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# **Bakalářská práce**

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## **Comparative Analysis of the Portrayal of Frankenstein's Creature on Film**

Srovnání a rozbor zobrazení Frankensteinova stvoření ve filmu

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Prague, 5 August 2022

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**Klíčová slova:**

*Frankenstein, Mary Shelley, Frankensteinovo stvoření, Film, Filmová adaptace*

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## **Abstrakt**

*Frankenstein neboli moderní Prométheus* Mary Shelley byl poprvé publikován v roce 1818. Téměř o století později, v roce 1910, v počátcích kinematografie, se Frankensteinovo monstrum poprvé objevilo v černé a bílé na stříbrném plátně v experimentální produkci Thomase Edisona v režii J. Searle Dawleyho. Od té doby vzniklo nepřehledné množství filmových a televizních adaptací. Cílem této práce je porovnat a analyzovat, jak bylo v těchto adaptacích zobrazeno Frankensteinovo stvoření, častěji Frankensteinovo monstrum, se zaměřením především na kognitivní schopnosti monstra. Cílem je zjistit, jak a proč se tvor, který je v knize popsán jako inteligentní bytost schopná myšlení a citů, která se naučila mluvit i číst, se v některých adaptacích mění na nesmyslnou a bezduchou obludu. Práce se bude také zabývat vlivem této zásadní transpozice na celkovou atmosféru, žánr a význam té které adaptace a souvisejícími problémy populárního kulturního odkazu románu jako takového. Analýza adaptací, které jsou blíže původní vizi románu, bude sloužit jako výchozí materiál pro srovnání. Analýza různých zpodobnění Frankensteinova stvoření v odlišných adaptacích navíc umožní určit některé z důvodů transformace nebo spíše degradace tvora v monstrum, a stanovit některé způsoby, kterými nová média ovlivnila tento posun paradigmatu, doplněný synekdochálním posunem jména Frankenstein, které od té doby označuje spíše stvoření než jeho tvůrce. Filmy vybrané pro bližší analýzu v této práci představují různá období filmografie, což nabízí komplexnější pohled na historický vývoj vizuálních a performativních zobrazení Frankensteinova stvoření.

**Abstract:**

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein: or The Modern Prometheus* was first published in 1818. Almost a century later, in 1910, in the early days of the cinematograph, Frankenstein's Creature appeared in black and white on the silver screen for the first time in Thomas Edison's experimental production directed by J. Searle Dawley. Since then, a plethora of film and television adaptations have been created. The goal of this thesis is to compare and analyse how Frankenstein's Creature, or, increasingly, the Frankenstein monster, was portrayed in these adaptations, paying attention primarily to the intelligence of the monster. The aim is to discover how and why the Creature, who is described in the book as an intelligent being capable of thinking, feeling, reading and speaking, is transformed in some adaptations into a senseless brutal monstrosity. The thesis will also discuss the effect of this transposition on the overall atmosphere, genre and meaning of the individual adaptations and the related problems of the novel's popular cultural legacy. The analysis of the adaptations which are closer to the original vision of the novel will serve as key material for comparison. The analysis of the different representations of the Creature throughout various adaptations will additionally allow to determine some of the reasons for the transformation or rather degradation of the Creature into the monster, commenting on the ways in which new media influenced this paradigm shift, complete with the synecdochal shift of the name 'Frankenstein', which has since come to mean the Creature rather than its creator. The films selected for closer analysis in this thesis represent different eras of filmography, which offers a more comprehensive perspective on the historical development of the Frankenstein Creature's visual and performative representations.

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# 1 Introduction

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein: or The Modern Prometheus* is arguably one of the most famous horror novels of our time. The novel was first published anonymously in three volumes in 1818 by Lackington, Hughes, Harding, Mavor, & Jones.<sup>1</sup> The 1823 edition credited Mary with the authorship and the 1831 edition, substantially edited and expanded, is the most read edition to this day.<sup>2</sup> While the first edition was, based on the manuscripts, heavily edited by Percy Shelley, and the anonymous publication led many critics, including Sir Walter Scott, to assume the poet was the author of the novel, the 1831 edition contains later editorial changes by Mary Shelley, complete with many instances of more overtly moral conclusions throughout, both in terms of scientific research and imperial endeavour to conquer the furthest reaches of the planet. Since its first publication, the novel has been adapted into theatre plays, films, comic books, board games and other formats and media. The image of Frankenstein's Monster and the name of the scientist are often misused and/or confused with one another, and despite reading the novel multiple times and knowing the distinction between the Creature and the creator even I occasionally make the common mistake of referring to the Creature by the name of Frankenstein. Frankenstein's Creature is also one of the symbols of the horror genre and an essential pillar of cinematographic history. However, his representation on film largely differs from the original description in Mary Shelley's novel. Most of the early films completely disregard his intelligence and favour the frightening qualities of his appearance and brute force, opting for the horror characteristics over a more profound portrayal. The film adaptations and the synecdochal shift of the name 'Frankenstein' are thus the two main points of this thesis. The goal is to compare and analyse selected film portrayals of Frankenstein's Creature, discover the reasons for the specific changes from the intelligent being to the mindless monster and discuss the effect of this transposition on the overall atmosphere, genre and meaning of the adaptations, and the related problems of the novel's popular cultural legacy.

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<sup>1</sup> "The Many Editions of Frankenstein," *University of North Georgia Press*, accessed February 25, 2022, <https://blog.ung.edu/press/editions-of-frankenstein/>

<sup>2</sup> "Frankenstein Chronology", *The Shelley-Godwin Archive*, Accessed July 8, 2022, <http://shelleygodwinarchive.org/contents/frankenstein/frankenstein-chronology/#1818-1830>

## 2 Between the novel and the films

Before the analysis of the films, it is important to mention the key transitional step between the two mediums of representation: dramatic adaptations. Before Frankenstein's Creature first appeared on screen, it was presented on stage throughout the nineteenth century. The first dramatization is Richard Brinsley Peake's *Presumption; or, the Fate of Frankenstein*, first performed in 1823. According to Denise Gigante Mary Shelley herself was surprised by its success and was pleased with the fact that the Creature was left unnamed in the list of *dramatis personae*.<sup>3</sup> The plot of the original novel was simplified and heavily adapted to ensure the possibility of its production in the "illegitimate theatre" venues and as "the resulting play was very much a mixed sort of production that combined elements of music, high and low comedy, and stage spectacle."<sup>4</sup> Another important play adaptation is *Frankenstein; or, The Demon of Switzerland* (1823), where the subtitle "The Modern Prometheus" was replaced by "The Demon of Switzerland" and where, according to Gigante, "the 'or,' then, becomes a pivotal transition, a vanishing mediator between 'Frankenstein' and 'Demon,' with the latter threatening to engulf the former."<sup>5</sup> William St Clair recalls that the first play was advertised initially as *Presumption*, but as the name of Frankenstein became more familiar among the theatre audience, the title was changed to *Frankenstein, or, The Danger of Presumption* and, similarly, another play's title changed from *The Man and the Monster* (1826) to *Frankenstein, or, The Monster* which slowly led to the fusion of the scientist and the monster and the lasting confusion of their names.<sup>6</sup> *Presumption*, as the first dramatization, plays the most important role, as it inspired many future adaptations. It simplified the plot by deleting the framing narrative and thus getting rid of Walton's entire storyline and introducing the Creature as a being unable to speak.<sup>7</sup> The initial inaccessibility of the novel also allowed the dramatizations to gain primary popularity and later it was often the content of the plays that inspired other adaptations: theatrical, cinematic or other.<sup>8</sup> The nineteenth-century dramatizations must be thus considered a

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<sup>3</sup> Gigante, Denise. 2000. "Facing the Ugly: The Case of 'Frankenstein.'" *ELH* 67 (2): 582. Accessed September 22, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30031925>.

<sup>4</sup> "Novel into Drama and onto the Stage." 2001. *Romantic-Circles.org*. University of Colorado Boulder. August 1, 2001. Accessed July 11, 2022. <https://romantic-circles.org/editions/peake/apparatus/drama.html>.

<sup>5</sup> Gigante, "Facing the Ugly: The Case of 'Frankenstein'," 583.

<sup>6</sup> St Clair, William. "The Impact of Frankenstein." In *Mary Shelley in Her Times*, edited by Betty T. Bennett and Stuart Curran, 53. 2000. Baltimore, Md.; London: Johns Hopkins University Press.

<sup>7</sup> Szwydky, Lissette Lopez. "Frankenstein's spectacular nineteenth-century stage history and legacy." In *Adapting Frankenstein: The Monster's Eternal Lives in Popular Culture*, edited by Dennis R. Cutchins and Dennis R. Perry, 58. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018.

<sup>8</sup> St Clair, "The Impact of Frankenstein," 55.

crucial stepping stone both for the synecdochal shift of the name 'Frankenstein' from the scientist to the Creature and for the artistic choices made by future filmmakers who predominantly opt for the horror genre rather than a more balanced speculative narrative with fully developed characters.

### 3 Film and novel as two media of representation – main differences

Before embarking on the comparative analysis of the portrayal of Frankenstein's Creature on film, it is necessary to briefly establish the differences between the two media. Both film and literature share the narrative frame, however, their methods of expression and representation obviously distinguish them from each other quite dramatically. The main difference is between the instruments used by writers and film creators: while the main tool of a writer is language, a film creator has a wider choice of tools such as colour, sound, music, speed, light etc., as well as physical character representation. Jason Mittell suggests that these techniques used in film allow the film creators to lead the viewer to a certain emotional response and interpretation of the film,<sup>9</sup> and "just as moving-image storytelling lacks literature's ability to describe and evaluate elements of the storyworld via adjectives and narrative voice, except via the 'literary' device of voice-over narration, films are also limited as to how much of the diegetic world can be presented or withheld."<sup>10</sup> Thus with the help of audio-visual effects, a film can offer a greater range, a more detailed image of a character or scenery. On the other hand, the written description can express the inner monologue of a character, their emotions, hopes, fears and thoughts overall. It can further introduce several points of view, which is difficult to attempt in a film adaptation. A film can attempt to replicate a similar approach, but an audio-visual representation would still be less certain compared to the written word, and a viewer would have a broader range of possible interpretations.

The precision of the expressed idea is another key difference between film and text. When Mittell compares L. Frank Baum's novel *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900) with its film adaptation *The Wizard of Oz* (1939), he introduces the idea that a writer cannot describe every detail of the scenery thus he uses general terms which can be adapted and enhanced in a film.<sup>11</sup> For example a writer can describe a lake scenery as 'beautiful' while a director can paint a detailed picture of a lake, with various flora and fauna, bright colours and vivid sounds. The first approach gives readers freedom to imagine the scenery according to their own idea of what is 'beautiful',

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<sup>9</sup> Mittell, Jason. "Film and television narrative." In *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative*, edited by David Herman, 160. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

<sup>10</sup> Mittell, "Film and television narrative," 160.

<sup>11</sup> Mittell, "Film and television narrative," 159.

while the second offers viewers a fixed image envisioned by the film crew. James Monaco argues that “chance plays a much larger part, and the end result is that the observer is free to participate in the experience much more actively.”<sup>12</sup>

Another important difference is the time perception and operation. While a film is usually limited to approximately two hours, the duration of the reading depends on the individual. This limitation can and inevitably always does influence the cinematographic interpretation, as the time-limited visual medium must provide a whole picture, a story from the beginning to the end in a comparably short period. A reader, on the other hand, can prolong their experience, concentrate more on certain parts, and possibly forget some of the details, or go back and re-read and possibly re-imagine certain parts of the narrative. The film experience is more condensed, which can also strengthen the emotional perception of a viewer. Nevertheless, as Monaco mentions, “almost invariably, details of incident are lost in the transition from book to film.”<sup>13</sup> As a film is limited by its time frame, the film director usually has to shorten, completely remove certain parts of the adapted novel, or change them to fit the desired or even required time limit.

The historical period can likewise play an important role when distinguishing the two media of representation. Except for the modern precedents, when a book is written based on a popular film or TV series, most novels precede their film adaptations. This usually means that there is a certain amount of time between the publishing of the novel and the screening of the film. This interval can vary from several years to decades and centuries. The longer the lapse period, the greater the difference in viewers’ perception of the adapted material. The historical events, technological, socio-economic and political changes influence the audience’s expectations and impressions, as well as the directors’ take on adapting the original source. The filmmakers have to adapt the original material to the contemporary audience, which can lead to its substantial changes, often to the detriment of the original text and its ethos. The original material can be further reinterpreted based on contemporary events, and the original idea can be used to express modern subject matter and reflect ongoing public debate.

The variations of historical background can be further connected to the difference in the purpose of the discussed mediums of representation. The intentions of a writer and of a filmmaker

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<sup>12</sup> Monaco, James. 2000. *How to Read a Film: Movies, Media, Multimedia*. 3rd ed. 46. New York: Oxford University Press. Accessed October 31, 2021.

<sup>13</sup> Monaco, *How to Read a Film: Movies, Media, Multimedia*, 45.

can significantly vary, especially when the interval between the original and the adaptation becomes longer. The cinematographic intentions depend on various factors: the desire to express emotions, to express an artistic vision or to bring attention to a certain issue; more often than not, commercial interest plays a key role in the artistic choices made both in cinematography and in novel writing. Both a writer and a filmmaker make their creative choices based on their personal, social, political and historical circumstances. H. L. Malchow describes a novel as “not only a product of inner psychology and private domestic experience but also of the wider, enfolding, external environment of shifting values, attitudes and observations which impinged upon the writer.”<sup>14</sup> Monaco further argues that “in quantitative terms, the more people who are exposed to a work of art, the more potential effect it has.”<sup>15</sup> Thus the two media are heavily influenced by their time period and further by the possible number of readers or viewers and by the overall popularity of the respective medium.

Though not exclusively the only factors, of course, these key differences are crucial for the comparison of the original Frankenstein novel and its various cinematic adaptations. They will be considered in the individual analyses of the adaptations, as they can help to explain the specific choices of the filmmakers and allow us to better understand the reasons behind them.

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<sup>14</sup> Malchow, H. L. 1993. “Frankenstein’s Monster and Images of Race in Nineteenth-Century Britain.” *Past & Present*, no. 139: 97. Accessed June 4, 2022. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/651092>.

<sup>15</sup> Monaco, *How to Read a Film: Movies, Media, Multimedia*, 36.

## 4 Frankenstein's Creature in the novel

For the later analysis and comparison of the films, it is important to establish the original image and characteristics of Frankenstein's Creature: his physical appearance and the aspects of his intelligence. When Frankenstein tells Walton a story of his scientific creations, he narrates the following: "[...] I resolved, contrary to my first intention, to make the being of a gigantic stature, that is to say, about eight feet in height, and proportionably large."<sup>16</sup> The Creature is later described by Frankenstein as having "the dull yellow eye", "the yellow skin", hair "of a lustrous black", "teeth of a pearly whiteness" and "shrivelled complexion and straight black lips" (50). Frankenstein then adds that "[the Creature] was ugly then, but when those muscles and joints were rendered capable of motion, it became a thing such as even Dante could not have conceived" (51). The Creature himself describes his physical form as follows: "I was more agile than they and could subsist upon coarser diet; I bore the extremes of heat and cold with less injury to my frame; my stature far exceeded theirs" (119). Towards the end of the novel, when Walton sees the Creature for the first time, he describes him as "gigantic in stature, yet uncouth and distorted in its proportions", with "long locks of ragged hair", his skin "in colour and apparent texture like that of a mummy" (226). Thus, physically Frankenstein's Creature has a distorted human shape but inhuman or highly amplified abilities such as strength, speed, agility, and endurance. Because of his appearance, he is called throughout the novel multiple pejorative names such as Creature, monster, dæmon, devil, being and wretch. In his essay, Malchow suggests that the size and the overall darker complexion of the Creature reflect the image of a black man that prevailed in culture and literature of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>-century England and influenced Shelley, who "reaching into childhood fantasy and imagination, [...] dredged up a bogymen which had been constructed out of a cultural tradition of the threatening 'Other' - whether troll or giant, gypsy or Negro - from the dark inner recesses of xenophobic fear and loath."<sup>17</sup> The Creature's ration throughout the novel usually consists of "berries, nuts, and roots" (109) and he states himself that "my food is not that of man; I do not destroy the lamb and the kid to glut my appetite; acorns and berries afford me

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<sup>16</sup> Shelley, Mary. (1818) 2014. *Frankenstein; Or, the Modern Prometheus*. The 1831 Text. London: Vintage. 46. All subsequent quotations from this edition will be indicated in the text by parentheses.

