

# A Black Prometheus: *Frankenstein's* Progeny in LaValle's *Destroyer*

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## Abstract

This paper explores the way in which Victor LaValle's comic book *Destroyer* (2017) uses Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* as a palimpsest through which to discuss racial inequalities, somehow retrieving and expanding W.E.B Du Bois' use of the Prometheus myth as a racial allegory. Through the intersection of critical race theory discourses, literary allusions, and Afrofuturists scenarios, America is here described as a gothic landscape. This sense of familiarity is generated by the "remediation" and interconnection of two well-known palimpsests: Frankenstein's monster story and the killing of unarmed African Americans by law enforcement officers in the United States. Indeed, Dr. Baker, inspired by Frankenstein, decides to revive her twelve-years-old son, Akai, using nanobots. Akai was returning home from a baseball game carrying his bat, when a cop shoots him after a neighbor call reporting an eighteen-to-twenty-year-old Black man with a rifle. Technology is here framed and interpreted as a response to personal grief, and (cultural) trauma. However, at a close glance, the racial utopia promised by technology hides some uncanny reality. Indeed, the hopes for tomorrow, for a Black person, are hindered by the past, as the technological enhancement is (also) enacted through the violation of a Black body, as in the case of Akai's father. Consequently, *Destroyer* attempts to make the country accountable for the injustices it has perpetrated throughout its history.