic grounds, despite still generally unquestioned support of imperialism. C. Duncan Rice writes that in a period of about sixty years spanning the turn of the century, "slavery . . . passed from being a given factor on the [English] social landscape, to being incompatible with the beliefs of thinking men and women" (319). The historical moment of *Frankenstein* coincides with the anti-slavery movement: Shelley composed it between the abolition of the slave trade in 1807 and the emancipation of slaves in 1833. Indeed, she began writing just after "one of the most violent and protracted slave rebellions to date" had taken place in May 1816 in Barbados (Baum 91), and at a time when black people were an increasingly visible presence in London. However, while readings of *Frankenstein* have historicized it through a wide variety of contemporaneous phenomena, it has only once been linked to changes in England's cultural consensus about slavery.<sup>3</sup> *Frankenstein* and its author do not appear in numerous studies of literary interventions into or reflections of anti-slavery sentiment,<sup>4</sup> and recent biographies imply (by its absence) that the slaves' cause made little or no impression on Mary Shelley.<sup>5</sup>

She would certainly have been aware of the issue, not only because of its high public profile, but through Shelley's personal relations. Coleridge, mentioned by Emily Sunstein as the member of Shelley's father's intellectual circle who "probably had the greatest influence on Mary" as a child (51), had been a prominent anti-slavery advocate, writing in 1796 of "the deformities of a commerce which is blotted all over with one leprosy of evil" (qtd. in

Baum 24). Coleridge's use of body imagery is characteristic of anti-slavery discourse, in which metaphors of deformity and monstrosity were often used to convey the immorality of a system that valued humans only as labouring bodies, and then abused them.<sup>6</sup> Percy Shelley included slavery among the social injustices he scorned; poems such as "Queen Mab" and "The Mask of Anarchy" use images of slavery to argue for more general reforms (*Works* 16, 255-56). Mary Shelley's father, William Godwin, was opposed to slavery, though some of his beliefs about racial difference were similar to those used to justify it (Malchow 12); his novel *St. Leon* (1799) has been read as an anti-slavery text (Lewis 63-64). Mary Wollstonecraft, who like Godwin was a major intellectual influence on her daughter, drew on slavery's currency as "the premier sign of the antithesis of individual freedom" to draw analogies in *The Vindication of the Rights of Woman*; as she "persistently links colonial slavery to female subjugation and male desire," she can be seen to imply an anti-slavery position in a text whose explicit reformist agenda lies elsewhere (Ferguson 33, 2). Mary Shelley herself wrote admiringly of the abolitionist Frances Wright (Sunstein 283-84), and although she acknowledged that her own temperament was not that of a reformer (341), she would follow her mother and her late husband in using the slave as a figure for the oppressed of Europe:

[H]owever perilous the passage from slavery to liberty, it must be attempted and persevered in, with all its attendant evils, if men are to be brought back from that cowardice, indolence, and selfishness which mark the slave, to the heroism, patience, and intellectual activity which characterize the freeman. (Qtd. in Sunstein 328)

Other interests and causes may have claimed more of Mary Shelley's attention, but she could not have been oblivious to the images of slavery and debates about the slave trade that swirled around her. Indeed, H.L. Malchow finds several titles in the reading journal of Mary and Percy Shelley that indicate an active interest in racial issues (16). Encouraged by this evidence, Malchow examines the place of "the imagery and issues of contemporary race debate" to *Frankenstein* (17). His fine, nuanced reading — the only analysis of the novel in this context — demonstrates that the Monster reflects representations of Africans and Negro slaves circulating in

the early nineteenth century. Malchow shows how aspects of the Monster's physical appearance and abilities, his diet and behaviour, and his contradictory emotions of affection and violent vengefulness embody stereotypes about blacks circulating in European culture of the period (18-23). He sees an obliquely sexual dimension to the Monster that reflects stereotypes of the sexually potent and threatening black male (24-25). And he offers a rich interpretation of the issues raised by Frankenstein's abdication of responsibility for his creature and the Monster's self-education and subsequent depression, rebellion, and suicide; these events Malchow relates to anxieties about the education and liberation of slaves, and complex questions of accountability for their behaviour after emancipation. The novel thus reflects "a dual aspect to the problem of education in the early nineteenth century: the advancement, moral well-being, and happiness of those to be educated, but also the safety of society into which, in some degree, either the new urban citizen of the 'dangerous classes' or the freed slave of the plantation was to be admitted" (28). As he historicizes the novel, Malchow shows how its internal ambivalences reflect the ambiguities and contradictions of the racial debates that inform it.

In addition to these debates, the novel's images and relationships can be attached to Europe's West Indian imperial adventure in ways that usefully supplement Malchow's reading. The first description of the Monster, by Robert Walton, is of a "gigantic" man who resembles "a savage inhabitant of some undiscovered island" (57). Frankenstein's motivation for creating the Monster, a combination of knowledge- and glory-seeking, is akin to the drives behind imperial exploration, territorial expansion, and settlement in the New World. Frankenstein echoes imperialist images in stating his desire to "pour a torrent of light into our dark world. A new species would bless me as its creator and source" (82). His missionary presumption is not unjustified; the Monster calls him "my natural lord and king" (128) and says he regarded the first humans he met as "superior beings, who would be the arbiters of my future destiny" (143).

The novel's central narrative of assembly and abandonment suggests a specifically West Indian imperial connection. The Caribbean island colonies, which "slavery shaped" (Chamberlin 1),

were brutally engendered from disparate bits, assembled in ways that were designed to be mis-fitting: the breaking-up of African language and tribal groups on plantations, for instance. Just as slaves, severed as adults from their ancestral languages and cultures, were required to learn those of the master, so the adult Monster's lack of language or history forces him to adopt language and culture by observing humans and reading their books. Idolizing the de Lacey's, he regards himself with the kind of "self-contempt" that slavery taught blacks, according to V. S. Naipaul, among others (*Middle* 71). And while the Monster seeks acceptance by others, he earns only abhorrence. The prejudice of the cottagers results from differences not in the Monster's essence — the blind man initially welcomes him — but his appearance. Just as Africans were historically treated by Europeans as inferior, primitive beings, he is rejected as a sub-human 'other.'

