

## **Panel 29**

### **Identities, Landscapes and the Anthropocene**

#### **Meta-landscapes in Peter Ackroyd's *The Casebook of Victor Frankenstein***

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In *The Casebook of Victor Frankenstein* (2008), Peter Ackroyd elaborates on the (post)romantic entanglement of landscape and identity. Mary Shelley's word-paintings are 'alive' again as Ackroyd skilfully explores the potential of the landscape not only to inform characterisation, but also – I will argue – to serve broader meta-discursive purposes. The landscapes sketched by Ackroyd, ranging from clichéd mountain sceneries to more conceptually advanced vistas of the Thames estuary, become metaphors of the literary adaptation processes: the reconciliation of the old and the new through anachronistic storytelling. In particular, the estuary, the refuge of the Creature, stands for the rejuvenating movements and changes of textual lives that Frankenstein's Creature represents. The estuary is deprived of the typical set of connotations that the other *Frankenstein* landscapes (the Alps, the Rhein valley) offer, and becomes emblematic of Ackroyd's view of textual identity as fluid and subject to change. *The Thames: A Biography* preceded *The Casebook* by a year, and Ackroyd's observations in the *Biography* on the Protean identity of 'the sacred river', the porous character of the estuary, as well as the more general remarks on the imagery of water encourage us to view the waterscapes in *The Casebook of Victor Frankenstein* as the core of the literary afterlives politics at play.

#### **Biography**

Jakub Lipski is University Professor in the Department of Anglophone Literatures at Kazimierz Wielki University in Bydgoszcz, Poland. He is the author of *Castaway Bodies in the Eighteenth-Century English Robinsonade* (2024), *Re-Reading the Eighteenth-Century Novel: Studies in Reception* (2021), *Painting the Novel: Pictorial Discourse in Eighteenth-Century English Fiction* (2018) and *In Quest of the Self: Masquerade and Travel in the Eighteenth-Century Novel* (2014). His research interests include eighteenth-century English fiction and culture, word and image crossovers, as well as reception and adaptation studies. He has recently co-edited (with Mary Newbould) *The Edinburgh Companion to the Eighteenth-Century British Novel and the Arts* (EUP, 2024).