

FRANKENSTEIN BOUND AND UNBOUND: FROM MARY SHELLEY TO BRIAN ALDISS

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ABSTRACT. Literary texts that were not central have acquired relevance and this phenomenon has been already approached and studied in profusion. A case of exceptional acceptability is that of some topics born around the most representative romantic poets. "Frankenstein" has been rewritten by Brian Aldiss, *Frankenstein Unbound* which was also transformed into a SF film. I will study in which terms the dialogue of B. Aldiss with his own literary and historical past was established, and his textual debt, his own interpretation and adaptation of the myth and his role as an artist in this transformation.

Palabras clave: Ficción científica, Aldiss, Frankenstein, intertextualidad.

"I slept. I dreamed -and in that dream

Frankenstein was born"

(*Frankenstein Unbound*,105)

Frankenstein Unbound (1973)¹ by Brian Aldiss is one of the links in the history of Frankenstein that has been unjustly forgotten. It was transformed into a SF film by Roger Corman who produced, directed and wrote the script. The film too passed unnoticed by the majority of people, perhaps because it was not so cleverly distributed as other expensive productions of today². The two words of the title establish an immediate textual relationship not only with Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, or the Modern Prometheus (1818) but with Percy B. Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* (1820). It directs the reader's attention towards the importance of the subject of Prometheus. Its presence in the novel by Brian Aldiss is an approach to the theme from the point of view of the writer of the end of the 20th century, almost two hundred years later.

¹ Translated into Spanish as *Frankenstein descendado* Barcelona: Mino-tauro 1990. Tr. M. Horne, who also translated Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein, o el moderno Prometeo* in 1994. Madrid: Valderama.

² *Frankenstein Unbound*. Roger Corman (Detroit 1926) produced in 1989 (1990, according to *Variety Movie Guide*). He has also produced series for American TV, including titles such as *House of Usher*. He is considered an independent producer, out of the main stream. This film has been distributed in Spain as *Frankenstein Resucitado*. (*International Dictionary of Films and Film Makers. Directors* 1991). It is available in video. The history of Frankenstein in the cinema is an old one, it dates back to 1902, *Frankenstein's trestle* was produced in the USA by American Mutoscope & Biograph Co. Since then 43 titles concerning the story have been released, the last one being the well known one produced by F. Coppola and directed by K. Branagh which tries to reconstruct Mary Shelley's work taking into account other aspects, such as the feminine point of view.

Aldiss's book was written as a by-product of his *Billion Year Spree. The True History of Science Fiction* in 1973 (Revised in 1984 as *Trillion Year Spree. The History of Science Fiction*) which is a history of Science Fiction. The first chapter of the latter "The Origin of the Species" claims for Mary Shelley the honour of being the first science fiction novelist whose work is a branch of the great tree of the gothic tradition³. I would like to point out that the book by Aldiss was published in the early seventies which were remarkable in many senses, especially one that has to do with the main subject of Mary Shelley's book, the advancement of science against natural order, the feverish obsession of scientists for their work and the consequences that they could not, or were unwilling, to foresee. By the beginning of the seventies a new era in modern surgery had started, the first heart transplant on a human being had already taken place in Cape Town, South Africa, in 1967. The Western world was very much concerned with this and other medical advances and it is a matter of course that today there is uncertainty, restlessness and uneasiness towards those matters that have to do with problems of identity and, in general, with the advantages of modern biology and medicine that many see as being against the laws of nature. Brian Aldiss devotes attention to his subject matter and at the same time was claiming for his own British literary roots the validity of a type of fiction and discourse which is up to date.

