

FRANKENSTEIN AND THE INOCULATED READER

FRANKENSTEIN; OR THE MODERN PROMETHEUS

AND THE INOCULATED READER

By

JANE L. DROVER, B.A., M.A.

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AUTHOR: Jane Drover, B.A. (McMaster University)
M.A. (McMaster University)

SUPERVISOR: Dr. Joan Coldwell

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Abstract

My thesis examines the relationship between Mary Shelley's novel Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus and the Frankenstein myth as it has come to be known because of film. I propose that present-day readers, in addition to having a repository of literary knowledge, also have a reservoir of filmic memories on which to draw when they read. These visual 'texts' can function, I argue, not only as inter-texts but also as signs, indicating to us how to read certain written texts. Building on reader-response criticism, I include these visual signs in my analysis of the reading experience of Frankenstein.

After outlining a brief history of visualizations of the novel on stage and in film and commenting on the contributions these adaptations gave to the story, I focus on the James Whale classics of 1931 and 1935. It is to these films that we owe the figures of the Karloffian monster, the hunchbacked assistant, the 'mad' scientist, and the monster's grotesque 'bride.'

Having imitated the common order of our exposure to the myth -- that is we know or know of Frankenstein films before we arrive at the novel --, I define and explain the

theoretical concepts of narrative and filmic afterimages. I then discuss their circulation in and revitalization through such agencies as advertisements, cartoons, and film and television remakes, illustrating how the Frankenstein story continues to be invoked and reworked in our culture.

I then turn to the novel and focus, first, on its reception and treatment by literary critics. Next, I examine its questioning and, at times, subverting, of such institutions as science, marriage, and orthodox Christianity. I also examine the novel's questioning of such concepts as narrative closure, the unity of character, and the possibility of knowing 'reality.' At the same time, I illustrate (1) how literary critics, in dismissing the novel as flawed, actually shield us from the novel's subversiveness and (2) how film versions of Frankenstein and their circulating afterimages not only work to diminish the dis-ease which the novel elicits but, in fact, inoculate us against this dis-ease.

I conclude my study by relying on yet another metaphor -- Freud's concept of "screen memory." We have, as my thesis illustrates, been effectively screened from Mary Shelley's novel. The version of the myth as it has come to be known by today's reader is not only tame (and tamed) by comparison but is, in some instances, antithetical to the novel. What I propose is both an acceptance of filmic afterimages of novels which have been visualized and a critical reading of these images. In the case of

Frankenstein, once we become aware of how certain filmic afterimages are operating, we can work towards a "cleansing of the doors of perception," so that in removing the film from before our eyes, we may see yet another, darker side of the myth.

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Joan Coldwell, my supervisor and friend, deserves special thanks. I first met Joan while I was an undergraduate, but I can still recall her strong commitment to her students. For myself and many women students, Joan became a role model, illustrating to us that we, too, could pursue a career in Academe. As the years passed, Joan

encouraged me to find my own voice and my own style. This thesis represents my discovering of that voice. Thank you Joan for listening.

Finally, I would like to thank my sister, Mary. She too has been a role model to me. Mary Shelley taught me how monsters are made. My sister shows me everyday the courage it takes to fight them.

I dedicate this thesis to my sister.

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Introduction

For many of my generation, raised during the film and television era, reading was an activity which was enjoyed alongside much exposure to the visual media. In fact, in my own household, reading was even put aside in favour of such special weekly events as Walt Disney's Sunday Night Special and Bonanza.¹ Thus, at the same time that I and others like myself were learning how to read, we were also learning -- to use James Monaco's words -- "how to read a film."² Since, as Monaco argues, "anyone of minimal intelligence over the age of four can -- more or less -- grasp the basic content of a film ... or television program without any special training," we, as readers, then, could not avoid having our reading experience influenced in some way by our exposure to Hollywood's or television's modes of storytelling. Indeed, like Stanley Fish's "fallen reader," we come to the written word, not so much tainted by our exposure to sin but, rather, by our exposure to cinema. Admittedly, this is an area of study which, because of the large number of variables, renders any definitive statements dangerous, if not next to impossible; nonetheless, because of the vast number of readers it concerns -- my own and

subsequent generations -- it does deserve a fuller examination than critics to this point have given it.

My own study of the influence of films on the reading experience is a good beginning primarily because of the unique nature of the Frankenstein story itself. Its popularity -- one which extends even beyond film -- has made it a twentieth-century presence to which, in some form or another, most readers have been exposed. The degree of exposure, of course, will vary depending on the number of films seen and the time elapsed since last viewing the film or films, but it would be the rare reader indeed who has not, for reasons I will outline in chapter one, either retained a visual memory of the Boris Karloff monster, or acquired a basic outline of the conflict between the scientist and his creation. There is then at least this common ground from which to examine the relationship between the novel and its numerous visualizations. Added to this common experience is another which many readers share: we read the novel only after having already been exposed to the myth through such agencies as film, television and advertising. In fact, such a collective experience of the myth has led more than one critic to claim: "It's a commonplace now that everybody talks about Frankenstein, but nobody reads it" (Levine Endurance 3).³

Those of us excluded from this category, particularly those of us who have, like myself, read the

novel after years of exposure to the story in its many and various visual forms, are the readers with whom I am especially concerned. My study does not attempt to be all-inclusive (as there will always be exceptions) nor does it in any way -- because of the nature of the study -- attempt to be conclusive. It does , however, examine the Frankenstein reader by taking into account what to date has been avoided in Frankenstein studies: the influence of visualizations of the myth on the reading experience and the dialectic which develops between the twentieth-century reader (with all his or her filmic baggage) and the written text itself. In many ways the Frankenstein reader is just as much a construction as Victor's creation. We too owe our origin to science or technology, in this case the technology of cinema, and we are, like the creature, also a hybrid being, informed in part by film, in part by television, and in part by the pervasiveness of the myth in our day-to-day experience.

Such day-to-day experience can include anything from a recent article on brain transplants in the Globe and Mail (see chapter one) to the press statement released early in 1988 by the Reagan administration, one which accused General Manuel Noriega of being a Frankenstein. These allusions work because "Frankenstein" has become and continues to be what John Ellis, in Visible Fictions, calls "a rhetorical point,...a verbal shorthand" (36). In the

following passage, Ellis outlines how this shorthand comes about, and, although he mentions only more recent films, his comments apply equally well to the early Frankenstein films. They were, as I will show, vast commercial successes and undoubtedly were as talked about on radio, in the news, and in everyday conversations as box-office hits are today. These constant references, Ellis explains, work to

constitute a particular film as a cultural event, as a particular fragment of the ceaseless ideological work of a society. This more diffuse, less organised, process occasionally reaches the point where a particular film becomes the slogan or title for a particular kind of event: A Clockwork Orange (1971) for urban street violence, The China Syndrome (1978) for the problem of nuclear energy. This eventually forms a part of everyday conversation: the film becomes a rhetorical point, its title becomes a verbal shorthand.

(36)

Thus, today, a casual reference to "Frankenstein" is sufficient to evoke images of an uncontrollable monster or of technology gone too far.

But, as it is appropriated and used in such various contexts as the medical and the political, the myth, as Mary Shelley presented it, becomes more and more obscured. A first-time reader cannot help but come to the novel with prescribed ideas -- ideas which in many cases may be in direct opposition to what is present in the novel itself. The reader is, to borrow from Susan Sontag, "encumbered by

the trappings of metaphor" (5), and many of these trappings, I believe, originate from film's exploitation of the myth. When a film such as the 1931 Frankenstein becomes a "verbal shorthand," even those who have not actually seen it acquire some sense of it. This process works in much the same way as Stephen Heath's "narrative image" works:

The narrative image of a film is a complex phenomenon that occurs in a number of media: it is the film's circulation outside its performance in cinemas. It consists of the direct publicity created by the film's distributors and producers; the general public knowledge of ingredients involved in the film (stars, brand identifications, generic qualities); and the more diffuse but equally vital ways in which the film becomes the subject of news and of chat.

(Ellis 32)

After a film is released, this same publicity circulates outside the film's performance, but now entering into everyday conversation and the news will be specific details about the film. What emerges is a type of narrative afterimage, co-existent with the original narrative image. As this image circulates, the public receives more than just an indication (Ellis 32) of the film but, instead, receives highlights of the key episodes. Moreover, the narrative afterimage can create (or ruin) a star. Boris Karloff, for instance, became a household name only after the release of the film, but rather than being identified as the monster, he became identified with Frankenstein. Part of this

misidentification, I would argue, is due to the publicity generated from the film after its release. The monster, because he was the central figure in the film -- the character everyone came to see --, quickly became associated not with Henry Frankenstein but rather with the film's title. It is a very short step from central character to titular character, and it is a step facilitated by the constant references in the press to Boris Karloff, the monster, and to the film's title. The same con-fusing existed in the publicity surrounding nineteenth-century theatrical productions of the novel, when, as in this century, the character playing the role of the monster became identified with Frankenstein. Thus, although the verbal shorthand "Frankenstein equals monster" may represent a careless stenographic error, it is an error which, because of the power of the narrative afterimage, resists correction. Once an image "circulates outside its performance," it does not matter whether a reader of Frankenstein has actually seen the original image; she will still carry the afterimage with her to the novel.

In fact, the persistence of vision of the narrative afterimage of Frankenstein (1931) was assisted not just by the publicity directly related to the film but -- and here Frankenstein represents an extreme case -- by the numerous visualizations of the monster in such agencies as "children's comics, records, ... T-shirt emblems, toys,

games, rubber masks" (Haining 6). Once in circulation, these visuals, particularly the rubber masks [either Don Post's authorized Karloffian look-alike or pirated copies (Glut 335)], made and continue to make Frankenstein's creation not just a permanent household name but a permanent household image. It is this image -- one which has become a twentieth-century icon -- that readers see when they read the novel, regardless of whether or not they have seen the original 1931 film itself.

For readers who have seen Frankenstein films, there exists yet another afterimage, one which I call the filmic afterimage. Generated in conjunction with a film's narrative afterimage -- an image created and sustained both by the original narrative image and by the public's embellishment of that image -- is the more personal filmic afterimage. Unlike the other two images, which derive from the public sphere of news, promotional advertising, and everyday conversation, the filmic afterimage derives, instead, from a viewer's first-hand experience of the film itself. Like an afterimage, the post filmic experience is potent yet evanescent. Very quickly details can become blurred, minor characters can be confused with one another, and events may be conflated or forgotten entirely. What remains vivid are crucial scenes, key characters and a narrative devoid of all but the most basic of details. Thus, the afterimage of Frankenstein which persists

involves, I would argue, such key elements as the creation scene, including its violent lightning storm, the monster's physical appearance, his encounter with the young child, Maria, and his eventual destruction. Assisting in the viewer's retaining of such an image is not just the film experience itself -- the darkened room, the brilliant screen with its larger-than-life characters, the highly evocative musical score,⁴ and the audience participation -- but also our own culture's use of characters or motifs from the film. Each time Frankenstein's creature appears in such places as newspaper articles, TV commercials and humorous cartoon drawings (see, for instance, the Gary Larson cartoons in chapter one) what results is a revitalizing of existing narrative afterimages of the 1931 film. Yet at the same time that the film's afterimage is revitalized, it is also altered by the superimposition of afterimages generated by other Frankenstein films. The public's sense of Frankenstein's bride (a case of con-fusing the creature with the creator), for example, stems from films other than the 1931 Frankenstein. The original source of this figure was not Mary's novel but Whale's 1935 sequel, Bride of Frankenstein; nonetheless, for many readers the 'bride' is as much a part of the Frankenstein story as the Karloffian monster. Today a reference to Frankenstein's bride evokes a mental picture of a shrouded figure with lightning-streaked hair. For many readers, in particular younger readers,

however, the actual source of this image is not in fact Whale's film but Mel Brooks' highly successful parody, Young Frankenstein.⁵

Brooks, as he admits, wanted to exorcise personal ghosts or afterimages which originated from his own childhood memories of the classic Frankenstein films.⁶ By parodying those ghosts, he re-presents to his viewers images which stem from the original films. Consequently, whether familiar or not with the 1935 film, viewers of Young Frankenstein will in some way experience an intensification of existing narrative and/or filmic afterimages of the classic films. Indeed, this is the very principle on which Brooks is operating. When he transforms Madeline Kahn into a Nefertiti-like goddess with lightning-streaked hair, he is depending on his public's memory of Elsa Lanchester's physical appearance in the 1935 film. Without such a memory the parody would fail to work. Thus, viewers who have retained a filmic and or narrative afterimage of the original film will experience a reactivation of that image. On the other hand, viewers who have neither seen the original film nor acquired a narrative afterimage of it will experience a superimposition of Brooks' image of the 'bride' onto already existing images, with the result being the formation of a new afterimage. For either viewer, however, the result is the same: the emergence of a vivid image of Frankenstein's bride. This image will be revitalized each

time our culture refers to it, either inside the movie theatre or outside of it.

The consequence of the existence of narrative images and narrative and filmic afterimages is that first-time readers of the novel Frankenstein -- either those such as myself who have actually seen the classic films and their more recent remakes, or those who have not seen the original films but have been exposed to narrative images and afterimages -- have in advance of their reading a visual sense of the Frankenstein story. With this assumption clearly foregrounded, I would like to begin by outlining in chapter one a history of popular visualizations of the novel. I would add here that I owe much of this chapter to Donald Glut, a Frankenstein specialist whose work on visualizations of the myth is unparalleled in Frankenstein studies. Included in this chapter will be popular nineteenth-century theatrical adaptations and the early silent films, not because their narrative afterimages continue to circulate, but because they originated certain trends in Frankenstein visualizations. Similarly, I discuss many films with which my reader may not be familiar, partly to illustrate the immense popularity of the Frankenstein myth and partly to apprise readers of the biasing such a study has inevitably had on myself. In addition, since some of these early films influenced James Whale, whose films in turn influenced Terence Fisher and Mel Brooks, they warrant

more than a brief mention in an endnote. In fact, an early film such as Metropolis, because it influenced Whale, will to a present-day reader bear certain resemblances to Whale's film. It does not matter (except to a film historian) who influenced whom. What matters is that such resemblances can, I believe, activate afterimages of Whale's film.

Viewers of, for instance, the creation scene in Metropolis will be reminded of yet another creation spectacle -- James Whale's or Mel Brooks' parody of Whale's. For this reason, then, I offer more than a cursory overview of the history of Frankenstein films. I realize that by presenting these visualizations I am, at the outset, conditioning my own reader, but, in many ways, such conditioning reflects at least in part the conditioning that present-day readers of Frankenstein experience. I hope then that rather than being guilty of unduly biasing my reader, I am guilty only of reviving already existing afterimages. These, more than my reactivating of them, are, I would argue, the more lasting sources of reader bias.

In chapter two, I examine, first, the ways in which the film medium differs from the print medium and the effects of this difference on the reading experience. Then, I shift my focus to analyze the changes Frankenstein films (here the more popular films will be examined) have made to the novel, more precisely, those changes which continue to circulate in the form of the film's narrative afterimage.

Included here are also those changes which persist in the more personal filmic afterimage. This section I keep to a minimum, as I realize that not all readers of Frankenstein have seen the Frankenstein films I mention; nonetheless, for readers like myself who have seen the films in theatres, on television or on video-cassette recorders further comment is required. While outlining the changes and similarities, I also examine their effects on the reader's response to the novel. In anticipation of chapter three, I conclude this chapter by commenting on film's power to de-fuse some of the more subversive aspects of the novel.

Chapter three focuses almost exclusively on the novel's subversiveness and examines the novel not just as the intertext for film (which is what it has become) but as a text in its own right. I provide here a brief history of the novel's reception in order to point out the origins of what has become a 'tradition' in Frankenstein criticism. Not only have literary critics made the less subversive 1831 edition the standard text, they have also relegated Mary Shelley to the rank of minor novelist. As a consequence, the present-day reading public is kept at a safe distance from both editions. At the same time, film -- itself a form of criticism -- continues to distance us from Mary Shelley's myth. Both types of distancing (the 'highbrow' and the 'lowbrow') screen us, I believe, from the dis-ease which Frankenstein generates. The source of that dis-ease is, as

I illustrate, Mary Shelley's questioning and, at times, condemning of such civil and religious institutions as: capitalism, the judicial system, organized religion, marriage, and science. In addition, she calls into question traditional cultural assumptions regarding gender roles, identity or subjectivity, and the nature of 'reality' (and its relative, literary 'realism'). Readers of the novel thus encounter a text which not only subverts traditional values and institutions but also, in many instances, actually refutes what they already 'know' (because of filmic afterimages) about the myth. Reconciling these irreconcilable differences becomes the task of the present-day reader, and for reasons which I provide, it is often a difficult task.

Chapter four is in effect a concluding chapter. In keeping with the scientific nature of the novel, I borrow from science its language of immunology to illustrate how film and other visualizations of the novel work to inoculate us against the dis-ease which Mary's myth elicits. This language is in many ways as familiar to present-day readers as Frankenstein itself, as such terms, for instance, as inoculation, vaccination, and immunization are terms we grew up with (just as we grew up with Frankenstein). I might add that throughout my thesis I have in effect been inoculating my own reader: each reference to a Frankenstein film or cartoon is a type of cultural booster shot, reactivating in

the reader his or her original exposure to the Frankenstein myth. That exposure is, as I illustrate throughout the thesis, a weak or attenuated form of the original dis-ease. Repeatedly provided with cultural booster shots in the form of film sequels, political cartoons, or Halloween costumes, readers are immunized against the dis-ease the novel generates. Our screen memory of the myth -- a memory which has much in common with Freud's concept of the same name -- protects us from Mary's subversive ideas. I conclude the chapter by examining how this screening process works and the effect it has on the reading experience.

Frankenstein has been published in over fifteen different languages (see chapter one) but it is, I believe, because of its film versions that it is Universal-ly known. Any discussion of Mary Shelley's novel must include and put into sharper focus these images because they are -- and I believe will continue to be -- an inescapable part of the myth. Indeed, they might even be its animating principle.

The edition of Frankenstein which I use is the 1831 text (with comments about the 1818 edition) not because I consider it the better work, but because it is presently the edition most readers will encounter. For the same reason, I cite from the Penguin paper-back edition, as it is the edition in widest circulation and is therefore the edition

most accessible to the modern-day reader.

Frankenstein, in refusing to name one of its principal characters, draws attention to the issue of names and naming. That same issue surrounds the naming of the author of the novel. Scholarly tradition demands that for the first reference I call the author "Mary Shelley," and for all subsequent references I call her "Shelley." But "Shelley" has come to denote Percy Shelley. Thus to avoid any confusion as to whom I am referring, I have been advised, again by scholars, to refer to her as "Mary Shelley." I find this form of naming, however, highly problematic. To me, such an act not only diminishes Mary Shelley's status as an author but also her status as an autonomous individual. The "Mary" in "Mary Shelley" functions in this context not as a first name but rather as a qualification or modification of the term "Shelley." It serves as a marker of difference and is a relative term in both senses of the word. Consequently, Mary's identity becomes limited to -- and by -- her relationship to Percy. On the other hand, referring to her simply as "Mary" runs the risk, say scholars, of sounding condescending. This is certainly not my intent, nor is it necessarily the case. The term "Mary" erases the inevitable comparison "Mary Shelley" evokes -- a comparison which to me is condescending. The term "Mary" also reminds me of my own status as a woman, writing in the rigid and highly

traditional world of academe. In this world, we speak of masters and masterpieces, and when we say Eliot, Lawrence or Shelley, our audience knows whom we mean. It is also a world that, as I will show, wields a language which has been and continues to be a means of oppressing women (including Mary herself). To remind myself that I too am subjected to this language and to escape being seduced by the power it promises, I variously refer to the author as "Mary" or "Mary Shelley." I use the latter term, problematic as it is, to remind myself of the plight of the woman writer. I add in conclusion that at no time in this thesis is it unclear as to whom I am referring.

Chapter One



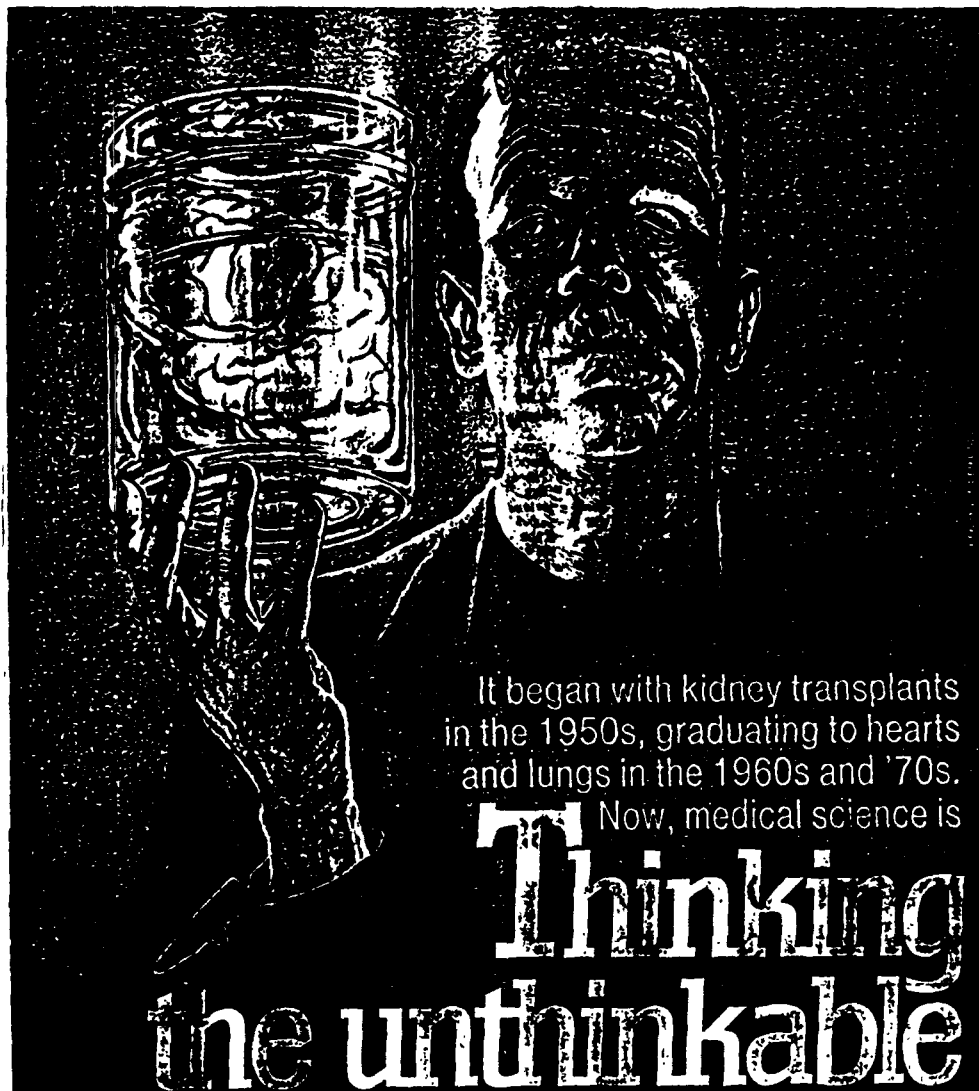
"Oh, don't be silly! No thanks needed.
Just take the brain—but tell that doctor
you work for not to be such a stranger."

"Sur Les Traces de Frankenstein"

The title of this chapter is borrowed from a French television program of the same name which aired in 1968. The story followed the adventures of a young girl who travelled to Geneva to do research for her thesis on Mary Shelley. When she arrived at the "place where Mary wrote her novel, the girl thought a man was following her -- a man believed to be the Frankenstein Monster." An intelligent young girl, she "fled the premises" (Legend 281-2).

Roughly twenty years later, another young researcher would, in somewhat different circumstances,

also be haunted by the Frankenstein monster. During a long-awaited (some might argue, necessary) respite from my own researches on Frankenstein, I treated myself to a few days up north, confident that I could succeed in doing what Victor Frankenstein had not: I would let go my obsession with tracking down what, by now, had become my monster. Fated perhaps to inherit the sins of my 'fathers,' I soon found myself in a situation analogous to Victor's (and to the young researcher's of 1968). No longer the hunter, I had become the h(a)unted. My encounter with the monster was presaged by an uneasy feeling of being watched -- a feeling I tried to dispel by reading the newspaper. No sooner had I opened the paper when the monster, as he had years ago, reared its ugly head. There, staring back at me from the "Focus" section of The Globe and Mail, was a huge (thirty centimeters in all), Karloffian-styled drawing of the monster:



(reduced by 40%)

The date of this encounter was Saturday, 16 May 1987 -- 168 years after the publication of Mary Shelley's Frankenstein; or the Modern Prometheus. The drawing of the Frankensteinian monster, holding and regarding suspiciously (or perhaps knowingly) a specimen jar containing a human

brain, is this century's latest variation on the Frankenstein theme. The caption -- somewhat superfluous given the iconographic power of the image -- informs us that

It began with kidney transplants in the 1950s, graduating to hearts and lungs in the 1960s and 1970s. Now medical science is THINKING the unthinkable.

(Globe D1)

We, the readers, however, already know what this "unthinkable" is long before we turn to the article, because we have already 'read' the message conveyed by the drawing. The article only confirms our suspicions that, in the 1980s, medical science is preparing for brain transplants. We are also told that

The reality of brain transplants that has emerged in the past few months bears little resemblance to the science-fiction scenarios of the past, in which a powerful intellect hindered by a feeble body achieved new life when transplanted into a young healthy one. Instead, the intent of transplants now being performed is to cure diseases caused by disorders of the brain.

(Globe D1)

Yet for all its visual cleverness and seemingly factual reporting, something about this article troubled me. First, given the somewhat defensive tone of the first sentence quoted above and the unqualified optimism of the second, and their combined efforts to allay any fears of the 'mad'

scientist, why then is science fiction refuted only after the article has visually evoked and paid homage to one of the first science-fiction novels?¹ Secondly, why is an article which purports to describe positive advancements in medical science written quite literally under the shadow of Frankenstein's monster, with all the negative and fearful associations which it brings, and, thirdly, why is it that Frankenstein's monster and not a medical scientist is left holding the brain? Finally, was the writer of this article aware of the irony in his comments concerning the "intent" of brain transplants? His words are, after all, a loud echo of Victor Frankenstein's. Victor, as we hear during his conversation with Walton, also had altruistic intentions:

I thought that if I could bestow upon
lifeless matter, I might in process of
time ... renew life where death had
apparently devoted the body to corruption.²

Like his modern-day counterparts, Victor saw his experiments as a benefit to mankind, yet we all know what became of his 'experiment.' Thus, although the writer of the Globe article seems 'neutral' in his written report about brain transplants, his apparent neutrality is undercut by the larger-than-newspaper-life drawing of Frankenstein's monster. Moreover, the presence of the monster, coupled with the popular con-fusion of the term

'Frankenstein' with the created product, sends a strong ideological message to the public. Since, as our modern dictionaries define it, Frankenstein is "a work or agency that ruins its originator; or a monster in the shape of man" (Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary 452), the political message of this article --a message inherent in the drawing itself-- is that medical science is about to create a monster. So much for 'unbiased' reporting.

And so much for my hiatus from my research. Yet my encounter with the monster was, unlike my French predecessor's, a productive one. Like Victor, I found that the monster had left clues to facilitate my search -- clues which, strange as it may sound, seemed more of my own bidding than anyone else's. Regardless of the source, however, they did aid in bringing into clearer focus the following preliminary findings concerning Mary Shelley's creation: the pervasiveness of the visualization of the novel, in particular the monster; the supremacy of that visualization over the written words; the conflation of creator with created; and the appropriation of the Frankenstein theme for ideological ends.³ Guided by this timely visitor, I, like Victor, returned to my search for the monster. Yet, given the prevalence of the monster since its 1818 birthday, Victor's search pales by comparison. His was, after all, a search confined ostensibly to a physical landscape with one creature to

find. Mine covers a much more protean landscape -- one not confined by the strictures of time and space -- and one which involves, true to Victor's prophecy, "a new species" (E 97), complete with its evolutionary mutations. Indeed, 'sightings' of the monster have been reported throughout the world and continue to be presented to us visually via the mass media. The repercussions of these visualizations will be the focus of subsequent chapters -- the numerous sightings, the focus of this one.

"Frankenstein Haunts the Stage"

When in 1831, Mary Shelley, in her Preface to her revised edition of Frankenstein, "bid [her] hideous progeny go forth and prosper" (F 56), she uttered what would prove to be one of literary history's greatest understatements. Indeed, since the publication of her novel on 11 March 1818, Mary's progeny has done nothing but multiply. Her novel has, as Radu Florescu explains, "been translated into [almost] every conceivable language, including Urdu, Arabic, and Malaysian" (161). Donald F. Glut, who is tireless in his own search for Frankenstein, lists the following translations of the novel: Czechoslovakian (1), Flemish (2), German (8), Greek (1), Hindi (1), Italian (5), Japanese (8), Portugese (2), Romanian (1), Russian (1), Sanskrit (1), Spanish (9), and Swedish (1) (Catalog 11-14). And not content with resting on the printed page, the Frankenstein monster has escaped to terrorize generations of theatre and film goers, television viewers, radio and record audiences, and recently music videophiles.⁴ He,⁵ or his 'mate', can be seen in newspaper cartoons, in children's comics and colouring books, in television advertising [selling such items as flashbulbs, vodka, telephones, socks, cigarettes (Legend 337), children's cereal, and, recently, Pepsi

Cola], and, of course, at front doors every Halloween.

This movement toward visualizing the monster -- one which has only gained in momentum -- began very early after the publication of the novel. But, as Leonard Wolf has discovered, it is a specific type of visualization.

"Curiously enough," he adds:

for a book that has been as frequently reprinted and is as visually powerful as Frankenstein, there are relatively few editions that have been illustrated. In 1818, when the book was first published, there were no pictures at all. In the revised edition of 1831, there were only two mildly gloomy drawings by Chevalier which served as the frontispiece and title page decoration.... The heavy period of Frankenstein illustration comes in the 1930s, no doubt as a consequence of the popularity of the 1931 Universal Pictures film.

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It seems that Mary's creature required a much more animated medium than the static, two-dimensional world of the illustration. Indeed, he was to find his home in the live arts of stage and film. In fact, "as early as the first printing," explains Glut, "the apparent adaptability of the story to the dramatic stage was recognized" (Legend 28). But, because of the public's belief that Percy Shelley was the author and because of his "atheistic and radical ideas," any aspirations of "dramatizing the story were abandoned" (Legend 28). Eventually, on 28 July 1823, one year after Percy Shelley's death and five years after the

novel was first published, Frankenstein was adapted to the stage in "at least five versions; two serious dramas (with possibly a third yet to be documented) and three comedies" (Legend 28). Mary, who in her youth had aspired to be a playwright (Nitchie 384) and had composed two verse plays, Proserpine and Midas, believing that she "could have written a good tragedy" (Nitchie 384), witnessed the success of her conception on the London stage.

But this success was not without a heated controversy. The questionable morality of Mary's theme in the first of the many adaptations, Richard Brinsley Peake's Presumption; or, the Fate of Frankenstein, sparked public protests. The London Magazine states that a "placard 'was stuck about the streets, professing to come from a knot of 'friends of humanity,' and calling on the fathers of families &c. to set their faces against the piece'" (Nitchie 388). To counter such public disapprobation, S.J. Arnold, the producer, "had put upon the playbill for the opening performance not only a quotation from the Preface to the novel but also the statement: 'The striking moral exhibited in this story, is the fatal consequence of that presumption which attempts to penetrate beyond prescribed depths into the mysteries of nature'" (Nitchie 388; Legend 32). Despite or, as one periodical claimed (Nitchie 388), because of the negative publicity, Presumption was highly successful, performed thirty-seven times in its first

season, running from 28 July to 4 October (1823). The play, which brought "thunders of applause," and "stimulated a breathless eagerness" in the "crowded and elegant audiences" (Nitchie 388) of the English Opera House, was later performed at Covent Garden and the Royalty, before leaving for the provinces. In 1825, when it headed for America, the play -- and Mary's conception -- began a journey which was eventually to bring to the Frankenstein story international recognition.

Presumption; or the Fate of Frankenstein may have carried with it many elements of Mary's story but not before making certain changes -- changes which, as Glut argues, were unavoidable given the exigences of melodrama or burlesque (Legend 28) and given the physical limitations of the stage itself. Walton, Mary's framing narrator, was eliminated, as was the "gradual development of the Monster's acquaintance with the world" and the men and women in it (Nitchie 389). Absent, too, was Frankenstein's "moral struggle ... over the creation of a mate" for the being he had created and his "relentless pursuit of the monster after the death of Elizabeth" (Nitchie 389). The ending was also adapted for the stage: Frankenstein and his creation die in an avalanche which Frankenstein himself triggers. Further, the play, in "conformity to the conventions of melodrama," was punctuated by songs and "incidental music and comic relief"

(Nitchie 389). Much of this comic relief was provided by a superstitious servant named Fritz -- a character not found in Mary's novel but a well-known figure to audiences of film versions of the story.

The reviewers were of a mixed opinion concerning the comic relief. One reviewer, in the Drama, saw the scenes as "'nonsensical frivolities ... unsparingly interlarded ... greatly detract[ing] from the interest of the piece'" (quoted by Nitchie 390). Mary herself says very little about Fritz's scenes but does admit that she "was much amused" (Nitchie 385). In a letter to Leigh Hunt, 9 Sept. 1823 -- the only surviving record of her comments -- Mary had the following to say about the performance, which starred James Wallack as Frankenstein and T. P. Cooke as the Demon (as the creature was termed in the playbill):

But lo and behold! I found myself famous. 'Frankenstein' had prodigious success as a drama, and was about to be repeated, for the twenty-third night, at the English Opera House. The play-bill amused me extremely, for, in the list of the dramatis personae, came '_____', by Mr. T. P. Cooke'; (Mary's emphasis) this mode of naming the unnameable is rather good.... Wallack looked very well as Frankenstein. He is at the beginning full of hope and expectation. At the end of the first act the stage represents a room with a staircase leading to Frankenstein's workshop; he goes to it, and you see his light at a small window, through which a frightened servant peeps, who runs off in terror when Frankenstein exclaims, 'It lives.' Presently Frankenstein himself rushes in horror and trepidation from the room, and, while still expressing his agony and terror,

['_____'] throws down the door of the laboratory, leaps the staircase, and presents his unearthly and monstrous person on the stage. The story is not well managed, but Cooke played _____'s part extremely well; his seeking, as it were, for support; his trying to grasp at the sounds he heard; all, indeed, he does was well imagined and executed. I was much amused, and it appeared to excite a breathless eagerness in the audience. It was a third piece, a scanty pit filled at half price, and all stayed till it was over. They continue to play it even now.... On the strength of the drama, my Father had published, for my benefit (Mary's italics), a new edition of 'Frankenstein.'

(Journal I: 259-66)

This somewhat lengthy passage warrants further comment, as it introduces many ideas which will recur in subsequent versions of the Frankenstein story. First, Mary's remark about the mode of "naming the unnameable" is a telling one. She, too, refused to name the creature, preferring a 'no-name' brand for her progeny. Without a name, Frankenstein's 'self-made man' is not only denied an identity (except the one he achieves through his creator) but also eludes linguistic confinement. I will return to this idea in a subsequent chapter and only add here that Mary's pleasure with the playbill's generic name would be short-lived: in 1826 with the English translation of the French play Le Monstre et Le Magicien, the con-fusing of creator and created began and "would continue for one and a half centuries" (Legend 34).⁶

Mary's interest in the 'monster's' performance is

also significant and for several reasons. As he did in the novel, and as Mary's comments suggest he did in the performance, the monster elicits the reader's/viewer's sympathy. Cooke, Glut has noted, "enacted the role sympathetically ... as when the Demon displayed his sensitivity to light and air" and when he "attempted to perform acts of kindness for Agatha's blind father" (Legend 31). But, the playwright made significant changes in the portrayal of the monster, changes which would have important consequences for the numerous subsequent versions of the story. One change is actually noted by Mary in her letter: the monster is 'born,' it seems, with a violent streak, capable of smashing down laboratory doors. Film versions would, as will be discussed later, exaggerate this innate violence -- something which grossly distorts Mary's original story.

