

Principles of Literary Study
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Office hours: Mondays 2:00–3:00 or by appointment

March 22, 2021. Shelley (I).

review: using genre for interpretation

- ▶ “Arson Plus” has a clever detective, but he’s no Holmes
 - ▶ a working guy: the Operative, along with the cops
 - ▶ not “fascinating problems” but a job to do
- ▶ there’s a crime, there are disguises, but there’s no snake
 - ▶ a plausible fraud
- ▶ what’s at stake?
 - ▶ no damsel in distress...not much of a femme fatale either

exercises for the reader: Chandler

It is not a fragrant world [Hammett's world], but it is the world you live in, and certain writers with tough minds and a cool spirit of detachment can make interesting and even amusing patterns out of it. It is not funny that a man should be killed, but it is sometimes funny that he should be killed for little, and that his death should be the coin of what we call civilization.

Raymond Chandler, "The Simple Art of Murder," *Atlantic Monthly* (November 1944): 59.

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Raymond Chandler, "The Simple Art of Murder," *Atlantic Monthly* (November 1944): 59.

- 1789 French revolution
- 1792 Mary Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*
- 1797 Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin born
- 1804 Haitian independence
- 1814 MWG elopes with Percy Shelley, m. 1816
- 1815 Waterloo
- 1816 *Frankenstein* begun
- 1818 *Frankenstein*, 1st ed.
- 1822 Percy Shelley dies
- 1831 *Frankenstein*, 3rd ed. (revised)
- 1851 Mary Shelley dies

- 1891 Conan Doyle, "A Scandal in Bohemia"
- 1923 Hammett, "Arson Plus"
- 1939 Chandler, "I'll Be Waiting"

judge a book by its title page

Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus (London: Lackington, Hughes, Harding, Mavor, & Jones, 1818), v. [HathiTrust](#).

Shelley: framing

- ▶ Who narrates *Frankenstein*?

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CN1 [Walton] CN2 [Dr. Frankenstein]

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external narrator (EN) does not participate in the *fabula*

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Discussion

- ▶ Why does the novel open with Walton as CN1?

short break

frame effects

Will you laugh at the enthusiasm I express concerning this divine wanderer? If you do, you must have certainly lost that simplicity which was once your characteristic charm. (17)

the moral of the story?

Learn from me, if not by my precepts, at least by my example, how dangerous is the acquirement of knowledge, and how much happier is the man who believes his native town to be the world. (33)

- ▶ Why might we doubt Frankenstein's own judgment?

My first thought was to discover [i.e., reveal] what I knew of the murderer, and cause instant pursuit to be made. But I paused when I reflected on the story that I had to tell....These reflections determined me, and I resolved to remain silent. (53)

this book is weird

- ▶ Does Frankenstein's response to the birth of the Creature (36–39) make sense?

next

- ▶ Continue reading, at least through vol. 2 (III).
- ▶ Percy Shelley, “Mont Blanc” (1817)