It might be useful to remember here that Brian Aldiss considers science fiction was and is only possible at a time in which new technologies are discovered, therefore we must expect the literature to be concerned with themes related to power. This is what lies underneath science fiction which is a fiction of technological times (*Trillion Year Spree*, 14). However much SF seems to be an American form of art, as it corresponds to a period of great discoveries and space technology and to the situation of the United States as the first world power, its origins were in Europe, because it was here where the Industrial Revolution took place, it was based on scientific and technological discoveries which changed the ways of life of men and their views of the environment. In fact Mary Shelley's novel has been associated with scientific fiction thanks to Chevalier, an engraver who visualized on the cover of the 1831 edition (Coburn & Bentley) the laboratory which cinema has popularized (C. de Miguel 1984: 138) and also thanks to the value and importance given at the time to the advances that promised to liberate men from their most painful tasks. The difference perceived by historians between American and British SF

³ In the 1920s "Science Fiction first applied to stories that appeared in American Magazines (*Amazing Stories*, was the earlier). The British called it "Scientific romance" (Aldiss, 1986: 27)

is explained by Aldiss, and his is a reference for those who study the history of this genre:

"The division echoes a division of experience which existed between writers of American and British SF.

...two different traditions had developed between the two countries. The scientific romance, which enjoyed its heyday in the works of Shiel, Griffith, and H.G.Wells, was shortly to merge with the science fiction of the SF magazines....

Its appeal, though limited, had always been to an intelligent middle-class audience.

American science fiction came from different roots, appealing to simpler audiences....(Aldiss, 1986:175-176)

The author with irony defines SF as we perceive it now,

The writers of the present seem always taller,...-They cast longer shadows than those who preceded them. It is difficult to relate their present popularity to their ultimate worth.(407)

As for the subject matter he summarizes with British humour,

"Glossy spacecraft hang in the star-strewn velvet void. Harsh militarized shapes: like unpainted models, masculine and brutal. Brand image: American Empire.

Dragons, unicorns, wizards and half-naked warriors (often women) adorn these covers in rich autumnal colours. Once again we sense a commonality of packaging if not purpose. Brand image: Tolkien's children. (408)

In comparative literature one of the most productive approaches is the study of the subject matter or *stoffgeschichte*. It seems clear enough that what unites Brian Aldiss with the work of his predecessor, whom he calls "the grandmother of SF" is the theme of Prometheus. In the Prologue to the edition of 1831, Mary Shelley explains the creative process and gives an account of the famous conversation between Shelley and Byron. Electricity fascinated Shelley as has been confirmed in the "Life" of Shelley written by his friend T.J. Hogg where we read "that would draw down from the sky an immense volume of electricity, the whole ammunition of a mighty thunderstorm" (*The Life of Shelley*,71). There are first hand biographies besides this one, insisting on the enormous interest for science shown by the poet and some of his friends. And we must not forget that electricity came to be considered "the

spirit of life". Its control was of utmost importance: the myth of Prometheus was ready for rebirth.

And the myth was reborn with Romanticism because it has to do with the evolution of the "I", of self-consciousness and of the awareness of the new capabilities developed by men to control their own environment. Gaston Bachellard in *La Psychoanalyse du Feu* says, "Le mythe de Prométhée raconte l'histoire spécifique de l'éveil de la conscience" (1983: 29). The myth refers to the will of the intellect which is the characteristic of human evolution⁴. Romanticism implied the outburst of the individual and the unique "I", it foregrounded the irrational, the liberation of passions which little by little would replace the philosophy of the classical taste for order. Mary Shelley's Modern Prometheus shows an irrational obsession to reach and control a knowledge that had remained forbidden to men. The scientists and revolutionaries of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century are justly regarded as the real founders of modern science and modern democracy⁵. The last statement of *Defence of Poetry* by her husband is one of tremendous arrogance, "Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the World" (*Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, 508). Shelley was one of the artists of a type of poetry which begins a new phase of the ancient myth and introduces the reader to a Titan fighting to overcome the god-tyrant and steal his power, in that way he

⁴ The notion of poet as "maker" related to Prometheus is already present in Shaftesbury who in *Soliloquy, or Advice to an Author* (1710) wrote,

but for the Man, who truly and in a just sense deserves the Name of Poet...such a poet is indeed a Second Maker, a just Prometheus under Jove. Like the Sovereign Artist or universal Plastick Nature, he forms a whole.