The second change and one which Mary's letter only hints at -- but again one which films would exploit -- is the monster's inability to talk. The monster, who in the novel was, as Frankenstein warned Walton, capable of "eloquent and persuasive" (E 248) speech, could only grunt in Peake's melodrama. This interpretation of the monster had serious repercussions not only for Mary's conception of the monster but also for a young, rising star in Hollywood. Bela Lugosi, who had already achieved public recognition for his portrayal of Dracula in the 1930 Universal

production (Legend 92), actually turned down a much better part (in terms of instant stardom): he rejected the role of the Frankenstein monster once he learned that the part was a non-speaking one (Legend 94). An obscure English actor, who began his acting career in Canada, was offered the part, and, since that film of 1931, Boris Karloff has become a name synonymous with Frankenstein (Legend 97).

The star-vehicle potential of the role of the monster was readily apparent from the novel's first dramatic adaptation. Karloff's predecessor, Thomas P. Cooke, played the monster three hundred and sixty-five times and "became identified with the role" (Legend 29). He was "described as 'the beau ideal of that speechless and enormous excrescence of nature'" (Legend 32) and played the role until 1830, when it was taken over by O. Smith (Florescu 167). It is not surprising to learn that, as Cooke had been earlier, Smith "became typecast as the Frankenstein Monster, so much so that the English publication of Punch referred to him as "Lord Frankenstein" in an 1831 issue (Legend 33 and Florescu 167). This last point also suggests the media's role in contributing to the conflation of the monster and his maker -- an idea which I will develop further in a subsequent chapter.

Finally, Mary's letter points out not only the newcomer, Fritz the assistant, but also another 'actor' who would gain fame in the numerous film versions of

Frankenstein. This actor is actually a stage prop, but its prominence and longevity in the popular media warrants according it the status of actor. That prop -- one which Mary mentions -- is the laboratory, and it is one which since the introduction of the Strickfaden apparatus in the 1931 Universal film (Legend 106-07), has become a regular in Frankenstein films. No one who has ever seen either the 1931 Frankenstein or its sequels can forget the sheer phallic power of the electrical apparatus, towering up to the heavens waiting to receive the omnipotent spark of nature.

Indeed, the creation scene is perhaps one of the most indelible scenes of the various film and television versions of Frankenstein. Not so with the novel. As I shall examine later, Mary is deliberately vague both in the creation scene and in her descriptions of the monster. Mary is also vague in her letter when she simply remarks that Peake's story was "not well managed." We can only surmise that the elimination of many of the novel's passages describing Frankenstein's moral struggle, the education of the monster, and his impassioned pleas for justice and duty, as well as his demand for a mate, lie behind her complaint. La Valley speculates in his essay "The Stage and Film Children of Frankenstein: A Survey," that "in the more moralistic and simplified world of melodrama, Victor Frankenstein was assimilated to the myth

of the godless and 'presumptive' scientist, tampering with nature's secrets" (249). He goes on to add that "much of the abstract and philosophical language had to go, as well as the probing into the psyches of Victor and the Monster" (247), arguing that "like almost all the stage and film presentations to follow, Presumption was far less openly daring in its morality than the novel" (246). La Valley also concludes that, since in the world of melodrama, "some condensation was necessary ... the common solution was to look for key scenes that could be highly charged dramatically and around which other scenes could be arranged" (247). These scenes -- ones which would recur in stage presentations and later in film versions -- include: "a creation scene, a wedding night scene or an abduction of the bride, and a scene of fiery [and occasionally icy] destruction" (245-46). Conversely, scenes which would be repeatedly omitted are those with Walton, those with Justine, and those in which the monster reads Paradise Lost or Plutarch (246). As for the monster, La Valley's comments are not only particularly perceptive but warrant fuller discussion. "Almost any visualizing of the Monster," he explains,

makes him the focal point and a point that is perforce primarily physical. The book may gradually present us with a fully formed human psyche whose feelings, yearnings, and logic are often more profound than those who reject its outward husk, but the stage and film must

fix that outward appearance from the very start.

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I have already mentioned how the role of the monster upstaged all other roles in both dramatic and film versions of the story. What remains to be discussed (in chapter two) concerns both La Valley's idea of fixing the monster's physicality and the popular media's fixing of Mary's conception.

It is unfortunate that we do not have Mary's views on the other stage adaptations of Frankenstein, performed the same year as Peake's Presumption. We do know, however, that Presumption spawned various versions, which, as Nitchie argues, were highly derivative:

the basic idea and the main characters remained fixed. There were certain matters of setting, costuming, and stage business which became traditions rarely to be broken by dramatist, producer, or actor. The laboratory at the top of the staircase leading from the back of the stage, with a door for the Monster to break down and a window for a frightened servant to peer through, was part of the setting for each play. There was almost invariably a cottage to be burnt. The Monster always leaped the railing of the staircase; he always seized and snapped Frankenstein's sword; he always experienced wonder at sounds and was charmed by music. He was always nameless. He was always painted blue. These things were accepted as conventions and passed into the realm of casual allusion.

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One such production was a "highly melodramatic

play" titled Frankenstein (Legend 33). All that is known about this adaptation is that it played at the Coburg and Royalty theatres (Legend 33). Also performed in 1823 were a "trio of burlesque versions of Frankenstein" (Legend 33) whose impetus, La Valley asserts, was the "makeup and melodramatic simplification of Presumption" -- two factors which "obviously placed it on the edge of comedy and ripe for parody" (250). Yet it is also possible to see these productions as satires on contemporary culture, in particular, the nineteenth century's preoccupation with industrial and technological innovations.

Two of the burlesques of the 1820s "sound like the comic variations of our own time, the spoofs ... like Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein (1948), or...Mel Brooks' parody Young Frankenstein" (La Valley 247). One burlesque was Peake's Another Piece of Presumption -- a comedy "full of puns, allusions and parodies of [his own] Presumption" (Nitchie 395). Another, performed at the Surrey (Florescu 166), was entitled Frankenstitch, and featured "a tailor named Frankenstein, later referred to as "Frankenstitch," and the 'Needle Prometheus' (Legend 33), who, in "accordance with the proverb, makes a Man out [of the corpses] of nine of his journeyman tailors" (Nitchie 395). Also performed that year was "Frank-in-steam," involving "an ambitious student [who] stole a body and thought he had

brought it back to life" (Legend 33). The 'humour' stems from the fact "his 'corpse' had never actually died but had been buried in a cataleptic state" (Legend 34). The other burlesque of 1823 (title unknown) concerned a "Parisian sculptor" who, Pygmalion-style, hoped to "bring life to his statue of Aesop" (Nitchie 395). Once animated, Aesop "ran about the stage in the person of a dwarf actor" (Legend 34). Thus, very early in the history of the visualizations of Frankenstein, not only were certain stage conventions established but also established was the beginning of a long tradition of parodying 'straight' versions of the theme with humorous and highly allusive productions. In addition, the stage had quite literally been set -- primarily because of the conventions of melodrama -- for musical spoofs of the story. Thus, films such as Young Frankenstein and the The Rocky Horror Picture Show (itself derived from the stage) are just two in a long line of musical, parodic interpretations of Mary's conception.

The success of the early stage adaptations, either serious or comic, led to numerous appropriations of the story throughout the nineteenth century. Indeed, it was, as Nitchie argues, "well toward the middle of the century and the end of Mary Shelley's life before the echoes in the periodical press of the presumptuous scientist and of '_____' died away, echoes in the form of serious allusion, verse and prose parody, [and] adaptation for political or

ecclesiastical satire" (397). The monster even entered the world of Shakespeare when, in 1847, The Man in the Moon "drafted a sixth act to Hamlet in which _____ enters through a trap with a strong sulphurous smell and drinks and sings with the Ghost" (Nitchie 397). As ludicrous as this sounds, it is no less ludicrous than such twentieth-century productions as Jesse James Meets Frankenstein's Daughter or Frankenstein Meets the Space Monster. It seems that the monster, as Victor knew only all too well, refuses to be contained.

Adaptations which made Frankenstein a household word and thus made possible the various satires include the following three plays which premiered in 1826: the English translation of Le Monstre et le Magicien, starring T. P. Cooke as the monster (this time brought to life through magic not science); H. M. Milner's Frankenstein; or, The Man and the Monster, variously known as Frankenstein; or the Demon of Switzerland and The Man and the Monster; or the Fate of Frankenstein (Legend 34); and The Devil Among the Players (Legend 38). Milner's play is worth remembering not just for its inclusion of the spectacular Mount Etna at centre stage or for its transposition of the monster to Sicily (Legend 38) but also for its composite scripting. Milner, in some Frankensteinian work of his own, brought together elements from both Mary's novel and Le Monstre et le Magicien (Legend 34) and, thus, along

with Peake's contribution, began a trend which would only gain in momentum in direct proportion to the number of versions of the story already in existence. The consequence of such hybridization is the focus of a subsequent chapter, but I might add here that anyone who has looked for Fritz in Mary's novel or has been startled to discover that the monster speaks fluent English, has already experienced some of the effects of the prolific 'monster-making' which has been in existence since Victor's original experiment.

The Devil Among the Players (1826) contributed yet another element to the Frankenstein story. "This poetic dramatization," Glut explains, "featured three characters of horror -- Frankenstein (probably the Monster, as Cooke fostered the mistake in calling the creature by its creator's name), Faust, and the Vampire" (38). "Such a combining of famous characters into one story," he adds, "became a technique employed in later years by motion picture studios" (38-39). Just a few of the films which adhere to a similar philosophy of successful horror include: Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man (1943), House of Frankenstein (1944), House of Dracula (1945), and Frankenstein and the Monster from Hell (1972). And, as with The Devil Among the Players, Frankenstein in all these films is the monster -- not the maker.

In 1849, another version of the theme was

produced, and it, too, featured more than one monster. The comic musical, Frankenstein; or The Vampire's Victim, which played strangely enough on Christmas Day, starred, along with the Frankenstein Monster, Zamiel, "another contemporary horror character" (Legend 39). In a moment of self-reflexiveness "the musical called attention to its own divergence from Mary Shelley's book as one actor sang, 'You must excuse a trifling deviation,/ From Mrs. Shelley's marvellous narration'" (Legend 39). The monster is finally subdued through the power of music (Legend 39) -- a theme not only in Milner's play but one which, as will later become evident, recurs in film versions of the novel.

Later in the century, in 1887, "Richard Henry" (Richard Butler and H. Chane Newton) presented The Model Man or Frankenstein at London's Gaiety Theatre (Legend 39). In this rather offbeat burlesque, Victor "seemed to have undergone a primitive sex change operation for the character was now played by Miss Nellie (Ellen) Farren" (Legend 39). Miss Farren, who was at that time the Gaiety's "top star" (Glut 39), played opposite Fred Leslie, the Gaiety's "second greatest star" (Legend 39), who, like his predecessor, T. P. Cooke, achieved instant recognition for his interpretation of the monster. And, as in the earlier adaptations, Frankenstein's monster or "Invention," as he was called, competed for the audience's attention with that other stage horror, the vampire. In this version

the monster is a mechanical man -- a precursor of the robot and the android creation in the science-fiction movies which emerged in the 1950s -- who not only learns to speak but "also to sing such numbers as 'Love in the Orchestra'" (Legend 41). Sporting a monocle, high boots, and a burlesque hat, the monster was more comic than terrifying (Legend 39), but such an interpretation, La Valley argues, sets the monster apart as "a clear forerunner to Peter Boyle" and his "'Putting on the Ritz' in Young Frankenstein" (250). In addition, The Model Man introduces a sexual dimension to the Frankenstein theme -- one which was absent in the earlier stage productions but one which would be emphasized in such later film versions as the Hammer series of Frankenstein, Morrissey's Flesh for Frankenstein, and The Rocky Horror Picture Show. Indeed, Frankenstein's monster, as I will discuss later, even found his way into the films and magazines of the pornographic world. Speculations on such exploitation of the novel, however, warrant a fuller treatment than space allows here and will be the subject of a future chapter.

One of the most influential dramatic adaptations of the Frankenstein story in terms of subsequent film treatments of the novel was Peggy Webling's Frankenstein: An Adventure in the Macabre. The play opened in London in 1927 and starred Henry Hallat as Henry Frankenstein (a name change which would recur in the films) and Hamilton Deane

as the Monster (Legend 42). Perhaps influenced by the Golem of the silent films of the Twenties, the monster's clothing "was covered with a clay-like layer" (Legend 42-43). (In fact, four years later when Lugosi tested for the part of the Monster, he "created a Golem-like look ... apparently basing his make-up on that of Hamilton Deane") (Legend 44). Webling's Monster, although "repulsive in appearance," was "childlike and submissive" (Nitchie 393) and, like Cooke's interpretation of the monster, Webling's was also sympathetic. To elicit audience sympathy, she included a scene in which Katrina, Frankenstein's young crippled sister (Nitchie 393), befriends the monster. The monster, unaware of "life and death ... crushes a dove in his hand and throws it into the lake, where, much to his delight it floats" (Nitchie 393). He then either, as Nitchie argues, takes Katrine out in a boat and "tries to make her float like the dove" (393) or, as Glut explains, places "the girl's head beneath the water to see her lovely face through the glassy surface" (44). Since Webling's play is no longer extant, we will never really know how the scene was originally played, but we do know, however, that the Universal film of 1931, which was based on Webling's play, included a scene in which the monster throws a young girl into the lake after watching flowers float. The effect of this scene (a scene humorously parodied in Young Frankenstein) and the last minute editing of it will be

discussed in more detail in the film section of this chapter. However the scene was played in the 1927 drama, the play was a tremendous success, and, as it had in the past, the Monster's role received the greater share of the audience's and critics' attention.

1936 saw yet another adaptation of Mary's story with the production of Miss Gladys Hastings-Walton's Frankenstein. Unlike earlier productions, this play was quite faithful to the novel (Legend 45 and Nitchie 394), even though Hastings-Walton called Mary "the daughter of Robert Goodwin" (Nitchie 394). Initiating a trend of presenting the story in a contemporary setting, Hastings-Walton, in her prefatory note, "associates the original story with the early nineteenth-century horror of the machine and justifies a revival of it in the twentieth century because of contemporary industrial conditions for which, she asserts, machines are responsible" (Nitchie 394). Also contemporary in her play was the inclusion of such scientific touches as taking the monster's blood-pressure, his basal metabolic rate, and his blood count, and the finding that "all his processes" were supernormal (Nitchie 394). Yet although Hastings-Walton's production stressed the scientific aspects of Mary's novel, it diverged from the novel in a crucial way: in its explanation of the reasons for the monster's savagery. The blame for this savagery, Nitchie notes, "is placed, not

alone on his ignorance or on Man's inhumanity to Man and Monster, but on the accident that Frankenstein used a criminal's brain in creating him" (394). To anyone who has seen the James Whale film classic of 1931, this scenario should seem strangely familiar. Whale also used a criminal's brain for the monster and, thus, like Hastings-Walton, de-fuses many of the frightening aspects of Mary's philosophical questioning. Just how the film tames the subversive elements of the novel is the focus of chapter two.

Other plays of the mid-twentieth century which originated from Mary's novel include Goon with the Wind, Arsenic and Old Lace, The Maniac, and Get the Picture (see appendix 1). Arsenic and Old Lace, in particular, illustrates and, on occasion, actually depends upon the public's familiarity with the Karloffian monster. Casting Boris Karloff in the role of Jonathan Brewster, Joseph Kesselring indulged in some humorous and highly successful intertextuality -- an intertextuality made possible only because of the extensive exposure Karloff had already received from his role as the monster in the Universal Frankensteins. It is perhaps worth noting that Universal had by this time realized the power of the visual and had, in fact, copyrighted Jack Pierce's make-up for the monster.⁷ It is this visualization which Kesselring relied on in the following scene in which Jonathan "whose

face seemed familiar to fans of horror movies with its stitched scars" (Legend 47) engages, along with his partner, Dr. Herman Einstein, in a conversation with his aunts:

Abby (stepping down to stage floor) Have you been in an accident?
 Jonathan (His hand goes to side of his face.) No - (He clouds) -- my face -- Dr. Einstein is responsible for that. He's a plastic surgeon. He changes people's faces.
 Martha (Comes down to Abby) But I've seen that face before. (To Abby) Abby, remember when we took the little Schultz boy to the movies and I was so frightened? It was that face! (Jonathan grows tense and looks toward Einstein. Einstein addresses Aunts)
 Einstein. Easy, Chonny -- easy! (To Aunts) Don't worry, ladies. The last five years I give Chonny three new faces. I give him another one right away. This last face -- well, I saw that picture too -- just before I operate. And I was intoxicated.

(Legend 47)

Having thus cued his audience, Kesselring brought down the house when he had his character Jonathan explain that he murdered one victim because "he said I looked like Boris Karloff" (quoted in Legend 47). Arsenic and Old Lace was later revived after a successful run on Broadway of one thousand, four hundred and forty-four performances (Legend 48), but, without Karloff in the role of Jonathan Brewster, the play lacked the charm and light-hearted humour of the original. That humour, however, would return in Frank Capra's film version of the play. Like Kesselring before him, Capra uses as an intertext Universal's 1931 film.

Today, the knowing laughter which is still elicited from the film's references to Boris Karloff attests to the almost iconographic status of the Karloffian monster.

Undoubtedly "the most incredible of all theatrical versions" (Legend 47) was the Living Theatre's spectacle Frankenstein. In its uncut version, the play subjected its audience to six hours of brutality, mass murder and dismemberment, emphasizing, as Glut argues, "that our society was conceived in violence and thrived upon it to survive" (Legend 52). It also exposed the irony inherent in a culture which accepts brutality and violence while censoring sexuality, thus offering a perceptive comment about the making of monsters. At the play's conclusion, the characters appear about to "engage in acts of love" (Legend), but freeze when a "giant version of the Monster beam[s] out at the audience ... saying that the law will not allow them to go any further" (Legend 50). The same society which made that law would, however, permit six hours of enacting dismemberment and mass murder. Although the play owed more to Julian Beck's Frankenstein Poem than to Mary Shelley's novel (Legend 50, see Appendix 1), it captured, nonetheless, the necrophilia at the 'heart' of Victor's experiment and indeed the necrophilia which informs our culture (see chapter three). It would be a matter only of several years until another director -- Paul Morrissey -- would exploit society's penchant for violence;

his film Andy Warhol's Frankenstein, with its graphic 3-D visuals, would make Beck's play seem rather tame.

A year prior to the release of Flesh for Frankenstein, (also known as Andy Warhol's Frankenstein) (1974) and nine years after The Living Theatre's production, the sex and violence implicit in Mary's Frankenstein was made explicit in Richard O'Brien's The Rocky Horror Show. Unlike its predecessors, The Rocky Horror Show (discussed in the film section of this chapter) exaggerated what critics have seen as a homophilic undercurrent running through the novel.⁸ The sexual undertones in the novel and in its numerous dramatic and filmic progeny will be the subject of another chapter, and I will add here only that Frankenstein has appeared numerous times in Playboy and Penthouse magazines as well as making guest appearances in such 'adult' exploitation films as: House on Bare Mountain (1962), Sexy Proibitissimo (1963, "The Most Prohibited Sex"), Angelic Frankenstein (1964 -- the first homosexual Frankenstein film (Legend 231-33)), Fanny Hill Meets Dr. Erotico (1968), and Hollow-My-Weanie, Dr. Frankenstein (1969) -- another homosexual film. Since I have not yet seen these loose adaptations of the Frankenstein story, I have nothing more to add about these special interest films.

After the Living Theatre's production, "the Frankenstein theme had become a youth-oriented property"

(Legend 52),⁹ and the 1970s saw not only the successful Rocky Horror Picture Show but also its forerunner, the musical comedy, I'm Sorry, the Bridge is Out, You'll Have to Spend the Night. Written by Sheldon Allman and Bob Pickett "with much affection and ... numerous 'in' lines taken from the scripts of old horror films" -- yet another hybridization of Mary's conception -- this musical satirized "the horror films of the 1930s and 1940s" (Legend 53). The writers, however, did capture something of the novel, particularly Victor's intentions when they interpreted "Dr. Frankenstein's main objective [as] getting a suitable brain for his nearly brainless Monster for the sole reason of having someone to call him 'Daddy'" (Legend 53). Yet, in this version, although all of the monsters were destroyed or "cured by various means [they] did not stay destroyed. As each of the various creatures returned to life the villagers concluded with a chorus," which I consider a humorous 'truism' about the Frankenstein phenomenon: "monsters always come back because that was the way the fans wanted it" (Legend 54). Frankenstein and his creation, however, would find an even better popular medium for successful resuscitation, and it is perhaps through the film that most of us first became acquainted (again and again) with Mary's progeny.

'Frankie' Goes to Hollywood ... and Beyond

There are many great authors of the past who have survived centuries of oblivion and neglect, but it is still an open question whether they will be able to survive an entertaining version of what they have to say.

Hannah Arendt
The Human Dialogue

The modern masters ... have indeed performed miracles They have acquired new and almost unlimited powers ... and even mock the invisible world with its own shadows.

Professor Waldman

The nineteenth-century stage, with its numerous adaptations of Frankenstein, had illustrated how well-suited Mary's conception was to the world of popular entertainment,¹⁰ but, while the student and his creation were appearing in play after play, a young challenger to theatre's reign over the popular imagination was waiting for its first appearance. Once technological innovations in photography made possible the moving picture, it would be only a matter of time until Frankenstein and his creature would find a new home. That home is where I first became acquainted with Mary's story, and it seems somehow fitting that my initial encounter with her Modern Prometheus would be in the realm of the greatest of artificers -- that maker of life out of shadow and light -- the film. Like countless others, I entered the theatre and anxiously waited for that

moment when the monster, with the bolts in his neck and the zipper-like scar on his forehead, would be brought to life. How I knew all this about the monster beforehand is still somewhat of a mystery, but I suspect that I, and others like me, had already encountered the monster in other forms of popular entertainment and had, by a type of cultural osmosis, absorbed much of what I 'knew' about Frankenstein. What is certain, however, is that the monster I saw was extremely close to what I had expected to see. How this one visualization of the monster has so tyrannized the viewing public is one of the major concerns of this section. The history of its genesis and evolution is a long and involved one; in fact, despite the relatively young age of the medium, the history of the film adaptations of Frankenstein is even more lengthy and varied than the stage's history of adaptations of Mary's story.

The first filmic adaptation of the Frankenstein story was the Thomas Edison Company's silent film (975 feet) Frankenstein (1910). The film itself no longer exists; however, the promotional stills and inter-titles which do exist, in addition to Edison's own written description of the film's climax, allow for a certain amount of reconstruction of the film's storyline and its interpretation of the monster. One of the promotional stills features a full-length representation of Charles Ogle in make-up for his role as the monster. The still reveals that, unlike the

Here comes the point which we have endeavored to bring out, namely: That when Frankenstein's love for his bride shall have attained full strength and freedom from impurity it will have such an effect upon his mind that the monster cannot exist. This theory is demonstrated in the next and closing scene, which has probably never been surpassed in anything shown on the motion picture screen. The monster, broken down by his unsuccessful attempts to be with his creator, enters the room, stands before a large mirror and holds out his arms entreatingly. Gradually the real monster fades away, leaving only the image in the mirror. A moment later, Frankenstein himself enters. As he stands directly before the mirror we are amazed to see the image of the monster reflected on Frankenstein's own. Gradually, however, under the effect of love and his better nature, the monster's image fades and Frankenstein sees himself in his young manhood in the mirror. His bride joins him, and the film ends with their embrace....

(Legend 62)

This passage not only reveals Edison's use of a mirror as a visual metaphor for the split self but also suggests that Edison wanted its audience to see that the splitting or doubling was directly related to impure love. Audiences of the time, already familiar with the euphemism "monstrous desire"¹¹ for sexual drives, would undoubtedly have recognized in the film a visual equating of Frankenstein's sexual desires (the return of the repressed) with his monstrous double. To ensure such an interpretation Edison cued its audience long before the mirror scene. The film opens with Frankenstein's letter to his fiancée, in which he explains:

Sweetheart,
 Tonight my ambition will be accomplished. I
 have discovered the secrets of life and death
 and in a few hours I shall create into life
 the most perfect human being the world has ever
 known. When this work is accomplished, I shall
 return to claim you for my bride.

Your devoted
 Frankenstein

(Legend 59-60)

The inter-title which follows his letter, however, informs viewers that "Instead of a perfect human being the evil in Frankenstein's mind creates a monster" (Legend 60). What the inter-title does, in fact, is anchor in a Barthesian sense¹² the film's visuals, restricting any readings of the images to the film's own morality. Viewers are linguistically informed by the inter-title that the monster is an externalization of the evil in Frankenstein's mind. Although the audience is not literally told just what that evil is, they are told that Frankenstein is going to create life before he marries his fiancée. The monster is, therefore, an externalization/literalization of the euphemism "monstrous desire." The moral seems to be that impure (sexual) thoughts are monstrous when indulged in outside of marriage (since manhood, as Edison's own description makes clear, is not in itself evil). The film's climax reinforces this idea. The wedding night arrives, and Frankenstein and his monstrous double engage in a psychomachia to determine who will take possession of the bride. Captioning the battle (after the bride herself swoons away)

novel, Edison's film presented a monster who was barrel-chested and hunchbacked, notable for his stark white face (a break from the dramatic convention of presenting the monster as blue), dark eyes and large forehead (Tropp 86, Legend 58). Unrecognizable today, perhaps, to viewers accustomed to the Karloffian monster, the still, nonetheless, is a visual reminder of the prominence given the monster. Indeed, the fact that Charles Ogle's name is even known, while the name of the actor who played Victor Frankenstein has been lost, strongly suggests that the role of the monster in film would do for the film actor what it had done for the stage actor. This particularization or concretization of the monster, however, is diametrically opposed to both Mary's limited description of the monster and the motif of doubling which exists in the novel. The Edison film, itself, recognized just such a motif, and, although it claimed to be "A Liberal Adaptation of Mrs. Shelley's Novel" (Legend 59), it illustrated in its interpretation of the novel a degree of sophistication absent in many of the later film versions.

In the 15 March 1910 issue of the Edison Kinetogram, viewers were given the following explanation of the film's climax -- one which makes explicit both the film's use of the Doppelganger and its recognition of the sexual undertones in the novel:

and thus loading the visual once again with the film's own morality is the message: "On the bridal night, Frankenstein's better nature asserted itself" (Legend 62). Viewers then learn from the film's final inter-title what the film has been leading up to all along: "The creation of an evil mind is overcome by love and disappears" (Legend 63). But that love, as the film has also made clear, is one which is pure -- one whose embodiment is not Frankenstein but rather his delicate fiancée. There is no question of the fiancée's having monstrous evil thoughts. She represents that readily identifiable -- but for that reason no less dangerous -- icon/cliché: woman as The Angel in the House. The angel in this film is, like the monster, unnamed and therefore denied the individuality which even a name imparts. She exists, again like the monster, merely as a symbol, but, unlike her counterpart's, her name has not been immortalized in film history books. She is goodness and purity incarnate, but, more importantly for the film's purpose, she represents Frankenstein's reward for his newly-found virtue. He may have an evil mind and may encounter his monstrous self, but, "under the effect of love," he will recover sufficiently to "claim" his bride. Such an adaptation of Mary's novel not only reinforces the privileged position of men in a patriarchal culture but also grossly distorts the novel itself. Mary's Frankenstein also includes a wedding night, but how different the outcome. The monster in the novel had

warned Victor that he would be with him on his wedding night (E 209), but, unlike in Edison's film, love is not enough to overcome the monster. Elizabeth, rather than the monster, is killed, and Victor is not rewarded with a bride; nor is he allowed to 'live happily ever after'. Mary is much more condemnatory of such a limiting/limited view of love and women and not only refuses to reward Victor, but, as I shall discuss in chapter three, also implicitly and explicitly comments on the position of women in patriarchy. In fact, as both feminist and Marxist critics have argued, Mary's probing extends beyond questioning the position of women in society to a broader look at society in general, particularly a capitalistic society.¹³

The Edison film in its altering of the novel's ending represents the first in a long line of films which would offer to the viewing public what by now has become the 'Hollywood ending'. It also marks the beginning of the film industry's recognition of the powerful appeal of the monster and his creation. From the script and reviews of the film, we can indulge in some reconstructing of our own. The script suggests that, unlike in the novel, Frankenstein's monster was not a collection of parts of corpses but rather a being brought to life by alchemic and fiery means. A recently discovered print of the film has been aired on WBEN's The Horror of it All, revealing how the being was created. As explained during the programme, the creation scene was

ingeniously done by first burning a prop dummy of the creature and then running the film backwards. Viewers thus see the monster rise Phoenix-like from his own ashes. Once described as a "piece of photographic work which will rank with the best of its kind" (early review quoted in Legend 63), the scene remains impressive. Yet this highlighting of the being's creation is problematic.

First, as I mentioned earlier, Mary is deliberately vague in her description of the creation, yet for filmmakers this scene becomes a pivotal one. Mary refuses to provide graphic details of the actual agent of creation, not I would argue because, as some critics have naively claimed, she lacked the scientific acumen to do so¹⁴ but because she is concerned with the broader, more involved issues that the artificial creation of life entails. The how is not nearly as important as the what now? By making the creation scene a spectacle, filmmakers shift the focus away from the moral questioning present in the novel and instead ask viewers to marvel at man's ingenuity and his awe-inspiring equipment, thereby manipulating them into aligning themselves and sympathizing with Victor from the outset. Such a shift in focus biases our interpretation of both the creation itself and the creator. Mary's Victor sought out "charnel houses," "unhallowed damps of the grave," and "tortured the living animal to animate the lifeless clay" (E 98). A fiery furnace or a towering laboratory, complete with the latest

in scientific gadgetry, is no doubt evocative, but it threatens to blind us to just what science or Victor is doing and what the implications of his actions are. Because we are caught up in the visual splendor of the creation, we become, in a sense accomplices, siding for the moment with Victor, the man of science. This positioning of viewers with Victor eliminates much of the tension which exists in the novel -- a tension which arises early when Mary asks Walton, and by extension readers, to judge Victor's motives and actions. In the novel, we are twice removed from the creation scene since we learn of it from Walton who has learned about it from Victor. Such distancing is deliberately created, I believe, to offer readers an 'objective' stance from which to judge Victor. Like Walton and his sister, readers are in a position to hear Victor's confession, but, more importantly, we are in a position to learn from it. This effect is lost, however, in films such as the Edison one which highlight the creation scene. Rather than being in a position to stand back and question just what Victor is doing, we are, instead, in a position (granted partly because of the nature of film itself) to identify with him and marvel at his ability to create. Consequently, much if not all of the moral questioning of the responsibilities of science which is present in the novel is sacrificed in films to the spectacle of science itself. The more elaborate the creation scene, the more viewers are in-spired by science --that very same

science Mary is questioning.

Filmmakers' interest in the creation scene introduces another aspect of Frankenstein films, namely the self-reflexivity inherent in films whose theme concerns animation itself. Indeed, the novel provides, as William Nestruck has commented, "a story that offers a narrative analogy to film itself" (294). "The persistence of the Frankenstein myth in film," he adds,

not only reiterates cultural values about reproduction, creation, and preservation, attempts through myth to keep apart human species and monstrous machines, but also displays a continued ambivalence toward film itself.... The narration that brings the machine or doll to life also confronts its own violations of sanctions against such reproduction.

(295)

The animation scene in Frankenstein thus offers filmmakers the opportunity to play creator, but it is itself (as was Victor's creature) an artificial type of creation. Like the monster, film is also a stitchwork, a suturing waiting for animation. The reviews of the Edison film suggest the public's emerging recognition of the potential for film to capitalize on the creation scene, but, it would be such later filmmakers as Frank Mouris and Tony Conrad who would exploit more fully film's own Frankensteinian elements.¹⁵

Five years after the Edison Frankenstein, the Ocean Film Corporation offered the viewing public the silent

five-reel film, Life Without Soul. After first setting the moral framework of the story with the exclamation "I Have Challenged the Almighty and am Paying the Penalty!" (words reminiscent of the advertising for the play, Presumption), the catch-line continued: "Transcending anything heretofore attempted in motion pictures, it will live in the minds of the public for years to come" (Legend 65). The same might be said of Victor and his creation: he too transcended all boundaries, fashioning a being who continues to live in the minds of the public.

Life Without Soul (an appropriate description of film's own artifice) differed from the earlier film, however, in its depiction of the monster. Unlike Edison's film, it featured a monster who was "un-made-up" (Tropp 66). Percy Darrell Standing played the role of the "Brute Man" (Legend 64), as the monster was called, and, like T. P. Cooke in Presumption, captured the audience's sympathy for the monster. The following review of Standing's performance both mentions the sympathetic portrayal of the monster and points out the film's attempt to remain faithful to its source -- a source it publicly acknowledged:

His embodiment of the man without a soul adequately conveys the author's intent. He is awe-inspiring, but never grotesque, and indicates the gradual unfolding of the creature's senses and understanding, with convincing skill. At times, he actually awakens sympathy for the monster's condition -- cut

off, as he is, from all human companionship.

(Legend 66)

It is tempting to suggest that part of the sympathy resulted from the film's use of the term "Brute Man" for the monster and, too, from the fact that the film's monster, unlike the Karloffian monster present-day viewers are accustomed to, lacked make-up. Both of these work to reduce any sense of otherness or difference, thus enabling viewers to identify with the creature.

In addition to applauding Standing's performance, reviews also commended the film's "visual variety" (Legend 66), not surprising given the film's introduction of location shooting (Tropp 86, Legend 64). The various locations ranged from Metropolitan New York, through the wild regions of Georgia, Arizona and Florida, to an Atlantic steamship. The effect and significance of location shooting, however, extends far beyond enriching the visual texture of the film; it also locates the story in a contemporary setting and thus sets the story in the present. Perhaps to counter the unsettling effect aroused by situating the story in the present, the film provided a frame narration, consisting of a main character who reads the story from a novel. After the death of the main characters, the film flashes back to the framing narrator who closes the book, after which viewers discover that the main characters are alive and unharmed (Legend 65). Glut argues that this framing "lessened the

horror and impact of the story" (65) but fails to acknowledge the film's indebtedness to the novel. Mary herself had framed her story, using Walton's letters to his sister for the frame narration. The film, then, except of course for its ending, captures the flavour of the novel and, as I mentioned above, allows viewers a certain amount of detachment. Glut's comment is nonetheless a telling one in that it points out the audience's response to the threatening elements in the novel the film adapted. Those elements, as I shall later discuss, involve much more than the deaths of the main characters.

The last of the silent versions of Frankenstein was the 1920 Albertini Film, Il Mostro di Frakestein. Once again, the Frankenstein story reached -- as it had on stage -- an international audience. Il Mostro di Frakestein also marked the third version of the story to be filmed in only a span of ten years. Today, in the era of film sequels, such a recurrence may not seem that remarkable, but, at the time, it did illustrate the growing appeal of the Frankenstein story. Indeed, it is an appeal which even today shows no signs of abating.