The Monster, of course, rebels violently against his master — not for making him in the first place, but for refusing to create the conditions by which he might live in dignity. He has learned that a dispossessed man who lacks "riches" and "unsullied descent" is destined to be "a vagabond and a slave, doomed to waste his powers for the profit of the chosen few" (148). Unwilling to take the world as he finds it, the Monster insists in his first speech to Frankenstein, "Do your duty towards me . . . or I will glut the maw of death, until it be satiated with the blood of your remaining friends" (127). The Monster's rhetoric here moves in two directions: he begins with an appeal to conscience, duty, and guilt, then follows with the threat of retaliation. The anti-slavery cause was forwarded, broadly speaking, by these same appeals. The humanitarian-sentimental entreaty to pity and recognition of equality before God, combined with philosophers' assignment of 'natural rights' to Africans, was intensified by the threat posed to British families by rebellions on West Indian plantations. Of course, the horror of such events and the fears they provoked also undermined the anti-slavery cause by reinforcing images of blacks as violent brutes; however, in what sounds like a precursor to recent academic debates about race, representation, and social construction, a number of intellectuals countered such negative images by making a point best expressed in an 1807 committee report: "The portrait of the

negro . . . has seldom been drawn but by the pen of his oppressor, and he has sat for it in the distorted attitude of slavery" (qtd. in Lewis 71). Similarly, when Shelley's *Monster* argues for a mate by claiming that his "vices" are caused by his "forced solitude," and that these will be replaced with "virtues" once he is allowed to live in dignity (174), his arguments reflect those of the reformer Thomas Clarkson that slaves' behaviour was a product of environment, not of an innately inferior nature (Lewis 50-51). Frankenstein's wild vacillations — between fleeing and embracing 'parental' responsibility, between revulsion and compassion for the *Monster*, and between agreeing to his demands and then renegeing — echo the tug-of-war British society underwent over the slaves' cause in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Indeed, the conflicted, shifting sympathies the novel seems designed to evoke capture something of the complexity and instability of the discourses that had gathered around the slavery question by the time Shelley wrote. According to Joan Baum,

by 1816 . . . the case for Negro emancipation had already shifted ground from the moral, religious, and economic arguments of abolition days to psychological and cultural considerations and fears of black vengeance. What could be anticipated from emancipated slaves except violence? As the revolutions in Haiti and France had shown, ex-slaves could become enslavers; victims, victimizers. White blood would flow, terror reign. (94)

The linguistic and geographical imaginations of the novel draw on various motifs from imperialism and the slave trade. The *Monster* refuses to submit to the "abject slavery" of his debased condition (172) and, on being denied his female partner, angrily calls Frankenstein "Slave" and insists, "You are my creator, but I am your master; — obey!" (194). When Frankenstein imagines (with horror) the *Monster* and a female breeding, he envisions the result as a "race of devils" (192).<sup>7</sup> He also invokes "race" earlier in a description of "the mighty Alps," which strike him "as belonging to another earth, the habitations of another race of beings" (123). Although his reverential description of these "sublime" and ethereal Alps implies that such a race would be a superior one, closer to heaven, mountains and other natural and uninhabited spaces are the usual domain of the *Monster*. The victim of what David Sibley calls

“geographies of exclusion” (1), the Monster as feared other is unwelcome in civilized space and spends his life in marginal extremities. The Monster’s occupation of space that is at once peripheral and sublime, connoting both inferiority and superiority, links him to the contradictory ethos of the noble savage myth; Peter Brooks sees the Monster as such a figure in the Monster’s early experiences (208-09). During his winter with the de Lacey’s, the Monster occupies space that is both marginal (outside the house of people who are themselves in exile) and elevating (in providing him access to language, knowledge, and culture). Furthermore, aspects of the Monster’s exceptional spatiality — his extraordinary combination of absence and presence, distance and proximity, invisibility and visibility — make him an obvious figure for the generalized black subject. In the cultural imagination of Shelley’s time, the black person appeared both as an unseen, faraway mystery (“lost in darkness and distance,” as Shelley’s Monster is last seen [247]), and as a visibly growing presence in England, especially London.<sup>8</sup>

In rebelling, the Monster forces his creator to inhabit the same marginal spaces that have been his domain. Like some hyper-industrious agent of empire, Frankenstein is compelled to traverse “a vast portion of the earth, . . . deserts and barbarous countries” (225). He ends up in the peripheral space of the Arctic where he meets the explorer Walton, whose imperialist quest for glory and knowledge is comparable to Frankenstein’s own. When Frankenstein gives Walton’s crew his rousing death-bed speech, he makes their collective aspirations sound much like his own former ones: “You were hereafter to be hailed as the benefactors of your species; your name adored” (238). When Walton reluctantly obeys the crew’s demand to abort the mission, he is forced to reject the Frankensteinian dream. The parallels between Frankenstein’s and Walton’s respective characters and projects reinforce a set of imperial analogies that the text makes available; the disastrous results of Frankenstein’s overreaching serve as a warning that the crew and Walton (under duress) take to heart, even if Frankenstein himself in his death-bed delirium apparently forgets that he has already used metaphors of spatial expansion to warn *against* the kind of project he pursued: “Learn from me,” he has earlier said, “how



dangerous is the acquirement of knowledge, and how much happier that man is who believes his native town to be the world, than he who aspires to become greater than his nature will allow" (81).<sup>9</sup>

The contradictions in Frankenstein's attitudes here capture something of the thematic ambiguity of Shelley's text. Adding chattel slavery to the "dizzying profusion of meanings" (Baldick 56) that *Frankenstein* has already spawned could make of it an anti-slavery fiction drawing on traditional associations of monstrous images with a moralizing "warning . . . to erring humanity" (Baldick 10). But as in other interpretive realms — for instance, in its registering of anxieties about European social and industrial revolutions — the meanings generated by *Frankenstein's* West Indian analogies prove unstable and ungovernable. Too unruly to be a simple warning, Shelley's dialogic text is more accurately seen to embody conflicted and ambivalent attitudes towards slavery and imperialism. On one hand, it can be read as a critique of imperial acts of transgressive social engineering and of the racial arrogance behind those acts; in making the Monster's demands so reasonable — so human — Shelley warns about the immorality and danger of neglecting slave societies, and raises the spectre of violent rebellion among humans condemned to peripheral otherness. On the other hand, the Monster's aspirations to "superior" humanity, and the theme of parental abandonment leading to violent retaliation, may register fears about the end of slavery. Interpretive choices — such as whether to see Frankenstein's error as wrong-headed creation in the first place, as failure to responsibly nurture a symbolic child, as insensitive refusal to acquiesce to a mature adult's reasonable demands, or as deadly aggression towards a blood-thirsty monstrosity — imply very different readings of the imperialism-slavery theme.