He presents a Prometheus "creator", the origin of Romantic Prometheus. Goethe, at 24 wrote an Ode to Prometheus (1774-1775). Byron in *Manfred* would say,

The mind, the spirit, the Promethean spark,

The lightning of my being (I, i, v, 154-155)

The same data are repeated and (or) confirmed by Mario Praz's Introductory Essay to *Three Gothic Novels* (Penguin, 1968) Trousson *Le Theme du Prométhée* and Maurice Hindle in the excellent introductory essay to the Penguin edition of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1992)

⁵ Paul Manteau study the whole phenomenon of the invention of new machines that put forward the Industrial Revolution and the social changes. Two more titles, A. Briggs's *The Age of Improvement 1783-1867* and Evans's *The Forging of the Modern State. Early Industrial Britain 1783-1870* are eloquent enough to describe the new society and the new links the individual established with it.

himself could be "maker" and "creator"⁶ I am recalling here the memory of Percy B. Shelley not as a pointless literary exercise related to the book of Mary Shelley but because Brian Aldiss paraphrases Shelley's work often enough and makes many textual references to the poet and to his work. Further more, *Trillion Year Spree* has this heading, "The mirror of the gigantic shadows which futurity casts upon the present" which is one of the statements from the final paragraph of *Defence of Poetry* and it is included explicitly and slightly changed in *Frankenstein Unbound* (124).

The stolen fire will be Prometheus's own Hell and as Maker and Creator he is responsible for his own creation. Prometheus presents a dual problem, he defies Jupiter the lord of Fire, the god of all religions described in Shelley's *Queen Mab* as "a vengeful pitiless and almighty fiend,/ whose mercy is a nickname for the rage/ of timeless tygers hungering for blood..." (IV, 211-213).

The Prometheus Unbound of P.B. Shelley was the first important Romantic work on the subject of the Titan rebelling against his creator. Victor Frankenstein, like Prometheus, is a rational and anthropocentric scientist (Shelley started his work in 1818, once his wife had finished her narrative, and finished it in Rome in 1820). In Act I we read, "I see a mighty darkness/ Filling the seat of power" (II,4, 2-3) (which is a clear reference to Milton's lines which in their turn were printed immediately below the title of Mary Shelley's work)

This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be
good, great and joyous, beautiful and free;
This is alone Life, Joy, Empire, and Victory.

Shelley's Prometheus is a titanic spirit, himself the representative of man, in Shelley equal to god, fighting against a tyrant evil god, man himself has created "He who is evil can receive no good!...he can feel hate, fear, shame-not gratitude" (*PU*, I, i, 389-391) This god is revengeful as Mercury says,

To thee unwilling, most unwillingly
I come, by the great father's will driven down
To execute a doom of new revenge

(*PU*, I, i, 353-355)

⁶ "But Prometheus is, as it were, the type of the highest perfection of moral and intellectual nature, impelled by the purest and the truest motives to the best and noblest ends" Preface to *Prometheus Unbound*

⁷ Conceived and written in between 1811 and 1813, published in London anonymously and without the name of the publisher as *Queen Mab: a Philosophical Poem: with Notes*

According to Trousson,

La lutte de Prométhée contre Jupiter illustre le combat du bien contre le mal: ainsi se trouve instauré ce dualism irréductible dont Camus dénonçait l'absence chez Eschyle. L'existence du mal se trouve perque en premier lieu sur le plan metaphysique, mais, aussitôt, on en aperçoit les prolongements terrestres (1976: 329)

Romantic Prometheus is Lucifer rebelling against God and his domain of fire, he is an indomitable spirit. He illustrates the exaltation of science as the liberation of men from human bonds, from superstitions, a liberation of his consciousness and from original sin; Prometheus also represented the cult of progress and the faith in culture; "qui dit Prométhée, pense liberté, genie, progrès, connaissance, revolte" (Trousson, iv). According to Bachelard he is a hero of culture, of science and reason, he is materialist and scientist, he fights God in the laboratory. Prometheus was also the Titan that robbed speech to give it to men, as Asia says to Demogorgon in *Prometheus Unbound*,

Gave Man speech, and speech created thought,
which is the measure of the universe;
And Science struck the thrones of earth and heaven

(II,iv, 72-74)

The poet uses speech at its highest, accordingly "the poet is a masterpiece of nature, which another [poet] not only ought to study but must study" (Preface to *Prometheus Unbound*), man has to liberate himself because evil is not inherent in human nature, but it has been imposed upon him. "Nature! -no! Kings, priests, and statemen blast the human flower" (*QM*, IV, 103-107). Science would free men from superstition, because Shelley believed that *humankind only had to will that evil did not exist* in the words of Mary Shelley.