Although these three silent films proved that the Frankenstein story could be successfully adapted to film, they would soon be overshadowed by what would become the 'standardized' film version of Frankenstein. Beyond doubt, the James Whale/Boris Karloff Frankenstein film of 1931 set

the standard for all subsequent film adaptations of Mary's novel. In its own time, the film was voted by the New York Times one of the best films of 1931 and eventually grossed for Universal 12 million dollars (O'Flinn 209). Today, primarily because of the widespread appearance of the Karloffian monster in everything from television advertising to rock videos, the film, in particular its monster, has become synonymous with Frankenstein. The Karloffian monster is not only, as La Valley argues, the "image inevitably evoked when we say 'Frankenstein'" but more importantly, for my purposes, "the image against which we must work when we read Mary Shelley's book" (262). La Valley's comment not only describes my own response to the novel but also points to the necessity of re-viewing literary criticism in light of film's power to condition the reading process. This is an area of criticism which has not been fully analyzed and one which I plan to explore in greater detail in subsequent chapters. Since the Whale film has been by far the most influential in conditioning readers (and in influencing subsequent film adaptations, which, in turn, influence readers), it warrants a more detailed analysis than space permits here. In the following chapter, then, I will discuss the film in conjunction with the novel, examining not simply how it differs from the novel but rather how its differences radically alter the text and, as a consequence, alter our reading of the novel. This discussion will range

from focusing on the film's de-fusing of many of the novel's subversive elements to an examination of the interaction between film and the reading audience and the consequences of this interaction. Thus, to avoid going over the same ground, I will restrict my analysis of the Whale film in this section to such background information as Whale's sources and influences and comment where applicable on changes he makes to his sources.

The immediate source for the film was, as I have already stated, not Mary's Frankenstein but rather Peggy Webling's play, Frankenstein; An Adventure in the Macabre. The very title of Webling's play "already suggests," as Peter O'Flinn has quite rightly argued, "a tilting of the work away from Mary Shelley's complex scientific and political statement towards those conventional terror terms for which Dracula [Universal's earlier box-office success] had indicated a market" (209). Terror, it seems, was what audiences of the twentieth century wanted. Indeed, prior to Dracula, such films as Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, The Cat and the Canary and The Magician had signalled a growing interest in the shocker. In addition to The Magician, such German films as Der Golem, Das Kabinett des Dr Caligari, Homunculus and Metropolis had signalled an interest in a specific type of film -- one whose theme concerned the creation of life. Der Golem centered on the animating of a clay man; Das Kabinett focused on a somnambulist who is

metaphorically brought to life by Dr. Caligari; Homunculus concerned an artificially created being; Metropolis presented the transformation of a metallic robot into a live young girl; and The Magician featured a sorcerer who had a formula for creating life. These films then had already established a filmic tradition from which Whale could draw in bringing to life his creation. Audiences of his film, for instance, might recognize in the monster's stiff, jerky movements and heavy boots a parallel to the clay man's movements in Der Golem. Another parallel to this film is the role a girl plays in the monster's "discovery of his humanity" (Legend 74) -- a role also present in Das Kabinett. Finally, Der Golem features a scene in which the monster is hunted down by the townspeople.

Even more influential than Der Golem were the two 1926 films, The Magician and Metropolis (Legend 82). Rex Ingram's The Magician featured a dwarf assistant -- a character also present in the play, Presumption -- whose comic touches, as Glut argues, were the source for Whale's dwarf, Fritz (83). Ingram also included a tower laboratory, reaching to the heavens to harness the vital spark of nature. Whale not only incorporates a similar laboratory in Frankenstein but in its sequel Bride of Frankenstein duplicated Ingram's "exploding tower with amazing detail" (Legend 84). A laboratory is also a spectacular element in Fritz Lang's Metropolis. There in the midst of metallic

bands and wired electrodes, Rotwang, the mad scientist, relies on electricity to effect the transformation of his robot into a beautiful young girl. The scene not only represents a tour de force in special effects but marks the beginning of a long tradition which would emerge in Frankenstein films of using electricity as the agent of creating life. Prior to Metropolis, the creation of the monster on stage and in films was rather vague and undefined but

After James Whale saw Metropolis, the ambiguity would forever be erased. The creations of Frankenstein would always be associated with wild electrical displays, with the artificial being resting on platforms.

(Legend 84-5)

Glut goes on to add, in reference to the laboratory scene in Whale's film, (quoting Ygor from Son of Frankenstein) that "Electricity had been established as the Mother of the Frankenstein monster" (his emphasis, 108). This claim is strange indeed. Victor, after all, strove to circumvent the natural birth process, the point being that he would create life in the absence of woman; and, as to calling the highly phallic image of electricity the mother of the monster, Glut is surely playing rhetorical games with his reader. His light-hearted claim no doubt alludes to the novel's theme of unnatural creation, but that same light-heartedness serves to de-fuse the subversive aspects of this theme. I am confused

as to why he even needs to introduce the absent mother and, worse, image her as electricity entering the body lying on the slab/bed.

Glut's comment introduces the larger issue of film's treatment of the creation scene in general. Mary's novel, as I have already noted, is vague on this point. Further, in a strange literary coincidence, Thea von Harbou's novel -- an extended version of her screenplay of Metropolis -- also "underplayed the actual creation," overlaying instead "the religious implications" (Legend n.89). Yet both Mary's and Thea's moral questioning have quite literally been screened out of the public domain at the expense of spectacular creation scenes. The filmmaker's interest in the creation scene may be, as I mentioned earlier, simply an interest in or recognition of the self-referential relationship between the creation scene and film-making. Then, again, it is tempting to at least propose that the filmmakers' penchant not only for making a spectacle of the creation scene but also, particularly in the film versions of *Frankenstein*, for outdoing one another in the visual power of the creation scene runs deeper than an interest in self-reflexivity. Here the novels themselves offer a partial explanation. In both novels, it is a man who 'gives birth'; and, in both novels the woman writer downplays the process of this artificial birth. Such an unnatural birth is, in fact, commented on by the novelists. Consciously or not, then,

male directors who highlight the creation scene are somehow emblematic of that very arrogance or perhaps womb envy the novels thematize. Their allegiance becomes an allegiance with Victor or Rotwang -- characters whose attempts to appropriate the birth process led to destruction in the novels.

This allegiance perhaps explains the altering of the novel's ending both in the Edison film Frankenstein and in Whale's version. Both films present a creator who is not destroyed by his creation but instead marries his bride and lives happily ever after. Victor (in name only in the novel) not only dies but is the sixth to die as a consequence of his experiment. Perhaps Whale's own recognition of Mary's ironic treatment of the young student lay behind his decision to change his name from Victor to the less value-laden "Henry." Then again, such a change may have been accidental -- a confusing of Victor with his friend, Henry Clerval. Regardless of the etiology, the result of this name change is nonetheless a subtle altering of the novel's plot and the effect it has on the reader. Readers are no longer asked to see in the name a tension between Victor's success at creating life and his failure to sustain that life; nor are they triggered by the name to judge whether or not Victor is indeed victorious.

Changes such as this one or comments such as Glut's concerning the monster's mother may in themselves seem

casual or innocuous, but their cumulative effect is to condition our own responses to the novel or film by embedding in us the filmmaker's or critic's ideology. I will return to the problems such prescribing poses for readers in the following chapter. What concerns this chapter is the extent to which the Frankenstein story has been worked and reworked.

Capitalizing on the popular and commercial success of Frankenstein, Universal, in 1935, released the sequel, Bride of Frankenstein -- a film whose very title both illustrated and reinforced the popular con-fusing of created with creator. The film featured Colin Clive again in the role of Henry Frankenstein and a scarred and burned Boris Karloff as the monster, a direct visual link to the fiery inferno which concluded the original. The film opens with an 'historical' prologue in which Mary Shelley, played by Elsa Lanchester, converses with Byron and Shelley. Elsa Lanchester, in fact, plays two roles in the film: Mary Shelley and the monster's bride. Yet as he had in the original film, Whale left the identity of the monster (here the female monster) unknown; the film simply credits the role of the 'bride' to a question mark (Legend 123-5), a faint reminder, conscious or not, of Mary's refusal to name her monster.

Concerning this dual role, Elsa Lanchester once remarked: "James Whale in his production of Bride of

Frankenstein did deliberately use me to play both 'Mary Shelley' and the monster's bride because he wanted to tell that Mary Shelley indeed had something in common with the dreadful creature of her imagination" (Legend 122). But if Mary shares something with her imagined creature, Whale shares something with Mary's Victor. Like Victor, Whale tries "to write out women from creativity whether it be artistic creativity or the creation of life,"¹⁶ since in addition to relying on and reinforcing those obvious stereotypes of women -- the angelic and the monstrous --, his prologue also effectively works to de-fuse Mary's power of authority. Paired as she is, Mary comes to be seen by viewers not as creator but rather as parodic bride, a Nefertiti-like goddess (a stereotype which Whale humorously inverts) who spurns her hideous bridegroom on her wedding day. Thus, just as the novel's bride is dismembered (F 207), the novel's author is dys-remembered.

After all, the prologue, ostensibly historical, is, in fact, fictitious. True Mary did converse with Byron, Shelley (and Polidori), but her comment that the "Monster didn't die in the fire at the burning mill" (Tropp 97) owes its origin to the 1931 screenplay and not the novel. Consequently, viewers unfamiliar with the novel are misled by this legitimizing ploy to accept not just this film but both films as authentic visualizations of Mary's novel. Yet the Mary of the prologue has only authorized not authored

these two films. The film she introduces has only the slightest basis in the novel. There was no bride for the monster, contrary to what subsequent Bride of Frankenstein films have since argued. Indeed, Whale has done what, as Mary Jacobus argues, "neither Mary Shelley nor her hero could quite bring themselves to do -- embody women as fully monstrous" ("Text" 103). Moreover, his film marks a tradition in Bride films of not only excluding women but offering instead distorted representations of them (Jackson True Story). Many of these films, Jackson explains, are "either overt or covert forms of sexism and misrepresentations of women ... turning women into vampires, monsters ... not part of Mary Shelley's work at all" (True Story). Thus in the patriarchal world of the film industry, Mary's novel has been "turned into the opposite of itself" -- something which Jackson suggests "is almost an allegory in itself" (True Story).

The prologue, however, works in yet another way. In addition to providing a 'realistic' basis for the sequel, it also, as La Valley points out, allows "the main body of the film to appear as science fiction, set in a futuristic Victorian England with newly discovered uses of electricity, scientific laboratories, and a mysterious invention, the telephone" (265). Although Glut considers the prologue "an almost ludicrous anachronism" (125), La Valley's comment about the science-fiction framework is well taken. It is

after all consonant with both the novel's and the film's focus on the emerging role of science in society. Indeed, Tropp argues that audiences of the 1930s would have seen in Dr. Pretorious' controlled breeding experiments a parallel to their own culture's interest in the science of eugenics (103). What Tropp has recognized is, in fact, the tendency in Frankenstein films to situate the myth in the present. This tendency, as I mentioned earlier, is one which emerged as early as the 1915 silent film Life Without Soul. Why it continues to be a salient aspect of Frankenstein films is a question which cannot be definitively answered: it could be that present-day concerns bring to mind the myth and therefore keep it popular, or that the myth is deliberately recalled and reworked either to capitalize on or defuse a culture's anxieties. The latter is the more popular view,¹⁷ and it is one which is supported by yet another tendency in Frankenstein films: the pairing of 'serious' versions of the story with humorous or parodic ones.

The humour, after all, works to diminish society's fears and tensions by domesticating, even trivializing, them and reducing them to a source of laughter, however uneasy. But, in addition, the humour also defuses the subversive aspects of the novel. In Bride of Frankenstein, for instance, it is the female creature (and by extension, Mary Shelley) who bears the brunt of the humour. What the humour contains is the 'bride's' sense of autonomy: she refuses to

accept the role Henry planned for her by rejecting her designated mate. Such a fear -- women monsters subverting the 'natural' order of things -- Whale renders satirically laughable. From the lightning-streaked beehive to the shroud-like wedding gown, all in conjunction with the distant sound of church bells (Tropp 102), the scene's humorous parody of a wedding ceremony works to mask the underlying and very real threat this independent bride poses. What in the novel was only speculation or more precisely Victor's specious rationalization against creating a mate, becomes, in Whale's hands, grounds for humour. But the message is clear: the bride's punishment for refusing to heed her master's voice is death. It is perhaps a similar fear which lies behind those 'bride' films Jackson saw as covert or overt forms of sexism. Indeed, the popularity of the Frankenstein myth -- one which Jackson argues has "particular resonances for women" (True Story) -- in a traditionally male film industry is a question I will return to in a subsequent chapter. But I might add here that the Hollywood myth and Mary's myth are quite different creatures.

The success of Bride of Frankenstein proved to Universal that the Frankenstein myth still appealed to the popular audience. In 1939, under the direction of Rowland Lee, the studio released Son of Frankenstein. Lee's presentation of the monster, however, marked quite a departure from Whale's presentation in the earlier films.

Setting the standard for films to come, this film offers a monster who, "Despite all of his fervent learning in the last movie to speak and attain some humanity, ... [has] lost his ability to talk and, except for a few touching scenes, [has] become more like a silently stalking robot" (Legend 135). This, Glut continues, "was the beginning of the downfall of the Monster's characterization, [and] [w]ithin the next few films he would become hardly more than an animated prop, appearing at the end of the picture to grope around a while before the villagers set fire to the castle" (135). This film was also the last in which Karloff would play the monster; in 1942, Universal's The Ghost of Frankenstein introduced audiences to Lon Chaney Jr. as the new monster. After The Ghost of Frankenstein, Universal, in a move reminiscent of the early dramatic adaptations, injected new life into the Frankenstein myth by adding to its cast other well-known horror figures, so that in 1943 audiences were offered Frankenstein Meets the Wolfman. The success of this yoking together of popular horror figures lead to the 1944 film, House of Frankenstein -- a film which featured such notables as The Wolfman, Frankenstein's monster, Count Dracula, Daniel the hunchback, and the mad scientist, Dr. Gustav Niemann. Finally, in 1945, Universal offered the last of its 'serious' films featuring Frankenstein's monster, when it released House of Dracula.

Three years later Universal spoofed its own

Frankenstein series when it presented Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein. "Variouslly described as a travesty on the classic films and a faithful piece of satire" (Tropp 116), this film, excluding, of course, the ludicrous Jesse James Meets Frankenstein's Daughter (1965), represents the extent to which Mary's novel was exploited once appropriated by Hollywood. But it also illustrates once again the tendency in Frankenstein visualizations, whether dramatic or filmic, to offset straight versions of the myth with comic ones. In addition, Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein, because of its well-known comic stars, brought Mary's monster to a younger audience. Although cast in a comedy, that monster was the familiar Universal Karloffian monster not the novel's. Thus whether audiences first met this monster in a serious thriller or a humorous spoof, they were given, with minor changes, the same visualization of the monster: an oversized, scar-faced, square-headed being with huge boots and neck electrodes. Since Universal, from its very first film, focused on the monster, and indeed copyrighted Pierce's make-up for Mary's creature, it is not surprising that its Karloffian monster developed into the icon it is today.

Perhaps because Karloff had already set the standard¹⁸ for the monster (only to witness over the years the deterioration of that standard), Hammer's English studio, when it began its series of Frankenstein films in

1957, shifted its focus from the monster to his maker. In The Curse of Frankenstein, the Frankenstein story

underwent a new transformation that distanced it even further from the emphasis that Whale had partially recovered. The pathos of Karloff's Monster is no longer of interest. Cadaverous, repugnant, mummy-like, Christopher Lee's Monster has become a mere prop, an adjunct to the film's emphasis on the necrophiliac activities of the half-criminal, half-pitiful Baron Frankenstein, played by Peter Cushing.

(La Valley 275)

Like Whale before him, director Terence Fisher exploited the Frankenstein myth, achieving great commercial success.

Indeed, Fisher's films even "borrow some of the familiar [Universal] elements, such as hunchback Germanic assistants, brain transplants, and elaborate laboratories" (Tropp 125).

Thus, as early as 1957 certain aspects of the story had become so familiar to audiences that filmmakers dared not change them. But these elements, it should be noted, derive from Whale's vision of the Frankenstein story, not Mary's. By incorporating such elements as hunchback assistants and elaborate laboratories, filmmakers not only 'authenticate' their particular version of the myth but also perpetuate the public's film-based understanding of it. The two feed into each other: an audience expects certain elements in a Frankenstein film; and the recurrence of these elements leads to the continued expectation of them. Once set in motion the cycle becomes self-perpetuating.

Fisher also added his own touches, introducing "ornate period sets, voluptuous women, and various internal organs, all projected on wide screen and bathed in color" (Tropp 125). The implied sexuality and violence of the Universal films (and of the novel) have now given way to Technicolor sex and blatant brutality. In addition, Fisher makes the following changes to the storyline: Victor has a new tutor, Paul Krempe; Justine is a servant girl pregnant with Victor's child; Elizabeth is accidentally shot by Victor; the creature dies in a vat of acid; and Victor is sentenced to execution by guillotine (Legend 192). Yet despite these obvious alterations of Mary's novel, a reviewer for the Hollywood Reporter 19 June, 1957 called Jimmy Sangster's script an "'almost straight rendition of the original Frankenstein story'" (Legend 194). Such a claim does not simply illustrate the extent to which the novel has been neglected in Hollywood, where now any inclusion of laboratories or artificially created monsters serves as a guarantor of a Frankenstein film's authenticity. It also serves to perpetuate that neglect. With each successive Frankenstein film and each successive review, the novel as "original" recedes further and further into the background, concomittantly recalled and obscured by film's fidelity to only the barest outlines of the myth. In the world of pop culture there is no ur-Frankenstein only Frankensteins.

Hammer, like Universal, capitalized on the market for sequels, releasing The Revenge of Frankenstein in 1958. In keeping with the spirit both of the doppelganger motif and the underlying narcissism in the novel, Victor, with the help of his assistant, literally becomes his own creation. Beaten by his own patients of the Workhouse Hospital, Victor survives long enough to tell his assistant how to transplant his brain into a body he had made prior to the beating (a body composed of stolen parts from various 'patients') (Legend 196). After the transplant, this new Victor could return to the screen in The Evil of Frankenstein (1964). Because this film was to be released by Universal, Hammer studios incorporated "old familiar trappings of the Universal series," including a monster whose make-up resembled Boris Karloff's (Legend 197). Thus, in this film, audiences witnessed a fusing of two loci of interest in the myth: the evil scientist/doctor Frankenstein, incarnated in Peter Cushing, and the dumb, groping monster, made famous by Boris Karloff.

Yet another area of interest, however, and one only hinted at in the novel but exploited in films, is of course the monster's desire for a mate. In 1966, Hammer released Frankenstein Created Woman -- a film whose title directly alluded to Roger Vadim's And God ... Created Woman (1956). The female monster, however, represented quite a radical departure from Elsa Lanchester's monster of 1935. Played by

Playboy model Susan Denberg, Frankenstein's creation appeared "with scarcely a 'stitch' on her" (La Valley 275). In fact, in scenes filmed for publicity purposes, the Baron Frankenstein is so aroused by his creation that he rapes her (Legend 198). Thus, the underlying eroticism in the novel -- an eroticism only implied in the earlier dramatic adaptation, The Model Man (1887) -- was finally 'laid bare' in Hammer's Frankenstein Created Woman.¹⁹

Moreover, Hammer's casting of such a high profile actor/model in a film whose title would readily recall Vadim's film, worked to situate the Frankenstein story in a contemporary milieu. Such a tendency, evident in the silent film Life Without Soul and also in the Abbott and Costello comedy, emerged in Hammer's fifth Frankenstein film, Frankenstein Must Be Destroyed (1969). Included in the film were such contemporary concerns as brain transplants (an idea no longer relegated to the realm of science-fiction given the successful heart transplants of the late 1960s); blackmail and kidnapping; rape and murder; and drug trafficking (Legend 200). But such concerns as rape and murder -- a sado-eroticism to which Fisher graphically draws attention by filling the laboratory scenes with a "pornographic display of internal organs" (Tropp 131) -- are, as I have shown, two concerns which either implicitly or explicitly recur in Frankenstein films. The vehicle of expressing these two themes may change as film's audience

itself changes, but the themes themselves remain a constant. What interests me, however, and what will be the concern of my next chapter, is the novel's treatment of these two themes.

Although Frankenstein Must Be Destroyed does indeed fulfill its promise to destroy Frankenstein, as both Frankenstein and his creature die in the by-now obligatory fire, it, in actuality, only represents the screen death of Peter Cushing as Baron Frankenstein. One year later, in The Horror of Frankenstein, Hammer replaced Cushing with a younger Baron, Ralph Bates. Having seemingly exhausted 'serious' adaptations of the myth, Hammer studios turned to a comic treatment of the Frankenstein story. Such a treatment, however, is hardly original; given the history of visualizations of the myth, it is almost expected. Universal, before Hammer, had spoofed Mary's novel and its own 'serious' adaptations of it, and playwrights before Universal had offered the public the burlesques, Frank 'n' Steam and Frankenstitch. Hammer's film, then, represents just part of a long tradition of serious and comic pairings of the story. Indeed, imitating Whale before him, director Jimmy Sangster not only intentionally spoofed the horror film genre but attempted "to capture the offbeat humor and characterizations of James Whale" himself (Legend 200).

Whether Universal's Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein and Hammer's The Horror of Frankenstein

represent the nadir of Frankenstein adaptations (or perhaps some means of de-fusing the very anxieties their respective earlier films worked to generate) is open to speculation. Aesthetic judgments and speculations aside, because of their parodic handling of the myth (I am using Hutcheon's definition of parody as "repetition with critical distance" (20)), both studios just by sheer repetition made and kept Frankenstein a household name. Whale, whose films focused on the monster, immortalized Karloff as the definitive Frankensteinian monster; while Fisher offered instead Peter Cushing as the archetypal evil scientist. But more than offer the two key figures in the novel, both studios also provided other filmmakers with a reservoir of images upon which to draw -- images which very quickly became "common knowledge " (La Valley 278). My interest concerns the effect of this "storehouse of common images" (La Valley 278) on readers of the novel. Even if a present-day reader of Frankenstein has not actually seen the Universal or Hammer film cycles, he or she undoubtedly has encountered more recent films (or visualizations of the monster in advertisements, political cartoons or videos), which draw upon or rework either images of the monster and his maker or the themes of sadism and eroticism evident in the Whale/Fisher series. In addition, Universal's horror films reached an even larger audience when, in 1957, they were released on television (Legend 279). Indeed, to capitalize

on their television audience's familiarity with the Frankenstein monster and theme, Universal, in 1964, starred their creature on the small screen in the weekly comedy, The Munsters (Legend 270). But even before being featured in his own series, the monster -- played again by Boris Karloff-- appeared in such television shows as The Rosemary Clooney Show in 1957 and Route 66 in 1962 (Legend 280). Thus, whatever the viewer's taste, he or she would, sooner or later, become acquainted with the Universal monster:

Various comedy, dramatic, and information programs featuring the Frankenstein Monster or theme include: The Honeymooners, Leave It To Beaver, The Monkees, Get Smart, Here's Lucy, The Saint, The Thin Man, ... Sesame Street, and Masquerade Party (starring Elsa Lanchester as the male Frankenstein Monster).

(Legend 282-3)

The monster's popularity on the small screen, in addition to rendering Mary's Universal-styled creature a household figure, also worked to keep alive interest in the theme on both the large and the small screens. In the 1970s, the monster and his maker returned in Hammer's Frankenstein and the Monster from Hell (1972), Universal's Frankenstein: The True Story (1973), Fox's Young Frankenstein (1974), EMI's Flesh for Frankenstein (or the popular title Andy Warhol's Frankenstein) (1974), and Twentieth-Century Fox's The Rocky Horror Picture Show (1975), adapted from the stage version, The Rocky Horror

Show (1973).

Whereas the Hammer film represented a continuation of its by now own mythic cycle, focussing on the evil exploits of Baron Frankenstein, as played by Peter Cushing, Universal's 1973 film promised a return to Mary Shelley's novel. Frankenstein: The True Story "was, as its title proclaims, a serious attempt to get away from the melodramatics of terror by accenting the inner torments and the bond between creator and creature" (La Valley 279). But as I have already noted, promises of fidelity to the 'true' story are very rarely kept in the world of film. Indeed, the true story of the title seems suspiciously close -- not to the novel-- but to Whale's Bride of Frankenstein. The film opens with a prologue and a Victorian setting, highly derivative of the prologue of Whale's film, and, rather than enact the 'true' story of Frankenstein, it instead enacts fictional events in the lives of the characters with whom Mary Shelley was in contact during the summer of 1816. Like Whale, director Jack Smight pairs the characters of the 'historical' prologue with the characters of the film proper: Henry Clerval is Lord Byron, Elizabeth is Mary Shelley, Victor Frankenstein is Percy Shelley, and, in a radical departure from the novel, Dr. Polidori plays himself. The changes continue: Byron/Henry Clerval literally becomes the brains behind artificial creation when, after his sudden death, Shelley/Victor transplants his

brain into the monster; Dr. Polidori, "creates a chemical womb and hatches Prima, a flawless woman" (Tropp 137); and, in an ending more indebted to the nineteenth-century play The Man and the Monster than to the novel, creator and created die in an avalanche (Tropp 134, La Valley 280). The "one thread that helps hold the movie together," explains Tropp, "is colored by the relationship between Monster making and sexuality. As Polidori's 'womb' and the fate of Frankenstein and his once beautiful creature suggest, the sexuality in this version is homosexuality" (138). In his interpretation of the novel, Smight not only exploits the homoeroticism latent in Victor's creating a man for himself -- a theme first made explicit in the 1964 homosexual film, Angelic Frankenstein -- but also stresses, via Polidori, man's womb envy. Both ideas, I would argue, are examined by Mary but with an indirectness and subtlety lacking in the film. Regardless of the film's title, viewers of this "true story" are being offered Smight's Frankenstein -- not Mary's. And as if the title alone were not sufficient to authenticate the story, when the film was released on television, the prologue was omitted only to be replaced with an equally deceptive 'authenticating' device: James Mason introduced the movie with an educational lecture, given over the grave of Mrs. Shelley (Tropp 134). In light of the liberties taken in this film, it is somehow fitting that the story begins only after focusing on the death of

the author.

Liberty-taking is also the hallmark of Paul Morrissey's Andy Warhol's Frankenstein. A tribute to Andy Warhol after he was shot by Valerie Solanas in 1968, the film was intended, claimed Morrissey, to be "a kind of exorcism for Andy and all the people who are crippled and haunted by some nut case" (quoted by Nestrick 311). Like Fisher before him, Morrissey exploits the public's capacity to be 'entertained' by the splatter film, providing generous helpings of impaled organs and decapitated victims all set in a framework of incest, voyeurism and necrophilia. More in line with Artaud and his Theatre of Cruelty than with Mary, "Morrissey," as Tropp explains, "is violating our outer shell of respectability, testing the limits of our tolerance, and playing with the sexual appeal of violence that keeps the audience peering through its fingers at the action" (140). Powerfully manipulative, the film works on the principle of excess, accenting that excess through the use of 3-D imaging. But while "both spoofing and paying homage to a failed theatrical experiment of the '50s, the 3-D process accentuates the gore, involves us, only to alienate us" (La Valley 282). The 3-D images, Tropp adds, offer the "technological counterfeit of 'realism,'" keeping "the viewer at a distance and mak[ing] the sadism more acceptable, while providing an easy escape -- when things got too grisly many members of the audience removed their

glasses and transformed the butchery into an eye-wrenching blur" (140). But the 3-D process functions in yet another way, and it is with respect to this function that Morrissey draws attention to the self-reflexivity inherent in Frankenstein films. This film, unlike any of the films mentioned thus far, not only exploits the relationship between Victor's animating and film's animation, but also demands of its viewers an active participation in the animating. The 3-D

demonstrates more clearly that the audience, like the scientist, has the capacity to detach itself from the human significance of the proceedings when they are presented through the 'sanitizing' technological medium. The same thing happened in the novel during the construction of the Monster, when Frankenstein could 'procrastinate his feelings of affection' in order to 'torture the living animal to animate the lifeless clay.'

(Tropp 143)

Now the audience itself takes part in the experiment: like Victor, we can, choose to use technology (in this instance 3-D glasses) to bring the images to life. But in doing so we become willing accomplices to Morrissey's experiment, not to Mary's. The novel, by way of the frame narrator, asks its readers to be Victor's and science's judge -- to "deduce an apt moral" (E 75); the film, in order to work, not only denies any detached judging but also implicates any would-be jurors. Thus, by implicating us in the new technology, Morrissey offers a "technological Monster" who is "a

magnified image of ourselves" (Tropp 156).

In direct opposition to Morrissey's interpretation of the novel, is Mel Brooks' humorously parodic handling of the myth in Young Frankenstein. Although the film, in its opening credits, claims to be "Based on the characters in the novel 'Frankenstein' by Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley," it, instead, owes more to Whale's Frankenstein series than to the actual novel. Even this opening credit recalls the 1931 film in which Whale credits his source -- in patriarchal terms -- to Mrs. Percy B. Shelley. Brooks' choice of names recalls with critical difference (now Percy no longer figures as source of Mary's identity) the earlier film. Throughout the film, Brooks recalls both formally and thematically the 'classic' Frankenstein films. Filmed in black and white, Young Frankenstein readily evokes the atmosphere and visual texture of the earlier films. But at the same time that he incorporates the techniques of these early films, Brooks also playfully satirizes them. Parodying Hollywood's penchant for using wipes to signal shifts in time and space, Brooks not only uses the traditional vertical wipe but also incorporates horizontal and even diagonal wipes. Similarly, Brooks carries to extremes the Hollywood pre-1930 convention of iris-ing in and out of scenes, by using an iris that is heart-shaped. He uses his musical score in the same manner, as he not only echoes the Romantic/melodramatic score of the early films

but also exposes their, now outdated because highly contrived, reliance on changes in the musical score to signal changes in the action. But it is from recognizing the old behind the new that much of the humour stems.

Brooks, when interviewed in The True Story of Frankenstein (An Everyman/BBC Wales Production 1986), spoke candidly about the Frankenstein film classics and his decision to create the comedy, Young Frankenstein:

It [the Frankenstein film cycle] had such a profound emotional effect on me that when we were going to do it -- I knew -- I did it -- part of it was a catharsis for me to make it funny so I would never have those terrible dreams that had been so real about monsters killing us and taking us away.

(True Story 1987)

What Brooks offers here as a personal explanation for deploying parody is, in fact, an explanation shared by other parodists. Many artists, argues Hutcheon, "have openly claimed that the ironic distance afforded by parody has made imitation a means of freedom, even in the sense of exorcizing personal ghosts -- or, rather, enlisting them in their own cause" (35). The ghosts Brooks seeks to exorcize, however, are not uniquely his. Indeed, for the parody to work (and worked it has) the audience must share with Brooks an underlying awareness of the target films. The proof that such a collective haunting or "cultural homogeneity" (Hutcheon 79) exists with respect to film images of

Frankenstein is the tremendous popular success of Young Frankenstein.

At the same time, because of the repetition of the classic Frankenstein film images -- albeit in a new and humorous context -- Brooks' film works to conserve and reinforce the very images it seeks to defuse. Consequently, younger members of the audience are introduced to the 'classic' images of the story (as filtered through Brooks) and older audience members are reminded, by Brooks' re-presenting of Whale's images, of the Frankenstein films of the '30s, '40s and '50s. But those images, I stress again, are recycled images of films, not of the novel. Brooks may present his monster "Old Zipperneck" in an attempt to exorcize his childhood fear of the creature with the "knobs" as he humorously termed the electrodes (True Story), but viewers still see, paradoxically because of difference, the old monster behind this one. Similarly, Brooks may play up for all its worth the creation scene, but he does so using the original Strickfaden equipment of the first Whale film. Yet neither monster nor spectacular creation scene derive from the novel.

Since parody works on the principle of recognizing the 'old' in a new context, it not only reinforces the older films but also tends to lend to them an air of pseudo-authority. They come to be seen as the "originals" against which Brooks' film works. But do viewers confuse the

original films with the novel as originator of the films? I believe they do. The extent of that confusion will, of course, vary depending on a viewer's familiarity with the novel, but, because of film's power to 'fix' images so forcefully, even viewers familiar with the novel will experience a certain amount of confusion over what stems from the novel and what stems from the films. The humour in Young Frankenstein, after all, stems from a viewer's awareness of filmic adaptations of the novel rather than from an awareness of the novel itself. Thus, what can very easily result from parodies such as Brooks' is a false familiarity with the novel: viewers who get the numerous "in-jokes" may conflate their knowledge of Frankenstein films with their knowledge of the novel, and eventually come to see the two as synonymous. And young viewers, unaware of either the earlier films or the novel, might possibly mistake the images Brooks re-presents for images from the original. The latter, they could understandably believe, must be the basis for the former. But such things as lightning storms and gothic castles, normal and A. B. normal brains, hunchbacked lab assistants, and 'brides' with zig-zag hairdos have no basis in the novel. They have, however, because of their numerous appearances in Frankenstein films become inextricably linked to the Frankenstein myth. It is the power of film to influence anyone unfamiliar with the novel that lies behind the following question. After

learning that I was working on Frankenstein, a third-year university student once asked: "Frankenstein, ... was it real? I mean did it really happen, or was it only a movie?" Although an extreme case of con-fusing 'fact' with film fiction, the question does nonetheless point out the pervasive influence of film.

Indeed, it was the "profound emotional effect" of Frankenstein films which inspired Young Frankenstein. To achieve that catharsis he sought, Brooks, rather than re-write the Whale series, offers a continuation of the Frankenstein myth by focusing on the life of young Frankenstein, the grandson of the infamous Baron Frankenstein. Frederick may deny his past, may even pronounce his surname "Fronkensteen" in an attempt to escape the past, but audiences know from the opening scene -- of his grandfather's coffin -- that Frederick "is a Frankenstein and they're all alike." Brooks' humorous portrait of an artificer as a young man traces Frederick's development from sceptical man of science to mad scientist to benevolent father. Along the way, Frederick not only learns to accept his past but manages to re-write it. Through the power of love, in addition to some help from a brain transference experiment, Frederick transforms his creature into an eloquent orator (more in keeping with Mary's creature than Whale's), who settles down to married life complete with the morning perusal of The Wall Street

Journal.

Yet for all its light-heartedness and humorous "in-jokes" ("Pardon me boy is this the Transylvania Station?" asks Frederick), the film does seriously look at society's values and, in this way, Brooks, like Mary, asks some probing questions. The role of science and technology, for instance, is examined when the villagers argue that scientists "say they're working for us when what they really want is to rule the world." The same questioning exists in the novel when Victor explains to Walton that he wanted to create a new race of beings -- but a race which would bless him as their creator (E 97). Similarly, like Victor's in the novel, Frederick's experiments are sexual in nature. Brooks, of course, could play up the novel's sexual undertones, or what he admits is man's "womb envy" (True Story), but he does so in a way which is compatible with the novel. Victor, with "unrelaxed and breathless eagerness," pursued "nature to her hiding places" (E 98); while Frederick wanted to "penetrate into the very womb of impervious nature herself." He does so only after his prudish fiancée has spurned his amorous pre-nuptial advances. Thus his experiment can be seen as an attempt to sublimate his own repressed sexual drives. Frederick's monster, raised from the very same operating table on which Frederick and his voluptuous lab assistant would later make love (a visual reminder of the sexual nature of the

experiment), embodies that "monstrous desire" implicit in the earliest Frankenstein films and the novel itself. But rather than murder Elizabeth, as he does in the novel, this monster kidnaps Victor's fiancée, and -- in a great visual gag -- when we next see her, she is coiffed with the Elsa Lanchester zig-zag hairstyle of Bride of Frankenstein.