<sup>17</sup> Malchow, "Frankenstein's Monster and Images of Race in Nineteenth-Century Britain," 103.

sufficient nourishment” (148). This vegetarian diet, according to Malchow, moreover coincides with the image of a wild, black man who based on the apologists’ opinion is well adapted to the meagre, plant-based diet.<sup>18</sup> The possible racial implications of the novel present a challenging aspect for future filmmakers as they have to create a visual representation of the Creature and thus risk a potentially racist portrayal. While most of the selected adaptations here create a different vision of the Creature, there are still arguments supporting the racial undertones. For example, Elizabeth Young suggests that in *Bride of Frankenstein*, “the monster appears as a marker of racial difference, and his sexualized advances to the film’s women encode racist American discourse of the 1930s on masculinity, femininity, rape, and lynching.”<sup>19</sup> Further, there are arguments proposing the idea that the racial narrative was transformed into another; for instance, Robin Wood argues that Whale’s *Frankenstein* (1931) contains “pervasive class references.”<sup>20</sup>

From the beginning of his existence, the Creature shows signs of intelligence. Immediately after the reanimation, he “muttered some inarticulate sounds” (51). Later, when Frankenstein and his Creature finally meet, the Creature expresses his first experience of the world: “I felt light, and hunger, and thirst, and darkness; innumerable sounds rang in my ears, and on all sides various scents saluted me; the only object that I could distinguish was the bright moon, and I fixed my eyes on that with pleasure” (100). This indicates that despite his strength and endurance, he is capable of feeling hunger, pain, sadness and pleasure. Furthermore, he narrates his story using eloquent language and precise expressions allowing him to communicate his ideas, feelings and wishes. He defines the reason why he decided to learn the language of humans: “knowledge [of the language] might enable me to make them overlook the deformity of my figure” (112). This emphasises his desire to learn and communicate and underlines his intelligence by showing his ability to understand his position. *Paradise Lost*, *Plutarch’s Lives*, and the *Sorrows of Werther* are some of the books that he uses to learn the language of men. Apart from the language itself, the books have a profound influence on the Creature. He says: “they produced in me an infinity of new images and feelings, that sometimes raised me to ecstasy, but more frequently sunk me into the lowest dejection” (127-128). This indicates the Creature’s intellectual capacity and ability, as well

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<sup>18</sup> Malchow, “Frankenstein’s Monster and Images of Race in Nineteenth-Century Britain,” 105.

<sup>19</sup> Young, Elizabeth. 1991. “Here Comes the Bride: Wedding Gender and Race in ‘Bride of Frankenstein.’” *Feminist Studies* 17 (3): 404. Accessed July 29, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3178280>.

<sup>20</sup> Wood, Robin, “An Introduction to the American Horror Film.” In *Robin Wood on the Horror Film: Collected Essays and Reviews*, edited by Barry Keith Grant, 80. 2018. Detroit: Wayne State University Press.

as desire to learn and understand. By the end of the novel, he can speak and write, as well as philosophise. Taking into consideration the racial aspect of the novel mentioned previously, the intelligent portrayal of the Creature suggests a possible abolitionist reading of the novel. In this case, the interpretation is quite ambiguous, as on the one hand, the Creature's humanity is emphasised, but on the other hand, it is suppressed by his anger, and the Creature stays alienated from society and loathed by his creator – master.

The Creature's mental capacity is also connected to his emotional intelligence. As it was established, the Creature can feel sadness and sorrow and he repeatedly asserts throughout the novel that his initial innocence and goodness were corrupted by the deeds of others towards him. For instance, he tells Frankenstein: "I was benevolent; my soul glowed with love and humanity; but am I not alone, miserably alone" (96). The Creature indicates that alienation and loneliness, as well as the abhorrence he inspired in others by nothing but his very appearance, suppressed his kindness and led to his subsequent cruel actions. He adds: "thanks to the lessons of Felix and the sanguinary laws of man, I had learned now to work mischief" (144). He argues that his harmful and vicious behaviour was instigated or provoked in him by men; thus he justifies his evil actions by the inherent evil qualities of human beings. He further asserts that the only way to his happiness and consequently the only way to stop his path of carnage is the creation of a female companion: "you must create a female for me with whom I can live in the interchange of those sympathies necessary for my being" (146). The Creature narrates his story and finally persuades Victor to create a female companion, however, Frankenstein has an epiphany: he realises that his new creation can lead to the destruction of the human race. He fears the children that the new species can spawn or the Creature's rage after being rejected by his female companion. Victor destroys the body before she could be animated and breaks his promise that he gave to the Creature.

The Creature then loses his final hope for happiness and decides to avenge his creator for the misery he has caused him. The loss and the pain thus motivate his desire for revenge and the killings of Frankenstein's loved ones. However, despite his malicious actions, he expresses remorse when his creator finally dies. He tells Walton: "you hate me, but your abhorrence cannot equal that with which I regard myself" (230). Before leaving, he proclaims: "I shall ascend my funeral pile triumphantly and exult in the agony of the torturing flames" (231). Frankenstein's Creature thus shows the ability to feel both negative and positive emotions. He is tortured by loneliness and desire for love and companionship and when his creator, the original reason for his tortures, is gone, he still expresses sorrow and guilt. Even though the Creature expresses his guilt when he says, "I have

strangled the innocent” (230) and “crime has degraded me beneath the meanest animal” (229), it does not erase the satisfaction that he felt after some of his crimes. After William’s murder, the Creature feels “exultation and hellish triumph” (143). When framing Justine, the Creature blames her for his cruel decision: “the crime had its source in her; be hers the punishment” (144). Despite the reasons behind his violence, he is still a murderer who consciously committed his cruel deeds.

To summarise, Frankenstein’s Creature is described as a physically hideous version of a human being, possessing highly amplified physical abilities as well as a considerable degree of emotional and rational intelligence. Bernard Duyfhuizen suggests that:

In our contemporary consciousness, most people conjure up the image of Boris Karloff’s hulking monster when they hear the name ‘Frankenstein.’ This is not surprising since the representation of Henry [*sic*] Frankenstein’s creation in James Whale’s 1931 film (and its many sequels) has a more firmly fixed place in twentieth-century cultural literacy than does any representation we might imagine from Mary Shelley’s novel. Indeed, first-time readers of the novel are often shocked to see how much filmmakers have transformed the story, characters, and creature.<sup>21</sup>

The following analyses will show how the selected films follow this description or differ from it. In each case, the analysis will be mostly centred around the portrayal of the Creature: both his physical image and his cognitive and emotional capacities. The original description of the Creature will be compared with each of the selected adaptations and further, the film portrayals will be compared in connection to each other. In addition, some other significant deviations from the novel will be pointed out and discussed, as they allow to demonstrate the reasons behind the Creature’s varying representations. While comparing the adaptations, it is important to consider the contextual aspects of the era of the individual productions: the social dynamics, historical and technological changes together with the evolution of the horror genre itself and the varying demands of the viewers that might all influence the depiction of the Creature. There is a considerable difference between Dawley’s silent adaptation and Branagh’s high-budget production. Thus, apart from the reasons that will be discussed below, it is necessary to factor in

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<sup>21</sup> Duyfhuizen, Bernard. 1995. “Periphrastic Naming in Mary Shelley’s ‘Frankenstein.’” *Studies in the Novel* 27 (4): 477. Accessed July 10, 2022. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/29533087>.

the role of the historical context and the available cinematographic technologies in the portrayal of the Creature.

## 5 Film analyses

There are seven films selected for close analysis in this thesis, spanning from the earliest ever to one of the most recent adaptations. The first is *Frankenstein* (1910), directed by J. Searle Dawley and produced by Edison Manufacturing Company. This is the first ever cinematographic adaptation. It shows the creation scene and the Creature himself. It already introduces the ambiguous status of the name Frankenstein and develops the theme of a doppelganger that is unique among the selected adaptations.

The second and the third films to be discussed are both directed by James Whale and produced by Universal Pictures: *Frankenstein* (1931) and *Bride of Frankenstein* (1935). These are the most influential adaptations that created the popular Karloffian image of the Monster. These adaptations also started the Universal film series dedicated to Frankenstein's Monster and inspired most of the later film adaptations. Whale's films contributed both to the transformation of the Creature into an unintelligent being and to the name shift of Frankenstein from Victor to the Creature.

The fourth film is *The Curse of Frankenstein* (1957), directed by Terence Fisher, produced by Hammer Film Productions, and distributed by Warner Brothers. This is the first film from another popular and eventually cult horror series made by Hammer Film Productions. This adaptation continues to present the Creature as a mute, unintelligent and violent being and further develops the science behind the assembling of the Creature.

The fifth film under scrutiny in this thesis is *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* (1994), directed by Kenneth Branagh, produced primarily by TriStar Pictures and Japan Satellite. This is the first closer adaptation that moreover uses Mary Shelley's name to underline the faithfulness of the interpretation. This film partially returns to the Creature the ability to speak, think and feel but also emphasises the theme of birth, parental relationships and develops Victor's motivations for his experiments.

The sixth film is *Frankenstein* (2004), directed by Kevin Connor and distributed by Hallmark Channel. A two-part series that closely retells the plot of the novel and presents an intelligent and emotional Creature. It is an important example to include in our discussion here, as it does the opposite from other adaptations and makes the Creature more beautiful and less violent. While most of the other adaptations reduce the Creature's humanity and emphasise his monstrosity,

Connor's film does the opposite and reverses the narrative of the original novel. It eliminates most of the dilemmas faced by Victor and subsequently by the readers or viewers as there is no visual abhorrence and violent behaviour contrasted with the intellectual soul that constitutes the complex image of Shelley's Creature. On the negative side, the choice of making the Creature physically appealing is problematic, as Shelley's original ethos is lost, and more questions arise.

The last and seventh film to be discussed here is *Frankenstein* (2015), directed by Bernard Rose and produced by Bad Badger. This sees the story interpreted in a modern setting: it contains the closest adaptation of the psychological portrayal of the Creature and combines early film inventions with the original narrative. It centres on a new scientific approach to the creation and gives a name to the Creature.

### 5.1 *Frankenstein*. Directed by J. Searle Dawley, Edison Manufacturing Company, 1910.

*Frankenstein* by J. Searle Dawley is the first film based on Mary Shelley's novel. This silent film lasts 16 minutes. The film is divided into nine chapters:

1. 'Frankenstein departs for college'
2. 'Two years later Frankenstein has discovered the mystery of life'
3. 'Just before the experiment'
4. 'Instead of a perfect human being the evil in Frankenstein's mind creates a monster'
5. 'Frankenstein appalled at the sight of his evil creation'
6. 'The return home'
7. 'Hunting his creator and jealous of his sweetheart, for the first time the monster sees himself'
8. 'On the bridal night Frankenstein's better nature asserting itself'
9. 'The creation of an evil mind is overcome by love and disappears'

Overall, the plot is simplified: after the creation, the Creature follows Frankenstein, confronts him and his fiancée, flees after recognising his evil nature and finally disappears. The plot lacks the framing plot of the original novel, the Creature's self-discovery narrative, and, crucially, also his murders. After the symbolic death of the Creature, Frankenstein achieves happiness and is reunited with his living fiancée.

In the third chapter, there is a letter written by Frankenstein to Elizabeth, which is absent from the original novel:

Sweetheart, Tonight my ambition will be accomplished. I have discovered the secret of life and death and in a few hours I shall create into life the most perfect human being that the world has yet known. When this marvellous work is accomplished shall then return to claim you for my bride. Your devoted, Frankenstein.<sup>22</sup>

Frankenstein's motivation is quite simplified in this case, as in the original, his desire was not simply to create a perfect being but to "bestow animation upon lifeless matter [and] renew life where death had apparently devoted the body to corruption" (46). He also envisions that "a new species would bless [him as their] creator and source; many happy and excellent natures would owe their being to [him]" (46). In this first film Frankenstein simply desires to achieve a beautiful reanimation and then leave this successful project to reunite with his fiancée. Furthermore, the process of creation differs from the original: while in the original, the Creature is assembled from different dead body parts harvested from graves, the dissecting room and the slaughterhouse, and infused with "a spark of being" (50), in this film, Frankenstein mixes a potion, and the Creature slowly emerges from the fire and smoke. It gives the process of creation more of a magical or alchemic feeling compared to the grotesque galvanic science of the original.

Visually the Creature is disproportionate and quite small. He has unnaturally long fingers and feet. His hair is long and patchy. He has a large forehead and dark circles around the eyes, but otherwise, his face is human. He has bandages on his legs and his clothes consist of pieces of fabric tied by a rope. Apart from the size, his image is quite close to the original. Due to the nature of the silent film, the succinct plot and the lack of the Creature's original storyline, it is impossible to estimate his mental capabilities, however based on his interactions with Frankenstein he seems to communicate with sounds or simple words.

The name of the eighth part, 'On the bridal night Frankenstein's better nature asserting itself', is ambiguous, as it is uncertain who the name of Frankenstein refers to. The asserting of his better nature can be related to the love and kindness shown by Frankenstein to his wedding guests and his fiancée, however the Creature's decision not to kill Elizabeth seems like a stronger act of

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<sup>22</sup> Dawley, J. Searle. (Director). (1910). *Frankenstein* [Film]. Edison Manufacturing Company. 00:01:42.

asserting his good nature. Both the scientist and the Creature seem to overcome their negative qualities; Frankenstein expresses his love and concern for Elizabeth, he finds courage to fight the Creature who previously scared him to the point of fainting, and he decides to follow the Creature, which could suggest that he had accepted his mistakes and now he is ready to take responsibility for his creation. The Creature, on the other hand, shows remorse for hurting Elizabeth, he breaks a vase to show his anger and then he escapes without hurting Frankenstein.

According to the title of the fourth part, 'Instead of a perfect human being the evil in Frankenstein's mind creates a monster', the reason for failure and for the creation of a monster is Frankenstein's own evil potential. The last chapter supports this interpretation of the plot. Frankenstein's Creature enters the room. His facial expression changes; the initial wicked grin transforms into sorrow and misery. He sees himself in a mirror and looks at his reflection with fear and disgust. The Creature then disappears, and only the reflection remains. Frankenstein arrives and for a moment, instead of his reflection, he sees his creation in the mirror. They point at each other; their movements are synchronised. After that, the Creature's reflection vanishes, and Frankenstein's normal reflection appears. This scene suggests that the Creature is an evil part of Frankenstein which he was able to extrapolate, endow with a physical body, and then defeat. The Creature epitomises Frankenstein's overly ambitious desires to control the forces of nature and his irresponsible reaction to his creation. When Frankenstein rejects and abandons his Creature, these negative aspects of his personality are reflected in the Creature himself. When he finally accepts his creation and thus his wrongdoings, thus enacting expiation, the Creature disappears.