But this is a century of decadence for the Titan, a decadence that began with the book of Mary Shelley, which shows her modern Prometheus "Sporting with Life". As Janet Todd says, it is an inspired dialectic reversal of the authorized (Romantic) version of Prometheus as humanity-God's defying "benefactor" (1989: 607). Her book must be understood in this romantic context of individualism enhanced. This is the tradition that cinema has stolen focusing its attention on the horror of Frankenstein's nameless creature, a tradition that Aldiss and Corman revived in 1989. Shelley's work is scientific in the sense that embodies the new science that would serve the purpose of

liberating man⁸ and it is essentially political, because it was in that way he conceived poetry.

I consider poetry very subordinate to moral and political science, and if I were well, certainly I would aspire to the latter; for I can conceive a great work, embodying the discoveries of all ages. (Letter to Peacock, Jan. 26th, 1819)

II

Frankenstein Unbound is science fiction according to one of the many definition of the genre, "Science fiction is the search for a definition of mankind and his status in the universe which stands in our advanced but confused state of knowledge (science), and is characteristically cast in the Gothic or post-Gothic mode" (quoted by Aldiss, 1984: 25). The novel is preceded by a quote from Byron's *Manfred* and Leonardo da Vinci's *Treatise on Painting* "make the beaten and conquered pallid, with brows raised and knit together, and let the skin above the brows be all full of lines of pain;...". Therefore we must expect the Byronic hero to be one of the subtexts. But the main one is basically the Prometheus of Percy B. Shelley which however unwritten was already present in *Alastor*⁹. In Aldiss novel the hero of the year 2020 meets the nameless monsters, Victor Frankenstein (He also visits his laboratory) and Mary Godwin (later Mary Shelley), they are the three interlocutors of the protagonist. Aldiss's Victor becomes a punished Prometheus, a Prometheus Bound from the very beginning, transformed into a Byronic character, his entrails eaten by remorse, he is still arrogant, "A new species would bless me as its creator and source" (*FU*, 46)¹⁰. Victor Frankenstein's obsession does not allow him to see the truth, in the name of his will he renounces everything. His creature turns out to be out of any

⁸ Histories of newly discovered technology in the 18th century existed a long time ago, two works worth mentioning are, CRABO, C. *Electricity, the Spirit of the Earth, Philological Quarterly*, 1927; 133-150 and, by the same author, *A Newton among Poets: The use of Science in Prometheus Unbound*, Chapel Hill, 1930.

⁹ Alastor "represents a youth of uncorrupted feelings and adventurous genius led forth by an imagination inflamed and purified through familiarity with all that is excellent and majestic...He drinks deeps of the fountain of knowledge and is still insatiate...So long as it is possible for his desires to point towards objects thus infinite and unmeasured, he is joyous, and tranquil, and self-possessed. But the period arrives when these objects cease to suffice." (*Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, 69)

¹⁰ This is a paraphrase of Victor Frankenstein words in his death-bed in Mary Shelley's novel "I have myself been blasted in these hopes, yet another may succeed" (1992: 210)

proportion, harmony is impossible, for the main problem is one of harmony and identity.