Brooks concludes this scene both humorously and intelligently, given the sexual nature of both Victor's and Frederick's experiments. Frederick's monster as the proxy lover does what Frederick could not, and, as the scene fades out, we are left with Elizabeth's ecstatic singing of "Sweet mystery of life at last I've found you."

Brooks, in his treatment of science, however, diverges from all his sources, as, unlike Mary and Whale, he offers the possibility that creator and created can meet and benefit from one another. The idea is treated humorously since, after the brain transference experiment, what Frederick receives from the monster in exchange for part of his brain is the monster's sexual prowess -- his "enormous schvannschtucker" (Tropp 153). Yet the underlying message that science can indeed be a life-giving force Brooks makes strikingly clear. Unlike the novel and the various films in which science's monster only brings disaster, Brooks' monster or "old zipperneck" has settled down and, like Herman Munster, has become a complacent family man.

Brooks' Young Frankenstein, with its black-and-

white photography, its various wipes and irises and its reworking of classic Frankenstein film images, is an affectionate tribute to the past. Because of its humour, its optimistic conclusion and its parodic handling of its sources, it is also, as Brooks hoped it would be, if not a release from at least a re-viewing of that past.

As in Young Frankenstein, part of the humour of The Rocky Horror Picture Show depends on the audience's knowledge of early Hollywood films. The film is a musical adaptation of Mary's creation myth, reminiscent of the nineteenth-century burlesques, and, at the same time, a humorous parody of science-fiction films of the earlier part of the twentieth century. From the film's opening number, director Jimmy Sharman identifies which films of the past it is spoofing. These include such "Late Night Double Features" as: King Kong, The Invisible Man, The Day the Earth Stood Still, Forbidden Planet, It Came From Outer Space, and The Day of the Triffids.

Dr. Fronkensteen of Brooks' film has been replaced by Dr. Frank-n-Furter, Ygor by Riff Raff, and Transylvania has now become a foreign planet inhabited by trans-sexuals. Focusing on the latent homoeroticism of the novel Frankenstein, Sharman offers yet another interpretation of the novel. In his satiric treatment of the Frankenstein myth, the science-fiction genre, and those saccharin boy-meets-girl teenage films of the '50s, Sharman takes an

irreverent look at everything from modern science (including space travel and artificial creation) to sexual mores and strictly defined gender roles. Dr. Frank-n-Furter models himself after Fay Wray and Esther Williams; strait-laced Brad finds himself in the arms of another man (Dr. Frank-n-Furter in drag) and enjoying it; and Brad's fiancée, Janet, like Madeline Kahn in Young Frankenstein, finds the creature, Rocky Horror, more sexually satisfying than her boyfriend. Yet "for all its subversive sexuality," La Valley quite rightly argues,

the film ... is remarkably free from the disturbing edge these images should suggest. The tone is always outlandishly comic and never really menacing.... The distancing is of course intentional, consistent with the comic, outlandish, and campy tone that is the 'liberated' posture of both the movie and its music.

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A popular cult film -- one which elicits audience participation by way of vocal interaction, costuming and props -- Rocky Horror not only represents another re-visioning of the myth but also the persistent appeal the myth offers to young audiences.

That appeal to young viewers is also evident in the frequent appearances of the Frankenstein monster in comic books and animated features. Indeed, the comic book history of the monster is almost as lengthy as the film history.

Since the inception of comic books in the 1930s, the Frankenstein monster or theme has appeared close to one thousand times (Legend 313). The earliest visualization of what would later become the standard comic book monster occurred in 1939 in Dick Briefer's Rex Dexter, Interplanetary Adventurer (Legend 307). It featured a "fiendish artificial man [with] a squared head, straight black hair and bangs drooping over the high forehead, sunken cheeks, a wrinkled mouth, and two electrodes at the top of the head" (Glut 307). The striking resemblance to Boris Karloff's monster most certainly suggests Briefer's indebtedness to the Whale films of the '30s, and not to the novel. Yet it was this image, with minor variations through the years, which was reinforced in young readers' minds. Whether featured in 'serious' comic books or satiric ones (again a pairing of serious and comic versions of the myth), the monster always appeared with the same physical features: a flat head, a high forehead, two electrodes, a broad chest, and oversized, heavy-soled boots. Thus, whether through comic books, television or films, audiences of all ages could not help but be exposed, in varying degrees, at one time or another, to the same Frankenstein monster.

That exposure continues in the '80s, as filmmakers and even rock musicians rework Mary's myth. In 1985, capitalizing on the popularity of Jennifer Beals (star of the hit, Flash Dance) and Sting, Franc Roddam released

The Bride -- a modern remake of Bride of Frankenstein. The same year saw the comedy spoof, Transylvania 6-5000, a film whose title recalls the big-band era of the '30s and '40s (and that era's films), but whose stars -- Ed Begley Jr. of St. Elsewhere, and Jeff Goldblum of The Fly and The Big Chill -- situate the story in the 1980s. Also released in 1985 was the comedy, Weird Science, an adolescent male wish-fulfilment film, starring Kelly Lebrock (The Woman in Red) as the perfect female, created by and supposedly at the command of two computer whiz kids. Even the popular films Short Circuit (1986) and Robocop (1987) represent reworkings of the Frankenstein myth, since they both examine the ability of science to create artificial life. On the small screen, Pepsi Cola, drawing on both the popularity of these teen films and on teen idols, released its 1987 commercial "Modern Love." In this reworking of Weird Science which in turn was a reworking of Bride of Frankenstein, David Bowie, with some help from a bottle of Pepsi, creates Pepsi's equivalent to Kelly Lebrock -- Tina Turner. Finally, in his 1987 video Doing It All For My Baby, Huey Lewis brings the myth full circle by offering to viewers, once again, images of those Whale classics, which made Frankenstein's monster a twentieth-century commonplace. Back in a starring role is the Karloffian monster who shares the stage with such other high-profile figures as the hunchback assistant, the Elsa Lanchester-style bride and the

Strickfadenesque laboratory apparatuses. The video works, as do all the other recent adaptations of Mary's novel, because, as Philip Strick so aptly puts it, "this myth, as it has now become, is a myth to which we are all heir, which we all know extremely well; it is part of our growing up" (True Story). But it is, however, a myth, which, like Victor's creature, is a composite being. It is part novel, part play, and part film, and, as Victor would learn, once animated -- either by the spark of nature or the spark of the carbon arcs -- there would be no containing it.

I began this chapter in search of sightings of Mary's "hideous progeny" and quickly discovered that I need not look far to find him. Indeed, at times, it seemed that he found me. From his presence in The Globe and Mail article to his starring role in recent rock videos (Alice Cooper has just released "I Was a Teenage Frankenstein"), it seems that there can be no escaping him. Indeed, from the earliest dramatic adaptation of the novel, in 1823, to the present, the myth continues to be visualized. Presently Mary's creation can be found in plays, films -- both experimental and commercial --, television, comics, cartoons, advertisements, political cartoons and even adult magazines. In addition, the myth is not confined to one culture, as it has been made available through various literary or filmic adaptations to almost every nation in the world.

Once visualized, the monster not only became a star-

vehicle for actors but also quickly became confused in the public's mind with the name of his maker. Such a confusion occurred very early in the history of the myth, and continues to occur. Today, the word "Frankenstein" not only evokes the image of a monster, but of a particular monster. With minor variations, the monster we readily associate with Frankenstein is the one made famous by Boris Karloff in the Whale/Universal films. What is strange about this naming and particularizing of the monster is that it runs counter to Mary's own treatment of the monster in the novel. She chose not to name her monster and was rather vague in her description of it. Thus, in the novel, much of the horror of the monster was dependent upon what readers imagined. Mary gave the outlines and left the shading in to her readers. But once named (even if erroneously) and once made concrete, the monster loses a certain amount of its power. At the same time, however, he gains a new kind of power, and it is with respect to this new power that film versions of the novel have an advantage over stage versions. Film, after all, fixes images and gives them a permanence which the stage can never match. Once visualized on film, the monster's physical appearance is the same for audiences today as it was for audiences of the '30s and '40s. It is from this very permanence that a new power emerges: the celluloid monster has the ability to keep coming back. And it is essential, I believe, in realizing the full potential

of this power that the same monster (with of course minor cosmetic changes) return. Otherwise, the monster would fail to terrorize. It is in his refusing to die that the monster truly has the power to elicit fear. By re-presenting the Karloffian-style monster, films, videos, and other visual media not only tap into this fear but also work to keep it alive. The Globe and Mail image that haunted me is the same image that haunted Mel Brooks: a broad-chested creature with a squarish head, a high forehead, and electrodes on either side of his neck. It is this image that Brooks' parody both evokes and seeks to contain, and it is this image which, in remaining unchanged, continues to haunt us.

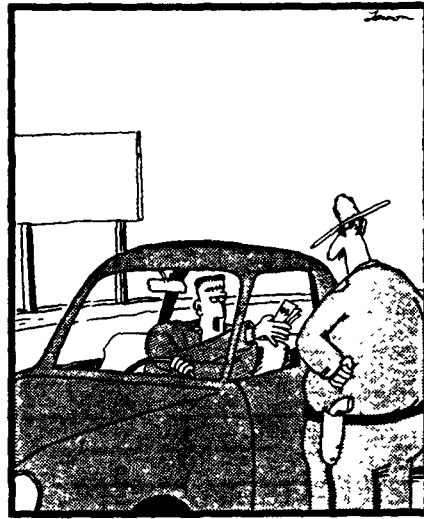
Another popular image in Frankenstein films and one which acquired a similar permanence is that of Peter Cushing as the evil scientist. The two major Frankenstein film cycles, the Whale/Universal and the Fisher/Hammer, with their different focuses, however, represent two halves of a whole. Whereas the former makes immortal the Promethean rebel, the creature who defies his creator, the latter immortalizes the Promethean plasticator, the victorious creator of life. But what these two cycles offer as separate entities Mary unites into one whole. Writing at the start of the Industrial Revolution, Mary recognized the double nature of progress. She does not so much condemn science's ability to make advancements -- Victor does after all succeed --, as she issues a warning to humankind

concerning its relationship to the new technology. The doppelganger motif which runs through the novel suggests that Victor and his creature are inextricably linked and vitally dependent upon one another.²⁰ So it is with man and his machines. Thus, it is perhaps not surprising that the Frankenstein myth experiences a resurgence whenever there are technological or scientific breakthroughs. And it is not surprising for this same reason that, early in the history of film adaptations of the novel, the myth was presented in a contemporary setting. Film after all is a part of the new technology. At the same time, because film animates images, it also mimics creation and is itself a Frankensteinian creator. Not surprising given this inherent self-reflexivity, Frankenstein films highlight the creation scene. In fact, the tower laboratory very quickly became the standard for films to come. To this day, a laboratory equipped with spectacular electrical gadgetry is expected in a Frankenstein film.

Also part of the Frankenstein tradition in both filmic and dramatic adaptations is the presence of the doctor's assistant, and, whether he goes by Fritz or Ygor, he is readily identifiable by his physical deformity. But his hunchback and his inability to communicate on any but the most basic of levels, because they tend to situate him somewhere between man and animal on the evolutionary scale, work to deflect much of the viewers' blame or disgust away

from the doctor. Because it is Fritz who steals the abnormal brain, and it is Fritz who enjoys searching for body parts, viewers tend to associate the loathsome aspects of the experiment with him and the more sublime aspects of creating life with Victor. Yet there is no mediator in the novel, nor is there an abnormal brain. The creature, Mary makes clear, is not innately evil; he learns from those around (or not around) him the true nature of cruelty. What is telling is the the exclusion of this "apt moral" in Frankenstein films.

At the same time that filmmakers exclude key aspects of the novel, they also make telling additions. Although Mary could not "bring herself to embody woman as fully monstrous" (Jacobus 103), filmmakers since Whale's Bride of Frankenstein of 1935, have released a variety of Bride films, ranging in effect from mildly to overtly sexist. Consequently, the bride -- originally an absent presence in the novel -- is today as much a part of the myth as her anxious groom. But any awareness of the actual physical appearance of the creature's bride stems entirely from film versions of the novel. Unlike the creature, who is given a limited physical description, the bride, because she was never completed, was not physically described. Indeed, she never existed. Yet as the following cartoon illustrates, (and depends on), there is a public awareness of the existence of the bride:



The bribe of Frankenstein

It seems then that Victor is not the only one who indulges in creating. Pop culture, particularly in its treatment of Frankenstein, can be equally creative.

Creativity in the form of additions and exclusions is of course not unexpected in dramatic or filmic adaptations of a novel. But what is somewhat unexpected with the novel Frankenstein is the extent to which certain additions and exclusions have 'stuck' in the public's mind. We 'know' in advance of reading the novel not only how the monster was created but what he looks like; we also 'know' that he had a bride, and some of us even know what she looks like. We also know, primarily because of the endless remakes of Frankenstein films or because of the monster's presence in everything from television late-shows to the latest music video, that, whatever the medium of visualization, the

monster is likely to be found. As he did with Victor in the novel, the creature refuses to leave us alone. What interests me and what will be the focus of the next chapter is the effect of this omnipresence on readers of the novel.

Chapter Two

Surprised by Cinema

There are dreams as distinct as actual experiences, so distinct that for some time after waking we do not realize that they were dreams at all; others, which are ineffably faint, shadowy and blurred; in one and the same dream, even, there may be some parts of extra-ordinary vividness alternating with others so indistinct as to be almost wholly elusive.... There are dreams which leave us quite cold, others in which every affect makes itself felt - pain to the point of tears, terror so intense as to wake us, amazement, delight, and so on. Most dreams are forgotten soon after waking; or they persist throughout the day, the recollection becoming fainter and more imperfect as the day goes on.

Sigmund Freud on dreams

The movie theater is the psychoanalytic clinic of the average worker's daylight dream.

Parker Tyler

One goes to a horror film in order to have a nightmare.

Bruce Kavin

In the preceding chapter, I outlined a partial history of the various visualizations of Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, focusing in particular on the film history of her myth. Indeed, from the earliest days of the moving picture, film and Frankenstein entered into what history has shown to be a lasting relationship. This ongoing relationship between film and Frankenstein has led one critic to claim that

the myth of Frankenstein and his monster is also largely the myth of film itself. For film -- the medium that presents the monster, and not solely the monster -- is an artifice, a technology that imitates life so successfully it almost, at times, seems a larger and more capacious version of life....From the first, silent films, in which photographs of men and women and machines seemed to move, seemed suddenly and miraculously to become capable of a simulacrum of life itself, the myth of Mary Shelley's monster was realized.

(McConnell "Born in Fire" 236-237)

Emerging in the second half of the nineteenth century -- a period which Jean-Louis Comolli has called "a sort of frenzy of the visible" (743) -- film came to represent an extension and ultimate instance of "a truly blind confidence in the visible, the hegemony, gradually acquired, of the eye over the other senses, the taste and need a society has to put itself in spectacle" (Daney in Comolli 746). "Cinema, Daney continues,

postulated that from the 'real' to the visual and from the visual to its filmed reproduction a same truth was infinitely reflected, without distortion or loss. In a world where 'I see' is readily used for 'I understand,' one conceives that such a dream had nothing fortuitous about it, the dominant ideology - that which equates the real with the visible - having every interest in encouraging it.

(quoted by Comolli 746)

Operating on the principle of retinal persistence, film is, in fact, an optical illusion (and a delusion), offering only an imitation of life. Nonetheless, because of its ability to re-present a "more capacious version of life" and its ability to capture 'reality,' film deludes viewers into thinking that it can "show the truth" (Belsey 158). This power to manipulate viewers extends beyond film's actual sphere of activity into our day-to-day lives and, more to my own purposes, to the reading experience itself:

The material culture [artifacts such as clothes, hair fashion, manners of speech] is directly affected by the images created and fostered by the movies, for they provide a visual shorthand with which we are able to identify individuals or groups. Thus, gangsters are Italian, all Frenchmen (or women) are amorous by nature ... all Englishmen are befuddled and well-bred. These images are commonplace in the popular culture as a whole, but they take on added significance in the movies because of the strong visual reinforcement. Thus, when we read about similar stereotypical characters, or listen to the rare radio drama, we visualize them in cinematic terms. Even if we are not frequent movie goers, the movie-made images are so powerful that they

form a cornerstone in the mind. The movies
are always with us.

(Jowett and Linton 112)¹

Indeed, the influence of the cinema has even extended into the realm of reader-response theory. Such well-known reader-response theorists as Wolfgang Iser and Stanley Fish both use cinematic terms to describe the reading response, prompting Carole Berger to argue that "Their work is another indication of the extent to which our own experience of films has altered, often unconsciously, the way we write, read, and think about literature" (144). Fish, for example, in his "Literature in the Reader" describes the reading experience as follows: "It is as if the slow-motion camera with an automatic stop action effect were recording our linguistic experiences and presenting them to us for viewing" (NLH 128).

Yet although critics claim that the movies "have left us a characteristic imagery now thoroughly embedded in our cultures" (Tudor 13), or refer to the reading experience in cinematic terms, very few examine the reading experience in light of film's influence. Christopher Small, writing on Frankenstein, argues that "the book itself is startlingly new to every fresh generation of readers -- although, in another way, ... familiar to them before they begin to read" (13), but he fails to comment in any depth on the effect of such familiarity. Then there is the view of film's

influence typified by the following report by a GCE O level examiner:

most candidates appeared to know Macbeth well. Some, however, were handicapped by having seen a film version candidates should remember that it is Shakespeare's text which is being examined.

(Holderness 183)

That students already 'know' something about Macbeth (even more about Frankenstein) is surely not a handicap but an inevitable consequence of our culture's visualizations of certain texts. Aware of such a knowledge, this examiner seems to require of present-day students of literature that they eliminate from their memory all traces of existing filmic afterimages and return, it would seem, to an original state of reading innocence. In effect, this examiner is attempting to ignore the existence and effect of what Fish calls the "interpretive community." Yet the very presence of student confusion over which details stem from Shakespeare's actual texts and which stem from various film versions of them only serves as a reminder that an interpretive community does, in fact, exist.²

It is this confusion which undoubtedly led to the O level examiner's conclusion that students were handicapped. In a way, I am inclined to agree with the examiner that students are handicapped but only because, as any golfer will argue, a "handicap" is not a limitation but an

"advantage conferred on a competitor to make him or her more nearly equal" (Oxford 452). Students who have seen a filmed version of a text do later come to the text with a set of shared visual memories because they have all seen the same film. This is not to claim that interpretations of films will be exactly the same for each student. But, at the same time, I do not believe that students will necessarily bring their interpretations of particular visuals or images to the literature which originated the film. For reasons I will offer in this chapter, the filmic memories or afterimages we share are predominantly visual rather than interpretive in orientation, deriving their potency from the nature of film itself. It is, I would argue, this primacy of the visual which handicaps viewers, enabling, as a consequence, generalizations about film's influence on the reading experience.

In addition to this handicap, however, students are also handicapped by the effects of the shift in thinking which has occurred as our culture moved from being word-centered to image-centered (Postman 61). Just as there was a shift in thinking caused by the advent of the alphabet and the printed word (see Ong, Goody, McLuhan), there has been a shift in thinking since the advent of what Daniel Boorstein calls the "graphic revolution" (cited by Postman 74). In a "society where the visual media (movies and especially television) have become the dominant form of communication

... the authentic, public 'visual experience' becomes more important than the more personal, internal 'mind images' created by written material" (Jowett and Linton 105). Once the expression 'do I have to draw you a picture?' implied a limited intelligence; now, because of the hegemony of the visual, seeing is indeed the basis for believing (Postman 74).

Similar views on the influence of the visual on the reader were once voiced by one of Mary Shelley's contemporaries. Writing in this case on dramatic performances of literary texts, Charles Lamb, nonetheless, offered insightful and, in many ways, still topical comments on the effects of stage visualizations on the reading experience. In fact, areas which he examines not only apply well to film but also serve to introduce many of the ideas which will be the concern of this chapter.

I can no longer think what I want to think.
My thoughts have been replaced by moving
images.

Duhamel on film

Contrary to the old saying that 'seeing is
believing,' the sight actually destroys
the faith.

Charles Lamb

In his essay, "On the Tragedies of Shakspeare [sic] Considered With Reference to their Fitness for Stage Representation," Lamb, anticipating such present-day semioticians of theatre as Keir Elam, begins his analysis by focusing on what he variously calls "signs of passions," "counterfeit appearance," or "symbols of emotion" (114, 118). Keenly aware of the dominance of the visual, he first argues that

things aimed at in theatrical representation are to arrest the spectator's eye upon the form and the gesture and so to gain a more favourable hearing to what is spoken: it is not what the character is, but how he looks; not what he says, but how he speaks it....and so contagious the counterfeit appearance of any emotion is that let the words be what they will, the look and tone shall it carry off.

(117)

Adding to what he calls the performance's "sense of distinctness" is the "inevitable consequence of imitating everything to make all things natural" (129). In effect, what Lamb has recognized is the difference in the signifying process between the printed text and theatrical representations. And, allowing for the fact that film endlessly re-presents exactly the same performance unaffected by audience interaction, what Lamb says about theatre can also be applied to film. Both media present a fiction which "is there with a specificity which the printed

text alone can never hope to match" (Scholes Film Theory 392), and both confront audiences "with a sign tightly tied to a specific referent" (Scholes Film Theory 398). But, Scholes adds, the "price for this intensity is a reduction in the interpretive richness of the text" (392). Lamb, over a century and a half ago, not only reached the same conclusion; he also introduced an idea which is integral to my thesis. Referring to a tragedy which starred Siddons and Kemble, Lamb adds:

It seemed to embody and realize conceptions which had hitherto assumed no distinct shape. But dearly do we pay all our life after for this juvenile pleasure, this sense of distinctness. When the novelty is past, we find to our cost that instead of realizing an idea, we have only materialized a fine vision to the standard of flesh and blood....How cruelly this operates upon the mind, to have its free conceptions thus cramped and pressed down to the measure of a strait-lacing actuality, may be judged from that delightful sensation of freshness with which we turn to those plays of Shakspeare [sic] which have escaped being performed.

(114-5, my emphasis)

By claiming that we pay all our life after, Lamb is actually arguing that these materialized visions, these afterimages of flesh and blood persist long after the actual performance and remain with us when we return to the text. It is, he specifies, only those plays which have not been performed that are untainted by memories of stage performances. The same claims can be made -- even more so -- for Frankenstein.

Further, when Lamb isolates Hamlet's famous "To be or not to be," arguing that it has been "so handled and pawed about by declamatory boys and men, and torn so inhumanely from its living place and principle of continuity in the play, till it has become a perfect dead member" (115), what he says about the soliloquy can also be said about Frankenstein. Endlessly re-presented in films, advertising, cartoons and videos, Mary's monster has also become a dead member.

Indeed, this monster is not (and can never really be) the creature as he is presented in the text. He is, after all, the monster as James Whale, Jack Pierce and Boris Karloff envisioned him. Mary's vague -- I believe deliberately so -- description of the creature presents "to the fancy just so much of the external appearances as to make us feel that we are among flesh and blood" (Lamb 129). But, once the creature is visualized in film and visualized so specifically (compare, for instance, Whale's style of visualization to the impressionistic treatment of the space creature in the recent film, Alien), it is almost impossible to read Frankenstein without seeing this image peering back at us from the pages. The effect of this materialized vision is, as I will show, more complex than a loss in "that delightful sensation of freshness" (Lamb 115).

Lamb, in addition to introducing the concepts of specificity and familiarity and their role in the signifying process, also contributes three other ideas which are

particularly appropriate to my discussion of Frankenstein. The first of these concerns the effects on theatre-goers of the star system -- a system which was in operation during Lamb's life and which, as Holderness comments, is still in operation in present-day productions of Shakespeare's plays. The "personalities" of modern day Shakespearean stars, explains Holderness, are "so subdued to what they work in that they appear to be characters from Shakespeare" (198, his emphasis). But it is Lamb and not the modern critic who sheds light on the effects of such a system on the reader. After recognizing the immediacy of drama, Lamb adds:

But such is the instantaneous nature of the impressions which we take in at the eye and ear at a playhouse, compared with the slow apprehension often times of the understanding in reading, that we are apt not only to sink the play-writer in the consideration but even to identify in our minds in a perverse manner, the actor with the character which he presents.

(114)

He concludes that it is "difficult for a frequent playgoer to disembararrass the idea of Hamlet from the person and voice of Mr. K [John Philip Kemble]. We speak of Lady Macbeth, while we are in reality thinking of Mrs. S. [Sarah Siddons]" (114, my emphasis). The same con-fusing of the actor with the character applies to film actors. Even today, close to sixty years after the film's release, we may speak of Frankenstein but we picture Boris Karloff.

I think the key to Lamb's conclusion is his phrase "the idea of Hamlet." By linking "idea" to the corporeal presence of Kemble or Siddons, Lamb is stressing the representational aspect of the term. An "idea," as Webster defines it, "exists in the mind as a representation" and is "equally applicable to a mental image or formulation of something seen or known" (563). Thus, playgoers (or moviegoers) who cannot "disembarrass" their idea or mental image of the actor playing the character from the character itself, return to the written text carrying with them a pre-set notion about the characters themselves. That notion -- one which concerns what a character looks like, acts like and sounds like -- can often be in direct opposition to the characterization offered by the written text. A striking example from Frankenstein is the film's presentation of an inarticulate monster. A reader who has this idea of the monster finds, however, quite a different creature in the novel. Not only can the monster speak -- an act which surely humanizes him -- but he can speak eloquently and persuasively (F 248). In fact, his are the last words spoken in the text.

In addition to recognizing theatre's power to provide potential readers with prescribed images of characters, Lamb also recognizes the effect of the exteriority of drama on the reading experience. In reference to Macbeth, Lamb briefly explains the changes

which result when a written text is performed -- changes which are inevitable given the nature of theatre. Theatre after all exists because of acts and actions. What we "see upon a stage," Lamb explains, "is body and bodily action," while "what we are conscious of in reading is almost exclusively the mind, and its movements" (126). In the theatre the "acts which [characters] do are comparatively everything; their impulses nothing" (123). This shift in focus from what a character thinks to what a character does results in the presentation of a different character, and it is, I believe, the idea of this character that a reader brings to the written text. With Frankenstein, however, the change is even more pronounced given film's fascination with movement. Indeed, the moving picture, as the early name for film tells us, was the raison d'être of film. Even today, we are reminded of film's obsession with movement by such familiar terms as the "movies," the "action or adventure film," and, of course, by that well-known expression, "lights, camera, action." Film exists, after all, because of animation, and, thus, it is somewhat fitting that it should become home to Frankenstein's creature.

The creature's move to the film medium, however, was not without certain changes. Foremost in significance was Whale's decision to present a monster denied the power of speech. What we remember, then, of the creature, either because of narrative and/or filmic afterimages is his

actions. Indeed, from the initial animation of the creature's hand to the chase scene which concludes the film, viewers see "body and bodily action." But what we receive from the novel is six chapters devoted to the monster, all of which offer insight into his motives. These motives, as I will show, are not only in direct opposition to the motives we infer from Whale's film -- motives which are more evanescent because subordinate to the acts themselves -- but take on added significance for the reader because of the opposition.

Part of the cause of this added significance stems from the reader's recognition of difference between what he or she already 'knows' and what the written text actually presents. Moreover, what the viewer knows is integrally related to the nature of film itself. Explains Holderness:

Through the intervention of the camera, which monitors what we see and therefore what we know, the film collects up meanings which may be lying around in the text, and streamlines them into one, single coherent interpretation which it fixes as inescapable. It arrests the play of possible meanings and presents its brilliant rectangle full of significance to and from a specific place, a single and at the same time inevitable point of view.

(184)

By streamlining the text into one fixed and inescapable interpretation, film endlessly re-presents to viewers the same visual shorthand of the text's narrative. This

shorthand is not only what the viewer retains but is -- primarily because of its abbreviated nature -- much easier to retain. Indeed, the plot structure of Frankenstein films has been variously abbreviated to such formulaic expressions as "the basic cycle of creation and destruction" (La Valley 245) or "the 'seek-it-out-and-destroy-it pattern" (Tudor 209). This pattern, Tudor adds, is reflected and reinforced by the very language of the horror film genre itself: "Evil ones are sought not searched out, destroyed not killed [cf Frankenstein Must Be Destroyed]; and, of course, they are its" (209, his emphasis). A formula such as this is, on its own, easier to remember than a complex narrative, but add to it the powerful effect of the visual images, and what results is a strong visual sense of the plot of Frankenstein. This superimposed or trans-textual narrative co-exists with Mary's novel, and its co-existence raises important questions about the reading response to novels which have been appropriated by the film or television media.

In addition to offering a "single basic horror narrative" (Tudor 209), Frankenstein films also use a particular mode of narration, one which Ellis terms "the historic mode" (59). This mode, he explains, is one in which

Events take place as though they came from nowhere. Events told in the historic mode

of narration are told by no one, they have no origin, no motivating intelligence.... Instead, the story unfolds: it seems as though reality is telling itself, almost unaware that it is being watched.... The film is always already complete, a record of something that predates the projection. The historic mode depends upon the fact that it has a story to tell, a story which is completed at the outset, yet unrolls as though it were in the present.

(60)

This mode -- one which relies not, in fact, on the "absence of narration" but on the "appearance of the absence of narration" -- is, Ellis adds, "one of the lynchpins of the notion of cinema-as-reality" (60). Reinforcing this notion is the temporal flow of film's images. The "film," explains Heath,

classically is always brought into time with its significant flow, its balance, its narrativisation; producing thereby its essential contemporariness -- constantly with you, for you, moving you with it in its narrative image.

(75)

Consequently, viewers of Frankenstein manipulated both by the historic mode of narration and by the film's essential contemporariness do not actually see the film as a story (indeed, moviegoers rarely refer to films as stories); rather, they are caught up in and taken up as subjects of (Heath 74) a series of events which unroll as if in the present. Thus, the bewildered student who once asked

"Frankenstein -- was it real or was it only a movie?" was perhaps not so much suffering from an inability to separate 'fact' from fiction but, rather, was suffering from the effects of film's ability to present fiction as fact. Adding to this ability to obscure its own fiction is film's power, because of the "constancy of the flow of images," to create a "binding coherence ... a unity of presentation, a stable memory" (Heath 76). These, of course, are all necessary if a film is to work, because film, unlike a novel, does not allow its viewers to control either the pace of the narrative or to flip back a few pages to go over material a second or third time. But that same stable memory, I would argue, lingers and can, for the reasons I have been outlining, be reactivated long after the actual viewing experience itself.

The consequence of such factors as film's ability to efface its own fiction, its "enormous concentration of visual imagery insistently signifying its own irreducible reality" (Hoderness 184) and its condensation of a text's possible meanings into a visual shorthand is a vividness and immediacy which, in many ways, approaches a type of secular immanence. Readers of Frankenstein are haunted either by their own memories of film versions of the novel or by collective (and collected) memories which circulate in narrative afterimages and persist in such visual media as advertising, rock videos and newspaper cartoons. Only

certain scenes or visuals, however, have reached this state of immanence, and it is those on which I will (re)focus now.

The play-bill amused me extremely, for, in the list of the dramatis personae, came "----", by Mr. T. P. Cook; this mode of naming the unnameable is rather good...

Mary Shelley

He has never had a name. The unenlightened call him 'Frankenstein,' confusing him with his creator. The less un-enlightened call him 'the monster,' confusing him with his popular reception by the villagers and the local constabulary. But none of us knows really, what to call him: knows, as it were, what name he would choose for himself, if he were given the choice. And that is ironic, for perhaps no creature of the last two hundred years of imagination has been more intricately involved with, more spectacularly crucified upon, the cross of language. But, as I say, he has never had a name.

Frank McConnell

Mr. Karloff's best make-up should not be permitted to pass from the screen. The Monster should become an institution, like Charlie Chan.

New York Times Review of
Bride of Frankenstein 1935

Although originally nameless and unnameable Mary's creature has, more than any other literary character, made a name for himself. He has indeed become an institution. He has been called "the Monster," and "Frankenstein" and has come to signify, usually in reference to the latter name, our fear of technology, of political insurgents, and our darker selves. Even critics of the novel seem unable to resist the temptation to name the unnameable. Martin Tropp, Donald Glut, and George Levine all refer to him as "the Monster", and, although Steven Florry may use the less judgmental term, "the Creature," he, like the others, still names Mary's creation when he offsets the term with the use of capitals.

Nonetheless, despite our various attempts to name him, the creature of the novel has never had a name. Indeed, Mary herself specifically states that the creature is "unnameable." Offering further comment on Mary's choice of words is the 1915 silent film by the Ocean Film Corporation. The film -- itself a type of visual criticism of the novel -- was entitled Life Without Soul. Such a title is particularly telling given Mary's decision not to name the creature and given the relationship which, according to tradition, exists between names and the soul. "Names," explains Barbara Walker, "were not only confused with souls," but, at one time, "words for 'name' were

virtually the same as words for 'soul'" (710). We can see, she adds, such a confusion in Latin, for example, with the synonyms, anima, nomen, and numen (708). Does Mary then call her creature "the unnameable" because he lives a "life without soul?" If so, then any naming of the creature, even the erroneous name "Frankenstein," results in a distorting of the text.

Further, since the "daemon," "devil," or "fiend" (terms which Victor uses) has no name, he is not only living a soulless existence but an existence which defies control. What cannot be named cannot be controlled. Victor may beg Walton to "swear that he [the creature] shall not live" (E 248) but, unless the devil's name is known, swearing, as any exorcist will attest, is futile.³ Perhaps, then, the various attempts to name the creature which persist today suggest that we are still trying to exorcise this demon.

Finally, when Victor says that he is "the miserable origin and author" (E 143) of the creature's being, he is only partly correct. True he "originates or gives existence" to the creature (Gilbert and Gubar 4), and, thus, in this sense, is an author. But there is another root to this term, and it is with respect to this root that Victor is mistaken. Etymologically, the term "author," as Walker explains, stems from the Christian and Brahman fathers' practice of giving their children their names "by speaking or sometimes writing them; hence the term 'author of my

being'" (710).⁴ Victor may be the creature's father, (and mother) but, as we learn, he does not name his child. Here, Mary's decision not to name the creature is particularly significant, given that her story concerns the absence of the mother in the creation process. Although traditionally Christian fathers spoke or wrote the child's name, "according to the Bible, infants were named by their mothers, not their fathers" (Walker 708). This practice, Walker explains, developed because "name-giving was often connected with food-giving" (708). In fact, a present-day reminder of this practice of conferring names when breast-feeding is the existence in France of a child's "nom de lait, a milk-name" (Walker 708). Whether or not Mary knew of this practice is today a matter for speculation; regardless of her motives, however, her text makes it clear that Victor fails to name his child. He may dream of a "mother" (E 102), compare his creature to a "mummy" (E 102) and even suffer from a type of post-partum depression (he experiences a "nervous fever" for "several months" after the 'birth' of his child E 105), but he is not, as the text makes clear, and, as the lack of food- and name-giving suggests, a mother to the creature. Indeed, Mary, as I will show in chapter three, presents a world in which mothers are conspicuously absent. And, contrary to what Whale and others have shown, this includes the absence of a mother for the creature's progeny.

All of these aspects of the novel, however, have been undercut, because the monster became -- much as the New York Times hoped he would -- an institution. Mr. Karloff's best make-up both did and did not pass from the screen, and today, as La Valley rightly argues, Boris Karloff is the "image inevitably evoked when we say 'Frankenstein' and the image against which we must work when we read Mary Shelley's novel" (262). Thus, the monster has been named on two levels: on a verbal level, he has been mistakenly named "Frankenstein"; and on a non-verbal level he has become a visual sign, something which is itself a form of naming, and something which also links the monster to the name "Frankenstein."