As a novel, then, *Frankenstein* destabilizes oppositions and confounds schematic interpretations. But in its lively cultural afterlife as myth, especially popular culture reincarnations, the Frankenstein paradigm has often been simplified so as to shore up the very binaries of human and monster, rational and physical, verbal and nonverbal, culture and savagery that Shelley's novel so effectively challenges; as he propagates and replicates in theatres, films, and cartoons, the Monster regularly mutates into the primitive emblem

of irredeemable alterity that Shelley would not allow him to be (Lavalley 244). This may be why, despite its suggestiveness, the Frankenstein–Monster relationship has not been adopted as an archetype for race relations in colonial slave societies: in its original form it is too unstable and contradictory to offer a usable model, while the later versions that have come to dominate the twentieth-century cultural imagination offer too reductive an analogy. Nevertheless, the few spectral appearances that can be found in postcolonial texts, particularly those of V. S. Naipaul, do afford glimpses of *Frankenstein's* potential to illuminate social relations in colonial and postcolonial West Indian cultures.

## II

Shakespeare's Caliban and Prospero and Defoe's Friday and Crusoe have been widely appropriated as narrative touchstones for colonial history and identity. They play defining roles in books on colonial psychology and postcolonial literature such as Octave Mannoni's *Prospero and Caliban* (1956), Max Dorsinville's *Caliban Without Prospero* (1974), and George Lamming's *The Pleasures of Exile* (1960). Their stories have been retold by many postcolonial playwrights, poets, and novelists. The imaginary geographies of the originals, and their modellings of master–slave relations, give them a strong resonance in the West Indies, and West Indians Aimé Césaire, Lamming, Edward Brathwaite, Derek Walcott, and Samuel Selvon have written some of the best-known imaginative retellings.<sup>10</sup> That Caliban–Prospero and Friday–Crusoe have been preferred over the Monster and Frankenstein is presumably because they are more conventionally human, because they interact in explicitly (or allegorically) colonial situations, and because Shakespeare's and Defoe's pairings offer more stable, hierarchical relationships without the same history of unruly breakouts from their original textual moulds — or at least not before the postcolonial retellings. It may also be because, until relatively recently, Mary Shelley and *Frankenstein* have had a lower cultural status than the more canonical authors of *The Tempest* and *Robinson Crusoe*.

Ideas central to the Frankenstein story do resonate through some well-known discussions of colonial psychology. Mannoni's *Prospero and Caliban*, for instance, employs a parent–child model of dependence for colonial relations, and calls the “real colonizer . . .

a creator rather than an acceptor of relationships" (97). For Mannoni, "feelings of hostility . . . arise when the bonds of dependence have snapped" and the native feels "abandoned" (44). Outlining a psychological progression not unlike that of Shelley's monster, Mannoni writes: "The only alternative of remorse is resentment, accompanied by hatred and violence. Violence springs from guilt, and guilt from a feeling of abandonment" (137). Frantz Fanon, in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967), writes vividly about the black person's experience of feeling rejected and "hated, despised, detested . . . by an entire race" on the basis of his appearance, which can make white people feel "frightened" (118, 112). He sees himself through white eyes not as "a new man" but "a new kind of man, a new genus" (116). In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon discusses in detail the colonial native's transformation of "hate and anger" against his "enemy," the colonizer, into "violence in action" (71). It is only through "armed struggle" that the native "extorts" concessions (142-43). Fanon's Manichean view typically individualizes its antagonists — *the native, the settler* — so that, as in Shelley's text, social groups and forces are embodied in two male antagonists. Moreover, for Fanon, colonization is a kind of creation: "it is the settler who has brought the native into existence" (36). Jean-Paul Sartre's preface to *The Wretched of the Earth* echoes this image in claiming that "The European elite undertook to manufacture a native elite" (7); Sartre calls Europeans "zombies . . . at death's door" (13) and the once-colonial North America a "super-European monstrosity" (26).

Both Mannoni and Fanon invoke Caliban and Prospero, but although aspects of the colonial dynamics they describe and the images they use fit Shelley's narrative at least as well as Shakespeare's, none of these influential texts mentions the Frankenstein story, and none of them could be said to allude to it in anything beyond an accidental or unconscious way. When V. S. Naipaul discusses West Indian colonial history and race relations in early travel books and essays, his views are notoriously divergent from those of Mannoni, Fanon, and most of the rest of the postcolonial intelligentsia. But he, too, seems to echo Shelley's novel, extending the story of one individual's creation and abandonment of another into the realm of societies.