This duality expressed by the mirror scene is intricately connected to the phenomenon of the *doppelganger* which originated in folklore tradition and appeared both in written and visual arts, especially rife in the nineteenth-century Gothic literature and later in postmodernist works. Gordon E. Slethaug elaborates that the doppelganger theme was interpreted in various ways throughout literary and visual history; the mystical representation of twinship, the fractured unity of body and soul, the duality of genders, and, perhaps most influentially in terms of future popular-culture legacy, the two distinct parts of one divided self famously interpreted in R. L. Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*.<sup>23</sup> This idea of psychological fragmentation was later analysed by various psychologists and philosophers whose theories "all rely upon a fundamental knowledge of Freudian and Jungian theories of psychic duplication and division, psychological

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<sup>23</sup> Slethaug, Gordon E. 1994. "Doubles and Doubling in the Arts." *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts* 6 (2/3 (22/23)): 101–102. Accessed July 10, 2022. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43308211?seq=6>.

decomposition, disintegration, regression, progression, repression, and primary narcissism.”<sup>24</sup> As previously suggested, the Creature represents Frankenstein’s evil mind, thus he functions as extrapolated, personified evil. Frankenstein’s hubristic ambitious desires and his refusal to become accountable for his mistakes manifest into the Creature and cause the aggression that he exhibits. Similarly to the original text, he shows hostility towards Frankenstein and his fiancée; however, in the film his behaviour is justified by his jealousy and his feelings of abandonment and rejection, and his evil is overturned and nullified by love and acceptance. The motifs of death and destruction, present in the original novel, are absent in the film, and the only death in this version is the Creature’s symbolic disappearance in the mirror.

Both the ambiguity of the title of the eighth chapter and the idea of a doppelganger indicate that this might be one of the first instances of the synecdochal shift of the name ‘Frankenstein,’ which has since come to mean the Creature rather than his creator. The Creature does not have a name; instead, the contrasting epithets are used for the Creature, similarly to the duality of the original novel: the initial ‘perfect human being’ is later contrasted with a ‘monster’ and an ‘evil creation.’ As stated earlier, the Creature reflects the evil mind of the scientist, his ambitions, and his inability to accept the outcome of his experiment. The magical stylisation chosen for the creation scene reinforces the idea that the Creature is the result of Frankenstein’s sin; he challenged the natural order of life and death and presumed his success. The Creature then functions as a punishment and as a physical reminder of Frankenstein’s egoistic ambition. When Frankenstein is faced with consequences, he faints and later tries to ignore the embodiment of his failure – chiefly the failure of aesthetic presumption, wishing to create something ‘beautiful’, again bringing this film adaptation closer to the novel. When he protects Elizabeth, he is forced to confront the Creature. When he sees the Creature in the mirror, reflecting on what should have been his own image, he shows acceptance: he is finally able to look at his creation and accept the result of his egocentric ambition. He sees himself in the Creature who undergoes a metamorphosis and changes into the reflection of his creator. They become one. The allure of this doppelganger re-interpretation of the novel is one of the possible reasons why the name of Frankenstein has been applied to both the Creature and the scientist himself in most subsequent cinematographic and small-screen adaptations.

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<sup>24</sup> Slethaug, “Doubles and Doubling in the Arts,” 102.

## 5.2 *Frankenstein*. Directed by James Whale, Universal Pictures, 1931.

Robert Horton introduces the film as follows: “the year was 1931 and the film was *Frankenstein*, a property that would big-footedly lumber into pop-culture glory.”<sup>25</sup> The directing of James Whale, the make-up skills of Jack P. Pierce and the acting of Boris Karloff created one of the most popular, significant, and influential *Frankenstein* adaptations. Based on Rebecca Baumann’s research Peggy Webling’s play *Frankenstein: An Adventure in the Macabre* (1927) served as a foundation for the script of the film and it is the first adaptation that used Frankenstein’s name both for the Creature and for the scientist.<sup>26</sup>

This adaptation is full of name-mingling. Mary Shelley herself is mentioned in the credits as Mrs Percy B. Shelley. The Monster’s actor is initially marked by the question mark, and it is only in the final credits that Boris Karloff’s name finally appears. Crucially, the word *monster* is used when referring to the Creature. Most importantly, there is no Victor Frankenstein: based on Webling’s play, the name is split, and new characters emerge, Henry Frankenstein and his friend Victor Moritz. Moreover, completely new characters are added, for instance, Frankenstein’s hunch-backed assistant Fritz, whose character was invented in the 19<sup>th</sup>-century drama *Presumption; or, the Fate of Frankenstein*.

Overall, the complexity of Mary Shelley’s novel is excluded from the film. The film starts with the graveyard scene where Henry Frankenstein and his assistant Fritz are digging a fresh grave to get the coffin with the body. Then they take the body of the hanged man in search of a viable brain, unsuccessfully. These scenes allude to the original idea of the Creature assembled from different dead body parts; however, the film concentrates primarily on the brain of the future Monster. In the next scene, Doctor Waldman lectures his students about the difference between two brains, one of a genius and one of a criminal:

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<sup>25</sup> Horton, Robert. 2014. *Frankenstein*. 22. London: Wallflower Press.

<sup>26</sup> Baumann, Rebecca. 2018. *Frankenstein 200: The Birth, Life, and Resurrection of Mary Shelley’s Monster*. 122. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press. For more detail about Webling’s play adaptation and its evolution into the film script, see Steven Earl Forry, *Hideous Progenies: Dramatizations of Frankenstein from Mary Shelley to the Present* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990).

And in conclusion, ladies and gentlemen, here we have one of the most perfect specimens of the human brain ever to come to my attention at the university. And here, the abnormal brain of the typical criminal.<sup>27</sup>

This difference becomes the foundation for the future failure of Frankenstein, as Fritz, while trying to steal the right specimen, breaks the container with the ‘normal brain’ and takes the ‘abnormal’ one instead. Compared to Dawley’s adaptation, where Frankenstein’s own evil potential causes the aggressive behaviour of the Creature, Whale’s Monster is already broken from the beginning due to an assistant’s error in procuring the correct brain. Dawley’s magical cauldron of creation is then replaced by a scientific scene of origin. The scientific visual vocabulary such as electrodes, machines, pulses, together with the sounds of electricity, thunder and with beams of light indicate that the creation here is purely scientific and there is no magic involved, bringing the adaptation closer to the novel in this respect. The electricity and lighting used for the reanimation allude to the original galvanic “spark of being” (50) that created the Creature. Whale’s adaptation further emphasises the image of a mad scientist obsessively working in his laboratory full of machines. This is also accentuated by the fact that Frankenstein performs his experiment despite the presence of Doctor Waldman, Elizabeth, and Victor.

When the Monster is reanimated, Henry exclaims the iconic “it’s alive [...] I know how it feels like to be God!”<sup>28</sup> The Monster, however, does not come to life immediately. Only after several days does the Monster awaken and come out from the laboratory, where he was kept in darkness. It is the first time the audience sees him. First, his back appears on the screen and then he slowly turns to reveal his face. It is the face that will appear on thousands of film posters, newspapers, magazines, and other countless items of popular-culture ephemera, as well as many academic editions dealing with the horror genre, the legacy of Shelley’s novel and its cinematographic evolution (or devolution). His physical proportions are abnormal, he has a large forehead with a scar, sunken cheeks, dull tired eyes, pale skin, and there are two metallic bolts in his neck, which are going to become a part of the Monster’s memorable aesthetic. His body is large but stiff, his hands are just hanging in an unnatural manner, the stitching scars are visible. He is dressed in a formal suit which, combined with his physical monstrosity, creates a contrasting look and paves the way to the aesthetics of zombie cinema. Despite his inability to communicate, the

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<sup>27</sup> Whale, James. (Director). (1931). *Frankenstein* [Film]. Universal Pictures. 00:07:14.

<sup>28</sup> Whale, *Frankenstein* [1931 Film], 00:25:09.

Monster tries to move his hands to express his confusion. Dwight Codr justifies Karloff's appearance as a possible consequence of the polio outbreak that was at its peak at the time of the release of the film.<sup>29</sup> Codr explains that the stiffness and the overall appearance of the Monster reminds the audience of the symptoms of polio and "in this way, the Karloffian monster stoked fears about polio by embodying the polio victim as a sort of death-bringing man child, who, enabled by technology just enough to move about, is best kept at a distance."<sup>30</sup>

There is a significant deviation from the original novel: Frankenstein does not abandon his creation when they see each other for the first time. Moreover, he is pleased with the result, not afraid and willing to try to understand his creation. The Monster initially listens to Frankenstein's commands, but when Fritz enters with a torch, it scares the Monster, causing a violent agitation, however the group is able to chain him, which suggests that he is far from the supernatural physical abilities of his literary prototype.

Both before and after his escape, the Monster does commit several murders, tying the adaption closer to Shelley's novel; he hangs Fritz, strangles Waldman, and drowns a little girl. The little girl, Maria, is Whale's invention: she is a farmer's daughter. She meets the Monster near the lake, and because of her age and innocence, she does not see his monstrosity. She offers to play with him, and the Monster initially enjoys her company, but his low intellectual capacity leads to him throwing Maria into the lake as a part of the game. The encounter with Maria is the only scene where the Monster appears to express positive emotions. His intelligence is mostly on the same level as Maria's, and the following murder is simply a mistake rather than a calculated action. The original novel contains a drowning scene; however, the events are quite different:

I was scarcely hid when a young girl came running towards the spot where I was concealed, laughing, as if she ran from someone in sport. She continued her course along the precipitous sides of the river, when suddenly her foot slipped, and she fell into the rapid stream. I rushed from my hiding-place and with extreme labour, from the force of the current, saved her and dragged her to shore. She was senseless, and I endeavoured by every means in my power to restore animation, when I was suddenly interrupted by the approach of a rustic, who was probably the person from whom she had playfully fled. On seeing me, he darted towards me, and tearing the girl from my arms, hastened towards the deeper parts of the wood. I followed

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<sup>29</sup> Codr, Dwight. 2014. "Arresting Monstrosity: Polio, 'Frankenstein', and the Horror Film." *PMLA* 129 (2): 174. Accessed October 4, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24769446>.

<sup>30</sup> Codr, "Arresting Monstrosity: Polio, 'Frankenstein,' and the Horror Film," 179.

speedily, I hardly knew why; but when the man saw me draw near, he aimed a gun, which he carried, at my body and fired. I sank to the ground, and my injurer, with increased swiftness, escaped into the wood (141).

Both scenes are key as they initially portray the good side of the Creature: the film *Monster* plays with an innocent child while Shelley's original Creature shows his kindness by saving the girl. On the other hand, the novel explores deeper aspects of the Creature's experiences: it suggests that despite his attempts to become a part of the human world, he is always feared, hated, rejected, and harmed. Whale's *Monster* does not really realise his wrongdoings. His aggression is caused either by his fear of fire or possibly by the criminal brain that he was given, which is further proved by the fact that he does not kill Elizabeth when he has that chance.

When the Monster captures Henry and brings him to the mill, there is a scene where they look at each other through the rotation mechanism. This scene alludes to the reflection scene in Dawley's adaptation; however, it is only a brief allusion which can simply be another means of generating suspense.

While the original Creature only declares to Walton his plan to "exult in the agony of the burning flames" (231), the film *Monster* disappears in the burning mill. The final scene shows that a son of the House of Frankenstein is still alive – ironically, this could allude both to Henry's and the Monster's survival.

Overall, the Creature's representation is again radically simplified. He does not speak or show any significant evidence of his intelligence. This director's choice is partially explained in the opening scene of the film, where an announcer addresses the audience:

We are about to unfold the story of Frankenstein. A man of science, who sought to create a man after his own image, without reckoning upon God. It is one of the strangest tales ever told. It deals with the two great mysteries of creation: life and death. I think it will thrill you. It may shock you. It might even horrify you. So, if any of you feel that you do not care to subject your nerves to such a strain, now is your chance to, er... Well, we've warned you.<sup>31</sup>

While Dawley's adaptation indeed contains a number of horror features, Whale's *Frankenstein* introduces the iconic monster as we have come to know him. The film partially

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<sup>31</sup> Whale, *Frankenstein* [1931 Film], 00:00:52.

explores the moral message of the dangers of playing with trying to conquer death, but its main purpose is to entertain the audience, shifting the ethos back to the terror-horror dynamic of the Gothic novel that Shelley was partially influenced by but also tried to recast and move past in her work. The deeply troubled Creature abandoned by his creator and repeatedly rejected by human society is stripped of his philosophical and intellectual thoughts and monologues and transformed into the scary nameless being without language or complex emotion. The film does not give the audience the option to decide for themselves who the monster is; on the contrary, it presents the Creature's monstrosity as an undeniable and inherent fact and, as Horton suggests:

The film has barely begun, and already the credits refer to the unfortunate new being as a Monster. This is key: the absence of a name already makes him a bastard; we are never told the names of the people whose body parts have been joined and animated to form this giant, so he lacks any kind of genealogical index, except for the stitching and jolting provided by Frankenstein.<sup>32</sup>

Whale's *Frankenstein* thus creates its own, vastly influential hideous progeny in this new mentally and emotionally impaired Monster, but it does not stop at that, as the commercial success of the film allows to continue the franchise with the sequel *Bride of Frankenstein*.

### 5.3 *Bride of Frankenstein*. Directed by James Whale, Universal Pictures, 1935.

While Whale's *Bride of Frankenstein* continues in the same horror tradition as *Frankenstein* four years earlier, it is important to discuss this adaptation here for several reasons: firstly, because of its very title and secondly, because of some additional deviations from and similarities with the original novel.

*Bride of Frankenstein* follows the same name-mingling tradition as its predecessor. While Shelley is finally credited as Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley (as opposed to the overly patriarchal Mrs Percy B. Shelley) and Karloff is referred to as The Monster, the actor of the Monster's Mate is left blank in both the opening and the final credits. Although her name is not mentioned, it is

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<sup>32</sup> Horton, *Frankenstein*, 52.

known that Elsa Lanchester plays both roles to indicate the contrast between the sweetness of Mary and the monstrosity of her creation.<sup>33</sup> The title of the film reinforces the ambiguity of Frankenstein's name as the bride is created for the Monster as thus it is the Monster who is referred to as Frankenstein in the title. As James B. Twitchell states: "for literary purists, of course, there can be only one 'bride' of Frankenstein and that is Henry's wife; but for movie buffs Frankenstein is the monster, and so it is his bride that the title describes."<sup>34</sup>

*Bride of Frankenstein* in some crucial respects returns to the original novel, which is worth noting here. The Monster himself slowly becomes more intelligent. For instance, the drowning scene is reinterpreted again, this time closer to Shelley's version. The Monster shows several times his growing strength; for example, he breaks the chains, showing an inhuman force. His intellect also improves: the Monster finds a blind man in a cabin (a reference to the De Lacey family in the novel) who teaches him several words and even befriends him, which causes an emotional reaction and makes the Monster shed a tear as he finally feels welcomed and accepted. When Doctor Pretorius asks the Monster if he knows Frankenstein or understands himself, the Monster replies: "Yes, I know. Made me. From dead. I love dead. Hate living."<sup>35</sup> In his final moment, the Monster utters, "we belong dead!"<sup>36</sup> This indicates his developing understanding of his being and possibly his final words also show his remorse for the murders, as he accepts the wicked nature of his existence. Alternatively, after his bride rejects him, his reaction can signify his acceptance that there are no beings capable of loving him and his death is an escape from the hateful world of humanity and his solitary existence.

There are, however, significant deviations from the original text. The Monster becomes acquainted with human aspects of life: he eats meat, smokes cigars and drinks alcohol, which is far from the minimalistic vegetarian of Shelley's novel. The creation of the bride also differs from the novel, where Frankenstein's experiment is never finished but rather deliberately destroyed even as it nears perfection, when Victor realises that the Creature and the female companion he is about to animate could procreate, scourging the world with further hideous progeny. In the film, two theories of creation, the galvanic and the organic, are combined: Frankenstein's power of electricity which can spark a being into life and Doctor Pretorius' methods of growing organs like plants. The

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<sup>33</sup> Horton, *Frankenstein*, 96.