The persistent con-fusing by the "un-enlightened" of the monster with his maker has various repercussions for present-day readers of Frankenstein. First, and this occurs prior to the actual reading experience, readers always already know who the monster is. Once named, even erroneously, the creature loses a great amount of his power to frighten, because much of that power depends on his strangeness, his otherness. Names, after all, "give human beings power over what they name" (Ong 33), since what "cannot be named cannot be grasped; cannot be understood" (Ketterer 93). Moreover, in addition to knowing the monster's name, readers know -- and this knowledge diminishes his power even more -- what the monster looks

like. He has a scarred forehead, a flat-topped head covered with straight, black hair, a metal clip which holds the skull together, and two electrode plugs on the sides of his neck. He is broader and taller than the average man and, with his stiff legs and large, heavy boots, he moves with a "retarded motion" which is "by now the hallmark of any amateur comedian who wants to impersonate 'Frankenstein'" (La Valley 256). This image, unchanging as a name, also signals to us something about how the creature was brought to life. The electrodes, of course, signify the use of electricity in the animating process, a process which today has become a well-known aspect of the Frankenstein myth. But, as I have already stated, the novel is vague on the actual method of animation. Thus, present-day readers, who think that electricity sparked the creature into life, have, in all likelihood, acquired this information from film versions of the novel.

In fact, prior to 1915, adaptations of the novel (filmic and theatrical) relied on alchemy as the source of animation.⁵ Electricity as a means of animation, came into being in this century, and once born it matured into the archetype it has become today. In much the same manner that our familiarity with the monster's physical appearance defuses his power to frighten, our familiarity with electricity also diminishes the frightening -- because unstated -- aspects of the creation. Indeed, in an era in

which electric shock routinely brings the cardiac-arrest patient back to life, the use of electricity to infuse life is not only safely familiar but almost expected. Similarly, the monster's metal clip -- a visual reminder of a brain transplant -- is not all that startling for present-day readers given that transplants are an everyday medical occurrence. Indeed, brain transplants, as the Globe and Mail article relates, are a possibility in the near future. Thus, what was once strange and unknown is, for the modern reader, familiar and therefore tame.

He or she arrives at the text not only expecting a Karloffian-like monster named "Frankenstein," but also a description of some sort of brain transplant, followed by an animation scene involving the use of electricity. This foreknowledge -- something which in itself is, for the reasons I have outlined, both a tame and 'safe' version of the novel, works quite differently once we return to the novel. In fact, that very familiarity, rather than lessening the novel's impact, works, I believe, to heighten it. Modern-day readers have been so to speak set up. Armed with certain expectations, we are quickly disarmed by the text. After meeting Captain Walton, a character not familiar to us from Frankenstein films, we are introduced to Victor (not Henry) Frankenstein. He is not, contrary to what the films told us, a baron nor is he a doctor. For some readers, particularly those who have not seen any

Frankenstein films, and have learned the verbal shorthand, "Frankenstein equals monster," he is not the Karloffian monster. Thus, from the opening chapters, our certainty is undermined, and, once this occurs, all that we think we know becomes suspect. Knowing, for instance, what we do about Dr. Frankenstein (particularly from the Fisher film cycle) what are we to conclude when he tells Walton, "Remember, I am not recording the vision of a madman" (E 96)? We know from the films that he is a madman. Or, if Frankenstein is not the monster 'who,' readers may well ask, 'is he?'

Once in operation this dialectic continues for the duration of the reading experience. The more we 'know' of the story, the more we are drawn into the text. At times, our response may be simply mild surprise, but, at others, depending on the degree of difference, it may be highly animated. Still at others, it may be conditioned by filmic memories which ostensibly should have nothing to do directly with the text's narrative, but interfere, nonetheless. For instance, very early in Victor's narrative, we receive, from Walton, the following description of Frankenstein:

Even now, as I commence my task, his full-toned voice swells in my ears, his lustrous eyes dwell on me with all their melancholy sweetness; I see his thin hand raised in animation.

(E 75)

Such a description, particularly the focus on the hand

"raised in animation," is, for readers familiar with Frankenstein films, more applicable to the monster than it is to Victor. The raising of the hand, especially, recalls Whale's and Brooks' animation scene. Thus, to "any reader aware of what is to come the effect is to trigger an association between Frankenstein and the monster" (Ketterer 58). "Whenever," adds Ketterer, "someone is presented as being 'animated' an attentive reader will think of the monster" (58). Indeed, as if to support such a claim, the text later links the monster to his maker by presenting the monster, focusing on his "one hand ... stretched out" (E 102). Consequently, our filmic memories -- memories that at first glance seem to contradict the text -- can in some instances work with the text. The novel incorporates the motif of the doppelganger,⁶ and, for reasons which Mary herself could not have imagined, film unintentionally reinforces this theme.

But, at the same time that film seems to reinforce this theme, it also works to disrupt it. Unlike the novel, film, because it is visual in nature, irrevocably severs the monster from his maker. However sensitized readers may be to such words as "animation" and "animate," they cannot erase their visual memories of the monster as a separate, autonomous being. These memories, then, make it extremely difficult to see the monster as symbolizing Victor's alter ego. Also working to disrupt this theme is Hollywood's

reliance on the historic mode of narration. Such a mode, as I have already explained, limits the novel's multiple points of view. Rather than receive the "marvellous" (E 75) tale as filtered through the consciousnesses of Walton, Victor, the creature, and, to a limited extent, Elizabeth (we read her letters) -- a narrative structure which L. J. Swingle sees as "a series of interlocked dramatic monologues" (52) -- we receive, instead, a "single and inevitable point of view." Rather than hear about the monster, "we 'see' the Monster with our own eyes" (La Valley 244). That seeing, to quote Lamb, once again, "destroys the faith." Films and stage productions may present a hideous monster, but

in the novel ... that hideousness
terrifies us because it is so indefinite.
We do not really see the Monster's ugliness;
we are reminded of it by its effects on
others. Each reader's imagination provides
details taken from private dreads. Mary
Shelley is capable of producing terror
through mere suggestion.

(La Valley 248)

Today, however, because of Frankenstein films, our private dreads have been replaced by shared, public ones. Biased as we are by the image of the Karloffian monster -- an image which functions to eliminate the text's indeterminacy -- we bring to the text a set and therefore contained image of ugliness. That image, now concrete as opposed to suggestive, not only fails to terrify but also threatens to overshadow an important issue raised in the

text.

The novel, La Valley perceptively argues, "strongly suggests that our notions of beauty are questionable, that an apparent monster may be moved by emotions like our own" (249). Ketterer goes one step further, arguing that more than the concept of beauty is called into question:

The reader of Frankenstein is put in a position of judging the evidence of three narrators, each bearing witness to his own experience, the 'facts' as he chooses to see them. Like Faulkner, and many other writers, Mary is using the technique of multiple first-person to dramatize the relativity of reality.

(102)

Once the monster is visualized, the relativity of beauty or of reality itself is no longer in question. The novel may encourage ambivalent feelings toward the monster, but film, because of its powerful visuals, works to discourage any such ambivalence (La Valley 249). When, for instance, we hear of Felix's or young William's response to the creature we image the monstrous Karloffian creature; consequently, we can very easily be manipulated by our film memories into sympathizing with such a response. Just as the characters in the novel respond to the creature with what seems to be an innate sense of ugliness, modern-day readers, because of their visual memories of the monster, are programmed to respond the same way. But Felix and William are only characters, and we, the reader, are asked by Mary, because

of the multiple narrative, to judge their actions. Victor, himself, tells Walton to deduce an "apt moral" from his tale and that moral, as I will illustrate in chapter three, involves much more than the discovering of the secrets of life.

If, and I think it is the case, we arrive at the novel with a filmic prejudice towards the monster, we run the risk of being as xenophobic, even racist (Victor did say he created a new "race" E 206), as Felix and William. Both characters are blinded by their preconceptions of beauty and ugliness -- a detail cast into higher relief by the different response to the monster experienced by the blind, elder De Lacey. Ketterer, in focusing on the theme of likeness/difference, also sees a thread of racism running through the text (55). Appropriately, it is the creature who, alienated himself, recognizes alienation in the situation of Safie's father. Readers learn from the creature's narrative that the Turk was imprisoned because his presence "became obnoxious to the government" (E 164):

He was tried and condemned to death. The injustice of his sentence was very flagrant; all Paris was indignant; and it was judged that his religion and wealth rather than the crime alleged against him had been the cause of his condemnation.

(E 164)

The "logic of the history and of Frankenstein generally," concludes Ketterer, "implies that what was at fault was simply the Turk's unlikeness" (55). This episode, along

with others,⁷ works, I believe, to sensitize readers to a form of discrimination which is based solely on the grounds of physical difference. But since, as Berger argues, "all films, in varying degrees and proportions, entangle us as cooperative victims and engage us as collaborators" (150), readers of Frankenstein who have seen its filmed adaptations run the risk of becoming both victims of and collaborators in a prejudicial view of the monster. The novel, particularly because of its epistolary form, reminds readers with each date and salutation both of the presence of Walton's consciousness and of the fact that this is a story told in retrospect. Film, on the other hand, catches viewers up in its temporal flow and essential contemporariness. We see events in a continuous present and thus are not allowed the narrative distance necessary for any objective assessment of the aptness of the moral.

Indeed, because the film denies the monster his voice, we not only judge him solely on the basis of physical appearance, but we also carry this view of the monster to the novel. Moreover, film presents a monster who is

usually mute or semi-articulate, lacking the 'powers of eloquence and persuasion' that, in the novel, defy or compensate for his hideousness. In the film or on the stage that hideousness tends to dominate; as a result, Victor has no real bond with his creation and is rarely so ambivalent about him as he is in the novel. The parallels between his increasing desolation and that of the Monster are not understood, and the

melodramatic style of acting first introduced by Colin Clive prevents an identification with the inner torment of the scientist. No Doppelganger can be suggested when his hysteria [an appropriate term] and nervousness are set against the Monster's quite distinct suffering, when no Walton exists to provide a common denominator.

(La Valley 244)

Without the suggestion of the doppelganger, the tension which arises in the novel when the creature confronts his creator is eliminated. This confrontation -- one which can only occur if the creature is articulate -- is, in fact, foreshadowed by the confrontation referred to in the novel's Miltonic epigraph:

Did I request thee, Maker from my clay
To mould me Man, did I solicit thee from
darkness to promote me?----

PARADISE LOST

Thus, readers, sensitive to this moral framework, are cued at the outset as to how to read the novel. Indeed, Frankenstein's "tragedy," argues one critic, "stems not from his Promethean excess but from his own moral error, his failure to love; he abhorred his creature, became terrified, and fled his responsibilities" (Bloom 217, his emphasis). It is in this respect that

movies and other adaptations missed the point. Their main objective was to show the creation of a monstrosity, while Mary Shelley briefly passed over such scenes. The creation of the Monster is but a small fragment of Frankenstein. What the story is all about came after the being had been

infused with life.

(Glut 16, his emphasis)

But, because of Frankenstein films, present-day readers are always already influenced by another epigraph -- one which is celluloid rather than literary, visual rather than verbal. We arrive at the novel 'knowing' what the story is about, but what we 'know' in advance works in ways counter to the way in which Mary's epigraph works.

We can picture, for instance, exactly how the creature was made, because Frankenstein adaptations, as I have already mentioned (40-41), make a spectacle of the creation scene. They also make viewers collaborators, even accomplices, in Victor's life-giving experiment. Dazzled by the special effects, however, viewers may be momentarily blinded to the ethical implications of such an experiment. Moreover, because the creation scene is so spectacular, it becomes a scene which remains with the viewer long after the viewing experience itself. The effect of this filmic afterimage on the reading experience is various and complex.

First, because viewers know that the agent of animation (in films) is electricity, when Victor mentions to Walton "the subject of electricity and galvanism" (E 85), viewers are cued by these terms to think of Frankenstein films and, thus, know in advance of Victor's narrative, how the creature was animated. The suspense leading up to Victor's disclosure of his awful secret -- Mary withholds

this information for four and a half chapters -- is eliminated for readers familiar with Frankenstein films. As we read about Victor's studies, we are not in the same position as the bewildered Walton;⁸ instead, paradoxically, we are in the position of Victor. We can visualize how the creature was made, and, rather than wait in suspense for the unfolding of the tale, we, instead, wait -- almost like confidants -- to hear confirmed what we think we already know.

Victor may say to Walton,

What had been the study and desire of the wisest men since the creation of the world was now within my grasp. Not that, like a magic scene, it all opened upon me at once,

(E 96),

but for modern-day readers, film -- itself a magic scene -- has indeed, opened it all upon us at once. We know exactly how the monster was made, and, depending on the degree of our familiarity with and memories of the Whale classics (or for reasons given in chapter one, our exposure to the parody Young Frankenstein), we know the following details.

Victor/Henry is a doctor, the son of a baron, living in Transylvania (note: this location stems from sources other than the Whale classic but nonetheless has become the homeland of both monster and maker).⁹ He and his hunchbacked assistant, Fritz/Ygor (a mitigating presence)

rob graveyards for body parts. In fact, the Whale classic opens in a graveyard. Here, Whale quite deftly alludes to the Promethean theme when he presents Henry literally throwing dirt into the face of death. While frantically digging up a freshly-interred body, Henry throws a shovelful of earth into the face of a statue of Death which is depicted as looking down upon the proceedings. Unable to find a suitably fresh brain, however, Henry sends Fritz away to find one, which Fritz eventually does at the Goldstadt Medical College. The brain he steals -- a detail which Brooks humorously parodies -- is, however, an abnormal one (Brooks labels it A. B. Normal). This change is, of course, a crucial one. Unlike the novel which focuses on the creature's learning to do evil, Whale and Brooks present a creature who is biologically programmed to be violent. Henry may say, in words which belie his scientific training, "Oh well, it's only a piece of dead tissue," but viewers know better. We already know from Dr. Waldman's lecture that because of "degenerate characteristics" the abnormal brain drove its owner to a life of "brutality, of violence and murder." Such a change is not only in direct opposition to one of the primary themes of the novel -- that monsters are made not created, their behaviour the result of nurture not nature -- but also drastically alters our feelings toward the monster.

When Victor of the novel begins his narrative, we

tend to sympathize with him because we already know that the creature was violent and vengeful. We also know, and here the film again alters the novel, that the creature murdered an innocent Maria (surely the choice of names is not accidental). This episode -- one which Brooks' film works to revitalize -- is the most damaging to the creature. Originally, the scene was to show the creature's interaction with a young girl, called Maria. After watching her throw flowers into a river and sharing in her innocent pleasure, Boris Karloff as the monster was to conclude rather naively that Maria herself would enjoy floating on the water, and, in an act derivative of Webling's play, he was to throw her into the river. Karloff, however, strongly objected to the scene, arguing that "by no stretch of the imagination could you make that innocent" (Glut 113). He went on to argue, illustrating his own ignorance of the novel, that the "whole pathos of the scene, to my mind, should have been -- and I'm sure that's the way it was written -- completely innocent and unaware" (Glut 113-4). There is a young girl in the novel, but she is not the inspiration for Whale's Maria. Maria, as I have noted, derives from Webling's play, not from the novel. Mary's work, now once removed from Whale's film, presented a scene with a girl but with quite a different effect. In fact, rather than throw a young girl into the water, the monster, in the novel, rescues her from the water, and, in an act

reminiscent of his own birth, tries to "restore animation" (E 182). His reward for his actions is to be shot by the young girl's male companion -- someone who we learn was responsible for her fall into the river in the first place. The Whale film, then, not only alters the novel's presentation of the creature but also eliminates the ironic and telling comments implicit in the novel's contrasting of society's so-called civilized man to the 'uncivilized' monster.

This scene, however, works in yet another, darker way. The scene concludes with the creature reaching out for young Maria, and the next time we see her, she is being carried into the village by her grieving father (again, the mother is absent). The cross-cutting, of course, implicates the monster; but, it is Maria's physical appearance which has far more implications, implications which are particularly damning to the creature. Her hair is dishevelled, her dress is soiled, and her stockings are down below her thighs so that her legs, once discreetly covered, are now exposed. The suggestion is, as Glut (114), Jensen (45) and O'Flinn (212) argue, that the attack is sexual. Adding, I believe, to this reading/viewing, and working to confirm our worst suspicions about what the creature has actually done to the girl is a scene which is juxtaposed with the father's entry into the village. The scene cross-cut with the father's arrival involves a frenetic, almost

violent peasant dance, performed by only the male villagers, during the performing of which the men vigorously slap themselves. Ostensibly a festive folk dance, covertly, the dance sends out a message of male virility and power. This strong male presence, I would argue, works in conjunction with Maria's physical appearance to suggest that the young girl was raped as well as murdered. It is quite possible that the almost subliminal effect of the peasant dance, juxtaposed as it is with the girl's physical appearance, is what is actually responsible for Glut's, Jensen's and O'Flinn's conclusion that the girl was raped. There is, after all, nothing explicitly stated in the script itself which would direct viewers to such a conclusion. The scene, then, -- one which was supposedly aimed at revealing the monster's innocence (sexual or otherwise) -- becomes, because of the editing and because of Maria's physical appearance, a scene which reveals the monster's sexual depravity and brutality. It is understandable, given such a heinous crime, that the townsmen became incensed and hunted down the beast.

Readers who, as a consequence of this scene, arrive at the novel with a memory of this monstrous crime will also tend to think of the creature as monstrous and, indeed, tend to call him a monster. Consequently, we will find ourselves more inclined to side with Victor when he describes the creature as "a fiend," (E 141) an "abhorred monster" (E 141),

a "vile insect " (E 141), with a countenance bespeaking "disdain and malignity" (E 140). We, in effect, have already prejudged the creature before he even begins his narrative. Also adding to this prejudice is the circulating around the text of filmic and/or narrative afterimages of the creature's 'bride,' because any memory of the monster's bride is sufficient to evoke images of the monster's sexuality -- a sexuality that we also see present in the episode with Maria. Because of the nature of afterimages, it does not matter that the bride derives from another film; over time, viewers tend to conflate the two films and come to remember them as part of the same story. That story, in its presentation of the monster, however, prejudices viewers against the monster long before they have an opportunity to hear the monster's version of events.

Indeed, once we hear the creature's story, this prejudicial view of him appears to be somewhat out of focus. Mary, unlike Whale, allows the creature to give us his version of the 'truth,' and she does so in a way which parallels Victor's narrative. Victor, in fact, prepares Walton and, by extension us, for this narrative mirroring very early in his story. "We are," he tells us, "unfashioned creatures, but half made up" (E 73), to which Captain Walton (a literary precursor to Conrad's "Secret Sharer") adds, "Such a man has a double existence" (E 74). Victor also remarks on the "wild and mysterious regions" (E

75) which form a suitable backdrop to his "marvellous" tale (E 75). He then adds: "I imagine that you may deduce an apt moral from my tale; one that may direct you if you succeed in your undertaking and console you in case of failure" (E 75).

Six chapters later, the creature's narrative begins, and, as his creator's was, it is spoken against a backdrop of wilderness. In fact, Mary situates the creature's meeting with his creator in a glacial field whose surface Victor compares to "the waves of a troubled sea," (E 140) thus recalling the polar sea of Victor's narrative. Echoing Victor, the creature explains in advance that his tale is "strange" (E 143) and, as his creator had done, the creature asks his audience to judge his actions: "Listen to my tale; when you have heard that, abandon or commiserate me, as you shall judge that I deserve" (E 142). But, (and here I am speaking for the moment about the reading experience in isolation from film's influence) placed in the position of the creature's judges, we, the readers, are subtly manipulated by Mary. By delaying the "fiend's" narrative -- a technique Emily Bronte would later effectively use for the fiendish Heathcliff -- Mary redirects our sympathies from Victor to the creature. This shifting of perspective and the inevitable shift in sympathies which it effects is, I believe, a deliberate rhetorical strategy intended to make readers question their own objectivity and fitness as

judges. Mary has already sensitized us to the "slightest shadow of partiality" (E 122) in the episode concerning the trial of Justine Moritz. Justine (another example of an ironic name) rests her innocence "on a plain and simple explanation of the facts" (E 125). But, as Mary stresses throughout this episode, 'facts' are not always that simple, because, as Justine learns, they are relative. After being charged with the murder of little William, Justine "confirmed the suspicion in a great measure by her extreme confusion and manner" (E 122). Later, we discover once again that guilt or innocence depends on outward appearances when we learn that Justine's "confusion had ... been adduced as proof of her guilt" (E 124). She was "gazed on and execrated by thousands, for all the kindness which her beauty might otherwise have excited was obliterated in the minds of the spectators by the imagination of the enormity she was supposed to have committed" (E 124). Blinded by their "fear and hatred of the crime," witnesses "who had known her for many years, and ... spoke well of her" became "timorous and unwilling to come forward" (E 126). Adducing 'proof' on the basis of physical appearance and biased by prejudice, the villagers rely on a series of facts which exist, like beauty and ugliness, in the eyes of the beholder. Elizabeth unintentionally points this out after Justine, who is innocent, must, in order to obtain absolution, confess to a lie -- an act which in itself

raises the question of the relativity of facts. After hearing of the confession, Elizabeth questions her own ability to judge human character, and the basis of her judging is physical appearance:

'How shall I ever believe in human goodness? Justine, whom I loved and esteemed as my sister, how could she put on those smiles of innocence only to betray? Her mild eyes seemed incapable of any severity or guile, and yet she has committed a murder.'

(E 128)

Justice in Justine's case is not blind. She is condemned on the basis of appearances, on "circumstantial evidence" (E 128). Mary, I believe, includes this episode to remind viewers of our own prejudices and "shadows of partiality," subtly reminding us of the relativity of facts before we hear the creature's version.

In fact, the creature himself reminds us of such shadows before he begins his narrative. In a sarcastic retort to Victor -- a retort which is also directed to the reader -- the creature exposes the hypocrisy inherent in a judicial system that advocates capital punishment. Like Elizabeth before him who saw men as "monsters thirsting for each other's blood" (E 134), the creature sees man's laws as "bloody" (E 142). "The guilty," he argues,

are allowed, by human laws, bloody as they are, to speak in their own defence before they are condemned. Listen to me, Frankenstein. You accuse me of murder, and yet you would, with a satisfied conscience, destroy your own creature. Oh, praise the

eternal justice of man!

(E 142)

Situated one chapter after the Justine episode, this impassioned speech does not, I believe, go unnoticed. Indeed, for readers of the 1818 edition of the novel, this sarcastic reply only serves to reinforce what we have already learned from Elizabeth concerning the judicial system. As she angrily explains to Justine,

Oh! how I hate its [this world's] shews and mockeries! When one creature is murdered, another is immediately deprived of life in a slow torturing manner; then the executioners, their hands yet reeking with the blood of innocence, believe that they have done a great deed. They call this retribution. Hateful name! When that word is pronounced, I know greater and more horrid punishments are going to be inflicted than the gloomiest tyrant has ever invented to satiate his utmost revenge.

(1818, Wolf 119)

Although in the 1831 edition of Frankenstein all that is retained of Elizabeth's attack on the judicial system is her reference to men's "thirsting after each other's blood," the judicial system is exposed and critiqued nonetheless. Readers have not only witnessed in the case of Justine a "wretched mockery of justice" (E 124) but have also witnessed "retribution" in action. Elizabeth's speech, then, is no longer necessary.

At this point in the narrative, readers, already sensitized to and highly suspicious of the legal system, are

asked by the creature to listen to him speak in his own "defence" (E 142). We are in effect asked to assume the role of judge and jury. But, because of what we have already learned from Justine's case, we are not without our own shadows of partiality. The reader, and here I mean Wolfgang Iser's "implied reader" (Reading 27), cannot listen to the creature condemn Victor's legal system without remembering what the system did for Justine. Conscious of flaws in the judicial system, and wishing to avoid the mistakes made at Justine's trial, we listen to the creature's narrative watchful of such things as prejudice, circumstantial evidence and partiality. As a consequence, we are manipulated by the text's rhetorical strategy into becoming more sympathetic listeners. We are also, because of the Justine episode, indirectly asked to question our own fitness to play the role of judge and jury.

Repeatedly in Frankenstein the reader's attention is directed toward the issues of judging, prejudging, and the judicial system. Three trials are referred to in the novel, all three of which reveal flaws in the judicial system and all three of which subtly remind readers of their role as judges. Justine, although innocent, is executed, while Victor, the man indirectly responsible for Henry's death and, in fact, most of the deaths in the novel, is set free. Between these two trials is the De Lacey episode with its reference to the trial of Safie's father. The trial was, as

I have already mentioned, another mockery of justice, and, although "all of Paris was indignant," Safie's father was convicted. This trial foreshadows the De Lacey episode in general and the question of partiality. We learn from the De Laceys, as the creature learns, that the "laws of man" are "sanguinary" (E 184). We also learn that a "fatal prejudice clouds" the villagers' eyes, and "where they ought to see a feeling and kind friend, they behold only a detestable monster" (E 175). Indeed, as a result of film and other visualizations of the monster, what the creature says of the villagers can also be said of modern-day readers of the novel. Because of film and other visual media, we arrive at the novel with a prejudiced eye, one which quite literally sees only a detestable monster.

In this regard, in particular, film versions of the novel and their circulating afterimages seem to work against the novel. Mary Shelley, I believe, creates a work which asks readers to assume the role of the elder De Lacey. His blindness, like justice itself, renders him an impartial judge. Unable to "judge" of the creature's "countenance" (E 175), he alone can offer the creature a fair hearing. Like De Lacey, readers are asked to hear the creature's story, and, because the novel provides only limited descriptions of the creature's physical appearance, we are, like the old man, blind to the creature's monstrosity. But, because of our culture's visualizations of the monster, we cannot hear

the creature's story with the same impartiality the elder De Lacey offers. Thus, those of us who read Frankenstein under the shadow of the magic lamp of film are quite possibly as prejudiced against the monster as are the other characters in the novel. The result of the various visualizations of the monster is not only a lessening of the creature's ability to frighten but is also, because of Mary Shelley's rhetorical strategy, a lessening in the dangers of prejudice. Each mention of the monster's hideousness (or as is more often the case man's response to that hideousness), triggers in the mind of the reader the visual image of the monster as he has derived from film. At the same time, however, because of Mary Shelley's repeated references to judging and prejudging, readers are reminded of their own preconceived notions about the monster. Whether these notions are humorous or serious, deriving from either Mel Brooks' parody or James Whale's films, the effect on the reading experience is, for the most part, the same.

Films of Frankenstein may make it impossible for readers to act in the role of the elder De Lacey, but the narrative structure of the novel allows for some of the changes films have made. Because of the motifs of prejudice and blindness reverberating throughout the novel, we become aware of the images we carry to the text. Hoping to avoid, for example, the same mistakes committed by Justine's judges or by the De Lacey children, readers will, I believe, be

more attentive to the 'facts' of the monster's narrative. Once we become more attentive, we will, because of the nature of perception, take particular notice of those 'facts' which conflict with our foreknowledge of Frankenstein. "We notice," explains E.H. Gombrich, "only when we look for something, and we look when our attention is aroused by some disequilibrium, a difference between our expectation and the incoming message" (172). We will not only be more aware of the incoming message -- one which differs from the message we have already received from film versions of the novel -- but will also become, because of the novel's narrative structure, conscious of how certain film 'facts' have prejudiced us against the creature. The result is, I argue, a readiness to give the creature more than a fair trial.

A major aspect of the creature's "defence" concerns the issue (or issuing) of a mate. Prior to hearing this part of the narrative, we first hear of the creature's early days at the De Lacey home. This episode not only illustrates once again the dangers of judging and prejudging but also recounts the next logical development in the creature's maturation. That development, we indirectly learn, is sexual in nature. Secreted away in a hovel, the creature -- the ultimate Other -- lives a voyeuristic existence. What he sees only adds to his feelings of alienation:

but I was shut off from intercourse with

them, except through means which I obtained by stealth when I was unseen and unknown, and which rather increased than satisfied the desire I had of becoming one among my fellows.

(F 162)

He learns of "the differences of sexes, and the birth and growth of children" (F 162). He witnesses the re-uniting of Felix with Safie, and he hears the "true history" (F 171) of Paradise Lost, only to realize that "no Eve soothed [his] sorrows nor shared [his] thoughts" (F 172). The cumulative effect of these various narratives is, I believe, the setting of a tone which is sexually charged. Thus, although we may not actually hear of the creature's sexual development, we are directed by the novel's rhetorical strategy to infer it. It comes as no surprise, then, to learn that, after the creature leaves this idyllic existence, this state of innocence, he is "consumed by a burning passion" (F 184), a passion which Victor "alone can gratify" (F 184). The creature, we soon learn, desires a "companion" (F 185).

For modern-day readers of Frankenstein, however, this build-up, this linguistic foreplay, is unnecessary. Indeed, for most of us familiar with the twentieth-century versions of the myth, it seems somewhat excessive. Because we 'know' before reading Frankenstein not only that there is a bride but also what she looks like, any references to the creature's desire for a mate only frustratingly delay

what we know will eventually happen. Even though this 'knowledge' is false, as there is no 'bride' for the creature, it exists and persists nonetheless. Knowledge, the creature explains, is indeed of a "strange nature. It clings to the mind, when it has once seized upon it, like a lichen to a rock" (E 162).

Once seized upon, this 'knowledge' complicates the reading experience. When, for instance, Victor concedes to the creature's demand for a mate and promises to go to London to gather the necessary information to create her, we, the readers, wait along with the creature for the desired product. In fact, because we have already learned through the De Lacey episode how deserving the monster actually is, we tend to side with him on this issue. But we do more than side with the monster. Like the monster, we believe -- because of our culture's visualizations of the 'bride' -- that there will be a mate, and, like the creature, we can envision the bride-to-be. Thus, the contract Victor makes with the creature is a contract which is also made with the reader. We, consequently, tend to believe Victor, and, because we believe him, we come to see him sympathetically as a benevolent Creator -- one who responds to his creature's pleas. At the same time, because of this insider information, we come to feel superior to the creature. But this is a feeling which, I would argue, Mary, through her narrative strategies, seeks to avoid generating.

Relying on a first-person narration, Mary keeps both her fictional characters and her readers in the dark. We are to wait, along with Walton, for the full story to unfold.

Yet, because of film, we become the all-knowing reader and thus need not concern ourselves with waiting for the 'bride.' In fact, we 'know' two things that the creature does not know: we 'know' what his mate will look like, and we know her choice of men. Thus, when Victor rationalizes that the female might turn with disgust from her intended to the superior beauty of man, we, because of Elsa Lanchester's actions, are predisposed to believe him. We 'know' from film -- the one after all Mary Shelley authorized -- that the 'bride' will reject her suitor. This knowledge, however erroneous, alters, I believe, our response to the scene. Knowing what we do, when we hear Victor admit to tearing to "pieces the thing on which he was engaged" (E 207), we do not image a formless "thing" (E 207). Instead, we image the 'bride' as she was embodied by Elsa Lanchester. The resultant feelings should be those of outrage at such a brutal act. But, and this is primarily the result of films' depictions of the 'bride,' there is, I believe, no such response. The 'bride' as she has been presented in films is a ludicrous and laughable figure -- indeed so laughable that I wonder if for some readers any reference to her is sufficient to evoke snickers. The male creature, as I have mentioned, was allowed a certain amount

of power and pathos. The female creature with her zig-zag hair-style and bird-like movements seems frivolous and funny, an object of ridicule rather than respect.

Those of us who remember Bride of Frankenstein remember the creature's mate as the figure who recoiled in abject horror at the sight of her intended, preferring instead the sight of man. The message was clear: even such a grotesque and misshapen woman as the 'bride' could still recognize the superiority of man. The same message is sent in the modern remake Weird Science. Using as the pretext and subtext Bride of Frankenstein (watching the 1935 film gives the young boys the idea to create a woman), this recent film explains why Elsa Lanchester's 'bride' was a "failed experiment." She had to be ugly, the one boy explains, because she was made for the monster. Their creation, on the other hand, will be made for their eyes only, and, unlike the prototype, she is anything but ugly. The effect of both films is the same: man is valorized at the expense of woman.

Afterimages of the 1935 film and the revitalization of those images in more modern films make it difficult for readers to take seriously the figure of the 'bride.' Given what she looks like and acts like, the creature, we might argue, is better off without her. Moreover, circulating afterimages of the 'bride' can actually work to deflect our attention away from Victor's actions. Rather than condemn

him for breaking his promise, we might, because the 'bride' has come to represent a grotesque parody of woman, even commend him for sparing us such a creature.

At the same time that afterimages of the 'bride' deflect our attention away from Victor's actions, they also deflect our attention away from the creature's motivation for killing Henry and Elizabeth. The broken promise is, the text makes clear, a mitigating factor in any judging of the creature's actions. If, and I think this is the case, we are asked on one level to read Frankenstein against the Christian creation story, then Victor, in refusing to create a companion and help-mate for his creature, has broken his covenant with his creation. Given Victor's actions, then, are we to condemn outright the creature's acts of vengeance? How culpable is Victor himself? These ethical issues may, because of persistent afterimages of the 'bride,' be obscured or even overlooked by modern-day readers of Frankenstein.

The persistence of filmic afterimages of the 'bride' works in yet another way to disrupt the text. The women in Frankenstein are all idealizations: Caroline is a "guardian angel" (F 79); Elizabeth's "saintly soul" shines "like a shrine-dedicated lamp" (F 82); and Safie is a woman of "angelic beauty" (F 158). Their presence in the text throws into higher relief the monstrous acts of man. Thus, perhaps Mary Shelley could not, to cite Jacobus again, bring herself

to "embody woman as fully monstrous" ("Text" 103) because to do so would be to contradict a recurrent theme in the text. Whale failed to recognize such a contradiction. His film and those films such as Young Frankenstein which present an Elsa-Lanchester-like 'bride' not only leave readers with a visual "sign" (E 155) of a grotesque figure for which there is no referent in the novel but also disrupt a signal sent by the text. With such women as Margaret Saville and Elizabeth Lavenza in the world, why do Walton and Victor choose to live apart from them in a society which excludes women? Is it, as Jackson and Brooks have argued, womb envy that drives Victor to isolate himself from women to create life without them? Is womb envy in some way connected to film's handling of the 'bride'? The answers to these questions, answers which I leave to the next chapter, require, first, an exploration of the more subversive aspects of the novel. Only then will we discover how film and other visualizations of the myth have left readers with images which de-fuse the more threatening aspects of the novel. If the text represents the reader's dis-ease, then afterimages of the myth work, I would argue, to inoculate us against this dis-ease.

Modern-day readers of Frankenstein are more than surprised by cinema. They are also, because of film and other visual media, confronted with a text which, to repeat Gombrich, offers an "incoming message" which differs from

our expectations and preconceptions. The reading experience becomes, then, an active one of looking and noticing. What we notice may be something as straightforward as the different setting of the story -- not the expected foreign world of Transylvania but the more familiar world of Switzerland. It may be something as straightforward as the con-fusing of the name of the creature with creator. But the cumulative effect of these differences is not straightforward. More than creating aggressive, investigative readers -- readers who must constantly revise what they think they know in light of what the novel itself offers -- filmic afterimages of the Frankenstein myth actively alter the reading experience.

In certain instances, filmic afterimages may actually work in conjunction with the text. Memories of Karloff's sympathetic portrayal of the creature, for example, work with the novel in eliciting our sympathy for the creature. Indeed, when we finally hear his version of the story -- when after years of being silenced in film, he is at last given the opportunity to defend himself -- we are, I believe, more than ready to offer him a sympathetic ear. Once we hear from the creature of the dangers of prejudice -- a prejudice which is visual in nature -- we are reminded of our own prejudices and, thus, work to suspend our dys-beliefs until the full story is told.