For Naipaul, Trinidad (and West Indian society as a whole) was “a unique imperial creation, where people of many lands [were] thrown together” (*Overcrowded* 21). The Caribbean territories were “manufactured societies” (275) pulled together from different continental bodies. Empire, in its Spanish and British versions, becomes for Naipaul a societal version of that famous “workshop of filthy creation” (Shelley 83) where Frankenstein creates an ugly being from beautiful parts. Naipaul calls the Caribbean a place where “every dark human instinct” was nurtured, where “civilization turned satanic” (*Middle* 224). He sees the region as a failed experiment in unilateral “human engineering” (*Overcrowded* 279), a misguided project that put “leaderless groups of conquered people” (279) together into brand new societies. If West Indian society was born, so to speak, of paternalistic Empires, it was also a place where both individuals and the society as a whole were treated irresponsibly. It can be argued that both Naipaul and Shelley see abandonment after the fact as a greater crime than the initial creation. For Naipaul, not only were Africans “kidnapped from one continent and abandoned on . . . another” (*Middle* 209), but the whole society suffered neglect and decline after the abolition of slavery. Empire’s interests shifted elsewhere, and as a colony Trinidad was seen by the British to be “an error and a failure” (*Loss* 372).<sup>11</sup>

In these scattered historical remarks, Naipaul follows one strand of Shelley’s thematic fabric by implying that self-serving, irresponsible imperial creators are to blame for any dysfunctionality in what they have made. These may be more parallel narratives than literary allusions, but when Naipaul turns from colonial history to contemporary postcolonial reality, he alludes more obviously (though still indirectly) to *Frankenstein*, with a very different effect. The first black person he meets in *The Middle Passage*, on a West Indies-bound “boat-train” from London to Southampton (9), appears to be a direct descendant of Shelley’s monster:

From the next compartment a very tall and ill-made Negro stepped out into the corridor. The disproportionate length of his thighs was revealed by his thin baggy trousers. His shoulders were broad and so unnaturally square that they seemed hunched. . . . His face was grotesque. It seemed to have been smashed in from one cheek. One eye had narrowed; the thick lips had bunched into a circular swollen protuberance; the enormous nose was twisted. When, slowly, he opened his mouth to spit, his face became even more distorted. (10-11)

The man's silence — he opens his mouth to spit, not to speak — arguably likens him more to Boris Karloff's grunting, visual monster than to Shelley's articulate, textual one. The unpleasant scene develops its *Frankenstein* echoes further in a hallucinatory, paranoid scene of entrapment and pursuit after the man's eye catches Naipaul's own:

I felt I had attracted his malevolence. And thereafter I couldn't avoid this Negro with the ruined face. I went to the lavatory. Our eyes met, twice. I went looking for a buffet car. I saw him. There was no buffet car. On the way back I saw him. (11)

This early incident sets the tone for the rest of *The Middle Passage* and subsequent travel narratives, in which Naipaul portrays himself as a beleaguered figure assailed on all sides by the repulsiveness and degradation of the 'Third World.'

Here Naipaul provides extreme evidence for Fanon's complaint about how often "The Negro symbolizes the biological" (*Black* 167). And while he may intend this embodied individual to be a synecdoche of the "ill-made" society he will later describe, the connection is not clear; indeed, the disgust he expresses seems closer to Frankenstein's contempt for his Monster than to Shelley's judicious ambivalence towards them both. Naipaul goes on in *The Middle Passage* to depict the purportedly misbegotten society that has resulted from imperial abandonment as an "under-developed" site of "ugliness" and "self-destructive rage" (247). His fastidious traveler's persona responds with Frankensteinian revulsion to the region and its people, prompting critics such as Rob Nixon to call him a racist because of the fear and loathing he expresses towards blacks (50).

Taken together, however, these disparate and oblique nods toward *Frankenstein* in Naipaul's early non-fiction highlight a more complex, unstable view of the West Indies and Empire than he is usually seen to possess. Naipaul is routinely depicted as a man of hierarchical mind — a late Victorian pseudo-imperialist who betrays his roots and supports those Western ideologies that see the ex-colonial world, especially the West Indies, as a site of drift and degeneration in the absence of imperial leadership. He is typically found to be blaming the victims of imperial slavery and siding with the oppressors.<sup>12</sup> But even as he textually "disfigures the 'other'"

(Healy 52), Naipaul is more willing to acknowledge the historical roots of (post)colonial societies' supposed ills and deformities than his detractors often allow. While suggesting that the West Indies suffered from neglect after Empire shifted its attentions elsewhere, Naipaul sees the worst abandonment as occurring not with independence in the mid-twentieth century, but in the early nineteenth century, when Britain was still responsible for the sugar colonies it had made. If the societies remained "unformed" in Naipaul's view (*Overcrowded* 9), it was because they were experiments in social engineering whose architects walked away before ensuring there were stable foundations. "In the West Indian islands," he writes in *The Middle Passage*, "slavery and the latifundia created only grossness, . . . a society without standards, without noble aspirations, nourished by greed and cruelty" (28). The British, who portrayed themselves as imperial parents to their colonial children, were brutal, self-serving, and negligent parents; here Naipaul's view is not far from that of many West Indian writers and intellectuals. Abdicating their responsibilities to guide to 'maturity,' to establish the conditions for nurturing independent life, the British, like Frankenstein, are accountable for whatever ill-adapted societal 'monstrosities' may have resulted. Everything Naipaul says he detests in the West Indies — racial-mindedness, violence, fraudulence, immaturity, pettiness — stems in some way from imperial mistreatment. He does not always say so, however, and his dismissive representations, expressions of disgust, and images of grotesque monstrosity loom so large that their rhetorical force tends to overshadow the articulated links to causes and creators.

Those polymorphous projections of cultural crisis known as "monsters" tend to destabilize the categories through which difference and alterity — racial, cultural, political, sexual — are conventionally inscribed (Cohen 6). Moreover, either diegetically (in the plot) or extradiegetically (as constructs embodying their cultural moment), monstrous imaginings rebound on their makers and insist on answers to such questions as "why was I made?" and "what dark or confused thing in you do I resemble?" Often, however, the physical repulsiveness, the power, and the independent life of the monster — especially one as diversely appropriated as Frankenstein's — overwhelm or erase this link with its creator; the

monster's autonomy, agency, and appearance of unbridgeable difference can make us lose sight of its constructedness, and thus of its causal links to the particular creator, author, and/or cultural moment that gave it birth. Similarly, Naipaul's satiric images of West Indian monstrosity are commonly thrown back at him as the deformations of a man seduced by European habits of condescension, rather than being read as indictments of imperialists and slavers for their arrogant assembly of ill-made societies. With satiric portraits and monstrous images alike, the point of origin — the cause of their (imagined) existence — is often obscured by the vivid, 'in your face' immediacy of the distorted representation itself.