<sup>34</sup> Twitchell, James B. 1983. "'Frankenstein' and the Anatomy of Horror." *The Georgia Review* 37 (1): 64. Accessed September 22, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41397330>.

<sup>35</sup> Whale, James. (Director). (1935). *Bride of Frankenstein* [Film]. Universal Pictures. 00:50:50.

<sup>36</sup> Whale, *Bride of Frankenstein* [1935 Film], 01:13:06.

result is left a mystery, as the bride is physically beautiful but still cannot speak and does not have time to improve or show her true nature as the Monster destroys them both. The exclusion of the female in the man-made creation myth at the heart of *Frankenstein* is thus also included in this sequel adaptation.

Finally, *Bride of Frankenstein* introduces the motif of metatextuality, as the opening scene portrays Mary Shelley, who continues to narrate her story to Lord Byron and Percy Bysshe Shelley. This scene creates various misconceptions. First, the film suggests that the purpose of Shelley's story was "to write a moral lesson of the punishment that befell a mortal man who dared to emulate God."<sup>37</sup> Henry, however, is not punished, especially compared to the original. He escapes, together with Elizabeth, to safety, as the Monster suddenly and not entirely plausibly forgives him, although Doctor Pretorius, who instigates the bride's creation, is punished indeed. Second, Mary's narration in this film creates the illusion that the previous film (*Frankenstein*, 1931) faithfully represents the content of the novel when quite the opposite is true. Whale's cinematographic diptych thus creates powerful cultural legacies of its own, dividing the moral responsibility of Shelley's Victor as the sole creator into several characters and also featuring a possibility of escape, which facilitates further adaptations and sequels and more commercial agenda in the long term.

#### 5.4 *The Curse of Frankenstein*. Directed by Terence Fisher, Warner Brothers, 1957.

While Warner Brothers is responsible for the distribution of the film, the production company is Hammer Film Productions. The company was founded in 1934 but only in the 1950s did they find their territory after the success of the 1955 sci-fi horror *The Quatermass Xperiment*.<sup>38</sup> Since then, Hammer has produced numerous horrors and horror franchises with iconic characters such as *The Revenge of Frankenstein* (1958), *Horror of Dracula* (1958), *The Mummy* (1959), *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1959), *The Curse of the Werewolf* (1961), *The Phantom of the Opera* (1962), *The Plague of the Zombies* (1966) and many others. Nevertheless, as Marcus K. Harnes concludes, the

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<sup>37</sup> Whale, *Bride of Frankenstein* [1935 Film], 00:03:48.

<sup>38</sup> Hammer. n.d. "About Hammer." *Hammer Films*. Accessed July 13, 2022. <http://www.hammerfilms.com/about-hammer/>.

“*Curse of Frankenstein* is remembered, as the foundation of twenty years’ worth of gothic horror and of the commercial and cinematic exploitation of public tastes for gore and violence.”<sup>39</sup>

The Creature, again called ‘the Creature’ in the credits, not ‘the Monster’, is portrayed by Christopher Lee who introduces a new influential variation of Frankenstein’s Creature. Frankenstein is called Victor, and he is portrayed by the inimitable Peter Cushing. Both Cushing and Lee later appear in numerous other horror and fantasy films after the success of *The Curse*, making the Hammer productions an iconic enterprise in the long run.

The film also partially returns to the framing narrative of the novel, though this is, like all cinematographic adaptations, much more crudely morally inflected; instead of Walton and his arctic enterprise, there is a priest who visits Victor in a prison cell and listens to his confession. There are, of course, multiple key deviations from Shelley’s original, both in terms of plot and ethos. As Twitchell summarises:

First, Frankenstein is no longer the adolescent overreacher but now a controlled master scientist. To a considerable degree this shift was mandated by the casting choice of Peter Cushing, for he is so urbane and suave that one imagines he couldn’t lose control even if he tried. And second, the saga is no longer about creating life, but rather about transplanting.<sup>40</sup>

Victor is the only living member of the Frankenstein family; he inherits his father’s assets and hires a tutor, Paul Krempe, who teaches him the mysteries of science and anatomy and becomes Victor’s mentor and assistant in his research. They achieve some results in their experiments and revive a dead dog. While Paul has noble impulses and wishes to present their findings in order to improve the technologies used in the medical field, Victor has more daring ambitions. He opposes Paul by saying:

We’ve restored life where life was extinct. It’s no longer sufficient to bring the dead back to life. We must create from the beginning. We must build up our own creature and build it up from nothing.<sup>41</sup> [...] We must create a human being, a man with the perfect physique, with the hands of an artist and the matured brain of a genius.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Harmes, Marcus K. 2015. *The Curse of Frankenstein*. 10. Leighton Buzzard (Gb): Auteur.

<sup>40</sup> Twitchell, “‘Frankenstein’ and the Anatomy of Horror,” 67.

<sup>41</sup> Fisher, Terence. (Director). (1957). *The Curse of Frankenstein* [Film]. Distributed by Warner Brothers. 00:14:57.

<sup>42</sup> Fisher, *The Curse of Frankenstein* [1957 Film], 00:15:24.

Despite his doubts, Paul continues to help Victor but soon abandons him when Victor's methods become too extreme. The process of creation takes significantly longer than that in the previous adaptations and the preparation for the last experiment is explained in greater detail. They use a body of a hanged highwayman. His head is removed because it was damaged. His head, hands, eyes, and brain are replaced. On his way to achieving perfection, Victor does not vacillate to act unethically and criminally: he fetches the hands of the world's greatest sculptor and murders Professor Bernstein to obtain the brain of a genius. The brain is unfortunately damaged during the quarrel between Paul and Victor. In this way, *The Curse* follows a similar logic to the 1931 *Frankenstein*, where the abnormal brain of a criminal is responsible for the Monster's aggression. The Creature is mummy-like, covered with bandages and emerges from a container filled with liquid.

It is the first film discussed in this analysis that is in colour, compared to the previous black and white adaptations. The colour medium enables new creative decisions. For instance, the laboratory is now packed with ampules and probes with brightly coloured substances and liquids. There are tubes connecting them, and the laboratory is full of fumes and bubbling beakers. Anatomical drawings cover the walls. *The Curse's* Victor is not a mad scientist but rather a cold, rational man, dedicated exclusively and unapologetically to his work.

Despite the introduction of the liquid substances and the water container, electricity still plays an important role. There is, however, an important difference: the Creature is reanimated by chance, as Victor initially fails and later, it is the lighting that strikes the electric mechanism connected to the Creature's container and finally reanimates him.

When the Creature comes to life, a new aesthetic vision of the Creature appears on the screen. He tears the bandages covering his head and reveals the face of a deformed man. His skin is discoloured and uneven, with bumps and bruises. There are several scars, especially the scar on his forehead, created after the brain was inserted. His teeth are rotten, and he is blind in one eye. His movements are stiff, but the proportions remain human. One of the pragmatic reasons for this re-imagined look is copyright law – as the visuals of the Universal Karloffian Monster were (and are) copyrighted, Hammer Film Productions had to make sure to create a distinctly different vision while still maintaining the familiar aspects of the Creature. Despite his human body, he has inhuman strength, and he almost kills Victor during their first encounter. As Harnes describes this encounter: “the creature is hideous when it was to have been handsome, mute when it should have

been eloquent, and most of all violent when it should have been cultivated [...].”<sup>43</sup> His hideousness is quite close to the original description in the novel, however his behaviour is immediately aggressive as opposed to Shelley’s development of aggression as an inevitable reaction to the initial violence of others. There is no contemplation, negative experience, or fire to cause this primary violence. The damaged brain inserted into this Hammer film Creature retains nothing of the genius mind of the professor, only anger remains. There is no pity for the Monster, as he does not express confusion or any signs of understanding. The elements of superhuman strength combined with acts of gore and horror become the main characteristics of the Creature in this adaptation.

Victor further deviates from the original, as he never abandons his creation. Even when the Creature almost strangles him, he pursues him and reanimates him again after the Creature is shot dead by Paul. The blind man and a small child, stray motifs from the original novel, appear in the film, but both are murdered by the Creature, who does not show any signs of empathy or regret.

Justine, whose name is taken from the novel, is distinctly different from her written counterpart. In this adaptation, she is Victor’s lover; blinded by anger after Victor rejects her, she enters his laboratory, and she is killed by the Creature. The Creature’s malfunctioning brain is possibly replaced by hers later, which makes him more obedient, but does not redeem his violent nature.

In the end, the Creature is shot again and then burned by the fire from the lantern thrown at him by Victor in self-defence and ultimately dissolved in the acid tank which he falls into. The feature-length flashback ends here, and the story returns to Victor in the prison cell. He is blamed for Justine’s murder and the final scene suggests that he is executed on a guillotine. The ending creates an ultimate ambiguity, as it is uncertain if Victor is a delusional killer or if Paul simply covered the gruesome reality.

*The Curse of Frankenstein* is a unique adaptation not in that it prioritises the horror and simplifies the original material, which connects most film versions based on the novel across the board, but it also offers multiple contemplations about the nature of the experiment, about its morality and ethics, raising questions about responsibility. For instance, as Professor Bernstein explains to Victor:

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<sup>43</sup> Harmes, *The Curse of Frankenstein*, 17.

The trouble with us scientists is we quickly tire of our discoveries. We hand them over to people who are not ready for them, while we go off again into the darkness of ignorance, searching for other discoveries which will be mishandled in just the same way when the time comes.<sup>44</sup>

This explores several important themes that can be found in, and form the basis of, the key insight of Shelley's novel: the responsibility and the dangers of new discoveries. While in the novel, both the Creature and the scientist-creator suffer the consequences, the film transforms the Creature into a crude instrument used to haunt Victor and the audience. Again, Victor is not punished for abandoning his creation but for his ambitions and hazardous experiments with the rules of nature. The title itself suggests that the Creature can be interpreted as the titular curse of Frankenstein.

### 5.5 *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*. Directed by Kenneth Branagh, Japan Satellite, 1994.

*Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* was produced by Japan Satellite Broadcasting, Inc., The IndieProd Company, American Zoetrope and distributed by TriStar Pictures, starring Robert De Niro, Kenneth Branagh, Tom Hulce, Helena Bonham Carter, Aidan Quinn, Ian Holm and John Cleese.<sup>45</sup> Technological advances in the cinematographic field allow Branagh to create a new vision of *Frankenstein* and to portray for the first time the sublime Alpine and arctic landscapes described by Shelley and the macabre realistic details of the creation process. Overall, the film can be classified as another type of horror based on gruesomeness and realistic images, with significant aesthetic diversions.

The title of this adaptation presents an interesting premise, as it advocates for the film's faithfulness to Shelley's novel. The film is introduced by Shelley's own words, used in the introduction to the 1831 edition of *Frankenstein*: "I busied myself to think of a story which would speak to the mysterious fears of our nature and awaken thrilling horror; one to make the reader

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<sup>44</sup> Fisher, Terence. (Director). (1957). *The Curse of Frankenstein* [Film]. Distributed by Warner Brothers. 00:36:00.

<sup>45</sup> "MARY SHELLEY'S FRANKENSTEIN | Sony Pictures Entertainment." n.d. [www.sonypictures.com](https://www.sonypictures.com/movies/maryshelleysfrankenstein). Accessed July 13, 2022. <https://www.sonypictures.com/movies/maryshelleysfrankenstein>.

dread to look around, to curdle the blood, and quicken the beatings of the heart.”<sup>46</sup> While the *Bride of Frankenstein* used a similar technique by portraying Mary in the opening scene, the mention of Shelley’s name in the title reinforces the authenticity of the adaptation. On the one hand *Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein* does approach its source more intimately, on the other, there are still some significant deviations which not only simplify the original material but also reinterpret some of its key ideas. Julie Sloan Brannon calls Branagh’s choice of Mary’s name a “kind of ghostly imprimatur for his adaptation”<sup>47</sup> and suggests that this invocation of the author “allows Branagh to trade upon the credibility of the literary even while leaving it behind.”<sup>48</sup>

The film finally introduces Walton who was removed from the previous adaptations; however, his demeanour is more radical and straightforward than the literary original. When the literary Walton alludes to some similarities between him and Victor, the film accentuates this idea and uses Walton to emphasise Victor’s obsession with new discoveries. Victor’s mother also receives more attention; the film portrays her death during childbirth and uses it as one of the main motivations for Victor’s interest in the renewal of life. When visiting her grave, Victor declares: “You should never have died. No one need ever die. I will stop this. I promise.”<sup>49</sup> Professor Waldman, who shows Victor one of his previous experiments of reanimation, is stabbed to death, and his murder becomes the turning point that pushes Frankenstein to create his Creature. Similarly to *The Curse*, Victor utilises the professor’s brain in hope to preserve his intellect in the Creature. When Victor explains to Clerval his motivations, he says: “I think for the chance to defeat death and disease, to let everyone on this Earth have the chance at life, sustained, healthy life, to allow people who love each other to be together forever...for all of that, I think it’s a risk worth taking.”<sup>50</sup> This endows Branagh’s Victor with a more noble altruistic attitude compared to his novel prototype.

The image of a hanged man appears again as a tribute to previous cinematographic adaptations. Victor starts to assemble the machine and the body. More of his previous experiments are shown as he explains the power of electricity with the combination of amniotic fluid. His laboratory is dark and chaotic. The scene of creation itself is violent, dynamic, and brutal: the

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<sup>46</sup> Branagh, Kenneth. (Director). (1994). *Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein* [Film]. Distributed by TriStar Pictures. 00:00:33.

<sup>47</sup> Brannon, Julie Sloan. 2012. “Mary Shelley’s ‘Frankenstein’? Kenneth Branagh and Keeping Promises.” *Studies in Popular Culture* 35 (1): 3. Accessed September 22, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23416363>.

<sup>48</sup> Brannon, “Mary Shelley’s ‘Frankenstein’? Kenneth Branagh and Keeping Promises,” 3.

<sup>49</sup> Branagh, *Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein* [1994 Film], 00:12:36.

<sup>50</sup> Branagh, *Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein* [1994 Film], 00:35:30.

assembled body is placed in the iron casquet and penetrated by needles, the casquet is then filled with the amniotic fluid and electric eels. Victor, who is topless, runs, turns the switches, and pulls the chains. When the Creature falls from the casquet, covered in fluid, they both lie on the floor. The scene of creation heavily alludes to childbirth, and Caroline Joan (“Kay”) S. Picart states that Kenneth Branagh is one of the directors “who actually talks overtly about the parthenogenetic theme at the heart of the *Frankenstein* narrative.”<sup>51</sup> When Frankenstein ‘births’ his Creature, he repeats the infamous “it’s alive.”<sup>52</sup>

However, his initial excitement is rapidly suppressed by the horrid image of the Creature hanging in the chains. According to James A. W. Heffernan, both the unnatural idea of a newly born adult being and his extreme ugliness are the causes of Victor’s disgust.<sup>53</sup> He presumes the Creature is dead, but the Creature finds him in his bed in the morning. A new vision of the Creature is presented: his body is covered with stitches to emphasise the idea that he is assembled from multiple pieces. When his body is being shown, Professor Krempe’s voice is heard in the background as he warns Victor: “bits of thieves, bits of murderers, evil stitched to evil stitched to evil.”<sup>54</sup> This raises a similar question as the abnormal brain featured in the *Bride* or the damaged brain in the *Curse*: is the Creature’s violence predetermined by the physical parts he is assembled from or is it caused by his suffering and loneliness, pointing the finger at humanity’s collective guilt?

In the next scene, the Creature lies in the street. He eats old vegetables, which denotes the vegetarian customs of the original. Covered in a black coat, he walks in the streets where he is attacked by the people when he is trying to steal some food. They chase him, but he demonstrates his strength by flipping a carriage and by launching the attackers in the air. He escapes the city in a carriage of dead corpses killed by a cholera epidemic.