In other instances, however, filmic afterimages work

against the text. Memories of the 'bride' cloud, as I have shown, the issue of Victor's moral responsibility to his creature. Because in the novel there is no 'bride,' readers cannot, as they could with the male monster, judge the appropriateness or inappropriateness of their preconceptions against what they read. Left with no description of the 'bride' (because she is never completed), readers supply what is missing in the text with visual memories of the 'bride' as she has derived from film. We cannot, however, bring these memories into line with the novel because we have no standard of reference against which to place them. We may hear Victor refer to the 'bride' as a "thing," but we see the Elsa Lanchester 'bride.' Once these memories are activated, they can obscure important issues in the text.

Related to film's treatment of the 'bride' is its treatment of Elizabeth, in particular, her presence at the conclusion of the story. Unlike the novel, the 1931 film saves Elizabeth from death at the hands of the creature. Victor (or Henry as he is named in the film) is also saved. In a complete reversal of the novel's catastrophe, the creature not the creator is killed. Whether he dies in a burning windmill or a spectacular avalanche (as he did in The Man and the Monster), the result is the same. The outsider, the Other, has been subdued and destroyed. The threat he poses to society is, the film tells us, only temporary. Stability is restored and the film concludes

with the traditional Hollywood ending: Henry and Elizabeth are re-united. Readers who come to the novel, knowing in advance that the monster will eventually be destroyed, are surprised to discover that the monster, in fact, outlives his creator. In the world of Hollywood, alien forces, it seems, are no match for man, but, in the world of the novel, man is left helpless against the monster he has created. Mary Shelley's refusal to offer readers any sense of closure is perhaps one of the most threatening aspects of her novel. Walton, after all, only loses sight of the monster; and seeing, as the novel often reminds us, is not always synonymous with believing.

For those of us who have seen Frankenstein films, seeing can often be misleading once we arrive at the novel. Films have left present-day readers of Frankenstein with a vast -- and at the same time limited and limiting -- visual memory of the Frankenstein story. Images of the Karloff monster are, today, commonplace. They can be found almost everywhere, from colouring books¹⁰ to cartoons, from rock videos to re-runs. Not as ubiquitous as the Karloffian monster, but familiar, nonetheless, are such film-derived images of the myth as the hunchbacked assistant, the spectacular creation scene, and the Elsa Lanchester 'bride.' The constant recycling of these images through such visual media as films, advertisements, and cartoons works to introduce to the uninitiated the twentieth-century version

of the myth and to revitalize in the initiated already existing afterimages. Once revitalized, these images follow us to the novel, at times, complementing and, at others, conflicting with the ideas of the text. What we remember of Frankenstein films is, I believe, primarily visual rather than aural or narrational. Indeed, the film monster is not allowed to tell his story. Since, as the monster learned, it is not so much what we say as what we look like that determines the type of reception we will receive, it is somewhat appropriate that visuals in the form of filmic afterimages affect the type of reception the novel presently receives.

Thus far, I have analyzed how certain afterimages contain and tame the novel. In the following chapter, I will present in greater detail the subversive aspects of Frankenstein, both those which have been de-fused by film and other forms of popular media, and those which have eluded containment. Films are themselves a form of criticism of the novel, and often what they choose to ignore in the novel can be as telling as what they choose to explore. They are, as I will continue to point out, the means by which we have come to know the myth of Frankenstein.

Chapter Three

'Pardon This Intrusion': Frankenstein's Reception

'Since you have preserved my narration I would not that a mutilated one should go down to posterity.'

Victor Frankenstein

'When the facts conflict with the legend, print the legend.'

Advice to the young reporter in the film, The Man Who Shot Liberty Valence

The day the creature made contact, he spoke three words -- "Pardon this intrusion" -- which, in 1990, seem presciently understated.¹ Indeed, his first speech act with "father" De Lacey initiated a dialogue with readers and critics alike which is today as animated and as resistant to closure as it was when the novel was first published. Since 1818, readers, critics, censors, cartoonists, and filmmakers have engaged in a dialogue with the creature in various forms and forums and with varying degrees of intensity. Early reviews of the novel found it objectionable on moral grounds. The Quarterly Review, for instance, argued:

Our taste and our judgment alike revolt at this kind of writing, and the greater the ability with which it is executed the worse it is -- it inculcates no lesson of conduct, manners, or morality; it cannot mend, and will not amuse its readers, unless their taste have been deplorably vitiated.

(Q.R., XVIII, 385)

The Edinburgh Review, like the Quarterly, attacked the novel on moral grounds, pointing out that its ideas bordered "too closely on impiety" (1818, ii, 249-53). The tenor of Frankenstein's early reviews is perhaps best illustrated by the comment made by William Beckford, a Gothic writer himself. Of the novel, he once said: "'This is, perhaps, the foulest Toadstool that has yet sprung up

from the reeking dunghill of the present times'" (quoted in Baldick 56). And, when the novel was adapted to the stage, the moral outrage continued. Peake's play Presumption: or, the Fate of Frankenstein, as I have already noted, was met with angry protestors, who, armed with placards, urged the public (in particular, "fathers") to boycott the play. Capitulating to the morally outraged public, Peake provided his play with the following very acceptable summary: "The striking moral exhibited in this story, is the fatal consequence of that presumption which attempts to penetrate, beyond prescribed depths, into the mysteries of nature" (Nitchie 388). His expression, 'penetrating the mysteries of nature,' is not only a reiteration of Victor's own words but stems, as I will illustrate later in this chapter, from a lengthy tradition of engendering nature as female, and science as male. The novel, rather than perpetuating such a view, however, offers what Anne Mellor and Brian Easlea have both interpreted as a feminist critique of science (see below).

Peake's moral tag did not, it seems, go unnoticed by Mary herself. Indeed, in her revised edition of 1831, Mary incorporated the interpretation of the novel as offered by Peake's play, when she has Victor allude to the -- by now -- popular play by saying, "'Oh that I could recall my impious labour, or suddenly extinguish the spark which I have so presumptuously bestowed'" (E 123; Leonard

Wolf 129; Baldick 61). This affixing to Frankenstein of moral labels is, as I will show, not just a tendency restricted to the early dramatic Frankenstein adaptations but continues in present-day visualizations of the myth. It was also in evidence when Universal released its 1931 film of the novel. Like Peake before him, Whale censored some of the film's more blatant improprieties to please the moral watchdogs.

In 1990, all this outrage concerning the novel's lack of a moral lesson seems outdated, something we have come to expect and accept from our Victorian predecessors. Yet as recently as 1955 the South African government banned Frankenstein on the grounds that it was "indecent, objectionable, or obscene" (New York Times "'Frankenstein' is Banned" Sept.5, 1955). The penalty for being caught with the novel ranged from a fine of 1,000 pounds to a maximum sentence of five years in prison. To ban a novel is not that surprising but to ban this novel seems beyond the limits of belief. Frankenstein, after all, is a story that all of us in some measure or another have grown up with. How could we, when children, be allowed to read such a book? Part of the answer depends on the version of the novel we have actually been exposed to. Those of us who read the Frankenstein story either in illustrated children's books or in serialized comics were offered a rather 'mutilated' version of the story. Similarly,

films, television shows, cartoons or rock videos present only versions of the novel, not the novel itself. Finally, although we are continuously subjected to references to the Frankenstein story in the form of newspaper cartoons or advertisements, once again, we are not being told the entire story. It is my argument that in becoming as familiar as a fairy tale Frankenstein has, in fact, also become very remote to us. Or, to borrow an image from Frank McConnell, the novel "has become virtually invisible through over exposure" (Spoken Seen 23). It is also my belief that the novel incorporates much that a racist government such as the South African would find objectionable. Anca Vlasopolos, for instance, can offer the following response to the South African banning, because she is referring to the novel and not to the popular versions of it:

Though no government on earth is fully exempt from charges of censorship or repression, South Africa provides a unique modern instance of a country in which appearance (i.e., shade of skin and racial physiognomy) is a strict criterion for social status and civil rights; and the subtext of Frankenstein -- the indictment of a class system that erects an aesthetics of exclusion to perpetuate its ascendancy -- makes it anathema to such an overtly racist regime.

(133)

How this distancing has come about and what it is in

Frankenstein that is threatening and subversive are the concerns of this chapter.

In his introduction to In Frankenstein's Shadow, Chris Baldick argues for labelling Frankenstein a myth (1-9). In doing so, he not only unintentionally illustrates how such labelling actually reduces the novel but also how it distances the public from the novel itself. The story of Frankenstein, he explains, "requires only two sentences: (a) Frankenstein makes a living creature out of bits of corpses (b) The creature turns against him and runs amok" (3). The sense carried by the latter sentence is, in fact, the one behind the common expression "creating a Frankenstein." It is this same sense which is carried by dictionary definitions of the term "Frankenstein." Here I should mention a tendency I have seen among critics with respect to their views on Frankenstein's generic status: there are critics such as Baldick who see the novel as a myth (a birth myth, a myth of the mad scientist, a secular creation myth); then there are those who refer to it as a "tale" (a fantastic tale, a tale of terror, a Gothic tale, a tale of frisson).² The term "tale" is for me particularly problematic -- more so than "myth" -- because to call the novel by the diminutive term, "tale," is to reduce its status and power even

further. As Mary Daly has explained about myths, "On the banal level of everyday cliché, [the same level I detect in criticism of Frankenstein] one often hears 'It's only a myth (or story, or fairy tale, or legend).'" The "cliché," she adds, "belittles the power of myth" (Gyn/Ecology 44). Thus, Mary Shelley may allude to such creation myths as Prometheus and Paradise Lost, but her own story is only a tale.

This is not to argue that "tale" is, in all instances, a diminutive term. Rather, it is a question of context. Used, for example, in conjunction with Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, "tale" is a generic term denoting the types of stories the pilgrims tell. Similarly, it refers to a specific genre with respect to Poe's short fictions. But to call Mary Shelley's novel a tale is something altogether different. Frankenstein was, after all, published as a novel. It was presented, as the title page illustrates, in three volumes, and, in 1831, it was once canonized (Paul Sherwin 891-2) when it was included in Colburn and Bentley's "Standard Novels Series" (Rieger xliii).

Critics, however, may counter that the term "tale" actually appears in the Preface to the 1818 edition (E 58). The word is, as critics also know, Percy's not Mary's. To take his word for it is also to summarize Frankenstein -- as he did -- as a story exhibiting "the

amiableness of domestic affection, and the excellence of universal virtue" (E 58). With respect to Percy's Preface, Barbara Johnson has argued that it is "a series of denials jarringly at odds with the daring negativity of the novel" (9), and that "What is being repressed here is the possibility that a woman can write anything that would not exhibit 'the amiableness of domestic affection'" (10).

Mary herself did not refer to her novel as a tale. In her Introduction to the 1831 edition, she explained: "At first I thought but of a few pages -- of a short tale, but Shelley urged me to develop the idea at greater length" (E 56). She thus implies a connection between the length of a work and its generic status. But if length alone is a criterion, then why are not works of comparable length to Frankenstein also referred to as tales? Critics, for instance, do not call James Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man a tale; instead, it receives such authoritative labels as Künstlerroman or Bildungsroman. The same labels could be -- but are not -- applied to Frankenstein. It too traces the development of an "artist" (E 55).

Critics may argue that Victor himself uses the word when he says to Walton: "I imagine that you may deduce an apt moral from my tale" (E 75). Yet Victor is only one of the many characters who tell their life stories. To call a novel a tale based on one character's

assessment of his part in it, however, is illogical. Indeed, we do not call Charles Dickens' A Tale of Two Cities a tale, simply because the title says so: we refer to this as a novel.

Yet in spite of Frankenstein's publishing history and its presentation in three volumes, critics, perhaps following Percy's lead, still refer to it as a tale. The back cover of the Penguin edition of the novel describes the work as "Mary Shelley's powerful tale of Gothic horror." Likewise, Sir Paul Harvey, in his authoritative source book, The Oxford Companion to English Literature, lists Frankenstein as "a tale of terror by Mary W. Shelley" (312).³ I am not convinced that Harvey, or indeed the critics I later cite, is using "tale" in a generic context. Instead, I believe that, intentionally or not, "tale" is being used as a diminutive, diminishing not just the literary status of Frankenstein and, by extension, Mary Shelley's stature as a novelist but also the power of the novel itself.

The novel's power -- evident in its endless reworkings in our culture -- suggests its mythic stature. In addition to being easily summarized, Frankenstein shares the following characteristic with myths: its authorship for the most part is unknown. Mary Shelley has been distanced from her novel to the point where, presently, many first-time readers of Frankenstein confess

to not knowing who wrote it. The story, in ways analogous to what happened between Victor and his creation, has somehow outstripped its creator; without an author, the story eludes being fixed to a certain time frame. Because of this 'seeming' lack of authorship, this lack of dating of its origin, the Frankenstein story is not confined to any one person's particular social and political sphere. Consequently, it appears to speak of universal 'truths,' fears, anxieties and so forth. It is this aspect of the public's perception of the story which has made it, I believe, so attractive to politicians and so susceptible to being recuperated for political purposes.

Mary Shelley herself is partly responsible for this distancing. Indeed, when she published Frankenstein in 1818, she did so anonymously, leaving as the only clue to authorship her inscription to William Godwin. The consequence of this inscription was, as Maurice Hindle notes in his introduction to the Penguin edition of the novel, that the vehement attacks on the novel by critics stemmed not so much from the actual novel but from the novel's affiliation with that "infamous philosophical radical of the anarchist Left," William Godwin (8, Florescu 154). From its very beginning, then, the novel became linked with politics, but it is a link which as I will show has been forged by both the radical left and the conservative right.

Another consequence of the inscription to Godwin was that readers assumed the author to be Percy Shelley "since to the world he was Godwin's best-known literary disciple" (Hindle 8). The effects of this assumption are twofold. First, the linking of the novel to Percy -- a well-known radical and atheist -- had the same effect as linking the novel to Godwin. Indeed, James Rieger argues that the reviewer in the Quarterly Review "thinking the book to be Shelley's, stigmatized it as a work of 'a man who perverts his ingenuity and knowledge to the attacking of all that is ancient and venerable in our civil and religious institutions'" (xix). But, on the other hand, Percy was an established author, and his authority, I believe, played a role in the critical reception of the novel. Walter Scott, for instance, who assumed Percy's authorship after receiving the manuscript from Percy on Jan. 14 (Florescu 155), praised the novel:

It is no slight merit in our eyes that the tale though wild in incident is written in plain and forcible English ... the ideas of the author are always clearly as well as forcibly expressed; and his descriptions of landscapes have in them the choice requisites of truth, freshness, precision and beauty.

(Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, March 1818, 612-620)

Scott does question what he considers certain

improbabilities in the novel, the self-education of the creature, for instance, but concludes with the favourable claim that "upon the whole, the work impresses us with the high idea of the author's original idea and happy power of expression" (620). Other enthusiastic reviews were expressed by the conservative Court magazine and the magazine, La Belle Assemblée (Florescu 155). In both magazines Florescu notes that praise was divided evenly between the novel's original idea and its excellent style (155).

When Mary finally acknowledged authorship in 1823, however, the tone of Frankenstein reviews changed utterly. Typical of the new style of review is the patronizing claim made in Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine: "For a man it was excellent, but for a woman it was wonderful" (March 1823). Equally patronizing is Byron's comment to his publisher, John Murray. "'Methinks,'" he said, "'it is a wonderful work for a girl of nineteen -- not nineteen, indeed, at that time'" (quoted by Hindle, 8). After more than a century and a half of literary criticism of Frankenstein, that tone is still very much in evidence. Anne Mellor can claim in Mary Shelley: Her Life Her Fiction Her Monsters that, since the publication of Ellen Moers' Literary Women in 1976, Mary is finally being judged as an author in her own right (39), but recent critical readings of the novel belie this claim. I agree

with Mellor that prior to Moers' work,

literary scholars and critics had for the most part discussed Mary Shelley's career merely as an appendage to her husband's, dismissing Frankenstein as a badly written children's book [a fairy tale] even though far more people were familiar with her novel than with Percy Shelley's poetry.

(39)

But, at the risk of perpetuating the very type of criticism I would prefer to leave buried in the past, I have found that critics are still attacking the novel on stylistic grounds -- grounds that are in stark opposition to the early reviews of the novel, written when the authorship was assumed to be male.⁴

One year prior to the release of Moers' Literary Women Gerhard Joseph, in his "Frankenstein's Dream: The Child As Father of The Monster," identified Frankenstein's weaknesses as "its perfunctory characterizations once we get beyond Frankenstein and the monster -- its absurd coincidences, its Gothic melodramatics, [and] its stylistic gaucheries" (97). Four years later (three years after Moers' work) George Levine, co-editor of a collection of essays on Frankenstein, also points to the novel's style. Like Joseph, Levine isolates the stylistic flaws of the novel, offering this damning praise of Frankenstein:

The echoes of the form and implications of the novel are pervasive through the following

century. This is not to deny that it is a radically uneven and awkward work, or to claim that every echo is a direct reference. Yet in the face of its remarkable participation in the central myths of developing industrial cultures, its obvious deficiencies become merely curious in a work so much larger than its failings. As we listen to some of the echoes, we ought not to forget that a reasonable formal case can be made for the novel.

(Endurance of Frankenstein 18)

The labels, "radically uneven," "awkward," "literary deficiencies," and "failings" should be sufficient to convince readers that Frankenstein, is, as he says earlier, "a 'minor' novel, radically flawed" (3). But he actually undercuts the novel in other, more subtle, ways. According to Levine, Frankenstein itself is not, contrary to what Baldick and others claim, a "modern myth" (Baldick 1) but is instead only a participator in the central myths of developing cultures. Likewise, it is not that a formal case can actually be made for the novel but that a "reasonable" formal case can be made. Why -- might a reader wonder -- would Levine choose to write on Frankenstein at all, given its obvious failings? As if to answer this very question, Levine, along with his co-editor Knoepfelmacher, explains in the Preface:

Might not a Frankenstein 'perplex' be met with the same mixture of amusement and disbelief always shown by students toward a book assumed to contain nothing more than a story about an awkward and poorly sutured monster? ... Our undertaking, we also

realized, might raise questions even among those more serious readers who would not have to be convinced that Frankenstein is much more than an adolescent flight that has somehow managed to cash in clumsily on popular traditions.

(xii)

In addition to pointing out one of the popular views of the novel -- the novel is nothing more than ... -- Levine also says something about his own level of reading. He seems unaware of the connection he inadvertently makes between 'non-serious' readers and himself. The former see the novel as "cashing in on popular traditions," something which is "clumsy;" Levine argues for seeing the novel as "participating in central myths" -- something which has now become "remarkable." Levine's semantic distinctions remind me once again of the "myth"/"tale" dichotomy I mentioned earlier. When Levine wants to add weight to what he is arguing, he talks of central myths. These are much more authoritative than popular traditions, or tales.

After providing what has become a familiar trope in Frankenstein criticism -- the obligatory apology -- , Levine and Knoepfelmacher then take readers into the mind of Mary Shelley. Again, the result (if not the intent) is to discredit the novel. And with respect to my earlier claim about the distancing of Mary from her work, Levine and Knoepfelmacher seem to deny Mary authorship:

How much of the book's complexity is actually the result of Mary Shelley's self-conscious art and how much is merely the product of happy circumstances of subject, moment, milieu? The novel intimates that it knows little about its implications (although it seems clear enough about its literary sources in Milton, Gothic fiction and Romantic poetry). Are not its energies, therefore, un-self-conscious and accidental? ... Such questions are valid ...

(xii)

Mary, according to Levine, knows what she is doing when she alludes to recognizable authorities, but when it comes to her own authorship/authority she "knows little."

William Veeder, in his introduction to Mary Shelley: The Fate of Androgyny (1986), takes issue with precisely the claims about intentionality which Levine and his co-editor make. Questioning instead the intentionality of the critic, Veeder rhetorically asks:

'Could Mary Shelley possibly have intended that?' will be a way of asking, 'Could she possibly be that sophisticated an artist -- capable both of imagining so complex a situation and of manipulating technique so adroitly?'

(4)

In answer to his own question, Veeder looks to the authority of the literary canon. "We readers," he argues,

are predisposed to respect claims for intricacy in a text of Percy Shelley or

Emily Bronte because these authors have entered the canon. Whether Mary Shelley 'could possibly be that sophisticated an artist' depends in part upon how sophisticated we are willing to consider her. Excellent recent criticism has increased considerably the status of Frankenstein as an imaginative and technical performance but Mary Shelley has by no means escaped completely the caricature which has plagued her since 1818 -- that she was an inept neophyte who chanced upon a myth.

(4)

'For a girl it was wonderful.'

Veeder's point about the power of the canon is reiterated by Chris Weedon, who points out the circularity inherent in evoking the authority of the canon.

"Critics," says Weedon, "turn to aesthetic criteria to silence the radical potential of texts by denying them a place in the canon" (145-6). Stylistic preferences, then, keep a work out of the canon; and, because potentially radical works are not allowed entry, the canon protects itself from the very criticism these works may offer. At the same time, because they are not in the canon, these works will continue to be subject to stylistic fault-finding, and thus, coming full circle, they are denied entry into the canon on aesthetic grounds.

Veeder's comment about the relationship between how we see a writer and how we receive that writer's work is also well taken. This relationship, I would add, is also intricately related to entry into the canon itself.

Susan Gubar, in "The Blank Page and the Issues of Female Creativity," provides a convincing explanation of Veeder's own observations. There is a "long tradition," Gubar comments,

identifying the author as a male who is primary and the female as his passive creation -- a secondary object lacking autonomy, endowed with often contradictory meaning but denied intentionality. Clearly this tradition excludes women from the creation of culture, even as it reifies her as an artifact within culture. It is therefore particularly problematic for those women who want to appropriate the pen by becoming writers. Especially in the nineteenth century, women writers, who feared their attempts at the pen were presumptuous, castrating, or even monstrous, engaged in a variety of strategies to deal with their anxiety about authorship.

(295)

It is not surprising, then, that we have come to see Mary Shelley as an "inept neophyte" whose novel was not her production but rather the product of "happy circumstances." In fact, Mary actually helped to perpetuate such a view in her Preface to the novel.⁵ Coming forward in print after acknowledging her authorship, Mary explained the origin of Frankenstein:

I shall thus give a general answer to the question so frequently asked me, 'How I, then a young girl, came to think of and dilate upon so very hideous an idea?' It is true that I am very averse to bringing

myself forward in print; but as my account will only appear as an appendage to a former production, and as it will be confined to such topics as have connexion with my authorship alone, I can scarcely accuse myself of a personal intrusion.

(E 51)

Mary's disappearing act in her Preface, as she hides behind self-effacement and apology, and her decision to publish her novel anonymously are indicative of the anxiety Gubar notes. But her actions also lend support to a lengthy tradition, identified by Gubar, of seeing men as authors and women as passive constructions -- ones who should not make personal intrusions. Thus, in attempting to disappear as author, in presenting herself not as an autonomous self but rather as an "appendage," Mary has become an artifact self-consumed.

The division Gubar identifies, one which depends on the division of gender, is, I believe, in large part behind the tendency among critics to attack Frankenstein on stylistic grounds. It is a tendency which effectively diminishes the status of the author by diminishing the status of the author's work. And it is, as the following illustration attests, a tendency which is still very much in operation. The illustration serves as a headnote to a newspaper review of Anne Mellor's Mary Shelley: Her Life Her Fiction Her Monsters. Like the illustration in chapter one, its sheer size threatens to overshadow the

review itself. And again like the illustration in chapter one, the massive caption accompanying the article --here "Failures" -- conditions its readers at the outset:



ANTHONY JENKINS/The Globe and Mail

Failures of love

The con-fusing of Mary Shelley with the Frankenstein monster, although seemingly clever, does not, however, obscure the message the illustration is actually sending: Mary Shelley herself is monstrous. Thus, in 1988, we are still being offered the view of women authors as outlined by Gubar. In addition, in yet another form of denying Mary Shelley authorship/authority,

the monster she is linked to is not even the one she herself created. Instead, it is the James Whale/Boris Karloff monster, readily recognizable by the lengthy scar, the high forehead and the neck bolts. It is this characterization of the monster, rather than the one Mary presents in her novel, which has become the author-ized version.

The actual review of Mellor's work, although for the most part favourable, also reinforces what I have said earlier about Shelley criticism. Once again the standard caricature of Mary Shelley rears its ugly head. "It's difficult," says the reviewer, "for a tale concocted by a partially educated 20-year-old to bear as much critical freight as Anne Mellor wants to load on it" (Globe Nov. 12 1988 C19). The reviewer also informs readers that Mary Shelley did become a "formidable literary widow," not, it seems, for her own fiction which was only "concocted" but for "devoting the rest of her life to editing Shelley's works and bringing up their son Percy Florence." Caught between caricatures -- one pictorial and the other verbal -- Mary is offered to readers either as monstrous or as the dedicated angel in the house. It seems then that in addition to those critics who have played a role in distancing Mary Shelley from her work, we now have the reviewers of the critics assuming a similar role. Mellor's work re-establishes Mary Shelley as an author in her own right, but the review, by relying on traditional caricatures, works to undercut this view.

Mary K. Patterson Thornburg offers an explanation of the

tendency among critics and reviewers to disparage Frankenstein. In The Monster in the Mirror, aware of such comments as Chris Baldick's claim that "as far as prose style is concerned, it is just as well she [Mary Shelley] had none [literary influence]" (9), Patterson Thornburg explains:

In general, nineteenth-century criticism expressed shock and disgust at the story itself but praised the author's craft; recent critics have more or less reversed this position, admiring the content but not the form ... charging to Mary Shelley's 'ineptitude' as a writer those facets of the book their criticism does not explain.

(10)

Her explanation for this "critical attitude" (10) is that the novel "threatens the reader's objectivity" so that "even the most admiring reader is uncomfortable with the book until he or she had demonstrated superiority by finding some obvious flaw in it" (10). "It seems to me," she continues,

that both of the recent reactions -- the varied and exclusive interpretations, the obligatory objection to some aspect of proof for interpretation on a narrow and often peripheral aspect of the novel is to avoid a confrontation with an emotionally repellent whole; to find the author's execution of the work clumsy or incompetent is to express a personal rejection of the novel without taking an unfashionable or inadmissible critical stance.

(11)

In identifying just what it is in the novel that causes such a reaction, Patterson Thornburg, using a paradigm based on the

sentimental/gothic myth, points to Mary's "merciless exposure" of what Hélène Cixous has called "patriarchal binary thought" (quoted in *Moi* 104). We are, argues Patterson Thornburg, still within a social frame which relies on dualities: "the duality of power and powerlessness; the duality of will (presumption) and the loss of will (compulsion); the dualities of good and bad intent, of self-knowledge and self-ignorance, of creativity and destructiveness; and above all the duality of sexual identity and role" (11). Recent evidence that we are still within this frame is the review of Mellor's book: the formidable literary widow is the sentimental side of the myth and the monstrous Mary Shelley who assumes power, creativity and will is the Gothic underside. The same dualities were evident, I might add, in James Whale's Bride of Frankenstein, in which the prim and proper young Mary becomes the monstrous bride.

Patterson Thornburg's stressing of the duality of sexual identity and role, in which the sentimental woman is passive and powerless, brings us back once again to Gubar's "The Blank Page." Like Gubar, Patterson Thornburg identifies a long tradition of division and duality -- a tradition in which women are not creators but created, not myth-makers but tale-tellers, not artists but "artifacts." And, when society has to admit that they are writers, these women are then labelled either as monsters or as neophytes.

In addition to publishing Frankenstein anonymously, Mary also allowed Percy complete freedom in editing her draft.

Such an act worked once again to distance Mary from her novel, and contributed to the view of her as inept neophyte: because of her immaturity, she required her husband's assistance. Indeed, as the following marginal comments suggest, Percy himself seemed to hold this view of Mary. Correcting Mary's misspelling "igmmatic," Percy added, "'enigmatic o you pretty Pecksie!'" Later, correcting Mary's reference to Lord Chancellor Bacon, Percy commented in the margin, "'No sweet Pecksie -- 'twas Friar Bacon, the discoverer of gunpowder'" (E.B. Murray 59-60; Mellor 68-9). Percy's comments "may be charming," Mellor first notes, "but they also demonstrate that he did not regard his wife altogether seriously as an author but rather as a lovable, teasable, and not yet fully educated schoolgirl" (69). Moreover, Mellor argues, Percy "thought he had the right to speak for his wife."⁶ This, she adds, "is clear from his comments to Lackington, Allen & Co, that he was 'authorized to amend' her text, with the play on 'authority' and 'authorial' fully operative here" (68). In fact, one of Percy's additions to the manuscript concerns the actual word "author." On three occasions he refers to Victor as the "author" of the being (Mellor 65; Murray only identifies one 63). But, for the reasons I outline in chapter two, the use of the term is inappropriate in this context. Thus Percy, as well as Victor, is mistaken here: not having conferred upon the creature a proper name, Victor, according to

tradition, is not an author. Unnamed, the creature is not under Victor's authority; lacking a proper name, the creature is not Victor's property.⁷

Although Mary later explained in her Introduction to the 1831 text that she "did not owe the suggestion of one incident, nor scarcely of one train of feeling to [her] husband" (E 56), she did say to Percy "I give you carte blanche to make what alterations you please" (Letters I 42). In fact, E. B. Murray, in his "Shelley's Contribution to Mary's Frankenstein" (1978), claims that "Shelley's hand was well into his wife's major work even before she gave him 'carte blanche' to correct it further in proof" (50). After analyzing the two manuscripts of Frankenstein, Murray concludes:

The rough draft, which embodies over half the novel, contains about one thousand words written by Shelley, while the last thirteen pages of the fair copy, which is transcribed from and sometimes recasts about a quarter of the rough draft, are in his handwriting.

(50)

James Rieger, in discussing Percy's contributions, has claimed that Percy's "assistance at every point in the book's manufacture was so extensive that one hardly knows whether to regard him as an editor or minor collaborator" (xvii). He goes on to ask: "Do we or do we not owe him [Percy] a measure of 'final authority'?" (xliv)? Murray, it seems, shares Rieger's opinion (Mellor 59). "The poet's

contribution," Murray adds, "may well have been substantial enough to require Mary's editorial carte blanche, whenever first given, and original enough to suggest that at times his creative impulse added its own initiative to the novel's effect" (67). Mary may have given Percy carte blanche to edit her manuscript, but in the hands of such critics as Rieger and Murray, her carte blanche (blank card), becomes a rationale for seeing her as a blank page.

Although Murray first claims that Rieger's conclusion about Percy's collaboration is "extreme" (53), he includes in a footnote a statement made in 1891 by Richard Garnett to argue that there is "empirical backing" (53) for seeing Percy as a minor collaborator. The effect of Garnett's assertion, I believe, is not lost on Murray's reader. Claims Garnett: "'Frankenstein was written when [Mary Shelley's] brain, magnetized by [her husband's] companionship, was capable of an effort never to be repeated'" (53).⁸ The strange image of Percy magnetizing Mary's brain -- an image which rivals the visuals in Whale's creation scenes -- is characteristic of the imagery Gubar outlines in "The Blank Page." Mary is passive while Percy is magnetically active. Since Walton did not succeed in "ascertaining the secret of the magnet" (E 60), we can only speculate as to how this magnetizing works. As it is, Garnett's image supports the claim Gubar makes in The Madwoman in the Attic "that women exist only to be acted

upon by men, both as literary and sensual objects" (8). The result of such images is the diminishing, here even the denying, of Mary's authority.

Although ostensibly an assessment of Percy's editorial changes, Murray's article also represents a privileging of Percy over the actual author of Frankenstein. Indeed, his rather condescending title is indicative of the limited authority he grants to Mary Shelley. She is nameless for the first ten lines, referred to only as Percy's wife; and, when finally she is addressed, she is "Mary" while her husband is "Shelley."

In his highly enthusiastic ap-praisal of Percy's contributions, Murray, however, makes some highly debatable claims. He first states that "many of the changes are creative additions which (in spite of Mary's later suggestion to the contrary) help to shape atmosphere, incident, character, reader-response, and, consequently, aid in establishing the moral and aesthetic tone of the novel" (51). Yet the improvements he notes are -- like beauty -- in the eyes of the beholder. What, for instance, Murray sees as "enhanc[ing] the Gothic atmosphere of the tale" (51), others may see -- even as he himself conditionally concedes -- as "clichéd rhetoric" (51). Mary, he adds, provides the "merely informative 'the moon arose, and shone ... upon the daemon who fled.'" Murray argues that Percy improved Mary's prose when he "gothicized" her sentence to

"'upon his ghastly and distorted shape, as he fled with more than mortal speed'" (51-2). Likewise, Percy changed Mary's "pardon me - I who destroyed thee by destroying those thou lovedst" to "pardon me - Wherefore do I seek to perish in thy stead after I have irretrievably destroyed thee, by destroying those thou lovedst" (62). The question, however, is whether or not such changes actually improve the text.

Murray repeatedly refers to what he variously calls "Gothic atmosphere" (51), "Gothic potential" (52), "Gothic epithet" (52), "happier Gothic touches" (52) and "hardcore Gothic realism" (58) to prove that Percy improved the novel. The problem with his reliance on this somewhat overdetermined term is that it really fails to say much about the changes themselves. Although the "Gothic" additions seem to Murray sufficient proof that Percy improved the text, they fail to convince all readers of any such improvements. Levine, for example, disparaged the novel for its "inflexibly public and oratorical" passages. Yet to Murray such passages are flourishes (52), and mark Victor's monster as "a creature of his times" (52). He argues that Percy's "Gothic heightening is sometimes merely rhetorical, sometimes descriptive, with the following a mixture of both, concluding with the monster balancing his period with a flourish" (52). The change to which Murray refers reads:

'Everything is related in them which bears reference to my accursed origin the whole detail of that series of disgusting circumstances which produces it ... is given, in language which painted your own horrors, and has rendered mine ineffaceable.

(52)

Another typical change is Percy's elaboration of Mary's "I was again roused to indignation and revenge" to "then impotent envy and bitter indignation filled me with an insatiable thirst for vengeance" (Murray 64). Then, Mary's monster says of Victor's death: "he suffered not more in the completion of the deed than I did in its execution," which Percy alters to "he suffered not more in the consummation of the deed; oh not the ten thousandth portion of the anguish that was mine during the lingering detail of its execution" (Murray 63). Less elaborate changes include Percy's "neither of us possessed the slightest pre-eminence over the other" for Mary's simple "we were all equal;" and his rewriting of Mary's "what to say" into the somewhat wordy "what manner to commence the interview" (Mellor 61). Mellor concludes about the changes that Percy "typically changed [Mary's] simple Anglo-Saxon diction and straightforward or colloquial sentence structures into their more refined, complex, and Latinate equivalents" (60).

Murray seems to prefer Percy's Latinate prose to Mary's Anglo-Saxon structures and that of course is his prerogative. But, in his attempt to illustrate that Percy improved the text, he relies on specious claims which are

strongly reminiscent of Victor's claims in Frankenstein. In the following passage, Murray responds to Percy's "Whence did I come? What was my destination." After calling the addition a "typically Shelleyan formulation," he adds:

Kindred changes or additions in Shelley's hand echo his poetry or anticipate the 'mental imagery of Prometheus Unbound: 'make desolate,' though later changed by Mary to 'create desolation' (a neat oxymoronic effect Shelley must have approved), suggests the departure of Intellectual Beauty from the vale of tears.