Naipaul's satiric grotesques also offend West Indians because *as* representations they share certain features of colonialist discourse; like most satire, colonialist discourse is a form of representational violence that diminishes and fixes its objects in a binary, hierarchical gaze. Both satire and colonialist discourse are forms of othering in which the perceiving subject is positioned as superior to the perceived object. And in both, the causes of perceived conditions are typically subordinated to effects. It is interesting, then, to note that Naipaul's most thoroughly satiric fiction, "A Flag on the Island," is also the only one to satirize both sides of an imperial (or in this case, neo-imperial) divide. Both colonizer and colonized, creators and created — cause and effect — are critiqued, resulting in a kind of satiric ambivalence. Not coincidentally, it is in this little-known novella that the scattered eruptions of Shelleyan themes and motifs in Naipaul's non-fiction are consolidated into a more substantial intertext.

### III

"A Flag on the Island" may be the only West Indian fiction to allude significantly to *Frankenstein*. It does so directly only once, in a bit of flippant dialogue. When the narrator introduces himself as Frank, a fellow tourist, Leonard, replies: "Short for Frankenstein. Forget it, that's my little joke" (131). It may be Naipaul's joke too, for the text is strewn with parodic echoes that have escaped the notice of critics. Of the many major studies of his work (some of which ignore "A Flag on the Island" entirely), only Anthony Boxill's book mentions the *Frankenstein* reference (52).<sup>13</sup> Even John Thieme's

fine and thorough study of Naipaul's uses of allusions ignores it; presumably seeing Leonard's joke as a meaningless aside, Thieme overlooks the ways a canonical intertext infiltrates this most episodic and seemingly frivolous of Naipaul's fictions. Nonetheless, "A Flag on the Island" offers a notable, if obscure, example of what Julia Kristeva calls "intertextuality" and Gérard Genette calls "hypertextuality"; its lone direct allusion 'flags' a sustained "relationship of copresence" between itself (the "hypertext" in Genette's terms) and *Frankenstein* (the earlier "hypotext" with which we are invited to engage in a "relational" or "palimpsestuous" reading) (Genette 1, 5, 399). As the slavery debates slip virtually unnoticed into Shelley's text, so *Frankenstein* almost invisibly infuses Naipaul's.

"A Flag on the Island," like *Frankenstein*, begins at sea. As in its precursor, sublimely bad weather enforces stasis and a narrative journey through the past. A hurricane threat forces a Caribbean cruise ship to port at the same island where Frank was posted as an American G.I. during World War Two. In a fast-paced, dream-like narrative, Frank revisits old haunts and cohorts from the local community, marvelling at the artificial tourist society that post-war America has spawned in the Caribbean. Frank both exemplifies and observes this process of neo-imperial creation. The 1940s flashback section framed by the 1960s drunken spree shows him making significant interventions in local society. In a synecdochic version of the general economic boom the American presence prompted, Frank fosters a corrupt and dependent society by stealing from the military base. When two men die as an indirect result of his activities, he is accused of killing one and is told to stop "interfering any more in other people's lives" (175). As with *Frankenstein*, Frank's intentions are both benevolent and self-serving; the results are disastrous. At the funeral, he displays Frankensteinian remorse for what he has begotten. "I wept for Mano and Lambert and myself, wept for my love of sugar" (175), he says, and while guilt, complicity, and remorse have been seen as Frank's primary responses (Boxill 49), he is usually more detached than this. Like *Frankenstein* at the moment of creation, he prefers to abdicate responsibility. His detachment is especially noticeable in the 1960s sections, in which Frank is an ironic observer of a fraudulent culture he identifies with American influence but not explicitly with



himself *as* an American. During the war, he says, “we built the tropics” on reclaimed land (144); now “the tropics” are an unreal place of shallow tourism and fetishized black culture designed to entice American dollars.

“A Flag on the Island,” subtitled “A Fantasy for a Small Screen,” rewrites *Frankenstein*’s monumentality and tragic irony as caustic, facetious satire that diminishes everything, including what it takes from Shelley. Frank’s hallucinatory frenzy is a far cry from Frankenstein’s, and the superficial ‘unreality’ of the island society contrasts with the profoundly real Monster.<sup>14</sup> Naipaul’s text contains some features commonly identified with parody such as “substituting a trivial *action* for a heroic one” (Marmotel qtd. in Genette 21; original emphasis); however, it does so not to mock its source text, as parody is often said to do. Rather, Naipaul employs *Frankenstein* as a narrative framework against which he may “place the contemporary under scrutiny” (Hutcheon 57). Borrowing Linda Hutcheon’s terms, “A Flag on the Island” uses “repetition with critical distance” to the ends not of “satiric parody” but of “parodic satire” (6, 104); the disjunctions generated by its parodic echoing allow it to satirize conditions in the post-war Caribbean. Characteristic techniques of modal and generic satire such as diminishment and belittlement are reinforced by what Hutcheon calls the “trans-contextualizing” energies of parody’s double-coding (101). And the parodic reductions suit Naipaul’s satiric target: a neo-imperialism that does not ennoble or enlarge what it engenders, but rather degrades, makes small, lays waste. A mockery of a culture gets a mocking treatment; “A Flag on the Island,” one might say, is the ‘flip’ side of *Frankenstein*.

Shelley’s grand vision is consistently stomped down by Naipaul. When he borrows *Frankenstein*’s diction and imagery — words like “destroy,” “disfigure,” “flesh,” “threat,” “fear,” “torment,” and “hate” feature prominently in “A Flag on the Island” — the reduced scale of the referents defuses the original ominous power. Tourists banter about what they will find on the island; the natives may be cannibals or “dolls,” Frank jokes, but it is only a joke (125, 129). Shelley’s theme of transgression into the territory of the divine becomes, in Naipaul’s text, the colonizing presumption of multinational brand names: “Moore-McCormack Moore-McCormack. Man had become God” (127). The story proper begins when Frank struggles

against his desire for “self-imposed isolation,” his “anxiety,” and his feeling, like Frankenstein on the ice floe, that “the whole world is being washed away and that I am being washed away with it.” Although he says “I feel my time is short,” he goes ashore to face the islanders: “I am going to be brave,” he tells Leonard (126, 127), invoking the ideal trumpeted by Frankenstein in his death-bed speech to Walton’s crew (Shelley 238-39). Frank’s drunken journey in Part One contains the same odd mixture of “energy and torpor, movement and rest, obsessive frenzy and virtually pathological detachment” that Philip Stevick sees in *Frankenstein* (222). As Frank and Leonard chase each other from place to place, Frank at one point makes a prominent islander look monstrous by defacing a poster: “I took the pen from the desk, blacked out the whites of Gary Priestland’s eyes and sent an arrow through his neck” (135); it is later revealed that Priestland was likely responsible for a voodoo-doll campaign against Frank during the war. In another incident, Frank accidentally insults a prostitute and she becomes an “offended black body” pursuing him, calling for “vengeance” and, like Victor’s Monster, appearing later out of nowhere to claim her due: “My right hand was gripped and the black face, smiling, menacing, humorous, frightening, which I seemed to study pore by pore, hair by hair, was saying, ‘Leave the change for me, nuh’” (140-41).