The quest of Joseph Bodenland, the man of the future starts on the 20th of August in the year 2020, (exactly two hundred years after the publication of *Prometheus Unbound*.) with a letter from Joseph Bodenland to his wife. The place New Houston. We learn that "CompC, being much more sophisticated, has been entirely disorganized by the recent impact-raids. What has not? The deadline on today's Still: SPACE/TIME RUPTURE, SCIENTISTS SAY" (1991:9). An attack with laser weapons has blurred the limits. Time shifts occupy the first part of the narrative, whose account in two letters, an editorial of *The Times*, a CompC cable and an "Extract from [a] W. Central Telecable Record of Conversation over open phone..."(26) takes five irregular chapters, using the different linguistic registers proper to the different media. Temporal and spacial boundaries are blurred in a phantasmagoric fiction which takes the protagonist from the Texas of 2020 to the Geneve of 1815, where he meets Victor Frankenstein at the moment his brother William has been murdered by the nameless creature, and Justina is about to be hanged. "Time and space have gone on the blink" (15). Joe travels through a dual universe, involving the reader of the present in his oneiric experience which relates the future with the past.

Time is a favourite Aldiss subject which he defines as "change": "ultimately the one permanent thing until the death of the universe" (*FU*, 199); "The greatest successes of science fiction are those which deal with man in relation to his changing surroundings and abilities" (*Trillion*, 1986:29); "Time is the spectre haunting the stage of most of my books. Time in its own right and in one of its nastiest disguises, as Change" (1991: 20). It is a literary convention used by H.G. Wells and has substituted other literary formulae such as visions and dreams.

Part 2 entitled "The tape journal of Joseph Bodenland" is divided into 27 parts. A first person narrator tells the story of his own nightmare and his encounter with the shadows of the past. He is hero, witness and narrator. It begins with a prophetic styled statement: "A Record must be kept for the sanity of all concerned". The tape recorder is a substitute for the written diary in this new fiction. In fact it is the same as a travel diary, written words or recorded voice, they are the only traces left. Its survival is of great relevance as records survive men.

"Between the blinding voltages of these returns, I attempted to make my brain think. *At least the graven image of reality had been destroyed for me*, so that I no longer had difficulty in

apprehending Frankenstein and his monsters, Byron, Mary Shelley, and the world of 2020 as contiguous...Possibility and time levels seemed as fluid as the clouds that meet and merge eternally" (193, my italics); "I had altered no future, no past, I had merely diffused myself over a number of cloud-patch times. There was no future, no past. Only the cloud-sky of infinite present states" (194)

Joseph Bodenland's personality dissolves in the fiction of Mary Shelley and diffuses itself over a number of cloud-patch times. In this way he has no difficulty in apprehending Frankenstein and his monsters, Byron and Shelley, and the world of 2020 as Mary Shelley's novel could be regarded as a possible future. Precision instruments and watches were useless to anyone of that age and in this fiction, they only serve the purpose of facing the past and the future which is one of the issues of the novel. Remarks on the great historical change are abundant and this one could be a good example,

"...their first lesson in working by the clock. But the greatest advances in regularizing the habits of people was soon about to descend on the world in which I found myself: the introduction of a complex railway system which depended on exact and uniform timing over whole countries, not on the vagaries of a church steeple...That regularization would reinforce the lesson of the factory siren: that to survive, all must be sacrificed to a formal pattern imposed impersonally on the individual" (81)

What is remarkable in this novel is that Joseph Bodenland, the man of the future, appears in the world of the fiction of Aldiss like the monster of the fiction of Mary Shelley. In the Geneve of 1815 he comes from darkness and avoids populated areas. He is a man from another world and another time, he feels a stranger in a world he always thought a pleasing and safe past, "without refrigerators or a can to be found throughout the land". Again a matter of proportions, his presence is out of place in a valley soothing and beautiful "I felt myself in the presence of myth and by association, accepted myself as mythical"(40). Joseph Bodenland is a mirror of the future casting his shadow upon the past, and from that Arcadia he descends into a Miltonic "infernal landscape of light and fire, a lake of fire". A blinding darkness is cast upon "impenetrable darkness" (43) the moment he encounters Frankenstein looking for his monsters (this time he has created an Eve for his creature). Joseph and Victor meet. Frankenstein refuses to listen to the voice of the future and with immense arrogance explains the reasons for his impulse,

The desire to wrest from Mother Nature some of her deeper secrets, however dark the passage down which I might tread... Truth was everything to me! I wanted to improve the world, to deliver into man's hands some of those powers which had hitherto been ascribed to a fictitious God! I made my bed in charnels and on coffins, that a new Promethean fire might be lit! What a man ever achieved what I have achieved? And you speak of my sins! (59-60)¹¹

"Hell hath no fury like a reformer who wishes to remake the world and finds the world prefers its irreducible self", is Joseph's remark on the tape recorder.