(54)

Murray makes no mention of the possibility that what he calls a 'neat oxymoronic effect' might have in fact influenced Percy and that what he calls an anticipation could just as easily be called a literary borrowing. Mary's "Modern Prometheus" preceded Percy's Prometheus Unbound. In addition, his highly speculative conclusion that "Shelley must have approved" gives the impression once again of the young Mary, ever under her husband's tutelage, waiting for his approval. Later in his article, Murray attempts to "qualify or confirm inferences about Shelley's influence" (54). Again, however, we must be -- as Walton was with the creature -- careful of the "powers of eloquence and persuasion" (E 258). Referring to Percy's change "and his eyes closed forever while the irridation of a gentle smile past away from his lips" for Mary's "and his eyes closed while a gentle smile played on his lips," Murray concludes:

At times, and this might be one of them, Mary will seem to out-Shelley Shelley in phrasings which may indicate his influence but appear in her hand.

(55)

Faced with the "empirical fact" (53) -- Mary's handwriting -- Murray refuses, nonetheless, to credit Mary outright with the actual change. Indeed, in this instance, Murray can only prove Percy's influence by undercutting Mary's own hand in the creation of Frankenstein.

What for the most part is absent in Murray's article is any sustained attention to what Levine, writing one year before him, had called the novel's stylistic flaws. Murray does claim that some of Percy's changes are "less successful" (58), calling them either "trite rhetorical fillers" (58) or "fatty rhetorical tissue" (59), but generally he tends to ignore what others have seen as weaknesses in the novel. The message Murray conveys is not that the novel is flawed or minor. Instead, the novel succeeds; and this success he reminds his readers is due in large part to Percy Shelley's contributions.

Taken together, the two styles of Frankenstein criticism, the fault-finding typified by Levine and Joseph and the privileging of Percy typical of Rieger and Murray, pose a problem for readers. When, for example, Levine criticizes the novel's style, he fails to mention Percy's role as minor collaborator. Likewise, when Murray praises

Percy for improving the novel, he quickly passes over the novel's stylistic flaws. The problem for a reader exposed to either or both styles of criticism is what becomes of Mary Shelley? To be influenced by Levine, is to see Mary as a minor novelist. To believe Murray is to see Mary as an inept neophyte waiting for her husband's improving hand. In either case, the result is the same: Mary's status as a novelist is critic-ally diminished.

Recently, Anne Mellor, in her Mary Shelley: Her Life Her Fiction Her Monsters (1988), has united the two types of criticism and in so doing presents to date the most balanced assessment of Percy's revisions. She provides examples of changes which she considers improved the novel and changes which did not (59), but, unlike Murray, she does not lose sight of her subject, Mary Shelley. Whether a reader considers the various changes improvements or the reverse will ultimately rest with the reader. What is at issue is the influence critics have had on readers. Now that Mellor's study is available, it is hoped that readers will look again at critics such as Levine and Murray and question the influence they have had in perpetuating a certain perception of Mary Shelley. Otherwise, Mary Shelley will continue to be thought of as a minor novelist, and, as a consequence, Frankenstein will be denied the critical attention I believe it deserves.

Mary's publishing in 1831 of a revised edition of

Frankenstein further complicates the issue of distancing. This edition has become the one "on which virtually all modern editions have been based" (Baldick 61, see also Mellor 39). Thus we have effectively been distanced from the 1818 edition -- a work which inculcated "no lesson of conduct, manners, or morality" (Quarterly). Critics generally agree that the 1831 edition is more conservative and represents a tamer version of the original (Mellor 170-176; Vlasopolos 133; Baldick 61; Wolf Note on Text). Vlasopolos argues that having read from some of "the most radical works of her time," Mary "must have been aware of the subversive power of her novel." The 1831 edition, he adds, suggests "she fled from her own knowledge" (133). Wolf shares this view: "Fifteen years later, she was a respectable widow striving for even more respectability. The 1831 edition reflects that change in her life" (Note on Text). Baldick agrees, adding that the 1831 edition represents Mary's incorporation of "several of the more conservative readings implied in the dramatic and rhetorical uses to which the story had been put since 1818" (61). Baldick thus identifies the beginning of a lengthy tradition in Frankenstein's history. It is a tradition in which the novel, once it has been dramatically visualized, becomes intricately connected to and read against those same visualizations.

One of Mary's incorporations is an allusion to

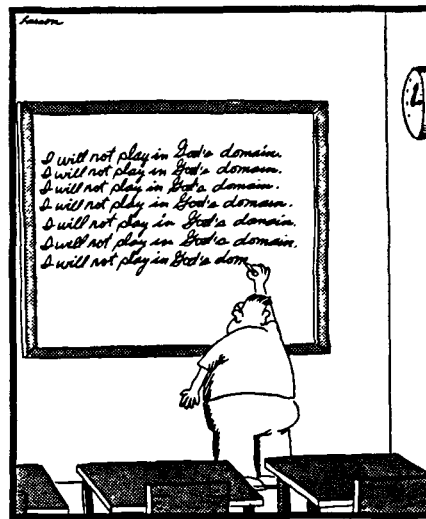
Peake's Presumption. As Baldick explains,

Now distancing herself from her radical past, the author strengthened the cautionary element of her novel to the point where it could be read as an 'improving' work. Despite her misgivings about Peake's handling of the story, she even introduced his title into her book: the word 'presumption' appears for the first time in a new speech given to Victor, who now describes the monster as the 'living monument of presumption and rash ignorance which I had let loose upon the world.'

(61)

Mary, in fact, prepares her readers for such a change in the novel's moral tone in her Introduction to the 1831 text.

Speaking of Victor's creation, she directs readers to the blasphemy inherent in his presumption: "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" (E 55). This moral framework marks, as I will later show, quite a departure from the 1818 text. But it has become, as the following cartoon illustrates, a popular way of interpreting the novel:



Young Victor Frankenstein stays after school.

Indeed, a century after the publication of the 1831 edition, James Whale's scientist triumphantly professed "Now I know what it feels like to be a god!" (Frankenstein 1931). Yet his speech, an encapsulation of the novel's new morality, offended the Hays Office (a type of censoring body), and it was edited out before the film's general release (Glut Legend 109).

In addition to alluding to Peake's play and providing an explanatory introduction, Mary also has Victor say to Walton: "when I reflect that you are pursuing the same course, exposing yourself to the same dangers which have rendered me what I am, I imagine that you may deduce an apt moral from my tale" (F 74-5). Concerning this change Baldick explains: "provided thus with a moral, Frankenstein at last became an acceptable text, its meanings brought into line with the improving lessons of its dramatic versions" (62). But the moral, as Baldick later explains, derives

less from the novel and more from the public's new perception of the novel -- a perception conditioned by the "developing tradition of stage, cartoon, and -- eventually screen Frankensteins" (62). These, he argues, "managed more successfully to rein in the excesses of the story's multiple significance by exhibiting the monster as an awful warning" (62).

Once streamlined into a moral fable and thus condensed into a verbal shorthand, the novel itself began to recede into the "darkness and distance" (E 261) of the past. Indeed, only one year after the novel's first visualization, George Canning, foreign secretary and leader of the House of Commons, used Frankenstein's new, drama-derived morality to argue against freeing the Negro slaves in the West Indies (Baldick 60; Mellor 113; Vlasopolos 133). Alluding to Mary's novel, he argued:

To turn [the Negro] loose in the manhood of his physical strength, in the maturity of his physical passions, but in the infancy of his uninstructed reason, would be to raise up a creature resembling the splendid fiction of recent romance; the hero of which constructs a human form, with all the corporeal capabilities of man, and with the thews and sinews of a giant; but being unable to impart to the work of his hands a perception of right and wrong, he finds too late that he has only created a more than mortal power of doing mischief, and himself recoils from the monster which he has made.

(Mellor 113)

What is evident from this speech is Canning's highly

selective and distorted use of the novel. As Vlasopolos rightly concludes,

Neither the monster's highly developed 'perception of right and wrong' nor his creator's downright murderous intentions appear in the M.P.'s summary, since clearly the revolutionary turbulence at the center of Frankenstein might have disrupted his entrenched notions about slavery. Perceived as a childish, hence monstrous, giant, the slave could more readily be chained.

(133)

Indeed, his summary appears to owe more to Peake's version of the Frankenstein story than to Mary Shelley's. The creature in the novel, after all, draws attention to his sense of right and wrong when he explains:

For a long time I could not conceive how one man could go forth and murder his fellow, or even why there were laws and governments; but when I heard details of vice and bloodshed, my wonder ceased and I turned away with disgust and loathing.

(E 161)

Moreover, he condemns the very thinking typified by Canning when he adds that a "slave" is "doomed to waste his powers for the profits of the chosen few" (E 161). The description of the creature offered by Canning sounds strikingly similar to the description offered by Peake's Frankenstein. After deserting his creation, Frankenstein asks himself, "What have I cast on the world - a creature powerful in form of supernatural and gigantic strength -- but with the mind of

an infant?" (Act 2nd, Scene 1st. LA 2359). This depiction of the creature -- one which is a tamer version of Mary Shelley's -- became, however, the more lasting one.

In fact, twenty-four years after Canning's speech, Elizabeth Gaskell offered a similar view of the creature in her allusion to Frankenstein in Mary Barton. She identifies the monster with the "nineteenth-century British working-class" (Mellor 112), and, like Canning and Peake before her, presents a Frankenstein (con-fusing the creator with his creation) who is "ungifted with a soul, a knowledge of the difference between good and evil" and who can only offer a "mute reproach" (Mary Barton Chapter 15). Her view of the monster -- one which persists today -- is, argues Baldick, "a prominent example of a creative misreading which wrenches the myth into new patterns while applying it directly to the central tensions of an industrializing social order" (86-7). More specifically for my purposes, Baldick links the misreading to visualizations of the myth:

The misreading here is more than just a matter of calling the monster by the name of his maker; it brings in too the stage versions' redefinition of the monster as a soulless being as an inarticulate child.

(87)

Because of Frankenstein's success on the stage and in other visual media (see appendix 2), the monster became, as Moretti explains, a "rhetorical figure" (6), called upon to

"put into focus a particularly complex experience ... or to express a judgement that possesses particular importance" (6). However, as a consequence, "the text itself has ceased to exist but as a metaphor torn and twisted from its being strenuously put to work" (O'Flinn 206). Today, because of the myth's being put to work, even those of us who have not read the novel are still familiar with its verbal shorthand. What we do not know -- and have, in fact, been kept from knowing by literary critics, playwrights, filmmakers, and politicians -- is the novel's written longhand.

If, however, we resurrect Mary's text, and suture it back together, we will discover not only where and how her novel was torn and twisted but also how this distortion enabled it to be put to work. The dramatic adaptations of Frankenstein in the nineteenth century provided the myth with a simple moral: presumption leads to monsters. The twentieth century, primarily through the medium of film, also confined the myth. Presently, Frankenstein is 'known,' explains Rieger, as "the composite picture of a Monster with bolts in his head, an epicene scientist and his slobbering, sadistic assistant, huddled together in a dungeon during a lightning storm" (xxxiii). What Rieger lists brings us back once again to what I call Frankenstein's filmic afterimages. These, of course, are features of film versions of the novel and not the novel itself, but they are nonetheless part of

our cultural heritage, and their circulation contributes to a biased view of how we think of Frankenstein.

To re-view the myth and to restore Mary's authority, I deliberately reverse the common order of experiencing Frankenstein, and examine the novel (both versions) first, before turning to the novel's various film versions. I will then illustrate how filmic afterimages contain the novel's more subversive elements, leaving viewers with a socially and politically acceptable reading of Frankenstein. This reading, this filmic shorthand, precedes the text itself, representing a visual pre-scribing of the Frankenstein story. But film, by closing off the novel's multiple meanings or interpretations, also inadvertently directs our attention to those aspects of the novel that it seeks to restrict. Filmic afterimages then offer a way back into the novel. Through these, we can re-view the black and white world of Whale's Frankenstein and return to the novel as Mary scribed it.

The act of suturing together a body (anatomical or textual) demands, as Victor himself knew, making certain choices. Because, as I have already noted, the 1831 text is the version which has become the standard text, I have chosen to focus primarily on this edition. I will, however, also pay particular attention to the disjecta membra of the 1818 text, because these efficiently direct us to aspects of the story that Mary supposedly toned down or eliminated

altogether. These 'problem areas,' I would argue, can be seen as sites of the novel's challenge to the dominant culture. In fact, a closer analysis reveals that some of these changes are merely cosmetic and barely mask the subversive elements of the story.

One of these changes, the one most frequently noted by critics, is Mary's changing of Elizabeth's familial status. In the 1831 edition, Elizabeth is no longer Victor's cousin but is, instead, an orphan adopted by Caroline Frankenstein. Leonard Wolf concludes that with this change Mary now avoids the "slightest suggestion of incest" (Note on Text).

Mellor also concludes:

Elizabeth Lavenza's place in the Frankenstein household is both more legitimate and more oppressed. No longer a blood-cousin, she is an orphan...; no incestuous overtones accrue to her marriage to Victor. But she is now presented to Victor as a 'present,' a gift that is entirely his to cherish and possess.

(175-6)

The overtones may be absent, but definite undertones of incest can still be heard. Indeed, if Mary had intended to avoid the slightest suggestion of incest, she needed to have made more than this one change. In 1831, Victor repeatedly refers to Elizabeth as his "cousin" -- a term she also uses in her letters -- and, on the day she was brought into the Frankenstein household, Victor twice calls her his "more

than sister" (E 80). Elizabeth is taught to call Alphonse her "uncle" and his children her "cousins" (E 88). In fact, after her death, he calls her "his more than daughter" (E 237). Alphonse himself draws attention to the incestuous nature of Victor's and Elizabeth's relationship when he says to Victor, "You, perhaps, regard her as your sister, without any wish that she might become your wife" (E 192). In addition, if Justine, another 'adopted' child, thinks of herself as little William's "sister" (E 126), and Elizabeth "esteems" Justine her "sister" (E 128), then, by the same logic, Elizabeth can be esteemed Victor's sister.

But as well as being presented as Victor's cousin-sister, Elizabeth is also presented as his mother. The 1831 edition retains Caroline's dying injunction to Elizabeth in which she asks of her adopted daughter: "my love, you must supply my place to my younger children" (E 87). Honouring Caroline's wish, Elizabeth "veiled her grief and strove to act the comforter to us all" (E 88). Even before Elizabeth assumed the role of mother, however, she was linked to Caroline. We learn that Caroline had once been "an orphan and a beggar" and five paragraphs later, we hear the same said of Elizabeth. Like Caroline, Elizabeth loses her father and becomes "an orphan and a beggar" (E 77,79). This linguistic link, I believe, serves to prepare readers for the role Elizabeth will eventually be asked to play.

Mary associates Elizabeth with Victor's mother even

more explicitly in Victor's dream. Unchanged in the 1831 edition, the dream manifests Victor's incestuous feelings both for his surrogate sister-mother, Elizabeth, and for his actual mother:

I was disturbed by the wildest dreams. I thought I saw Elizabeth, in the bloom of health, walking in the streets of Ingolstadt. Delighted and surprised, I embraced her; but as I imprinted the first kiss on her lips, they became livid with the hue of death; her features appeared to change, and I thought that I held the corpse of my dead mother in my arms; a shroud enveloped her form, and I saw the grave-worms crawling in the folds of her flannel. I started from my sleep with horror; a cold dew covered my forehead, my teeth chattered, and every limb convulsed; when, by the dim yellow light of the moon, as it forced its way through the window shutters, I beheld the wretch.

(E 102)

Raised on popularized versions of Freud and the Freudian interpretations of dreams, even the most naive reader will recognize the not-so-latent content of this dream. Victor's sexual feelings for Elizabeth are a sublimation of his feelings for his mother, the dream itself reading like an Oedipal drama.

Victor, in fact, directs readers to the Oedipal implications of his act, when he relates to Walton the events leading up to the animation of the creature. One of his motives for creating life, he tells Walton, was the promise it offered of becoming the ultimate Father/father. "A new species," he explains, "would bless me as its creator and

source" (E 97). He then adds that "no father could claim the gratitude of his child so completely as I should deserve theirs" (E 97-98). While describing his emotions at the time, Victor becomes exceedingly preoccupied with his own father. Four times he refers to his father (E 99), and, although he believes that his father would not approve of his "loathsome" employment (E 99), he rationalizes that his "father would be unjust if he ascribed [his] neglect to vice or faultiness" (E 99). What he both fears and desires is his father's authority, but, as his dream intimates, usurping the father's prerogatives also leads to coupling with the father's wife. Fearing the taboos surrounding incest, he wakes before the hungry worms consummate their labours, "confronted by the creature as demoniacal corpse, its negativity a token of the repression that distorts the wish even in a dream" (Sherwin 887).

Forewarned of Victor's feelings for his "mummy" (E 102), a present-day pun which Ketterer rightly concludes is suggested to modern readers by the "train of associations" here (58), we can understand why he postpones his marriage. We can understand too why he confesses: "to me the idea of an immediate union with my Elizabeth was one of horror and dismay" (E 193). Likewise, we can appreciate the significance of his anxiety on his wedding night. "'Oh! Peace, peace my love,'" he trembles, "'this night is dreadful, very dreadful'" (E 234). An anxious bridegroom,

"fearful" of the "combat" (E 234), Victor fails to consummate his marriage and only embraces his wife once she is lifeless upon her "bridal bier" (E 235). This embrace, Vlasopolos argues, represents Victor's only "overt sexual act throughout the entire novel" (129). It also recalls Victor's dream of embracing his dead mother. The conflation of the two, Mellor perceptively adds, "signals Victor's most profound erotic desire, a necrophiliac and incestuous desire to possess the dead female, the lost mother" ("Possessing" 225; see also Sherwin 885 and Margaret Homans 102).

The two embraces reproduce the necrophilia which is at the very 'heart' of Victor's experiment. In preparing to create life, he spends his days and nights with the dead, in vaults, charnel-houses and animal slaughter-houses. To "animate the lifeless clay," he "tortured the living animal" and "dabbled among the unhallowed damps of the grave" (E 98). All these activities, he adds, he pursued with "an eagerness which perpetually increased" (E 98). Victor's fascination with the dead -- a fascination grotesquely exposed by the 3-dimensional graphics of Andy Warhol's Frankenstein -- is both disturbing and perverse. Yet, as Mary Daly reminds us in Gyn/Ecology, as perverse as it may seem, necrophilia is not unusual or unique in patriarchal cultures. In fact, she explains, it is patriarchy's "essential message" (39). Victor is merely representative of a culture which defines and commonly uses the term "necrophilia" but has yet to

inscribe its opposite --"biophilia" (life-loving) -- in its discourse (Gyn/Ecology 10). What drives Victor and what drives all necrophiliacs, Daly adds, is a passion either for "all that is dead, dying, and purely mechanical" or for all those "victimized into a state of living death" (63, 59).

Mary Shelley exposes this passion not only in the deadly embraces (dreamt or actual), but in Victor's relationship with his creature -- a creature who is quite literally the living dead. Indeed, given the choice of pursuing a heterosexual relationship with a live Elizabeth and developing a relationship with an assemblage of dead human and animal parts, Victor chooses the latter. He voluntarily isolates himself both physically and emotionally from his fiancée, preferring the "beautiful features" (E 101) of his creature to Elizabeth. The night he infuses life into his creature, he uses his "instruments of life"; his creature, we learn, "breathed hard, and a convulsive motion agitated its limbs" (E 101). The erotic tenor of this scene has lead more than one critic to conclude that Victor's relationship with his creature is founded on a homoerotic desire (Veeder, Ketterer, Cantor, Kosofsky). In fact, Gilbert and Gubar argue that, on the creation night, "Victor, in effect couples with his monster" (229). Supporting their reading, Mellor convincingly adds:

Frankenstein's homoerotic fixation upon his creature, whose features he had selected as

'beautiful' in a parody of Pygmalion and Galatea, was underlined by Mary Shelley in a revision she made in her Thomas copy of Frankenstein.... Describing his anxious enslavement to his task, Frankenstein confesses: 'my voice became broken, my trembling hands almost refused to accomplish their task; I became as timid as a lovesick girl, alternate tremor and passionate ardour took the place of wholesome sensation and regulated ambition.'

(122)

Indeed, similar readings of the novel inform the films Angelic Frankenstein, The Rocky Horror Picture Show and Hollow My Weanie Dr. Frankenstein, as all three make explicit and exploit the homoeroticism inherent in Victor's project. That same homoeroticism is exposed (although by implication) in the 1974 film, Lady Frankenstein. In this film, the scientist's daughter creates a male monster, specifically designed to satisfy her monstrous lust. But read against the original Frankenstein story, it raises telling questions about the motivating forces behind Victor's desire to create a male creature for himself. Critics may avoid this reading and choose to refer to the creature as a neutral/neutered "it," but, Mary makes it clear that Victor's man-made creation is very much a man himself.

In light of the novel's homoeroticism, incest, necrophilic embraces with dead mothers or sister-brides, and its images of worms penetrating the mother's folds, it is hardly surprising that the author of Frankenstein was described as someone "who perverts his ingenuity and

knowledge to the attacking of all that is ancient in our venerable civil and religious institutions" (Rieger xix). What I do find surprising, however, is that it would take more than a century and a half until films such as Andy Warhol's Frankenstein or The Rocky Horror Picture Show would make explicit on film what Mary Shelley had inscribed in her novel. Certain taboos, it seems, are better left unvisualized.

Mary Shelley also exposes and critiques the venerable institution of marriage. In fact, in the limited number of marriages depicted in the novel, we soon discover a dominant pattern: for women, the consequences of marriage are deadly. Beaufort's unnamed wife is absent from Victor's narrated "history" (E 75). Left to re-create her history we can only assume that, since Caroline is left an "orphan" (E 77) after Beaufort's death, Mrs. Beaufort must have preceded her husband to the grave. Caroline, we quickly learn, repeats her mother's fate. After months of devotion and selfless service to her father -- a man who was too "proud" to procure "plain work" for himself but not too proud to allow his daughter to plait straw for his living (E 77) -- Caroline exchanges this life of servitude for yet another. She is "committed" to the care of her father's friend, imaged as a "fair exotic ... sheltered by the gardener," Alphonse (E 78). Re-enacting her role of self-sacrificing "guardian angel to the afflicted" (E 79), she attends to Elizabeth, catches

scarlet fever and dies shortly thereafter.

Here, Mary Shelley revises her text and, in her revisions, de-fuses much of the original edition's subversiveness. In the 1818 text, Caroline enters Elizabeth's chamber after the threat of the disease is past, when Elizabeth is actually recovering. Her death in this instance is, as Kate Ellis concludes, "gratuitous," her "motherly touch" killing her "without benefiting anyone else" (132). What kills her, Ellis adds, is her belief in the female ideal (132), an ideal which demands self-sacrifice and a passivity "bordering on the ultimate passivity of death" itself (Knoepfmacker 108). It is also an ideal which, given the novel's focus on necrophilia, is particularly fitting.

In the revised edition, however, Mary Shelley includes a causality which tones down the threat of the original. Now, notes Ellis, Caroline enters the chamber when Elizabeth's life is "menaced," and, precisely "because of her watchful attentions," she "triumphed over the malignity of the distemper" (E 87, Ellis 131). The revision thus gives meaning to Caroline's death. Nonetheless, it does not conceal the fact that "maternal love is strikingly associated with self-destruction" (Mellor 175). The image we are left of Caroline is fittingly a painting,⁹ its subject death. Framed into history -- this painting Victor tells us is an "historical subject" (E 121) -- Caroline is framed by a society that turns obedient daughters into obedient wives.

The women in Frankenstein are, like Alphonse's painting, possessions, presents, commodities of exchange. In this world, as the sailor on board Walton's ship learned, fathers consent to marriages only if the "match" involves the exchange of a "considerable sum in prize money" (E 64). Safie's father, recognizing the exchange value of his daughter, uses her to buy his own freedom. Although Felix initially turns down the Turk's "promises of reward and wealth" (E 165), he changes his mind once he sees the captive's daughter. He does so we learn because he "could not help owing to his own mind that the captive possessed a treasure which would fully reward his toil and hazard" (E 165). The language of commerce is telling: as payment for his labour, Victor will be given a treasure which the father possesses. The sale is finalized once Felix is promised Safie's "hand in marriage" (E 165), and, although he is "too delicate to accept his offer" outright, he nonetheless "looked forward to the probability of the event" (E 165), once he had met the terms of the offer. Rumours of a similar financial arrangement circulated around Percy's and Mary's marriage, as at the time "it was ... rumoured that [Godwin] had sold the two girls [Mary and Claire] to Shelley for 800 and 700 pounds respectively" (The Life and Letters of M.W. Shelley vol.1, 83).

Like Safie (and Mary herself), Elizabeth is also a "possession," a "present" (E 80). These terms, added in

the 1831 edition, are even more dehumanizing than the string of epithets Victor uses in the original. In the 1818 edition, Elizabeth is "as playful as a summer insect," her eyes "as lively as a bird's " (Wolf 36). Victor, we hear, "loved to tend on her, as [he] should a favourite animal" (Wolf 36). Like Caroline, she is kept, kept in and kept apart from the outside world (Ellis 124, Mellor 214). And, after Mary's revision, she becomes, in 1831, the "prototype of the Victorian 'angel in the house'" (Mellor 176). Victor now describes her as "a being heaven sent" (E 79). She bears "a celestial stamp in all her features" and she is "fairer than a pictured cherub" (E 79). We also learn that her "saintly soul shone like a shrine-dedicated lamp" (E 82), but, as Ellis reminds us, "to whom, one may ask, is this shrine dedicated" (134)?

Mary may incorporate prototypical images of the Victorian angel in the house, but, by illustrating the deadly consequences of this idealization, she, in fact, questions this view as much as she endorses it.¹⁰ Her changes, like her changes concerning the novel's incest, ostensibly 'tame' her text, but, at the same time, they fail to de-fuse entirely the novel's subversiveness. What Mary illustrates in the later text is that the more closely Elizabeth approximates the Victorian ideal, the more silent and consequently helpless she becomes. Like her mother before her and like the creature himself, Elizabeth approaches the

necrophile's ideal -- a state of the living dead.

One of the changes concerns Elizabeth's regret about not being allowed a "liberal education" (F 89). In the 1818 edition, she not only recognizes the inequalities in her society but voices her opinion concerning them. When Victor sets out for England, she, we are told, "regretted that she did not have the same opportunities of enlarging her experience, and cultivating her understanding" (Wolf 224). In the revised text, Elizabeth becomes more acquiescent and concerned only about Victor's well-being (224). Now when Victor departs, "a thousand conflicting emotions rendered her mute" as she bade him "a tearful, silent farewell" (F 195). She is silenced, as Mellor notes, on two other occasions in the 1831 text:

No longer does Elizabeth protest against her father's plans for Ernest [to be a lawyer]¹¹ or denounce the tyrannical vengeful retribution of the law courts. Bound by the 'immutable laws of nature' and her dependence on the Frankenstein family, Elizabeth Lavenza has become a cypher, the woman as silenced Other.

(176)

As silenced Other, concerned more with the well-being of the Frankenstein men than with her own well-being, Elizabeth acts out the role society demands of her.

Her actions, however, stand in direct opposition to what we are told about the actions of women "born in freedom" (F 165). Such women, as Safie learned, should "aspire to

higher powers of intellect and an independence of spirit" (E 165). Elizabeth, rather than develop her powers of intellect, is "satisfied" with contemplating the "appearances of things" (E 81). She is an "inmate" (E 80), kept apart from the public sphere of commerce and education, is not allowed to travel, and, in the 1831 text, she is even denied the opportunity to speak for herself. Thus, like her mother, and like the "saintly sufferer" (E 131) Justine, Elizabeth, rather than being born "in freedom" is born into a society which suppresses both aspiration and independence of thought and spirit. The last image we are given of Elizabeth is of a lifeless body upon a "wedding bier" (E 235). Like William Blake's "marriage hearse," the image is a grim reminder of the two conclusions to women's stories offered in society. In fact, in three of the marriages in the novel, the two conclusions turn out to be virtually synonymous.

One marriage, however, promises a different conclusion, and thus serves as a commentary on the novel's other marriages. Safie and Felix's marriage (E 179) -- a detail Mary offers almost in passing -- marks a radical departure from the other marriages as well as a change in attitude for Felix. In the Parisian world, Felix once viewed Safie as a "treasure," a commodity of exchange. In the new world he inhabits, one which Safie freely seeks, he comes to see women as equals. He, his sister Agatha and eventually Safie, share the work and perform the same duties. There is

no division of work based on gender and no division of their world into private (female) and public (male) spheres.

Theirs is a society "based on justice, gender equality and mutual affection" (Mellor 118), a society in which men and women are both comforters and providers. As such it marks quite a departure from the world they left behind.

That world, as the creature learned, is built on oppression and injustice. While listening in on Safie's history and civics lessons (unlike Elizabeth, Safie seeks more than the appearances of things), he hears of "the strange system of human society" (E 161). He learns "of the division of property, of immense wealth and squalid poverty" (E 161) and discovers too that without either "a high and unsullied descent" or "riches" a man is a "slave, doomed to waste his powers for the profits of the chosen few" (E 161). He also hears of the evils of imperialism and "wept with Safie over the hapless fate of [America's] original inhabitants" (E 161). And, from Volney's Ruins of Empires (E 160), he also learns, argues Peter Dale Scott, "that cultural decay" is attributed "to political despotism, and despotism to paternal tyranny" ("Vital Artifice" 192). "Paternal tyranny, wrote Volney,"

laid the foundation of political despotism.... In every savage and barbarous state, the father, the chief of the family, is a despot, and a cruel and insolent despot. The wife is a slave, the children his servants.... It is remarkable, that parental authority is great accordingly as

the government is despotic. China, India, and Turkey are striking examples of this.

(quoted by Scott 192)

What the creature learns from Volney, however, only reinforces what readers have already learned. Wives are still enslaved and children such as Caroline and Safie are still servants.

For all its attractiveness, there is something troubling about the De Lacey society. Originally classless, based on the equal distribution of labour, this "polis-as-egalitarian-family" (Mellor 118) eventually begins to ignore its own tenets by introducing a servant class. What threatens to emerge is a leisure class, as now "assisted in their labours by servants," "Felix and Agatha spent more time in amusement and conversation" (E 172). And, too, as symbolized by the blind and feeble father De Lacey, patriarchy is only weakened in this society not gone from it entirely. Felix, as true son, 'instinctively' defends the father when the creature enters and, thus, by resorting to violence, realigns himself with that sex whose mark of distinction is the taking not the giving of life (Simone de Beauvoir 58). Finally, as exiles from their respective homelands, living on the margins of society, Felix and Safie and the alternative ideology they represent, are literally marginalized. In fact, when they escape from their cottage, they disappear altogether. The novel suggests, Mellor

correctly argues, that there seems to be "no place in history" (118) for this alternative to the existing system of human society.

That same fate, significantly, awaits the relationship which the creature envisions. Having learned from the De Laceys how to develop an egalitarian social organization, the creature plans a similar society for himself and his promised mate. Repeatedly he tells readers that his relationship will be based on equality. "My companion," he explains, "will be of the same nature as myself and will be content with the same fare" (E 187). His "virtues," he argues, "will necessarily arise" when he lives "in communion with an equal" (E 185). His mate will be "as deformed and horrible" as he, will have the "same defects" and be "as hideous" (E 185, 187). Yet precisely because of this sameness, they will, the creature adds, "be more attached to one another" (E 187). The "picture" (E 187) he presents to Victor, one which he naively believes is "peaceful and human" (E 187), is, however, radically opposed to the other pictures of domesticity presented in the novel. Moreover, it is a picture which Victor cannot accept. Unable to comprehend such a monstrous utopia, Victor vows to the creature that he will never "create another like [him]self, equal in deformity and wickedness" (E 208). Having been raised in a society which engages in binary thinking, Victor is unable to understand a relationship based on sameness.

Indeed, when he rationalizes against creating a mate, he -- unlike his creature -- composes a list of possible scenarios all of which involve difference, or otherness. First, Victor argues (using a familiar patriarchal trope¹²) that the female "might become ten thousand times more malignant than her mate" (E 206). Then, believing that a proper woman exists to reflect back to man an image of himself, Victor speculates that the male creature might "conceive a greater abhorrence for [his own deformity] when it came before his eyes in the female form" (E 206). Finally, he chauvinistically rationalizes (as Whale would after him in Bride) that, the female, rather than be satisfied with her mate, "might turn with disgust from him to the superior beauty of man" (E 206). Thus, where the creature sees in terms of "like," "same" or "equal," Victor can only see in terms of "more," "greater," or "superior." Armed with patriarchal rationalizations -- rationalizations which have at their base man's superiority -- Victor in "the wantonness of power and cruelty" (E 187), tears "to pieces" the female creature (E 207).¹³ In doing so, he extinguishes a potential "race" -- not "of devils" (E 206), not of angels in the house, but of equals.

In addition to exposing the "'wrongs' done to women and children, friends and fiances, in the name of domestic affection" (Ellis 126), Mary also attacks much that is "ancient in our venerable ... religious institutions." Like

other Gothic writers of her time, Mary especially condemns Roman Catholicism. In the episode with Justine (an episode which, as I have mentioned, also serves as a criticism of the judicial system), Mary presents to her readers the wrongs done to Justine in the name of the Catholic Church. Innocent of any crime, Justine confesses to murdering William Frankenstein because, as she explains to Elizabeth,

Ever since I was condemned, my confessor besieged me; he threatened and menaced, until I almost began to think that I was the monster that he said I was. He threatened excommunication and hell fire in my last moments if I continued obdurate. Dear Lady, I had none to support me; all looked on me as a wretch doomed to ignominy and perdition. What could I do? In an evil hour I subscribed to a lie.

(E 129)

Forced to lie to save her soul, menaced and threatened by her confessor, Justine reveals more than she knows when she describes her time spent in confession as an "evil hour." Her subsequent speeches are also bitterly revealing. Like one of William Blake's innocent children, Justine endures her "sad and bitter world" believing in the promise of a "heaven, where we shall all be happy" (E 129-30). Acting self-consciously as an exemplary figure -- "learn from me," she teaches "to submit in patience to the will of heaven -- " Justine, in fact, illustrates the mortal consequences of the death of Will.

The episode with Justine is also telling in that it

represents one of the rare instances in the novel in which God's name is actually piously invoked (Baldick 43). Victor and his creature may blaspheme God's name but for the most part God is conspicuously absent from Mary's creation story (Baldick 43). Even the allusions to Paradise Lost fail to situate the story in a Christian framework because, as Baldick rightly concludes, Mary revises "Paradise Lost in so decontextualized a manner that the great context Himself is removed, turning the novel into a 'Paradise Lost without angels, or devils, or God'" (42, Levine 7).

Yet to the creature, Victor does represent a Creator. Having read Milton's great epic -- a "true history," as he calls it -- the creature (and the reader) is quick to discover the parallels between his creation and the Christian story of creation (F 171-173). It is "through this perspective," adds Baldick, "that the novel's impieties emerge" (43):

The monster's 'god' comes to be seen as an ineptly negligent creator whose conduct towards his creation is callously unjust. If Adam's complaint in the epigraph is borne in mind as well, the novel begins to look like a nightmarish parody of patriarchal religion, in which the Son is made, not begotten, the Flesh is made Word, and women cede the power of conception to men while being legally framed as criminals (like Eve) or torn to pieces. It is not hard to imagine the pious readers of 1818 feeling that their God and His creation were being grimly mocked.¹⁴

Burton Hatlen, in his "Milton, Mary Shelley, and Patriarchy," argues that Mary does much more than simply mock patriarchal religion: "She puts the patriarchal creator on trial, and she finds him guilty" (32). He is especially guilty, adds Hatlen, of believing that he "'owns' the creature to which he gives birth" (28). The source of his belief, explains Hatlen, is the "patriarchal mythos" of creation, a mythos which argues that the "act of creation is the exclusive prerogative of the male of the species, and it entails rights of ownership both over the 'means' of creation (that is, the female) and over the end result of this act" (Hatlen 20). Consequently, societies which have developed adhering to this mythos (the world of Geneva is no exception), rely on an imbalance of power which

denies the possibility of mutual relationships between equals, demanding instead that in every human relationship one person must be the master while the other must be a slave, that one must give orders while the other obeys, that one must be a subject while the other is an object.