There are many such passages, often fleeting and incidental, in which Naipaul’s text parodies Shelley’s. But the character who most fully plays the Monster to Frank’s (and America’s) Frankenstein is the writer H.J. Blackwhite. His name suggests a significant blurring of racial binaries;<sup>15</sup> the human-monster duality that Shelley’s story conflates is reworked here as a function of race. Blackwhite begins his literary career in the 1940s as an anglophile; his absurd imitations of Jane Austen lead Frank to remark that Blackwhite is “not black at all” but “terribly white” (163). Frank encourages Blackwhite to write instead about his own society, and the result, Naipaul implies, is a literary monstrosity. Blackwhite complains that the English language is wrong for the task, and that “our own language” is needed for literary expression (182). Initially this means using the island patois, but he soon starts to “make up new words” for “the new island language” (184). Twenty years later, Frank finds Blackwhite to be a successful purveyor of “inter-racial

romances" (197) and faddy expressions of black anger for the American market, with American foundations firmly in his pocket. One of his books, "called *I Hate You*, with the sub-title *One Man's Search for Identity*," reads in part:

I am a man without identity. Hate has consumed my identity. My personality has been distorted by hate. My hymns have not been hymns of praise, but of hate. How terrible to be Caliban, you say. But I say, how tremendous. (129)

Blackwhite may identify himself (derivatively) with Shakespeare's monster, but his story echoes that of Shelley. Blackwhite's career, as outlined above, parodically replicates the Monster's account of his initial reverence for human beings, his acquisition of language, and his sudden turn to hatred after being rejected because of his alterity. The Monster is consumed by hate because of an emotional response to experience and an authentic transformation of identity; Blackwhite hates because hate sells. The Monster turns his hatred into violent action against his creator; Blackwhite has cocktails with the white "Foundationland" representatives who fund his work, cashing in on popular interest in black writing. His "attacking" of whites (130) exists only as insincere, opportunistic text.

The satire here has two related targets. The first is a borrowed Black Power politics that, in Naipaul's view, becomes fraudulent when imported to the West Indies. He explores this theme more fully in the novel *Guerrillas* (1975) and the essay "Michael X and the Black Power Killings in Trinidad" (1980), which examines the events on which the novel is loosely based. Both Michael X and his counterpart in *Guerrillas*, Jimmy Ahmed, are portrayed as hate-mongering "monster[s . . . ] made in England," nurtured as black leaders on a lethal mix of media indulgence, egotistic delusions, and a misguided desire among London radicals for a West Indian embodiment of the American Black Power movement's "racial vehemence" ("Michael" 30, 63).<sup>16</sup> While Michael's and Jimmy's anger turns them, like Frankenstein's Monster, to capricious acts of murder and a fugitive existence, Blackwhite's more farcical hatred is benign. Its confinement to the textual realm indicates Naipaul's second satiric target: the nascent West Indian literature's emphasis

on racial identity and oppositional anger. But the cultural industries he mocks have an avid market, and Naipaul also targets Western readers, tourists, and foundations for fostering such illegitimate offspring. This dual focus is signalled most obviously in the satiric cloning in Part Three: Blackwhite brings "Bippy, Tippy and Chippy," representatives from Foundationland, together with "Pablo, Sandro and Pedro," whom he presents as Caribbean art's next great thing. As partners in a mutually complicitous sham these two groups of look-alike triplets not only serve the two-pronged satire but also follow the intertext: as Shelley's Monster responds in human-like ways to his condition, Frankenstein seems increasingly monstrous.

When Frank and Blackwhite first meet after 20 years, each says he is "frightened" of the other, and Frank lifts his arms "in mock terror" (188). Frank, who during the war "creates opportunities" (White 142), now watches Blackwhite's opportunistic dealings with a mixture of horror and bemused complacency. He is both implicated participant and detached observer; on one hand, as Henry tells Frank, "it was you who give him the idea . . . to write about black people" (189), but on the other hand, as Selwyn Cudjoe notes, Blackwhite is "the entire creation of the other, a toy, one of the latest fads in the hands of an American foundation" (98). In both cases, of course, Blackwhite is not his own creation; he exemplifies what Fawzia Mustafa calls "the made-up, manufactured quality of the island's independent 'identity'" (108). The reunion scene takes place in Henry's nightclub, where black history is travestied in a show for tourists:

Men and women in fancy costumes which were like the waiters' costumes came out on to the stage and began doing a fancy folk dance. They symbolically picked cotton, symbolically cut cane, symbolically carried water. They squatted and swayed on the floor and moaned a dirge. From time to time a figure with a white mask over his face ran among them, cracking a whip; and they lifted their hands in pretty fear.

"You can see how us niggers suffered," Henry said. (189)

As this show reduces the pain, brutality, and fear of slave society into a digestible object of consumption, Naipaul likewise flattens out the portentous implications and emotional excesses of *Frankenstein*, the slave society's contemporaneous text.