Another episode from the original novel is presented here: the Creature finds shelter in the shed near the rural cabin and learns to speak and read by listening to the cottagers and peeking through the hole in the wood wall. Heffernan argues that “in Branagh’s film, the close-up of his

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<sup>51</sup> Picart, Caroline Joan (“Kay”) S. 2000. “Visualizing the Monstrous in Frankenstein Films.” *Pacific Coast Philology* 35 (1): 33. Accessed September 22, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3252064>.

<sup>52</sup> Branagh, *Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein* [1994 Film], 00:46:40.

<sup>53</sup> Heffernan, James A. W. 1997. “Looking at the Monster: ‘Frankenstein’ and Film.” *Critical Inquiry* 24 (1): 144. Accessed September 22, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1344161>.

<sup>54</sup> Branagh, *Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein* [1994 Film], 00:51:20.

peering face combines the spectacle of [the Creature's] mutilated features with the complex expression of his desire to see and his fear of being seen."<sup>55</sup>

The first word he learns is *friend*, which makes a reference to the *Bride of Frankenstein*. While in the original text, he supplies the cottagers with firewood, in this film the Creature brings them food and happily observes their joyful reaction. Unlike in the original, the only written text that he finds and studies is Victor's journal that allows the Creature to understand his Creator and later track him down. In the novel, the Creature describes the contents of the journal as follows: "the whole detail of that series of disgusting circumstances which produced it, is set in view; the minutest description of my odious and loathsome person is given, in language which painted your own horrors, and rendered mine indelible" (130). The fact that Victor's journal is the only book that the Creature appears to study in the film limits the scope of the Creature's knowledge and overall focuses the narrative on the relationship between the Creature and Victor, which quickly turns into a revenge plot.

The Creature saves the blind man from an angry landowner, and the blind man invites him inside, which is another deviation from the source material where the Creature finds the courage to enter the cabin when the rest of the family members are absent. Moreover, the Creature still does not speak eloquently. When the rest of the cottager family arrives, the Creature is shunned, chased away and abandoned. He sets the cabin on fire in spite and sets out on his journey of revenge. The following murder of William is not shown directly but rather implied by the reaction of other characters. Instead of a female portrait, he finds Victor's, and places it on the chest of the sleeping Justine. Later she is caught by the townspeople and hanged without a trial. Instead of a trial presented in the novel, Branagh's adaptation shows the cruel and fast lynching committed by the townspeople who, based on the discovered portrait, believe that Justine is the one who murdered William.

Victor and the Creature meet in the mountains: the discussion leads to the same conclusion as the original scene in the novel but greatly differs in the execution. The Creature asks Victor about his origin and his soul.<sup>56</sup> He also presents a theory that his fragmented knowledge comes from the people whose bodies he was assembled from. He encapsulates the eloquent and emotional monologue of Shelley's Creature in a short paradigm:

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<sup>55</sup> Heffernan, "Looking at the Monster: 'Frankenstein' and Film," 139.

<sup>56</sup> Branagh, *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* [1994 Film], 01:25:37.

I have love in me the likes of which you can scarcely imagine. And rage, the likes of which you would not believe. If I cannot satisfy the one, I will indulge the other.<sup>57</sup>

This adaptation presents the Creature as a troubled, lonely being. The Creature demands a companion, and Victor agrees at first, but when the Creature brings Justine's corpse, Frankenstein refuses to continue. The Creature warns him: "if you deny me my wedding night, I will be on yours."<sup>58</sup> Elizabeth is then murdered during the wedding night in a particularly gruesome way; her heart is ripped out; her hair is burnt, and her face is wounded. Her death forces Victor to break his promise and repeat the creation process – this is the most radical departure from both Shelley's original and subsequent theatre and film adaptations. In contrast to the *Bride of Frankenstein*, Elizabeth resembles the Creature here; large ugly scars and stitches are covering her face and neck, only patches of hair are left on her head. Victor dances with her to help her remember her previous human self, but the Creature interrupts and bids Elizabeth to approach him. She slowly walks towards him and compares their scars. Victor and the Creature both attempt to summon her. She tries to pronounce Victor's name, which shows that she might have some memories left. Nevertheless, disturbed by her own physical state, she sets herself on fire. It is important to note that she is called Elizabeth immediately after her resurrection, both by Victor and by the Creature. And while being disgusted by his first creation, Victor shows love and affection towards the reanimated Elizabeth.

The film returns to the arctic narrative, we are back at sea and in the ship's cabin, Walton discovers the Creature. The Creature makes two essential statements which deviate from the original: "he never gave me a name"<sup>59</sup> and "he was my father."<sup>60</sup> The relationship between the creator and the creation is again compared to the father and child paradigm, raising potential questions about creation without any ethical compass.

The funeral scene concludes the film: Victor's body is prepared to be burnt in the fire when the ice breaks and the Creature falls into the cold water. Walton tries to help him when the Creature rejects him with the words: "I am done with men."<sup>61</sup> While Shelley only alludes to the flames in

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<sup>57</sup> Branagh, *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* [1994 Film], 01:28:00.

<sup>58</sup> Branagh, *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* [1994 Film], 01:32:00.

<sup>59</sup> Branagh, *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* [1994 Film], 01:53:20.

<sup>60</sup> Branagh, *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* [1994 Film], 01:54:00.

<sup>61</sup> Branagh, *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* [1994 Film], 01:55:30.

which the Creature plans to end his existence, Branagh's Creature finds the piece of ice with Victor's body and sets them both on fire. Heffernan concludes that:

In Kenneth Branagh's *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* (1994), the creature rips out Elizabeth's heart and in so doing reenacts what filmmakers regularly do to Mary Shelley's text. They rip out its heart by making the creature speechless, as Whale's version did, or at the very least cutting out his narrative, as even Branagh's version does.<sup>62</sup>

Branagh's *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* finally gives the Creature emotions and thoughts, but they are still limited. The beating scene and the cottage scene portray his desire to live and to become a part of human relationships, and the hate and rejections evoke sympathy towards him. His decision to take revenge is still quite abrupt, and most importantly, he never shows any remorse, not even after Victor's death. It creates a paradoxical effect as the audience has more reasons to sympathise with the Creature, but not enough material to understand his actions. His final message is oversimplified; he is never given the space to explore and express himself. *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*, in some ways, achieves more than the previous adaptations but also creates new myths surrounding the Creature and the creator.

## 5.6 *Frankenstein*. Directed by Kevin Connor, Hallmark Channel, 2004.

*Frankenstein* is a 2004 two-part miniseries directed by Mark Kruger and distributed by the Hallmark Channel, starring Alec Newman as Victor and Luke Goss as the Creature. Its running time is 3 hours and 24 minutes, which, compared to the previous adaptations, gives the miniseries an advantage and provides an opportunity for a more accurate representation. When asked about the proposition to direct the film, Kevin Connor replied: "as long as it's not a horror film per se, I'd be very interested in doing it. I read the script, it was a very good script, pretty close to the book – as close as you can get – but it was more human."<sup>63</sup>

As the series does indeed come close to the novel, even directly quoting the original, it is sensible to concentrate on the main deviations and the portrayal of the Creature. The series gives

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<sup>62</sup> Heffernan, "Looking at the Monster: 'Frankenstein' and Film," 136.

<sup>63</sup> Connor, Kevin. 2003. *Cult films and the people who make them*. Interview by MJ Simpson. Accessed July 14, 2022. <http://mjsimpson-films.blogspot.com/2013/12/interview-kevin-connor.html>.

more attention to Victor's childhood and explains that the first moment that inspired Victor to his future experiments was the death of his family dog. When another dog is killed by a carriage, he uses its body for his first experiment; electricity again plays a crucial role in the reanimation. The motif of the *Curse* repeats, but in this case, the dog dies immediately after being revived.

The process of creation combines the ideas from the previous adaptations: there is an iron bath filled with fluid and galvanised using the power of lightning. The body of the Creature is already visible, the face covered by a thin cloth. This is a significant visual difference, as in most of the previous adaptations, the body is usually revealed after the Creature is reanimated. The Creature takes his first breath and then dies again, which disappoints Victor immensely; however, when Victor is awakened by the living Creature, he is scared, and he abandons his creation and flees.

The Creature has human proportions and overall possesses a certain physical beauty; he does not have any apparent deformities, except for a small scar on his forehead and the stitching marks on his body that are later covered by his clothes. His face is pale, and his skin is slightly wrinkled or dehydrated. Together with prominent cheekbones, white teeth, dark hair, eyebrows and deep blue eyes, he resembles a vampire rather than a hideous monster. This look partially adheres to the original description as "hair of a lustrous black" and "teeth of a pearly whiteness" are also mentioned in the novel, but as Victor describes "these luxuriances only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes, that seemed almost of the same colour as the dun-white sockets in which they were set, his shrivelled complexion and straight black lips" (50). Connor explains that he opted for a look with fewer scars to remind the audience of a human being hiding behind the Creature's appearance and consequently to make him more sympathetic and deserving of sympathy.<sup>64</sup> On the one hand it makes it less logical for Victor to be so appalled by his creation, on the other it does make it easier to pity the Creature.

When the Creature tries to steal food from the villagers, he is followed by a mob of angry people and ousted from the village. He hides in the shed and lives near the cottagers. Apart from reading *Paradise Lost*, he also finds Victor's diary and happily murmurs: "I do have a father."<sup>65</sup> This bittersweet reaction is different from the original, where the Creature is horrified and hurt by the detailed descriptions of his creation. The relationship between the creator and the creation is

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<sup>64</sup> Connor, interview by MJ Simpson.

<sup>65</sup> Connor, Kevin. (Director). (2004). *Frankenstein* [Film]. Hallmark Channel. Part 1, 1:14:05.

again compared to a father-son relationship, which streamlines the audience's sympathies and antipathies along these lines.

The Creature is later led inside the cottage by a little girl, a visual echo of the original Safie. The blind man plays the violin, and the Creature is moved to tears. Their short dialogue and a joyful dance are interrupted by the rest of the cottagers, who see the Creature as a threat and, despite his plea, attack and expel him. His less threatening, more appealing looks allow the film to underline the unfairness of the hate he is faced with and suffers from everywhere he goes, while it also makes it slightly harder to understand and therefore incites the audience's interest as well as further thinking about the questions of society's tendency to expel the Other in whichever form it takes. Not long afterwards, William's dead body is found in the woods, which ends the first part of the series. The second part of this adaptation starts with Justine's conviction for William's murder. Victor tries to save her, but he fails. The Creature observes Justine's hanging from a distance and he is disturbed by it. This is the first instance, compared to the previous adaptations, where the Creature shows visible regret for his actions. Moreover, he takes down Justine's body from the gallows, brings her to the Church ground and asks for her forgiveness.<sup>66</sup>

Instead of the snowy mountains, Victor and the Creature meet in the ruins of a castle. They have a brief fight, and then their conversation follows. There are some similar points which are made by the novel's Creature, but the father theme is accentuated more in this film. The Creature tells Victor: "the world has rejected me; I hoped my father would not",<sup>67</sup> to which Victor replies: "I am not your father."<sup>68</sup> The question of responsibility is raised rather pointedly here. In the original novel the Creature uses the word father only once: "I learned from your papers that you were my father, my creator; and to whom could I apply with more fitness than to him who had given me life" (139). The Creature then confesses that he never intended to harm William. The murder of William is presented as a complete accident, as the Creature underestimated his strength. This is again a unique interpretation of this part of the plot, as this film tries to create a better, kinder and more emotionally mature and consequently more human version of the Creature. In the original the Creature is filled with "exultation and hellish triumph" (143) after he quite consciously

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<sup>66</sup> Connor, Kevin. (Director). (2004). *Frankenstein* [Film]. Hallmark Channel. Part 2, 00:08:04.

<sup>67</sup> Connor, *Frankenstein* [2004 Film]. Part 2, 00:05:00.

<sup>67</sup> Connor, *Frankenstein* [2004 Film]. Part 2, 00:14:49.

<sup>68</sup> Connor, *Frankenstein* [2004 Film]. Part 2, 00:14:50.

strangles William, a beastly reaction to his discovering his relation to Frankenstein and the story of his creation.

Similarly to the novel, the Creature asks for a female companion and threatens revenge if this desire is not fulfilled by Victor. There is, however, a deviation, as it is not the Creature who swears to leave the civilised world if the female companion is created, but it is Victor who proposes it as his only condition. The female is not created, and the Creature keeps his promise by murdering Clerval and Elizabeth.

In his final scene, the Creature makes several religious references. He quotes Adam from Milton's *Paradise Lost*: "did I request thee, Maker, from my clay to mould me man,"<sup>69</sup> reflecting the famous epigraph already present in the 1818 edition of Shelley's novel. When Walton opposes him and suggests that Christ did not revenge himself on mankind even when they made him suffer,<sup>70</sup> the Creature replies: "his father loved him, Sir."<sup>71</sup> Before leaving, both the Creature and Walton quote Milton again: "o welcome hour."<sup>72</sup> The Miltonic quotations emphasise the theme of father-son relationship that is heavily accentuated in this adaptation. The Creature compares himself both to Adam and to Jesus and his violence and anger are explained by the abandonment by his father, Frankenstein. Furthermore, this father-son dynamic also humanises the Creature in addition to his tamed behaviour and softened appearance. The Creature takes Frankenstein's body and disappears into darkness.

The most significant innovation in this adaptation is that Connor creates a new version of Frankenstein's Creature: he is softer, kinder, and more beautiful than the original. He does not show the violence and hatred that Shelley's Creature exhibits; his rage and cruelty serve to emphasise the immense magnitude of his suffering. Although Connor finally portrays a Creature that is worthy of sympathy, he eliminates the brutality and vengefulness that the original possesses. By doing so, he also removes the important aspects of the moral dilemma; while the novel presents a complex being that is capable of both great love and terrible violence, the film offers a more normalised and therefore diluted version of the Creature, whitewashing some of the novel's most important aspects. While it is refreshing to see an adaptation removed from the overstated physical horror of the Creature's very appearance, Connor's adaptation pushes the limits of the story's ethos

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<sup>69</sup> Connor, *Frankenstein* [2004 Film]. Part 2, 1:22:45.

<sup>70</sup> Connor, *Frankenstein* [2004 Film]. Part 2, 1:24:00.

<sup>71</sup> Connor, *Frankenstein* [2004 Film]. Part 2, 1:24:07.

<sup>72</sup> Connor, *Frankenstein* [2004 Film]. Part 2, 1:24:55.

by setting the aesthetic boundaries somewhat closer to the original novel, while also introducing a thinking and emotionally mature Creature, whose brutal actions are repeatedly interpreted through the lens of alienation and the failure of a father-son rather than a strictly creator-creation relationship.

### 5.7 *Frankenstein*. Directed by Bernard Rose, Bad Badger, 2015.

The last film selected for analysis in this thesis is *Frankenstein* (spelled as *FRANKENSTEIN*), directed by Bernard Rose, produced by Bad Badger, starring Xavier Samuel as Adam (the creation), and Carrie-Anne Moss and Danny Huston as Elizabeth and Victor. This adaptation represents both a modern vision of Mary Shelley's novel and an emotionally faithful interpretation of the Creature.

The setting of the film is drastically different from the previous adaptations, as the events are portrayed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Another significant shift in this interpretation sees Elizabeth and Victor Frankenstein both as scientists who successfully recreate a human being. The film starts by quoting the opening lines of the Creature's story from the novel: "it is with considerable difficulty that I remember the original era of my being."<sup>73</sup> These lines are delivered by Adam in the background as a voiceover: this shows that the story is narrated by Adam himself.

Initially, Adam looks like a healthy young man with the cognitive abilities of a new-born child. His beauty is not permanent, however, as his skin starts to disintegrate, which impels the scientists to euthanise their project. As Adam's body is artificially created, he is exceptionally strong, which allows him to survive the creators' attempt to kill him and escape the laboratory. On his way, he kills several workers, however, his murders do not seem to represent conscious or deliberate actions, as he mostly simply protects himself and tries to understand and discover the world. Despite his strength, his movements are still unbalanced at his point, but he quickly learns how to walk and run.