This encounter takes our protagonist to Vila Diodati, where Byron, his Italian doctor "Poli" and his retinue lived. P.B. Shelley and Mary Godwin, still unmarried, were established close by and Byron is made to say, "The great John Milton, that blind justifier of God to man, stayed under this very roof once". Milton's shadow is cast upon the whole narrative in the same way his lines are cast upon Mary Shelley's book,

Did I request thee, Maker, from my day
to mould me man? Did I solicit thee

From darkness to promote me? (*Paradise Lost*) (10, ll. 743-745)

These are the words of Adam cursing his creator, in the same way Mary Shelley's creature curses Frankenstein, *Hateful day when I received life! Accursed Creator! Why did you from a monster so hideous that even you turned from me in disgust?* (132)

The meeting of the man from the future and the characters of the past is described in realistic terms, and Aldiss's humour pervades (they have carrots and mutton for supper, Shelley's features are carefully portrayed, the same as those of Mary Godwin). The presence of William the son of Mary by the poet is clearly associated with the fictitious William of Mary's narrative. The domesticity of the moment is opposed to the conversation of the two poets, Byron and Shelley: Joe the narrator addresses to the reader, "the world seemed very small, only the perspectives of the poets were large" (79). The conversation is about the "new systems of machines" that create a new social

¹¹ This time Aldiss paraphrases the lines in *Alastor* "I have made my bed / in charnels and on coffins, where black death/ Keeps record of the trophies won from thee." (24-24) 8. Histories of newly discovered technology in the 18th century existed a long time ago, two works worth mentioning are, CRABO, C. *Electricity, the Spirit of the Earth, Philological Quarterly*, 1927; 133-150 and, by the same author, *A Newton among Poets: The use of Science in Prometheus Unbound*, Chapel Hill, 1930.

class. The man of the future Joseph Bodenland, this time performing the role of Tiresias the blind seer who retained his prophetic gifts even in the underworld, and the man of the past P.B.Shelley establish a debate on the perspective of workers as "a labour force". Certainly Shelley wouldn't be convinced.

The great moment, the climax of the narrative, is the one in which Joseph Bodenland is left alone with Mary Shelley: they understand each other instantly, "Something has happened to us Mary, that enables us to step between worlds. It may not last." (108) and this meeting which defies any kind of obstacle is possible because "human nature is the same"; Joseph asks her to go with him "Mary come with me! You are a displaced person, I swear! - Come and be a displaced person with me!" (110). They make love and part. Joseph remains a displaced person in the Geneve of 1816 and is sent to jail where he writes a letter to Mary Godwin; the letter together with the direct phantasmagoric conversation are the formulae of communication between the writer of the present and the writer of the past. The writer of the present patronizingly tells her about the advantages of education

Between your age and mine, dear Mary, a re-education has taken place. The benefits of a growing scientific spirit have formed an overwhelming force behind that re-education.

Of course, that's not the end of the story. To have an overwhelming force is one thing, to direct it quite another. (123)

This letter is an abridged history of civilization in the last two hundred years; on the improving conditions of humankind two hundred years after *Prometheus Unbound* was published; about social improvements in Justice, "We no longer allow the weak or foolish or unfortunate to perish in the gutters of a city slum" (which is the utopia of the present as fulfilled in the future). It is also about the role of poets, however he misquotes Shelley, probably on purpose "it is your-husband-to-be who declares...that poets are mirrors of the tremendous shadows which futurity cast upon the present...He is absolutely right, save in one particular: he should have specifically included novelists with poets"(124), (which is not true as Shelley in his *Defence* says "The distinction between poets and prose writers is a vulgar error" ("*A Defence...*", *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, 484)