Henry, while profiting from this shallow spectacle, also voices despair at the inauthentic postures to which the islanders have been reduced. As cynical about his own MBE as he is about Blackwhite's "culture," he says to Frank, "Sometimes you want the world to end. . . . I wish the hurricane would come and blow away all this. I feel the world need this sort of thing every now and then. A clean break, a fresh start. But the damn world don't end. And we don't dead at the right time" (191). Soon after, Henry's apocalyptic desire seems destined to be fulfilled: the hurricane is forecast to hit the island and the mood turns celebratory. The crowd looks forward to the release that destruction promises, and Gary Priestland, the TV preacher, promises "now is the day of salvation" (211). Blackwhite and the six triplets dance in the streets. But whereas in *Frankenstein* bad weather reinforces the outsized emotions and high stakes of the central conflict, and helps bring on the final release of death, Naipaul's hurricane never comes. With a refusal of closure characteristic of satire, he implies that apocalypse is too grand and release too good for this undeserving lot; Naipaul dooms island society to continued entrapment in its petty monstrosities.

In *Frankenstein* the reversal of the pursuer-pursued relationship provides the major narrative development before the closure of confession and death; a similar reversal is a final, open-ended event in Naipaul's story. Blackwhite, who has been courted by the Foundationland triplets, drops them in favour of Leonard, the American trickster who promises to nurture his career with more money. After stringing him along, Leonard abandons Blackwhite at the end, apparently not the millionaire he said he was. Blackwhite, facing a riches-to-rags disaster, chases his former patrons in a passage that echoes *Frankenstein*'s pursuit of the Monster to the ends of the earth:

[Blackwhite], once the pursued, now became the pursuer. Pablo, Sandro and Pedro fled before him, as did Bippy, Tippy and Chippy. He pursued them; they evaded him and often the six came together. On the stage stretching to infinity the chase took place, pursuer and the six pursued dwindling to nothing before us. The sun was bright; there were shadows. (213)

With Blackwhite, the main monster figure, taking on *Frankenstein*'s role, and with the sham local artists and their American

funders as co-monsters, Frank is free to leave. Unlike Frankenstein, who must suffer the hideous consequences of his transgression, Frank can enact neo-imperial abandonment and satiric non-closure by sailing away — for a second time — from the results of what he and America have engendered.

“A Flag on the Island” is a unique work for Naipaul in having an American narrator. And the fact that Frank can leave, while the islanders remain stranded in futility, may support Nixon’s complaint that Naipaul cannot empathize with local predicaments; in Naipaul’s non-fiction, Nixon says, “His condemnation of the tourist society is harsher than his judgement of either the tourists or the inequities in North–South economic relations that have provoked tourism” (64). But Naipaul goes to greater lengths here than in his other satiric comedies to critique both sides of the North–South divide.<sup>17</sup> Only in “A Flag on the Island” are both the local effects *and* the foreign causes of a satirized state of affairs represented. North and South are so complicitous and interdependent that the major characters — Frank, Blackwhite, Henry, Leonard, the Foundationland trio, the local artistic one, and Frank’s sometime girlfriend Selma — blend into a satirized continuum. As economic and cultural partners, both sides of this neo-imperial relationship are diminished by their dependence on each other. Naipaul targets what he describes in *The Middle Passage* as the Trinidadian “talent for self-caricature,” for “living up to the ideals of the tourist brochure” (76), but he also takes aim at the Americans who constructed “the tropics” as a commercialized site of pleasure, exploitation, and consumption.

“A Flag on the Island” is of a piece with Naipaul’s frequently stated disdain for Trinidad’s Carnival celebrations and his portrayal of West Indian society as “unimportant, uncreative, cynical,” a place “where the stories were never stories of success but of failure” (*Middle* 43–44). But by critiquing a cause–effect continuum, he raises a question that also haunts Shelley’s readers: who or what is responsible for the disasters and failures that result from acts of transgressive creation? Is Frankenstein as fully accountable for the violence of his Monster as his guilt and remorse — and his repeated claims to be the real murderer of the Monster’s victims — would suggest? Does the Monster’s suffering and lack of ‘parental’

guidance excuse his actions — even make him a victim — or does he gain enough humanity, education, agency, and self-sufficiency to be morally culpable? Just as Shelley's readers are confronted with the question of who is more monstrous, the murderous "progeny" or the self-seeking "father" who unilaterally creates life only to disavow responsibility for it, Naipaul's readers may justifiably wonder which he sees as more unsavoury and blameworthy, the ill-made (post)colonial society or the negligent empires that have begotten it. When Naipaul — apparently alone among West Indian writers — uses a cultural icon like *Frankenstein* as an oblique intertext in satirizing the monstrous offspring of imperial history and the neo-imperial present, he is playing with a uniquely complicated narrative that both reinforces and unsettles binaries.

To read *Frankenstein* into "A Flag on the Island" as not a trivial local allusion but a sustained parodic double-coding begs some obvious questions: Has Naipaul deliberately embedded Shelley's narrative in this text (and, more sketchily, in other writings on the West Indies)? If so, does "A Flag on the Island" deserve the label of parody if its intertext has remained latent — unnoticed by critics for over thirty years? Does parody not have to be recognized in order to exist? Hutcheon argues that parody forces us to revisit prevailing anti-intentional biases in literary criticism and posit at least an "inferred" act of authorial encoding to correspond to the reader's hermeneutic act of recognition and decoding, which completes the "circuit of meaning" generated by parody (85, 94). Parody, in other words, involves both enunciative input and pragmatic output: an author who parodies a prior text and a reader who recognizes the parody. Of Naipaul's intent, we have no clues other than the one direct allusion and the numerous indirect echoes in the text which, if sufficiently convincing, should have the cumulative effect of implying a deliberately encoded and meaningful relation to *Frankenstein*. As for the absence of prior recognition of the intertext, various features of both text and intertext can help account for critics' non-completion of this particular "circuit of meaning": the seemingly throwaway dialogue containing the direct allusion; the substantial differences in genre and plot between the two texts; the reputation of "A Flag on the Island" as a minor work in Naipaul's oeuvre; and *Frankenstein*'s low profile in

postcolonial discourse. If, however, the above reading has identified the parody in a way that others find convincing and worthwhile, then it may be said to exist in a manifest, rather than merely latent, form.