After his escape, he observes the world around him and learns how to feed himself. The background narrative quotes Shelley's original again, as Adam describes his perception of the surrounding environment. He meets a dog that shows him kindness and becomes his companion. Then, not surprisingly, at this stage of the novel's vast cinematic legacy, the motif from the long-since classic 1931 *Frankenstein* is repeated again but with an important variation. Adam meets a

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<sup>73</sup> Rose, Bernard. (Director). (2015). *Frankenstein* [Film]. Bad Badger. 00:01:00.

little girl who asks him to play with her near the water. As Adam does not yet fully understand language, he misunderstands the girl's instructions and throws her into the lake. When he hears her cry and sees how she struggles, he immediately jumps in after her and brings her to the shore. This scene combines the 1931 interpretation and the original narrative where the Creature saves a drowning girl. On the shore, he is stopped by the police who kill the dog that is trying to protect Adam. This act of violence causes Adam to lose control and attack the police officers. When he later tries to bury the dog, he is beaten by people, chained to the track and then the scene abruptly changes, as the events relocate to the police station where Adam is sitting in a straitjacket. Two agents ask him about his name, and he answers "Monster."<sup>74</sup> They find Elizabeth's badge and invite her to the station, but she lies and claims that she does not recognise Adam. He calls her "mom" repeatedly but is yelled at by the police officers. Up to this point, the relationship between him and Elizabeth is more accentuated than that between him and Victor. Adam considers Elizabeth to be his mother and at the beginning she reciprocated his feelings by showing sympathy and care. Adam calls Victor "dad" once but compared to Elizabeth, Victor does not see in him an intelligent being. While the scientists do not abandon Adam immediately after the creation, their decision to euthanise him and Elizabeth's denial at the police station allude to and play out on a larger, public scale the act of abandonment described in the novel.

We see the defenceless Adam is beaten again and shot in the head by the police officer who hates him for attacking his colleague. Adam survives again, but now his appearance draws closer to the original Creature: his face is scarred, there are signs of disintegration on his skin and his eyes are red from the beatings. He finds his way to the street where a blind man plays the guitar. The man, Eddie, frees him from the straitjacket, calls him a friend and shows him compassion. As Adam calls himself "Monster", Eddie uses it as well as a nickname for this new friend. Adam, in the background voiceover, calls Eddie his protector. They survive on the streets of the city together.

Then Eddie introduces Adam to Wanda, Eddie's friend who works as a prostitute, and pays her to have sexual intercourse with Adam. She agrees and initially shows him compassion, but when she finally sees him naked, Wanda is disgusted and wants to leave. Adam's body does not look human anymore, as his skin is covered in bumps, leaking wounds, and bruises. While trying to hug her, Adam accidentally kills Wanda. When Eddie enters the room and discovers what happened, he beats Adam with his walking stick. Adam tries to protect himself and by throwing

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<sup>74</sup> Rose, *Frankenstein* [2015 Film], 00:39:00.

Eddie on the wall, he kills him as well. The loss of the people who showed him love and compassion awakens his anger. While escaping, he meets the police officer who harmed him and shoots both him and his colleague.

Emotionally and physically hurt, Adam decides to find Elizabeth and enact his revenge. He quotes Shelley at this key turning point: "I will revenge my injuries: if I cannot inspire love, I will cause fear."<sup>75</sup> He finds both Elizabeth and Victor in their house and tries to strangle Victor. Elizabeth calls him Adam: this is the first of the selected adaptations where the Creature receives a name from his creator. Elizabeth and Victor lead Adam to the laboratory and show him another body being bio-printed.

When Adam sees another, more beautiful version of himself, he argues with Victor and claims that the copy is not him. The question of identity is raised, as Adam is confused by his origins and by the very nature of his existence. Victor, while admitting that Adam's disintegrating body is a mistake, expresses that he wants to repeat his experiment and create another, more viable being.

When Adam looks closer at his beautiful copy, he gets furious and destroys it. When Victor tries to sever Adam's head, Elizabeth wants to protect him, and Victor accidentally cuts her throat. Victor leaves, and Adam takes Elizabeth's body into a forest. The final monologue of Shelley's Creature is quoted at this point while Adam assembles the fire and burns in it together with Elizabeth, whom he considers to be his maker, thus bridging as well as widening the gap between the original text and the adaptation.

*Frankenstein* (2015) combines the original material, motifs from other cinematographic adaptations and a modern setting. Visually this adaptation is more graphic and violent, which allows to portray both the abhorrent decaying nature of Adam's body and the various traumas and suffering he endures. By making his body young and beautiful at the beginning, the film facilitates a better understanding of Adam's agony and together with his initial child-like innocence it creates a narrative which is closer to the original novel. It helps the audience to understand that Adam's aggression is caused first by a lack of understanding of the human moral code and second by the violence committed against him. The development of his character is the closest representation of the Creature in relation to the novel. Moreover, this film does not try to invent any preceding

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<sup>75</sup> Rose, *Frankenstein* [2015 Film], 01:12:00.

reasons for Adam's behaviour, as his body and mind are healthy at the beginning, and his physical and moral deterioration is caused by people around him and their violent actions.

The innovation that the film proposes is the fragmentation of the creator into two separate characters and introducing the feminine element into the originally solely male creation story, while also keeping to the traditional gender stereotypes of this new male/female creator duo. Victor represents the cold egoistic approach of hard science; he never feels pity for his creation and moreover, he is the one who tries to kill Adam and accidentally kills Elizabeth instead. Drawing on the feminine stereotype, Elizabeth portrays the passionate, caring, motherly approach. She is the one who tries to teach Adam to speak, and she sees a conscious being in him from the beginning. She is also the one who has a chance to help him, but she abandons Adam and causes all his consequent suffering. She represents the more humane side of scientific experimentation, but she does not have power over Victor's obsessive and dedicated attitude. Victor represents the dangerous inhuman behaviour of science in the name of progress and advancing new technologies, and unlike Elizabeth, he is not directly punished for his actions.

This adaptation shows a new approach to the original material: it combines the original narrative with a modern setting, which allows to portray a modern version of the story and enables to present a more faithful interpretation of the Creature. The process of the creation, the Creature's physiology and the challenges that he faces are adapted to the modern world which facilitates a better understanding of the original premise as the events set in the modern world elicit a more sympathetic reaction from the viewers. Adam shows both a high level of emotional and cognitive intelligence and his violent behaviour is explained both by his initial innocence and by the social injustice that he faces. Compared to the previous adaptations, the Creature receives more screen time and moreover, his story overshadows the storylines of the scientists. Overall, despite the change in the setting, the modern version shows a closer representation of the Creature and moreover, allows the film creators to discuss modern subject matter and reflect ongoing public debate such as urban poverty or police brutality.

## 6 How film adaptations changed the perception of the novel

Since the publication of *Frankenstein* in 1818, the name appears both on bookshelves and on the screens. However, compared to the two editions of the novel, there are dozens of closer adaptations and hundreds of other various interpretations and allusions to the novel or to the Creature himself. Robert Stam states that the fidelity of the adaptation is not an adequate trope and “in fact, adaptation theory has available a whole constellation of tropes – translation, reading, dialogization, cannibalization, transmutation, transfiguration, and signifying – each of which sheds light on a different dimension of adaptation.”<sup>76</sup> It is thus unnecessary to judge which of the adaptations creates the closest copy of the original, but it is rather important to concentrate on the ways in which they transform the novel and its rich afterlife and legacy, as the quantity and the diversity of the adaptations inevitably create misconceptions about the original material and change the perception of the novel.

### 6.1 Who is Frankenstein?

One of the more obvious consequences of the adaptations is the name shift: the name of the scientist is often used to describe the Creature. It is impossible to select the specific time when the shift occurred but, introducing the most popularised vision of the Creature and becoming an inspiration for other later adaptations, James Whale’s *Frankenstein* (1931) plays a key role in the shift. It is necessary to discuss both the reasons for and the consequences of the shift.

Before analysing the various effects of the adaptations, it is essential to establish the possible foundation in the novel itself which allows the name shift to happen or at least facilitates the subsequent confusion. The Creature in the novel does not receive a name and instead multiple pejorative names or periphrastic constructions are used to refer to him, such as: wretch, demon, hideous monster, the being, devil, vile insect, and the Creature. Duyfhuizen suggests that “the absence of a proper name [...] marks his alienation by and from the world of human existence [and]

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<sup>76</sup> Stam, Robert. “Beyond Fidelity: The Dialogics of Adaptation.” In *Film Adaptation*, edited by James Naremore, 62. 2000. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press.

signifies his lack of a family and his exclusion from a chain of generation.”<sup>77</sup> The decision to select a certain name thus allows a drama or film to demonstrate a specific aspect of the Creature; either to accentuate his monstrosity or to connect him to his creator by simply giving him his creator’s family name. Attesting to the novel’s and the adaptations’ far-reaching legacies, the word “Frankenstein” has become a modern synonym of the artificial and monstrous, making “Franken” a commonly used prefix to describe genetically modified crops (“frankenfoods”), for instance.<sup>78</sup> Already before the films the roots of the confusion can be found in the theatre adaptations where the titles of the plays combine Frankenstein’s name with the periphrastic term for the Creature: *Frankenstein; or, The Demon of Switzerland* (1823), *Frankenstein, or, The Monster* (1826). The films then follow this example either by choosing a similarly ambiguous title or by suggesting this ambiguity otherwise. Dawley’s *Frankenstein* (1910) contains a confusing chapter title, ‘On the bridal night Frankenstein’s better nature asserting itself’, erasing the boundaries between Frankenstein and his creation. Whale’s films, because of their popularity and the number of adaptations, have had the strongest effect. *Bride of Frankenstein* (1935), telling the story of the creation of a female mate for the Monster, causes another ambiguity by its title. *The Curse of Frankenstein* (1957) has a similar effect, as the curse can be either directed at the scientist or originated in the Creature. In addition to the confusing titles, these films of the Frankenstein horror era also enable the shift of the name by creating ambiguous advertisement.

Film posters can be considered one of the most influential reasons for the confusion of the name. As a part of a commercial promotion strategy, posters are meant to capture the attention of possible viewers and therefore, they use the most popular and entertaining images from the film. Most of the *Frankenstein* posters made for the 1931 film have several common attributes: there is a large title, ‘Frankenstein’, the Monster’s image, and an additional slogan, written in a smaller font: “the man who made a monster.”<sup>79</sup> The visage of the Monster easily blends with the large title and the subtitle can be simply overlooked. Some other posters completely remove the subtitle and the only things left are thus the Monster and the name Frankenstein and in this specific example,

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<sup>77</sup> Duyfhuizen, “Periphrastic Naming in Mary Shelley’s ‘Frankenstein’”, 480.

<sup>78</sup> “something that is considered to be frightening and dangerous because of the unnatural way in which it was created”, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/franken>.

<sup>79</sup> Miller, Julie. 2012. “Photos: Gallery: Frankenstein, Dracula, and the Rest of the Most Valuable Movie Posters.” *Vanity Fair*. March 13, 2012. <https://www.vanityfair.com/hollywood/photos/2012/03/dracula-frankenstein-most-valuable-movie-posters>.

the additional subtitle “The Monster that terrorized the world.”<sup>80</sup> When the scientist disappears from the picture, the name becomes visually connected only to the Monster. Other types of advertisement create a similar illusion. For example, the 1931 advertisement in the *New York Times* creates a confusing title as it can be read as “The man who made a monster – Frankenstein” or “Frankenstein, a monster created with a diabolical cunning by a mad scientist.”<sup>81</sup> A similar example can be found in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* advertisement of the *Bride of Frankenstein*, where two main titles create an impression that Frankenstein is the Monster: “A mate for the monster” and “The Bride of Frankenstein.”<sup>82</sup>

The film titles and the posters lead to the confusion, however there is also a symbolic meaning behind the shift which the adaptations help to underline, either voluntarily or not. Overall, there are two main ideas that make the shift logical: the Creature as a reflection or a child of his creator and the creator as the real Monster. For instance, Dawley’s *Frankenstein* elaborates on the idea of a doppelganger and reaches the conclusion that the Creature is the embodiment of Frankenstein’s evil nature and thus he is a part and emanation of his creator. Horton argues that “if Frankenstein and the Monster are linked as a personality, a Jekyll and Hyde before Robert Louis Stevenson concocted his double man, then this naming confusion makes sense.”<sup>83</sup>

Moreover, multiple adaptations develop the idea of a reflection and emphasise the parental bond between Victor and the Creature. Branagh’s *Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein* (1994) accentuates the theme of childbirth, Connor’s *Frankenstein* (2004) repeatedly calls Victor his father and Rose’s *Frankenstein* (2015) gives Elizabeth the role of a mother who nurses and then abandons her creation. All these films underline the same idea: as the Creature does not have a family, his creator carries the role of a parent, and thus the family name rightly belongs to the Creature.

Both the doppelganger theme and the child-parent relationship indicate that there is a duality present between the creator and the Creature. As the Creature reflects the evil or the wrongdoings of his creator, the creator in turn reflects the monstrosity of his Creature. The shift of the name thus represents the ultimate message of the novel: Frankenstein as an unethical scientist can be considered the real monster. Frankenstein’s blind desire for progress and innovation, or his

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<sup>80</sup> For example, a 1931 poster. *Movieposters.com*. Accessed July 12, 2022. <https://www.movieposters.com/products/frankenstein-mpw-132999>.

<sup>81</sup> “1931 Frankenstein Film Opening Day Ad.” *www.rarenewspapers.com*. Accessed July 15, 2022. <https://www.rarenewspapers.com/view/659084?imagelist=1>.

<sup>82</sup> “Bride of Frankenstein Opening Night Ad.” *www.rarenewspapers.com*. Accessed July 15, 2022. [shorturl.at/abCE9](http://shorturl.at/abCE9).

<sup>83</sup> Horton, *Frankenstein*, 52.

ignorance towards any potential risks, or his inability to control or accept his creation are at least partially presented in all the adaptations and they all lead to the same conclusion that Frankenstein himself can be deemed the monster. Although Shelley has never called the Creature Frankenstein, the name shift produced by the adaptations reflects the notions established by the novel.

## 6.2 The popularised image of the “Monster” instead of the intelligent Creature

Abhorrent appearance, brilliant intellect and strong sensibility are combined in Mary Shelley’s original Creature. In the Creature’s final monologue, he conveys the intricacies of his being:

Once I falsely hoped to meet with beings, who, pardoning my outward form, would love me for the excellent qualities which I was capable of unfolding. I was nourished with high thoughts of honour and devotion. But now crime has degraded me beneath the meanest animal. No guilt, no mischief, no malignity, no misery, can be found comparable to mine. When I run over the frightful catalogue of my sins, I cannot believe that I am the same creature whose thoughts were once filled with sublime and transcendent visions of the beauty and the majesty of goodness. But it is even so; the fallen angel becomes a malignant devil. Yet even that enemy of God and man had friends and associates in his desolation; I am alone. (229)

However, in popular culture the main association with Frankenstein’s Creature is Boris Karloff’s “indelible image as familiar as the Coca-Cola logo”<sup>84</sup> and “reproduced and disseminated as widely and as often as the Mona Lisa.”<sup>85</sup> It is almost impossible to examine all the reasons behind this change, as the social and political atmosphere, cinematographic technologies, historical influences on the psyche of the audience and pure commercial or artistic interests were at least partially involved in this transformation. Nevertheless, it is possible to establish some of the main causes.

The horror genre itself plays a crucial role in the creation of a monster. Horton explains that there is a reason behind the popularity of horror monsters:

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<sup>84</sup> Horton, *Frankenstein*, 18.