In this letter he also reminds Mary Godwin (and the reader) that novels were not much regarded in 1816, that the great day of the novel would

dawn in the next generation, that the novel would become the flower of humanity. He recalls the names of the great novelists and adds,

And you, my dear Mary, respected though your name is- you are insufficiently regarded as the first of that invaluable breed, preceding them by at least one whole generation! (124)

One of the subtexts worth noticing is that, as I said above, the man of the future, Joseph Bodenland can be identified with the monster. He takes with him the Western man's burden. Joseph in his journey to the past and through the past plays the role of a primitive Prometheus. Confronted with cold and hunger, isolated in a cave, the fire he has lit with great effort is stolen by common thieves. Confronted with an adverse Nature, panic is felt to be a primitive force. His self, deprived of the external elements proportioned by civilization, dissolves in "filth and terror and tumult" (130) in a clear allusion to Milton, the Milton Shelley promotes in the Preface of *Prometheus Unbound*. He is only a creature striving against the elements; there are no feelings left, only primeval sensations in a night without darkness, an age of innocence.

Joseph Bodenland in his nightmarish journey is besieged by visions "long deprived of their dreaming times". Stumps of time pass in a pageant of memories: a successful, best-selling Mary, Mary and Joseph looking for Shelley's boat; in the same way that the Creator of Mary Shelley's book pursues his creature, Joseph pursues Victor to kill him. In this demented pursuit there is another vision, Victor's monsters have engendered children whose cry "was a certain voice-print of brain damage in the infant. He gave an exact name to the kind of damage...". there are many infants in a great heap, all with wakeful eyes and distorted features.

The landscape belongs to the world of nightmare and is a splendid surrealistic description that echoes other descents into Hell, other *catabasis*; it is a *waste land*, it is in the heart of darkness as he drives near the mountains through *a road that turned and coiled* in order to find its way among the foothills, a metaphor for cyclic repetition:

"The road winds and winds to reach one end of a giant recession into the mountains then it winds in an opposite direction to reach a point but a short distance from the first as the crow flies...Now this process had to be repeated a hundred times, two hundred, three...

Occasionally, my tired brain assured me it saw Victor running screaming before the vehicle, a hole in his lungs and blood at his throat (205)

Joseph shoots Victor, but his monsters still exert "that tremendous paralysis of fascination" (213) ("the fascination of the abomination" as Conrad puts it). It is the last encounter of Joseph Bodenland with Mary Shelley's fiction, and in this encounter, this dialogue: "I am a natural creature, you are -a horror, unalive! I was born, you were made-". The monster at Joseph's feet "...though you seek to bury me, yet you continuously resurrect me! Once I am unbound, I am unbounded!" (215). In spite of all the shots the monster never dies, he is reborn in a sort of eternal cycle: "They thought me gone, for 1 that day was absent, as befell, bound on a voyage uncouth and obscure, far on excursion towards the gates of hell.." (216).

Joseph ends his record "waiting until someone or something came for me" and as the creature of Mary Shelley disappears "lost in darkness and distance", the protagonist of the future is "biding his time in darkness and distance", which is Aldiss's paraphrase of the last paragraph of *Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus*. The repetition of the creation of nameless creatures is thus cyclic. In this way Brian Aldiss dissolves his fiction in that of his predecessor, melting his voice in hers.

"Science fiction is now too popular to ignore. Science fiction, fantasy and horror films and novels are the box office and bestseller's list success stories of the modern film and publishing age" (Justice, 1989: ix). Brian Aldiss, the science fiction writer, the writer of a genre considered popular, sometimes peripheral and marginal, alien to the central tradition, certainly not belonging to the major canon, has been claiming for this type of literature a place among the privileged and in doing so he feeds his own fiction out of the central British literary system and at the same time he amplifies it. His textual references always belong to the great British tradition. Aldiss's is a huge effort to gain for science fiction a place at the summit. This is the value of intertextuality for this novelist. The effort to acquire for this genre a status in the major canon is perhaps the main contribution of Aldiss.

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