That Shelley's characters have not been widely welcomed into postcolonial analyses and imaginings may be, as suggested above, because their legacy of popular-culture transformations makes them simply too unstable, too potentially explosive to serve as politically nuanced cultural icons. It may also be that they cannot be taken as seriously: in the many Hollywood reincarnations filmed by the time Mannoni, Fanon, Lamming, Naipaul, and others were writing, *Frankenstein's* Monster is not only a near-Neanderthal primitive whose kinship with his maker (or with humanity at large) is minimal, but he is also as likely to provoke a derisively comic response as a feeling of fear. The sympathy Shelley's Monster demands is rarely encouraged by latter-day representations. With these versions overriding Shelley's in the popular imaginary, it is not surprising that the writer to exploit the *Frankenstein* myth's West Indian possibilities should be one with as "incendiary" a view of the West Indies as Naipaul (Healy 46); he would be unlikely to fret about the negative associations. However, just as scraping away popular distortions reveals the complexity and ambivalence of Shelley's original vision, it is possible to look past the immediate offences of Naipaul's satiric grotesques and caustic judgements and find a more complex vision of imperialism than he is often seen to possess. One way "A Flag on the Island" can be taken seriously is in provoking this recognition through the ambivalent, multi-pronged satire that its *Frankenstein* parody supports. And as we reread Shelley's text for the colonial dimensions of its human monstrosities, we may wonder how, if its critical tradition and popular transformations had been different, *Frankenstein's* narrative of creation, abandonment, and retaliation might have been more widely influential in West Indian and postcolonial writing.<sup>18</sup>

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Good discussions of *Frankenstein's* popular and literary afterlife can be found in books by Levine and Knoepfelmacher; and Baldick.



- 2 For discussions of these various historical analogies, see Baldick; Sterrenberg; Smith; and Clemit.
- 3 Spivak (273-78); Baldick (163-83); and Fulford and Kitson (14, 43) discuss some connections between *Frankenstein* and imperialism, but none of them mentions slavery or the slave debates. Mellor briefly speculates that a reference to the book during an anti-emancipation speech in the House of Commons in 1824 may have encouraged Shelley to identify Frankenstein's project with that of "colonial imperialism" when revising the 1831 edition, but she does not examine how slavery is figured in the novel apart from seeing it as another instance of the "alienated view of . . . human labour" that radicals were highlighting domestically (113-14). Only Malchow (9-10) offers a sustained exploration of the connections; his reading is summarized in the main text of this article.
- 4 Studies of the slavery debates and/or literary engagements with them in which *Frankenstein's* absence is notable include those by Baum; Blackburn; Ellis; Leask; Lewis; Rice; Sypher; and Thomas.
- 5 The slavery question has little or no presence in biographies of Mary Shelley by Bigland; Dunn; Gerson; Spark; and Sunstein; nor in St. Clair's biography of the Godwin and Shelley family; nor in Small's partly biographical *Ariel Like a Harp*, despite its discussion of *Frankenstein's* debt to *The Tempest*.
- 6 For instance, in 1804, anti-slavery activist James Stephen wrote in frustration at the recent expansion of the trade despite activism against it: "The monster, instead of being cut off, as the first burst of honest indignation promised, has been more fondly nourished than before; and fattened with fuller meals of misery and murder" (qtd. in Thomas 540-41).
- 7 Robert Young makes an interesting racial analogy when he describes nineteenth-century anxieties about miscegenation as involving "a horror that recalls that of Frankenstein contemplating the possibility of the results of a female companion for his monster deserting her own species for the 'superior beauty of man'" (113).
- 8 For a thorough discussion of blacks in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century London, see Gerzina.
- 9 Cf. Frankenstein's retrospective warning against obsessive pursuits at the expense of a social life and "simple pleasures": "if no man allowed any pursuit whatsoever to interfere with the tranquility of his domestic affections, Greece had not been enslaved; Caesar would have spared his country; America would have been discovered more gradually; and the empires of Mexico and Peru had not been destroyed" (84).
- 10 Shakespeare's characters are reworked by Césaire in his play *Une Tempête* (1969), Lamming in the novel *Water With Berries* (1971), and by Brathwaite in the poem "Caliban" (1969). The Crusoe-Friday relationship is taken up by Walcott in the play *Pantomime* (1980) and the poems "Crusoe's Island" and "Crusoe's Journal" (1965), and by Selvon in the novel *Moses Ascending* (1975).
- 11 Naipaul is not alone in this view. Historian Gordon Lewis writes that after the end of slavery, the West Indies suffered losses because "having been originally cultivated by the British mercantilist commercial capitalism as sources of capital accumulation they were abandoned by the new British laissez-faire industrial capitalism of the nineteenth century as other, alternative sources became more profitable" (58).
- 12 E.g., see Cudjoe (esp. 123-27); Nixon; and Said (53). For a thorough summary of West Indian responses to Naipaul, see Hassan.
- 13 Boxill writes, "Naipaul's distress at . . . corruption is expressed through his narrator Frankie who is referred to on one occasion as Frankenstein. Frankie and other Americans like him have created a monster which they can no longer control. Frankie's remorse is contrasted with the self-satisfaction of the monstrosity itself" (52).

- 14 Frank himself can seem oddly unreal or insubstantial as well; as one critic notes, he is "at best a flickering presence, difficult to pin down or characterize" (Gupta 29), and his glibly casual interactions contrast starkly with the intensity of Frankenstein's.
- 15 It may also be a play on E.K. Brathwaite.
- 16 Naipaul twice calls Michael X a "monster," alternately created by English and American influences (30, 63); his "plasticity" and "grotesque" identity are also emphasized (25, 33). Jimmy Ahmed is not explicitly associated with monstrosity, except as a respondent to "monstrous . . . white aggression against black people" (209); "hate" may be a defining feature of Jimmy's fabricated persona, but Naipaul seems not to have exploited the obvious Frankensteinian possibilities of his narrative in *Guerrillas*.
- 17 E.g., *The Mystic Masseur* (1957) and *The Suffrage of Elvira* (1958).
- 18 For their helpful comments on earlier versions of this article, I am very grateful to Jennifer Andrews, Robert Fiander, Randall Martin, Mary Rimmer, Victor J. Ramraj, and *ARIEL*'s anonymous reviewers.

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