<sup>85</sup> Heffernan, “Looking at the Monster: ‘Frankenstein’ and Film,” 158.

Keeping the monsters close at hand is surely a way to manage them, and the fear they represent. Here is an external representation of a child's dread, kept near the bedside; when the child wakes up in the morning, it's one more tiny victory over the forces of fear.<sup>86</sup>

Twitchell also argues that “the first rule of shivers seems to be that horror art will be most prevalent in times of gradual cultural shifts when people need some ‘object’ toward which they can direct their anxieties.”<sup>87</sup> The 1930s in the United States, where Whale's *Frankenstein* first appeared on the screens, were marked by the Great Depression, unemployment, drought, and the looming threat of World War II.<sup>88</sup> Thus it was a prospective time for the horror genre as it allowed people to see the monster defeated or to simply relax and forget the troubles of real life.

If the main purpose of horror at that time was to entertain the audience, the transformation of the psychologically complex Creature into the simple but scary Monster is pragmatically understandable. There are multiple reasons why specifically Frankenstein's Creature was fitting for the horror monster image: despite the simplification of the original novel, even the 1931 version discusses the basic mysteries that are relevant for both children and adults of any generation. The topics of life and death, and the quandaries of alienation. Baumann further suggests that:

Whale's film also shifts a fundamental philosophical point of Shelley's novel. In the novel, ugliness is absolute and eternal, rather than relative. Beauty is not in the eye of the beholder.<sup>89</sup>

While in the original novel the Creature's appearance is so dreadful that anyone who sees him averts their eyes, most of the films suggest that his deformities can be overlooked by the innocent eyes of children. Stephen T. Asma also proposes that “the liberal lesson of monsters is one of tolerance: we must overcome our innate scapegoating, our xenophobic tendencies.”<sup>90</sup> The final result is then the monster who is not as intelligent and not as hideous as the original Creature,

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<sup>86</sup> Horton, *Frankenstein*, 17.

<sup>87</sup> Twitchell, “‘Frankenstein’ and the Anatomy of Horror,” 41.

<sup>88</sup> History.com editors. 2018. “The 1930s.” *HISTORY*. A&E Television Networks. Accessed July 19, 2022. <https://www.history.com/topics/great-depression/1930s>.

<sup>89</sup> Baumann, *Frankenstein 200: The Birth, Life, and Resurrection of Mary Shelley's Monster*, 94.

<sup>90</sup> Asma, Stephen T. “Monsters And The Moral Imagination.” In *The Monster Theory Reader*, edited by Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock, 289. University of Minnesota Press. 2020.

which creates an entertaining character who is compelling enough but does not instill the existential fears and complex moral dilemmas of the original being, contributing to the popularity of this new, simplified cinematographic development of the Frankenstein myth.

Finally, sensationalism can offer an additional explanation for the popularity of the simplified image of a monster. As was previously demonstrated by the film posters, advertisement is a crucial part of the film industry and in this case clearly a chief culprit of the name shift of the Creature. As commercial success is one of the main goals of almost any film, the advertisement tends to use sensationalism to draw the attention of the potential audience and to promote the film to as many as possible. For example, an advertisement of the 1931 *Frankenstein* in *The New York Times* contains the following catchphrase: “A creature – half man – half fiend – a soulless wretch with a mechanical brain – knowing every human sensation except the love of woman.”<sup>91</sup> Additionally, after the success of Whale’s *Frankenstein* (1931), the image of the Monster was used not only in the film and its advertisements, but also in merchandising. As Horton indicates, “the gathering of talismans is another aspect of cult worship, and posters or magazines devoted to the monsters were an important part of extending one’s devotion.”<sup>92</sup> Although the advertisement and the items themselves do not transform the intelligent Creature into the Monster, they show why the transformation had such success. To create an entertaining character the Creature had to be adapted for the horror genre whose main purpose is to frighten the audience for entertainment, and the original complexity of the Creature and the overall grim existential narrative of Shelley’s *Frankenstein* would contradict this commercial purpose.

After the era of the horror *Frankenstein*, presented primarily by Universal and Hammer, the subsequent adaptations try to restore the Creature’s intellect. However, as was demonstrated by the analyses above, the rehabilitation of the Creature was not instantaneous. Branagh’s Creature starts to speak and express emotions, but his learning process is slow, his vocabulary is limited, and he does not articulate any remorse for his violence and the murders. The casting of Robert de Niro furthers the violent essence of the cinematic Creature. Connor’s *Frankenstein* (2004) completely changes Whale’s vision, as his Creature is beautiful and well-spoken, and shows more kindness and remorse than the original Creature. Overall, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century the Creature enters a new era of adaptation: he is still being presented as a violent, mute monster, as in McGuigan’s *Victor*

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<sup>91</sup> “1931 Frankenstein Film Opening Day Ad.” [www.rarenewspapers.com](http://www.rarenewspapers.com). Accessed July 15, 2022. <https://www.rarenewspapers.com/view/659084?imagelist=1>.

<sup>92</sup> Horton, *Frankenstein*, 16.

*Frankenstein* (2015), but often he is reinvented and adapted to the post-modern genre as in Rose's *Frankenstein* (2015) or Fessenden's *Depraved* (2019). Despite that, the image established by Whale and Karloff still prevails in popular culture and moreover, it can now be found on some of the editions of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*,<sup>93</sup> completing the circle of cultural crosspollination between text and screen.

### 6.3 Film inventions

Another significant influence of the film adaptations is their ability to extend the narrative of the original and create new episodes and clichés that might be mistakenly attributed to the original novel. Whale's film again serves as a primary inspiration, as it invents several motifs that later reappear in other adaptations. One of the motifs is the encounter with the little girl near the pond. First it appears in 1931 *Frankenstein* and then it is reinterpreted in Rose's *Frankenstein* in 2015. In both scenes the innocent girl is contrasted with the menacing Creature. The girl does not perceive the Creature as a threat and offers to play with him. The Creature does not understand the game and throws the girl in the water. While Whale's Creature does not possess the understanding of the world and leaves the girl to drown, Rose's Adam realises his mistake and saves the girl. The scene from the later film combines both the narrative from the original novel and Whale's invention. Another more prominent motif that has already become almost a cliché, is the phrase "it's alive," first used in Whale's *Frankenstein* (1931). This phrase does not appear in the original novel, yet it is reused in almost every adaptation. In *Bride of Frankenstein*, Henry exclaims, "she is alive!". In *The Curse* (1957), Victor says, "Paul, it's alive", when they successfully reanimate the dog. In Branagh's version, Victor mumbles, "it's alive," when he hears the Creature move in the iron casquet. The phrase has since become so intertwined with the Frankenstein myth that it is used, both ironically and unironically, to allude to the creation scene in various films, TV series and cartoons. Similar reusing of the interpolated motifs happens with other scenes, such as a body of a hanged man later used for organs being cut from the gallows, Frankenstein's family dog being killed to inspire him in his reanimation experiments, the overall aesthetics of the laboratory, the power of lighting reviving the Creature, and the blind man or the cottagers teaching the Creature the word 'friend.' While Whale's *Frankenstein* (1931) at the time of its creation had only the theatre

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<sup>93</sup> For example, Macmillan Collector's Library 2017 edition, ISBN-13: 9781509827756.

adaptations and Dawley's silent film to use as an inspiration, later adaptations had a broader choice. The 21<sup>st</sup>-century adaptations can now use the original material, the plays, Universal and Hammer inventions, and other numerous adaptations of the past 200 years of the Frankenstein myth. Harmes suggests that:

Far from looking for fidelity, theorists now consider the ways that a transgressive adaptation produces a work of cultural interest. Moving past and beyond the once dominant binary model of examining a book made into a film, and judging how faithful the resulting film was to the book, has also given us the critical apparatus to evaluate the points of differences as much as the points of similarities between an original work and the adapted work.<sup>94</sup>

The novel provides the material for the adaptations and the adaptations then not only adapt and change the original narrative, but they also invent new motifs that become a part of the Frankenstein mythology. The inventions can be seen as misconceptions, creating a false narrative, but they can also be perceived as an enriching element, broadening the Frankenstein universe.

## 6.4 The ultimate message of the novel

As demonstrated by the previous chapter, the film adaptations have the ability to reinvent the original narrative either by transforming the Creature or inventing new episodes and motifs. Additionally, they offer new interpretations of the novel, which become a part of the Frankenstein myth.

In the introduction to the 1831 edition of *Frankenstein*, Shelley explains her desire to write a frightening story: "if I could only contrive one [story] which would frighten my reader as I myself had been frightened that night!"<sup>95</sup> Thus one of Shelley's own goals was to create a terrifying narrative and the film adaptations indeed follow this path. However, they change Shelley's vision in various degrees to achieve the same purpose. There are some themes that disappear completely in most of the adaptations, but there are also themes that are invented by the filmmakers and reused in multiple films. As Shelley's novel presents a plethora of rich subject matter, it is sensible to concentrate only on the main elements in this thesis.

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<sup>94</sup> Harmes, *The Curse of Frankenstein*, 36.

<sup>95</sup> Shelley, Mary. 2013. *Frankenstein: Or, the Modern Prometheus*. The 1831 Text. The Project Gutenberg. Accessed July 13, 2022. <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/42324/42324-h/42324-h.htm>.

The most prominent and apparent theme is the subject of overcoming death. This is an inseparable part of the Frankenstein narrative, and it appears in all the adaptations. It is the subject that makes both the novel and the adaptations intriguing. The fascination with this topic is partially related to the idea of the uncanny, presented by Sigmund Freud. He theorises that the lack of knowledge about death and the strong emotional bond that all people have with it produces the feeling of something uncanny when people are faced with the dead body coming back to life.<sup>96</sup> As people perceive death as something permanent, the idea of reanimating a dead body produces fear or unrest, as it contradicts established secular belief. Both the novel and the adaptations present an unimaginable and thus frightening, uncanny scenario, where death was conquered by humans, and they all show that scientific progress was behind that achievement, portraying humanity's deep-set anxieties about the possible fallout when things go wrong.

Shelley's novel does not discuss the science and the methods that allowed Victor to return the dead body to life in great detail. The only specific mentions are the laws of electricity, galvanism, Erasmus Darwin's experiments and the works of Cornelius Agrippa, Paracelsus, and Albertus Magnus that Victor avidly reads. There is no direct description of the creation scene and the only explanation that Victor provides is that he infused "a spark of being into the lifeless thing" (50). Dawley's version explores a more supernatural, alchemic type of creation, as the Creature magically appears in the cauldron. Whale, on the other hand, invents the staple laboratory scene, which then serves as a primary inspiration for future adaptations. Although every adaptation presents a slightly different vision of the laboratory and of the scientific methods used in the reanimation process, some aspects stay the same: a gurney or a container with the body, the electrodes and the power of electricity used to reanimate the Creature. There are some exceptions, mostly in contemporary adaptations: for instance, Rose's film does not show the creation and immediately presents a living being. The adaptations thus provide a more detailed vision of the creation process and moreover, they add a new aspect: the collected organs can play an important role in the reanimation and influence its results, as in the case of the Creature's brain discussed above.

In the original novel, Victor mentions that he collected the body parts from graves, charnel-houses, the dissecting room, and the slaughterhouse (47). However, there are no mentions of who did the parts belong to, as their previous owners do not influence the result. The film adaptations therefore introduce a new idea and shorthand of ethical reasoning: the previous possessors of the

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<sup>96</sup> Freud, Sigmund. "The Uncanny." In *The Monster Theory Reader*, edited by Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock, 75. University of Minnesota Press. 2020.

body parts can be possibly responsible for the violent nature of the Creature, which solves the nurture versus nature dilemma. In the novel, the Creature only becomes violent after being treated unfairly and despicably by his creator and by other people. Whale's *Frankenstein* (1931) develops the idea of an abnormal brain that is inserted into the body and that becomes one of the reasons for the Monster's uncontrollable aggression. Fernando Vidal argues that the Monster still reacts aggressively because he was provoked by the fire and "reproducing Waldman's views about the 'criminal brain' and presenting them as the film's ideological essence contradicts both the spirit and the letter of the movie."<sup>97</sup> However, later adaptations concentrate more on the idea of a damaged brain or a criminal body as the source of evil. *The Curse of Frankenstein* (1957) chooses a similar path, but in this case, it is a damaged brain of a genius that is responsible for the violence. *The Curse* further develops the theme of collecting the right body parts, as Victor selects the hands of a sculptor and commits murder to get the brain of a professor. Later adaptations slowly abandon this idea, but even Branagh's Creature is deemed evil because it was assembled from the bodies of criminals. The early adaptations thus discover a different reason for the Creature's aggression and at least partially change the initial message of the original; if the body parts contain the evil that they somehow transfer to the Creature, then his behaviour is not solely caused by Frankenstein's irresponsibility or social injustice, largely simplifying or indeed erasing the novel's complex sense of ethics.

Frankenstein himself is also subjected to various interpretations. His motivations, his reaction to the Creature and his punishment vary. An important change presented both by some early and by some later adaptations is that Frankenstein does not abandon his creation when the Creature is reanimated. This drastically transforms the original premise that suggests that the Creature caused death and violence because it was abandoned by his creator. In Whale's first adaptation, Frankenstein is pleased with his creation, he shows happiness when he sees the Creature move for the first time. Even after the threatening figure of Boris Karloff appears on the screen, Frankenstein is not scared or disgusted. A similar narrative applies to *The Curse*. Whale's Frankenstein is forced to abandon his creation after he appears to be dangerous, however he does not leave him alone but in the hands of his colleague, Waldman. In *The Curse*, Frankenstein is almost killed by his creation, yet he is still fascinated by him to the extent that when the Creature is killed, he reanimates him again. In Rose's adaptation the Frankensteins are initially enthralled

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<sup>97</sup> Vidal, Fernando. 2016. "Frankenstein's Brain: 'the Final Touch.'" *SubStance* 45 (2): 99. Accessed July 20, 2022. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24897970>.

by their creation, but as Adam starts to show signs of decay, they decide to euthanise him. The fact that Frankenstein does not abandon the Creature changes the basic plot of the original story: it downplays the Creature's hideousness, and it partially manipulates the audience into siding with Frankenstein. If Frankenstein is not responsible for the violence of the Creature because he did not abandon him, then the Creature's aggression is less rational or understandable, and therefore it needs to be explicated by the criminal essence of the dead body parts. Moreover, Branagh's and Connor's Victor receives a more detailed backstory, explaining his obsession with reanimation. While early horror adaptations create an image of a mad scientist, Branagh and Connor try to humanise Victor and portray him as a loving character, motivated by the death of his loved ones, taking a partial cue from Shelley's novel. It again creates a narrative that sympathises with Frankenstein in a way the novel does not. Despite these differences, the question of the consequences of Frankenstein's experiments is still raised in all the adaptations, as Frankenstein has to face his creation. What Frankenstein is punished for and how marks another key difference.

Some of the adaptations allow a happy ending for Frankenstein. Dawley's adaptation shows that Victor accepted his mistakes and his good nature triumphed over evil. He does not lose any loved ones. In Whale's version Frankenstein is almost killed by his creation but he survives, and in the *Bride*, the Monster allows him to escape together with Elizabeth before destroying the tower. *The Curse* offers another interpretation, as Victor is blamed for the Creature's murders and sentenced to decapitation. Thus, in some cases, Frankenstein is portrayed as a passionate scientist who simply makes a mistake and who does not deserve to be punished. In others, he is an obsessed scientist, who does not accept the rules of nature and is not afraid to kill to achieve his goal. Only in later adaptations is Frankenstein subjected to loss and terror caused by his experiment. These differences in the portrayal of Frankenstein also lead to an unbalanced dynamic between the creator and the creation. While in the novel, they become equal rivals, who both suffer and both are able to assert their arguments on the same intellectual level, the film adaptations present a more imbalanced picture. By removing the Creature's speech and intellect, the adaptations give more attention to Frankenstein and less to his creation. In some cases, this allows us to sympathise with Frankenstein more than with his creation. The Creature, then, becomes overshadowed by the creator. As Ann C. Hall suggests, there is "equally compelling evidence to suggest that (1) the novel sympathizes with Victor; (2) the novel sympathizes with his creation; (3) the novel does not

sympathize with either; and (4) the novel sympathizes with both.”<sup>98</sup> This complicated but balanced structure of Shelley’s novel is rarely portrayed by any of the visual adaptations.

In the introduction to the 1831 edition of *Frankenstein*, Shelley describes the dream that inspired her to write the novel:

I saw—with shut eyes, but acute mental vision,—I saw the pale student of unhallowed arts kneeling beside the thing he had put together. I saw the hideous phantasm of a man stretched out, and then, on the working of some powerful engine, show signs of life, and stir with an uneasy, half vital motion. Frightful must it be; for supremely frightful would be the effect of any human endeavour to mock the stupendous mechanism of the Creator of the world. His success would terrify the artist; he would rush away from his odious handywork, horror-stricken. He would hope that, left to itself, the slight spark of life which he had communicated would fade; that this thing, which had received such imperfect animation, would subside into dead matter; and he might sleep in the belief that the silence of the grave would quench for ever the transient existence of the hideous corpse which he had looked upon as the cradle of life. He sleeps; but he is awakened; he opens his eyes; behold the horrid thing stands at his bedside, opening his curtains, and looking on him with yellow, watery, but speculative eyes.<sup>99</sup>

The dangers of playing with death, the unforgivable cowardice towards one’s creation and the suffering and loss as a punishment: the core elements of Shelley’s novel are often completely removed or crudely simplified. The original material is used as an inspiration, but the adaptations make their own conclusions and, in some cases, heavily deviate from the original premises or indeed conclusions.

## 6.5 Speculative fiction and the Monster multiverse

Despite some questionable decisions made by filmmakers, the film adaptations have one significant positive effect on the novel: they allow the story to live on and evolve. This can be demonstrated

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<sup>98</sup> Hall, Ann C. “Making Monsters: The Philosophy of Reproduction in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* and the Universal Films *Frankenstein* and *The Bride of Frankenstein*.” In *The Philosophy of Horror*, edited by Thomas Fahy, 212. *JSTOR*. University Press of Kentucky. Accessed September 22, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt2jck39>.

<sup>99</sup> Shelley, Mary. 2013. *Frankenstein: Or, the Modern Prometheus*. The 1831 Text. The Project Gutenberg.

both by the continuing presence of the Creature in popular culture and by the speculative fiction themes inspired by the ideas from the novel or by Shelley herself.

After the success of Whale's *Frankenstein* (1931), the Creature became an iconic character of the horror genre. Two main series of films were created by Universal Studios and by Hammer Film Productions. The Creature was killed and came to life, over and over. Baumann indicates that "along with the equally successful *Dracula*, released the same year [1931], it launched the reign of Gothic-inspired monsters in the box office that would last for almost two decades before giving way to a preference for science fiction (aliens in flying saucers, giant insects, and, of course, *Godzilla*) in the early 1950s."<sup>100</sup> The quantity and the popularity of the adaptations separated the Monster from the original narrative and integrated him in a Monster multiverse: the Creature, with an already established backstory, can be used as a narrative block that can be inserted into any other work of speculative fiction.

Nowadays, there are countless adaptations or independent stories that simply reference the Creature, the novel, or the author: films, series, comics, games, novels, plays and songs. The genres of the adaptations also vary from serious dramatic interpretations to action-filled blockbusters or light-hearted comedies. Some use the Creature for comic relief, some explore the deeper issues developed in the novel. For instance, in *Hotel Transylvania*, an animated film produced by Sony Pictures in 2013, the Creature is portrayed as Frank, a good-hearted married monster, one of *Dracula*'s best friends with an intense pyrophobia. The Marvel Comics portray *Frankenstein*'s Creature both as the original monster and later as a superhero-monster who fights the villains and helps the good guys, such as *Spider-Man*.<sup>101</sup> In Danny Boyle's *Frankenstein* (2011), a drama adaptation for The Royal National Theatre, Benedict Cumberbatch and Jonny Lee Miller symbolically alternated in the role of *Frankenstein* and the Creature. In the HBO series *Penny Dreadful* (2014-2016), the Creature embodies the emotions and the intellect of the original, quoting Romantic poetry, and is a part of a complex story full of famous Gothic characters such as *Dracula*, *Dorian Gray*, or *Henry Jekyll*.

However, the films do not only create an independent character appearing in various adaptations but also maintain the main themes of the novel and allow them to inspire and evolve in the genre of speculative fiction. According to M. Keith Booker and Anne-Marie Thomas, Mary

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<sup>100</sup> Baumann, *Frankenstein 200: The Birth, Life, and Resurrection of Mary Shelley's Monster*, 90.

<sup>101</sup> Baumann, *Frankenstein 200: The Birth, Life, and Resurrection of Mary Shelley's Monster*, 107-108.

Shelley's *Frankenstein* is often considered the first work of science fiction.<sup>102</sup> Science fiction or speculative fiction can be defined as 'a broad literary genre encompassing any fiction with supernatural, fantastical, or futuristic elements.'<sup>103</sup> The ideas developed in the original novel often find their reflection in the modern works of speculative fiction. Scientific progress and its potentially dangerous consequences are the main themes, explored in Shelley's *Frankenstein* and replicated and taken further in modern works of speculative fiction. For instance, P. L. Thomas argues that the Hulk, a character from Marvel Comics, "can be read as the personification of a modern Frankenstein's monster, but created by the human failure to seek science while ignoring ethical concerns."<sup>104</sup> The Hulk embodies both the scientist and the Creature and despite suffering the consequences of his experiments, he learns to control his anger and uses it to help people, putting a positive spin on the unethical science conundrum.

However, most of the Frankenstein-inspired speculative fiction has a grimmer message. One of the tendencies of speculative fiction is to warn,<sup>105</sup> and the original novel discusses the dangers of the creation of a new species with similar or higher intelligence and greater strength than humans possess. Gorman Beauchamp explains that Isaac Asimov even uses the term the 'Frankenstein complex' to explain the fear of artificial inventions that can gain consciousness and overtake humanity.<sup>106</sup> Thus, the Creature escapes the boundaries of the initial narrative and finds a reflection in artificial intelligence, robots, and androids. According to Beauchamp, Karel Čapek in *R.U.R.* "rehearsed the Frankenstein myth, but with a significant variation: the bungled attempt to create man gives way to the successful attempt to create robots; biology is superseded by engineering."<sup>107</sup> Victor Frankenstein is replaced by the engineers and programmers and the Creature by the artificial intelligence, which does not reflect the hideous appearance of the Creature but explores the idea of a new type of beings. Similar questions are raised: can the A.I., robots or androids be considered human, should they have equal rights, what makes them a living being and will they inevitably conquer the weaker race – humans – or is the simultaneous existence of both

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<sup>102</sup> Booker, M. Keith, and Thomas, Anne-Marie. 2009. *The Science Fiction Handbook*. 5. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell Pub.

<sup>103</sup> Definition of speculative fiction from the Collins English Dictionary, <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/speculative-fiction>.

<sup>104</sup> Thomas, P.L. "A Case For SF And Speculative Fiction." In *Science Fiction and Speculative Fiction: Challenging Genres*, edited by P. L. Thomas, 17-18. 2013. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

<sup>105</sup> Thomas, "A Case For SF And Speculative Fiction," 17-18.

<sup>106</sup> Beauchamp, Gorman. 1980. "The Frankenstein Complex and Asimov's Robots." *Mosaic: A Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature* 13 (3/4): 84. Accessed July 15, 2022. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24780264>.

<sup>107</sup> Beauchamp, "The Frankenstein Complex and Asimov's Robots," 83.

kin possible? When Victor declines to create a female mate for the Creature, his decision is based on his fear that the Creature will have offspring. As Hall states, “The problem for Frankenstein is that the monster is like him, like all of us, actually, drawn to others for intimacy and support, but he is also drawn to others for a sense of power and domination.”<sup>108</sup> Both the Creature and A.I. are created by humans, whose strengths and flaws inevitably find a reflection in their creations.

Some of the most famous examples of the speculative fiction that explores these themes are Čapek’s novel *R.U.R.* (1920), Cameron’s film *The Terminator* (1984), Asimov’s novel *I, Robot* (1950) and eponymous Proyas’ film *I, Robot* (2004), Garland’s film *Ex Machina* (2014), HBO series *Westworld* (2016) and the Quantic Dream videogame *Detroit: Become Human* (2018). This is just a minimal number of examples. Apart from artificial intelligence, the overall theme of human desire for scientific and technological progress leading to a disaster is explored in an even greater number of works, such as Bradbury’s short story *A Sound of Thunder* (1952), Spielberg’s film *Jurassic Park* (1993) or Brooker’s series *Black Mirror* (2011), to name just a few again from the plethora of possible examples.

Additionally, speculative fiction allows to explore the topics of *Frankenstein* that were previously unknown or forbidden. Booker and Thomas state that “the genre has also enabled both men and women writers to fruitfully explore issues of gender and sexuality, including those relating to gay, lesbian, and bisexual identities.”<sup>109</sup> For example, Condon’s film *Gods and Monsters* (1998) explores a possible reflection of James Whale’s struggle with sexuality in his *Frankenstein* films. Another example is Jeanette Winterson’s novel *Frankissstein* (2019), combining metafictional narrative, the question of gender identity and overall existential uncertainty of humanity and its ethical concerns for the future. The film adaptations thus allow Shelley’s Creature to be reborn in many variations.

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<sup>108</sup> Hall, “Making Monsters: The Philosophy of Reproduction in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* and the Universal Films *Frankenstein* and *The Bride of Frankenstein*,” 220.

<sup>109</sup> Booker and Thomas, *The Science Fiction Handbook*, 86.

## 7 Conclusion

The first edition of *Frankenstein*, consisting of only 500 copies, made Mary Shelley more commercially successful than her husband had ever been.<sup>110</sup> One of the copies has been recently sold at an auction for \$1.17 million, making it one of the most expensive printed books written by a woman.<sup>111</sup> Since the first film adaptation in 1910 more than 30 other direct, and even more loose adaptations have been made. The name Frankenstein has since appeared in films, series, songs, books, plays, comics, games, and other media of representation.

The goal of this thesis was to compare and analyse selected film portrayals of Frankenstein's Creature and demonstrate the changes introduced by the adaptations and their effect on the novel's reception. The selected films show a wide range of approaches to the original material: early films tend to deviate from the novel, while later adaptations seek to represent a closer reproduction of Shelley's story. Their decisions are influenced by a range of available inspirations, by the technological advancements in the cinematic industry and by the consumers' interest based on the historical, social, political, and economic atmosphere of each given period.

The main objective here was to follow the transformation of the Creature into the Monster and to find some of the causes. Based on the analysis of the selected adaptations, the primary reason is the necessity to adapt the novel into the horror film genre, which should be frightening but also entertaining. The original novel provided a narrative that made it a perfect fit for this purpose: the story deals with overcoming the mysteries of death, it offers an entertaining and terrifying tale of a scientific experiment gone wrong and it contains characters that can be easily adapted for the horror genre. Moreover, the theatre adaptations created a simplified version of the story that served as an inspiration for future film adaptations. As wholesale entertainment was the main goal of the horror films, the complexities of the original plot and of the Creature himself had to be radically reduced. Whale's *Frankenstein* (1931) together with Boris Karloff plays the biggest role in the establishing of the monster image. Their creative decisions fascinated and terrified the audience and led to the creation of the famous image of the Monster with iron bolts, a wide forehead, and a large and stiff body. But it is not one film that singlehandedly established the image, but rather the whole Universal series, founded by Whale. As Universal copyrighted their vision of the Monster,

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<sup>110</sup> St Clair, "The Impact of Frankenstein," 43.

<sup>111</sup> "Frankenstein Sets World Auction Record for Printed Work by a Woman," *Fine Books & Collections*.

future adaptations had to reinvent the looks of the Creature, but there are still some similar images of the Monster that can be found across animated series, comic books and other media. One of the key decisions that led to the widely popularised and abiding image of the Monster was cancelling the Creature's ability to speak and think. Without the cognitive abilities of Shelley's original, the Monster was reduced to a character intended to simply scare the audience.

The Creature regained speech and intelligence only after the horror era of the Universal and Hammer films. As was established by the analyses, the change was slow and not always complete. Even the films that intended to be faithful adaptations limited the Creature's monologues and gave more attention to Frankenstein and his motivations instead. And despite the existence of these close adaptations, the image of the Monster still appears and thrives in popular culture.

Another important transformation that was analysed in this thesis was the synecdochal shift of the name Frankenstein. As mentioned above, the novel itself provides some grounding for this shift as it never gives the Creature a proper name and leaves up for debate who the real monster of the story is. But the primary reason for the shift are the titles of the theatre and film adaptations that create an ambiguity between the scientist's name and the Creature. The advertisements, film posters and merchandising further intensify the ambiguity. The shift is also based on the connection between the creator and the creation. Without a proper name, the Monster is associated with his creator on the principle of synecdoche. This is intensified by the later adaptations, which tend to accentuate the paternal relationship between Frankenstein and the Creature.

The transformation of the Creature into a monster and the name shift are the main influences of the film adaptations on the novel's afterlife. Overall, the films create misconceptions about Shelley's novel, but they also allow her narrative to continue to exist in various forms and to further transform into new narratives and ideas. As Harnes concludes, "the sheer diversity of media in which adaptations have been made, the variety of tones and styles in approach and the bewildering range of national contexts and storytelling traditions from which these adaptations have emerged, all indicate the richness of the source novel as an inspiration."<sup>112</sup> The Creature's or the Monster's character continues to appear in various universes and references to the films are still made either for comedic or dramatic purposes. The films also created new motifs, such as fear of fire, the phrase 'it's alive' or the grave-digging scene, that are now a part of the Frankenstein myth.

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<sup>112</sup> Harnes, *The Curse of Frankenstein*, 40.

*Frankenstein* also found a reflection in speculative fiction. As the original story is concerned with scientific progress and its dangers, it became increasingly relevant in the period of the development of artificial intelligence. The myth of creation of a new species or sentient entity and its implications are now widely discussed in films, series and novels telling the stories of robots and androids. The wide range of topics presented in the novel and interpreted by the films also gives space for ongoing discussions about gender, sexuality and other key social and psychological topics.

Scott MacKenzie states that Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* has an "ability to continuously raise images from the dead, giving them new life."<sup>113</sup> There are as many creatures as there are creators: from Frankenstein's Creature to Whale's Monster, to Rose's Adam. The novel and the films now coexist in the dynamic inspirational circle that may possibly influence many more adaptations to come.

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<sup>113</sup> MacKenzie, Scott. "The Cadaver's Pulse: Cinema and the Modern Prometheus." In *Global Frankenstein*, edited by Carol Margaret Davison and Marie Mulvey-Roberts, 164. 2018. Cham Springer International Publishing.

List of films:

- 1) *Frankenstein*. Directed by J. Searle Dawley, Edison Manufacturing Company, 1910.
- 2) *Frankenstein*. Directed by James Whale, Universal Pictures, 1931.
- 3) *Bride of Frankenstein*. Directed by James Whale, Universal Pictures, 1935.
- 4) *The Curse of Frankenstein*. Directed by Terence Fisher, Warner Brothers, 1957.
- 5) *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*. Directed by Kenneth Branagh, Japan Satellite, 1994.
- 6) *Frankenstein*. Directed by Kevin Connor, Hallmark Channel, 2004.
- 7) *Frankenstein*. Directed by Bernard Rose, Bad Badger, 2015.

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