(Hatlen 40)

This is the society that Mary Shelley "summons to the bar of judgement" (Hatlen 40) and finds guilty, and it is a society which finds its rationale in Christianity itself.

In addition to exposing and mocking male Creators, Mary also implicitly mocks traditional views of Creation itself. Indeed, one of the novel's most subversive aspects -- and one which critics fail to discuss -- is its implicit

commentary on what it means to be human. By allowing Victor to succeed in creating a sentient, rational and intelligent being, a being who is, as Harold Bloom argues, "more human than his creator" (Afterword 215), Mary calls into question the longstanding Christian belief that humankind is divinely inspired. No longer descended from the divine Creator, man is now reduced to a conglomerate of dead human and animal parts.¹⁵ No Frankenstein film to date has visualized this detail of the novel: Fritz may rob graveyards and medical laboratories, but he (or his master) has yet to visit "slaughter-houses" (F 98) to furnish parts for the creature. Mary's blurring of the God-given boundary between the animal and the human, shocking in 1818, is no less shocking today. In fact, the public outcry in this decade concerning the religious and ethical implications of transplanting a baboon's heart into an infant (anonymously named "Baby Faye" for her own protection) suggests that we are still within a religious frame that advocates seeing humans as distinct from and elevated above animals. The Baby Faye controversy forced many parties to heed some rather obstinate questionings; fittingly, they are questionings which were once very eloquently voiced by Victor's 'monster': "What was I? Whence did I come? What was my destination?" (F 170). Now when science is on the verge of realizing Victor's experiment, these are questions we may soon be asked to answer.

At the same time that we attempt to grapple with these questions we might, following Mary Shelley's lead, take a critical look at the institution of science itself.

Frankenstein is very much concerned with modern science, and does not present, as Rieger claims, a science which is "switched-on, souped up alchemy" (Rieger xxvii). Victor may have once been interested in the writings of such alchemists as Agrippa, Magnus and Paracelsus, but he soon learns that theirs are "exploded systems" in the "enlightened and scientific age" in which he lives (E 90). He studies "mathematics" (E 86), "modern chemistry" (E 91), "physiology" and "anatomy" (E 95) and, by studying the "natural decay and corruption of the human body" (E 95), he becomes a precursor to the forensic scientist. He repeatedly refers to a "laboratory" (E 93, 94, 205, 206), learns "the uses of ... various machines" (E 93), and, when he discovers the secret of life, he does so not by the aid of magic or some "miracle" (E 96), but instead by "stages of ... discovery" that were "distinct and logical" (E 96).

He prepares for his experiment very logically, building on and learning from the discoveries of others (E 92-101). When he decides to create a mate for the creature, he travels to England to obtain from English philosophers "knowledge and discoveries ... of indispensable use" (E 193). His steps are methodical, logical, and rational, yet, in the popular imagination, Frankenstein has become the

archetypal mad scientist. It is true that in the course of his life Victor suffers from "nervous fevers" (E 100, 105, 217), but these are more the result of his arduous study than the actual impetus for it. He remains sufficiently sane to recognize that any confession of his experiment would be "looked upon as the ravings of insanity" (E 120) or "as madness by the vulgar" (E 123). In fact, Victor reminds Walton very early in his narrative: "Remember, I am not recording the vision of a madman" (E 96). Yet today, in the minds of the vulgar (vulgar in sense of the non-reader), Frankenstein's actions are indeed thought of as madness. Reducing Frankenstein's narrative to the ravings of insanity, however, not only simplifies the novel's psychological complexities but also rather conveniently de-fuses Mary's indictment of science, in particular masculine science.¹⁶

Yet, in a way, the popular view of Frankenstein as the mad scientist is an appropriate one because, by probing and dissecting the ideology of science, Mary exposes the madness such an ideology can promote. If Victor goes mad, he does so because, unlike Walton, he fails to recognize the personal cost science exacts. In the name of science, Victor first severs all ties with his friends and family. He explains that he felt he must "procrastinate all that related to [his] feelings of affection until the great object, which swallowed up every habit of [his] nature, should be completed" (E 99). That great object, Mary illustrates, is

none other than science itself. Eventually, his "eyes" became "insensible to the charms of nature," and "the same feelings which made [him] neglect the scenes around [him] caused [him] also to forget those friends who were so many miles absent" (E 99). Walton, another scientist in search of a "secret" (E 60), also distances himself from "domestic affections" (E 99), and, like Victor, he dedicates himself mind and body to one great objective (E 61). He even "voluntarily endured cold, famine, thirst, and want of sleep," before embarking on his quest for the pole. Such training was necessary, he tells Margaret, for "inuring [his] body to hardship" (E 61). Devotees and "disciple[s]" (E 84) of the religion of science, Walton and Victor become ascetics, inuring themselves not just to hardship but to affection as well.

This emotional detachment renders the scientist blind to all but "one pursuit" (E 98). Under-mates (E 61) to the scientific enterprize, Victor and Walton are seduced by the "enticements of science" (E 94), and once "deeply smitten" (E 81), they will do anything in its service. Walton's confession to Victor illustrates the depth of his commitment:

I was easily led by the sympathy which he evinced to use the language of my heart, to give utterance to the burning ardour of my soul and to say, with all the fervour that warmed me, how gladly I would sacrifice my fortune, my existence, my every hope, to the furtherance of

my enterprize. One man's life or death were but a small price to pay for the acquirement of the knowledge which I sought.

(E 73)

Such blind faith, such zeal is indeed madness. Science -- contrary to the familiar cliché -- does not set Victor and Walton free; instead, it enslaves them. In fact, Victor at one point draws this same conclusion when he confesses to Walton that he "appeared rather like one doomed by slavery to toil in the mines, or any other unwholesome trade than an artist occupied by his favourite employment" (E 101). He is confined to a "solitary chamber, or rather cell" (E 98), a prisoner to his scientific enterprize.

Brian Easlea, in his Fathering the Unthinkable, convincingly argues that the mentality of such scientists as Victor and Walton is all too common among scientists today. Mellor agrees, and adds that the scientific demand for "'objectivity'" and "detachment" -- a demand willingly accepted by Victor and Walton can result in

a dangerous division between what C.P. Snow called 'two cultures,' between the power-seeking practices of science and the concerns of humanists with moral responsibility, emotional communion, and spiritual values.

(112)

Aware only in retrospect of this division, a division which can inure scientists to matters emotional or spiritual, Victor explains to readers:

a churchyard was to me merely the receptacle of bodies deprived of life, which, from being the seat of beauty and strength, had become food for the worm. Now I was led to examine the cause and progress of this decay and forced to spend days and nights in vaults and charnel houses. My attention was fixed upon every object the most insupportable to the delicacy of the human feelings.

(F 95-6)

Victor was "led" to this life, "forced" to spend his life in vaults and charnel-houses not because he was mad but because he believed in an ideology which demanded a degree of emotional detachment bordering on the edge of madness. Moreover, his desire for the "acquisition of knowledge" (F 89), laudable in the realm of science, can be (and has been) dangerous and destructive. Victor's -- like the scientists' after him -- was quite literally an "anti-natural dream" (Easlea 45).¹⁷

Mary Shelley, in fact, contrasts Victor's project with the natural world around him, throwing into higher relief the unnaturalness of his experiment. We learn that while "thus engaged, heart and soul, in one pursuit" (F 94, 98), Victor failed to notice that it was "a most beautiful season; never did the fields bestow a more plentiful harvest or the vines yield a more luxuriant vintage" (F 98). Rather than bestow life in the spring -- a time of the "blossoms and expanding leaves" -- Victor reverses the natural order, bringing his child to life on a "dreary night of November" (F

99, 101). And, having successfully completed his experiment, Victor abdicates all responsibility, leaving the consequences of his scientific discovery to others to face. The scenario is by now a familiar one.

Mary also points an accusing finger at Victor's motivation. Again what she finds in need of "keeping" (E 64) in her scientist extends to science itself. Victor may altruistically explain to Walton that because of his studies he "could banish disease from the human frame" (E 85), but he also egotistically believed that if he succeeded a "new species would bless me as its creator and source" and would "owe their being to me" (E 97). What he seeks is power. He had initially turned to the "dreams of forgotten alchemists" (E 91) because these "masters" of "science sought immortality and power" (E 91), and he rejects modern science until Waldman counters that the "modern masters" had "acquired new and almost unlimited power" (E 92).

He also seeks the personal fame and glory that his discovery would bring. "Wealth," he admits "was an inferior object but what glory would attend the discovery if I could banish disease from the human frame" (E 85). Walton repeats the same creed and explains to his sister "I preferred glory to every enticement that wealth placed in my path" (E 61). Power and glory become the motivating forces in both scientists' lives. At one point in his narrative,

Victor steps outside himself, uttering his and science's rallying cry:

So much has been done, exclaimed the soul of Frankenstein -- more, far more, will I achieve; treading in the steps already marked, I will pioneer a new way, explore unknown powers, and unfold to the world the deepest mysteries of creation.

(F 92)

His search for the mysteries of creation is an egotistical, "selfish pursuit" (F 113). In creating life he collaborates with no one; secluded in his "workshop of filthy creation," in his "solitary chamber" (F 98), he alone discovers "the cause of generation and life" (F 96). Thus the power and the glory that attend this discovery will become his and his alone.

While Victor pursues nature to her hiding places, he is assisted in his pursuit by an ideology which presents nature as female and passive and science as male and active. Once again, Mary Shelley holds such a view up to close scrutiny. Throughout the early stages of his narrative, (and we should remember that it is his narrative), Victor engenders nature as female, and, like the scientists before (and after) him, he wants to "penetrate into the recesses of nature and show how she works in her hiding-places" (F 92). He admits he was "always ... imbued with a fervent longing to penetrate the secrets of nature" and became the acolyte of "men who had penetrated deeper and knew more" (F 84).

Indeed, when Victor speaks of his desire to learn these secrets, he frequently relies on sexual metaphors and describes his passion in highly charged, erotic language. Curious "to learn the hidden laws of nature," he experiences a "gladness akin to rapture" (F 81); he suffers an "unremitting ardour" (F 98). When he studies the discoveries of modern philosophers, he comes away from his studies "discontented and unsatisfied" because they had only "partially unveiled the face of Nature, [and] her immortal lineaments were still a wonder and a mystery" (F 84). When he actively seeks to unfold these mysteries, he experiences "delight and rapture" because

After so much time spent in painful labour, to arrive at once at the summit of [his] desires was the most gratifying consummation of [his] toils.

(F 96)

Finally, Victor's night of creation arrives, and, as he describes this night to Walton, he also describes his mounting rapture and unremitting ardour as he approaches the climax of his labours:

the moon gazed on my midnight labours, while with unrelaxed and breathless eagerness, I pursued nature to her hiding-places My limbs now tremble, and my eyes swim with the remembrance; but then a resistless and almost frantic impulse urged me forward; I seemed to have lost soul or sensation but for this one pursuit.

(F 98)

Enraptured, Victor cannot resist the frantic impulse to rape nature. Penetrating "vaults" and "charnel-houses," he "disturbed, with profane fingers the secrets of the human frame" (F 95,98). Desirous of mastering nature, and at the same time envious of nature's procreative power, he strives to become mother-nature. In his insistence on describing his experiment with sexual metaphors of penetration, metaphors of a "pregnant phallus" (Easlea 49), and in his frantic search to discover nature's secrets, he "illustrates" what Mary Daly calls "the hysteria of the manic mother-mimer who experiences his inherent male sterility as unbearable barrenness" (Gyn/Ecology 70). Envious of nature's great womb, Victor as Promethean figure succeeds in stealing it. Yet as the barren wastes of the Arctic suggest, Victor's Creation is inevitably a sterile one. The creature himself recognizes this aspect of Victor's new world. Indeed, in his final words, Victor's child paints a picture "livid with the hues of death," describing not a glorious creation but rather a great "conflagration" (F 261). (For readers living in the nuclear age, the consequences of science threaten an even greater conflagration). Mary, in fact, telegraphs such an end earlier in Victor's narrative. Intentionally playing on the double meanings of the words "conceived" and "executed," she deftly critiques Victor's project, encapsulating its deadly consequences in one sentence. "My imagination," explains Victor, "was vivid, yet my powers of analysis and application

were intense; by the union of these qualities I conceived the idea and executed the creation of a man" (E 250).

The union of Victor's imagination and powers of analysis, however, results in the birth of a grotesque monster. But what is in fact monstrous is Victor's power of analysis itself. His thinking, as Mellor, Easlea, Merchant, and Keller have shown, is typical of "a particular mode of thinking which we might call 'scientific,'" and it is a mode which is the "product of the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century" (Mellor 110). Francis Bacon, once called the "'Patriark of Experimental Philosophy,'" called on all the "sons of knowledge" to turn "'with united forces against the Nature of things, to storm and occupy her castle and strongholds'" (Easlea 20-21). Victor, a true son, had "gazed upon the fortifications and impediments that seemed to keep human beings from entering the citadel of nature" (E 84), and answering Bacon's battle call, he is driven to penetrate her barriers. As a product of the scientific revolution, Victor comes to see nature as "something separate," a passive Other "to serve his own ends, to gratify his own desires for power, wealth, and reputation" (Mellor 110, 112).

Like his forefather, Francis Bacon, Victor construes nature as a woman. He believes too that the aim of the new philosophy is to "search Nature out of her Concealments, and unfold her dark Mysteries" (Mellor 111). Victor wants to remove nature's lineaments and discover her 'secrets'. His

choice of words is highly appropriate. This term, as Easlea has discovered, was once linked to female genitalia when Giovanni della Porta's Natural Magick was translated into English in the mid seventeenth century. In it, the female genitalia were explicitly called "'the Secrets'" (25). Thus, it is hardly surprising that images of disrobing recur throughout the writings of the men of science. Indeed, Sir Humphry Davy had once written of the powers of biochemistry: "'the skirt only of the veil which conceals these mysterious and sublime processes has been lifted up and the grand view is as yet unknown'" (Easlea 28). Bacon had promised his followers that "time will only show" what nature may do once "her folds have been shaken out" (Easlea 21). Victor experiences rapture when the "hidden laws of nature" were "unfolded" to him (E 81). The sexual metaphor of nature as "a woman to be unveiled, unclothed and penetrated by masculine science" (Easlea 27), was, in 1902, "visually encoded" in Ernest Barrias' statue at the entrance to the Faculté de Médecine of the Université de Paris (Mellor 111, Easlea 27). The statue, explains Easlea, is of "a young woman, her breasts bared, her head slightly bowed beneath the veil she is taking off [and] bears the inscription La Nature Se Devoilant Devant La Science" (27).

The consequences of this ideology are all too apparent today. They were also foretold in Frankenstein. Willingly exiled from all domestic affections and not at all interested

in the "moral relations of things " (E 82), Victor epitomizes the detached objective scientist. Indeed, as if to emulate this objectivity, Mary Shelley the author remains detached from her subject. She lets her three men tell their stories and lets readers draw their own conclusions. In doing so, however, she raises some very disturbing questions about objectivity itself.

By filtering events through a series of narrators, Mary draws attention to the problem of interpretation. Like Margaret Saville, we are asked to sort through the evidence and piece the story (or stories) together. But what becomes apparent is that, unlike the interpretations presented in the early Frankenstein films, the story cannot be reduced to a simple moral; events are not always black and white. Caught up in a web of subjectivity, we are, as Jackson rightly concludes,

never returned to a position of confidence in relation to the tale such as would be the case in a third-person omniscient narrative where an 'objective,' authoritative (authorial) voice, knowing all, tells the meaning of the events.

(29-30)

Unlike her creature, who leaves "marks" and "inscriptions" (E 244) for guidance, Mary offers no such signposts for her readers. At times, the story reads like a "frightful dream" (E 223) without "the force of reality" (E 218). Yet at the same time, "the story is too connected to be mistaken for a dream" (E 238) and contains "internal

evidence of the truth of the events of which it is composed" (E 75). What we learn from Victor, for instance, is "connected and told with an appearance of the simplest truth" (E 248), but what we hear from the creature is also 'true.' Consequently, after hearing what either narrator relates as a "true history" (E 171), we are, like Walton and his crew, in the same position as when we began. Left without any sense of closure -- the creature we learn is only "lost in darkness and distance" (E 261) -- we must "deduce" our own "moral" from the tales (E 75). Our task, however, is not as simple and straightforward as Victor suggests, given what Mary illustrates about 'facts.' They are not always objective and empirically verifiable but are instead relative and highly subjective.

Not only does Mary refuse to indulge in any "moralizing" (E 99) -- something which greatly unsettled the novel's early reviewers -- but she adds to our dis-ease by calling into question a long held belief in the referentiality of language. Using the naivety of the monster as a means of defamiliarization (Baldick 53), Mary offers readers a new look at language. Indeed, the creature's situation serves as an analogue to the reader's: like him we are trying to make sense of and read all the "signs" (E 155). And, like him, we search for "any clue by which" to "unravel the mystery of their reference" (E 154). The problem both we and the creature face is the plurality

of language. We are "baffled" (E 154) by what Baldick terms the novel's "dialogical openness" (43) and its "abundant excess of meanings" (33). Indicative of the novel's "extraordinary resistance to simple resolutions and its almost inexhaustible possibilities of significance" (Levine "Ambiguous Heritage" 18) is Paul Sherwin's catalogue of critical interpretations of the creature:

As the reader increasingly acknowledges the larger cultural and biographical context that constitutes the penumbra of the fiction, critical representations of what the Creature represents multiply endlessly. If, for the orthodox Freudian, he is a type of the unconscious, for the Jungian he is the shadow, for the Lacanian an objet a, for one Romanticist a Blakean "spectre," for another a Blakean "emanation"; he also has been or can be read as Rousseau's natural man, a Wordsworthian child of nature, the isolated Romantic rebel, the misunderstood revolutionary impulse, Mary Shelley's abandoned baby self, her abandoned babe, an aberrant signifier, difference, or as hypostasis of godless presumption, the monstrosity of a god-less nature, analytical reasoning, or alienating labor.

(890)

"How strange," admitted the creature "that the same cause should produce such opposite effects" (E 146).

Responding to what Sherwin sees as "an overload of signification" (890), Baldick explains that

The source of this dizzying profusion of meanings appears to lie in Mary Shelley's overloading of the novel with approximately parallel 'codes' of signification -- psychological, pedagogic, sexual, Miltonic,

political -- which overlap and interfere with one another at so many points that no single line of interpretation can convincingly fend off all the others.

(56)

Thus, because the novel refuses to be read as a simple allegory, any interpretation is both sufficient and insufficient. Those readers seeking a narrative with a logical, linear development and a well-defined teleology will be disappointed and perhaps frustrated by a text which relies on a circular and circuitous narrative structure. Creation (both Victor's and her own), Mary seems to be saying, is not always logical. Interpreting or reading Creation necessarily brings with it an "overload of signification."

Mary not only calls into question the problems of interpreting the "'real,' be it in terms of linguistic competence" or of "fabricating monistic versions of 'real' time" and "space" (Jackson 84), but she "violate[s] the most cherished of all human unities: the unity of character" (Jackson 82). The con-fusing by the general public of the created with the creator (a confusion generated and reinforced by popular culture more than the novel) is highly appropriate given the numerous parallels in the novel between Victor and his creature. Victor and the creature are, as I have previously mentioned, both Promethean figures and are equally "eloquent and

persuasive." Both alternate between playing the complementary roles of persecutor and persecuted, master and slave, pursued and pursuer, victim and victimizer. Both allude to Milton's Paradise Lost and both parallel their situations to Satan's. Victor sees himself as the "archangel who aspired to omnipotence" (E 250), while the creature "considered Satan as the fitter emblem of [his] condition" (E 171). Victor, reciting Paradise Lost, claims that he "bore a hell within" him (E 130), and his creature, equally versed in Milton's epic, admits that "Evil henceforth became my good" (E 258). Victor, in fact, makes the connection explicit when he explains to Walton that he "considered the living being ... nearly in light of [his] own vampire, [his] own spirit let loose from the grave" (E 120).

But the bond between Victor and his creature represents only one of the numerous pairings or doublings in the novel. Walton, for instance, is also linked to Victor. He is, argues Levine,

an incipient Frankenstein, in his way precisely in Frankenstein's position: ambitious for glory, embarked on a voyage of scientific discovery, putting others to risk for his work, isolated from the rest of mankind by his ambition, and desperately lonely.

("Realism" 19)

Walton is also associated with Victor both on a linguistic level through Mary's repetition of such terms as "ardour"

(E 73/81) "ardent" (E 60/85) and "ardently" (E 67/89), and by a digression she added to her 1831 text. Her digression points directly to the link between the two men and introduces the motif of doubling which she sustains throughout the novel. After Walton tells him of his desire for an "intimate sympathy with a fellow mind" (E 73), Victor counters: " 'I agree with you,' ... 'we are unfashioned creatures, but half made up'" (E 73). As if to remind readers of Victor's belief concerning half selves or doubles, Walton explains to Margaret one short paragraph later that "Such a man has a double existence" (E 74).

Doubling, however, is only half of the story. Indeed, as William Veeder's jacket cover illustrates, characters in Frankenstein are not simply divided into two selves but into multiple selves. Clerval, like Walton, is an "aspiring poet" and like Walton he can also be seen as Victor's "alter-ego" (Mellor 76). As "Frankenstein's friend from boyhood," he echoes, adds Levine, "an aspect of Frankenstein's self" ("Realism" 19):

Clerval is, surely, Frankenstein without the monster. Both men reject the occupations of everyday life, both are consumed by great ambitions, both are kept humane by the influence of the same women, and, in the end, both are destroyed by Frankenstein's own creation, by the aspect of Frankenstein which ignores the 'moral relations of things.' Moreover, when Clerval dies, Frankenstein is not only accused of the murder (and seems unwilling to exculpate himself though he has the evidence that will do so), but he falls

mortally ill -- as though he himself has been the victim.

(19)

Leonard Wolf agrees that "Clerval represents the gentler, non-demonic Victor," but also adds: "it can be argued that Clerval is a kind of male Elizabeth" (232). But adding even further to our confusion, Henry Clerval is also linked to the monster. After being released from prison, Victor confuses Henry with the monster. He relates his confusion to Walton:

I saw around me nothing but a dense and frightful darkness, penetrated by no light but the glimmer of two eyes that glared upon me. Sometimes they were the expressive eyes of Henry, languishing in death, the dark orbs nearly covered by the lids and the long black lashes that fringed them; sometimes it was the watery, clouded eyes of the monster, as I first saw them in my chamber at Ingolstadt.

(E 222)

Yet at the same time that Mary associates the monster with Clerval, she also associates the monster with Elizabeth. As William Veeder perceptively argues,

Elizabeth's insistence upon herself as the murderer links her with the monster and highlights other links. Like the monster whose eyes are 'dun white,' Elizabeth after the murder has 'lustreless eyes.' Like the monster, she is associated with the moon. And most important, Victor's epithet for her, 'insect,' recurs when he calls the creature 'vile insect.'

(169, on 'vile insect,' see also Wolf 35)

This relationship between Elizabeth and the creature is visually and humorously highlighted in Young Frankenstein when the creature is reunited "not with Victor, but with Elizabeth" (Knoepflmacher 108). It is a doubling, however, which was visualized as early as 1927 by Peggy Webling. Like Brooks after her and Mary before her, Webling links Victor's fiancée to the creature. Responding to the creature's advances, Victor's fiancée confesses: "There was some call from his body to mine that I could not deny" (quoted in Forry's "The Foulest Toadstool" 200). As Madeline Kahn reminds us in Young Frankenstein, the mystery of life is sexual.

In addition to the doubling which exists among the major characters, there is also doubling among the minor characters. As both Levine and Gilbert/Gubar argue, all the characters' histories "echo and re-echo each other" so that each "story seems a variation on every other" (229, 20). Justine, as I have already mentioned, is linked with Caroline, and is explicitly asked to take her place. But she is also, as Levine argues, a double of Elizabeth: "both are found by the Frankenstein family and rescued from poverty, and both accuse themselves, in different ways, of the murder of Frankenstein's youngest brother" ("Realism" 20). Elizabeth herself is an echo of Caroline, but she is also "paired with ... the unfinished 'bride' of the

Monster" ("Ambiguous Heritage" 15).

Thus, whether minor or major, the characters in Frankenstein suffer in varying degrees from an unbearable likeness of being. Indeed, "Like figures in a dream, all the people in Frankenstein have different bodies and somehow, horribly, the same face, or worse -- the same two faces" (Gilbert and Gubar 229). What Mary refuses to present, as Levine, Veeder and Jackson all conclude, are characters who are rational, logical and, above all, unified. Instead, she presents characters who are incomplete and fragmented, "unstable and shifting" (Baldick 44). She offers, as Jackson concludes, "subjects in process, suggesting possibilities of innumerable other selves, of different histories, different bodies" (177-8). It is the creature -- a literalization of the fragmented self sutured together -- who intimates (and illustrates) that subjectivity "is not innate, not genetically determined, but socially produced" (Weedon 21). He learns, for instance, that Agatha and Felix "had each of them several names" and that their names changed according to the role they were playing: "The girl was called 'sister' or 'Agatha' and the youth 'Felix,' 'brother,' or 'son'" (E 154). And, he reaches a similar conclusion about subjectivity when he refers to himself. After learning of Victor's death, the creature, using images of fluidity and flux, confesses to Walton (E 154) that "the miserable

series of my being is wound to its close" (E 257). Like the reader, he comes to realize that subjectivity is a series of roles or positions, that the "'I' is more than one" (Cixous 389).

Mary's questioning of traditional cultural assumptions concerning identity, something Jackson asserts is the "most radical, transgressive function of the fantastic" (83), represents one of the many subversions in Frankenstein. The venerable institutions of the church and state are exposed as being oppressive and unjust. Marriage is shown not as an ideal but as "the instrument par excellence of the oppression of women" (Weedon 40). In fact, women in Frankenstein who aspire to becoming angels in the house, illustrate to us the fatal consequences of believing in such an ideal. In the public sphere, science, both medical and political, is presented as yet another form of institutionalized oppression, providing, Mary illustrates, the rationale for violating both nature and nations. Indeed, violation is a dominant motif in Frankenstein. Mary repeatedly violates her readers' sensibilities by including such tabooed subjects as incest, necrophilia, rape and homoeroticism, all of which call into question society's limited (and limiting) views on sexuality. In fact, through the image of the creature, Mary illustrates that sexuality is not as rigidly defined as society says it is. The creature combines those

qualities which society labels as masculine and feminine. He is strong, aggressive, powerful, and logical; but he is also irrational, sentimental (moved by the warmth and affection of the De Lacey home), and is "respectful of that same Wordsworthian and feminine Nature whose 'recesses' its creator is so eager to 'penetrate'" (Knoepfelmacher 106). He can be read as alternately representing Victor's aggressive phallic side (Sherwin 885) and Victor's feminine side, the side he suppresses to perform his experiment. What he thus comes to symbolize is an androgyne (Day 142). Yet, as reactions to his physical form illustrate, and as Victor's reaction to his plans for an androgynous society attest, the concept is, in the Genevan world of the novel, monstrous.

When Frankenstein was first introduced to the public, it was criticized for being diseased and tasteless, and for failing to inculcate a "lesson of conduct, manners, or morality." It quickly became something which the creature himself hoped he would not become: an intrusion. Repeatedly in Frankenstein Mary removes the veil of familiarity from our venerable and ancient civil and religious institutions and asks us to look again at the cultural assumptions which underlie (and are generated) by them. She also questions her readers' assumptions concerning fiction itself. As critics such as Fiedler, Punter, Day and Jackson all variously conclude, Mary

parodies and subverts the tradition of realism. Like other Gothic writers, Mary illustrates that

'realism' is not the whole story: the world at least in some aspects, is very much more inexplicable or mysterious, or terrifying, or violent -- than that. And furthermore, the Gothic writer goes on, the problem of realism is that it assumes that in some simple sense we can as writers uncover and demonstrate laws of cause and effect; yet this is merely to simplify and distort, for the world is not most usefully or memorably explicable in terms of cause and effect.¹⁸

(Day 407)

In the world of Frankenstein, there is no closure, characters are not "the full-bodied, three-dimensional 'rounded' characters of George Eliot's Middlemarch or Tolstoy's War and Peace" (Jackson 104), and 'reality' is not always clearly distinguishable from the world of dreams. In fact, 'reality,' Mary seems to say, is nothing more than a series of narratives, of stories, of fictions. The reviewer who believed that art, by re-producing life, can teach us life lessons, has it the wrong way around. Art does not mimic life; life mimics art.¹⁹ Indeed, such is the case each time the label "Frankenstein" is affixed to a political leader, a scientific experiment or a revolutionary uprising.

There is much in Frankenstein to direct the Quarterly reviewer to speak metaphorically of dis-ease and much to encourage the South African government to ban the

novel. Less overtly but, I believe, no less effectively, the novel continues to be banned on this continent. Not literally banned, the novel is, because of a variety of forces, as distanced from the reader as any banned work. Literary critics, for instance, continue to find fault with the novel, or with Mary Shelley herself (or both) and as a consequence Frankenstein is marginalized, excluded from the literary canon. Playwrights, filmmakers, novelists, politicians and cartoonists compound the problem. Like Peake, for instance, they interpret the novel for us, attaching to it moral labels. Although today the labels may no longer be as morally conventional as Peake's or as literal and unambiguous as Life Without Soul's inter-titles, they nonetheless work to contain the novel's subversiveness. (The Ygor and Fritz characters of Frankenstein films, for example, may seem to be nothing more than comic additions to an otherwise serious story, yet they actually deflect blame from Victor and thus radically alter the impact of Mary's original story). In addition, because the novel has been appropriated by and subsumed into the world of popular culture, it has come to be viewed (perhaps unintentionally) as being 'simply' escapist, entertainment fiction -- something not worthy of serious literary study. Moreover, because it is difficult to separate what we think we know of the novel from what we know because of film versions of it, we may tend to avoid

the novel, feeling that, like everyone else, we already know the story of Frankenstein. Thus we have been blinded to the novel by too much rather than by too little exposure to the myth. But, as I have mentioned, and will now discuss more fully, what we 'know' of the novel is, for most of us who have been exposed to filmic afterimages of the myth, a 'tamer' version of Mary's story. What we have been given and continue to receive are controlled doses of an attenuated form of the novel. We have, as a consequence, been inoculated against the dis-ease which the novel elicits. The processes of this inoculation will be the focus of the following chapter.

Chapter Four

Screen Memory: A Postscript

'Oh it is not thus - not thus,' interrupted the being. 'Yet such must be the impression conveyed to you by what appears to be the purport of my actions.'

Frankenstein

We speak still of 'sunrise' and 'sunset.'
We do so as if the Copernican model of the solar system had not replaced, ineradicably, the Ptolemaic. Vacant metaphors, eroded figures of speech inhabit our vocabulary and grammar. They are caught, tenaciously, in the scaffolding and recesses of our common parlance. There they rattle about like old rags or ghosts in the attic.

George Steiner Real Presences

Thus have I put down my thoughts. I may have deceived myself; I may be in the wrong; I try to examine myself; and such as I have written appears to me the exact truth.

Mary Shelley

In the closing pages of Frankenstein, the creature, after learning of Victor's death, promises to take his own life. Before he departs for the "most northern extremity of the globe" (F 260), he explains to Walton: "He is dead who called me into being; and when I shall be no more, the very remembrance of us both will speedily vanish" (F 260). To the present-day reader, such a statement could not be any further from the truth. Neither Victor nor his creature shows any sign of vanishing from our memory. Indeed, while writing this thesis, I repeatedly encountered new and various uses of the Frankenstein myth. The creature and his 'bride,' for instance, now promote Seagram's latest product, Fruit Schnapps.¹ The television programme The People's Court uses the angry villagers from Whale's Frankenstein to warn against the consequences of failing to watch their programme. Epic Waves Permanents appropriates the image of the 'Bride' from Whale's film to promise today's woman that their product -- unlike others -- will not result in a "monstrous commitment" to a Nefertiti-like hairstyle. Frankenstein (again a reference to the monster not the maker) has also been used in the context of steroid use among Canadian amateur athletes.² And, the recent film Twins continues to keep the myth alive. In fact, it not only uses Frankenstein as an intertext but explicitly refers

to Mary's story.

After having been separated from birth -- a birth which like Victor's creature's represented the fruition of a scientific experiment -- a set of twins meets for the first time. Julius (Arnold Schwarzenegger) -- the perfected twin -- has been raised in physical isolation and has been, like Mary's creature, exposed to the best that has been known and thought in the world. Vincent (Danny De Vito) -- the embodiment of flawed genetic material -- directs the viewers' attention to the Frankensteinian parallels in a scene in which he tries to teach Julius how to walk. Remarking on his twin's stiff and stilted posture, Vincent asks: "have you ever seen Frankenstein?" Julius responds: "No, but I read the book." Exasperated with his brother's ignorance, Vincent grumbles: "That's not gonna help." Here, Vincent humorously, but no less perceptively, makes explicit the disparity which presently exists between Whale's version of Frankenstein and the myth as Mary herself presented it. Thus, in a way, the creature was right: our memories of him and his creator have speedily vanished. But as quickly as they have faded, they have been replaced by film memories of Mary's myth.

What we and Vincent share is a screen memory of the myth. It is, I believe, a type of memory which has much in common with Freud's psychoanalytic term "screen memory."³ Like our childhood memories, our film memories of

Frankenstein are "plastically visual"; they are "regular scenes worked out in plastic form, comparable only to representations on the stage" (Psychopathology 47). Further, like our earliest memories, our film memories are often re-visions or "falsifications" of the "genuine memory-trace" (Psychopathology 47). Like screen memories, film memories prove to be "tendentious," serving "the purposes of repression and replacement of objectionable or disagreeable impressions" (Early Psycho-Analytic Publications 322). They thus screen out much that is disturbing or much that is a source of dis-ease in the novel.

Our film memories, however, do more than screen us from Frankenstein's subversiveness. They also actively immunize us against the novel's dis-ease. Because they represent certain disturbing -- but by now acceptable -- aspects of the novel, they, "by means of a small inoculation of acknowledged evil," immunize "the contents of the collective imagination," thereby protecting it "against the risk of generalized subversion" (Barthes Mythologies 150). This is, as I have been illustrating, an ongoing process. Each time a filmic afterimage is recalled by a parodist such as Mel Brooks or by a cartoonist such as Gary Larson, we receive a type of cultural booster shot, one which increases or renews the effect of the original shot (ie. Whale's films). This process is not only ongoing but is also, for the most part, a process of which the general public is

unaware. Since Hollywood films and popular culture are not considered 'serious' art forms and are instead viewed as being 'simply' entertainment, films such as Whale's Frankenstein and Bride of Frankenstein escape any kind of critical analyses by the viewing public. But, as Jowett and Linton argue, "Movies, like all the mass media, serve as a potent source of informal education, and their content, no matter how innocuous it may appear, is never entirely free of value judgments or even of ideological or political biases" (109). Indeed, quoting Brazilian filmmaker Glauber Rocha, Linton argues that "Hollywood's allegedly non-ideological films" are "'the most political' and 'the most politically effectual cinema'" (18). The dismissing of these films, then, on the grounds that they are not to be taken seriously only "helps to further the myth that [Hollywood film] is pure entertainment, a condition conducive to its ideological work" (Weedon 171).⁴ To discover this ideological work, we must not be, as was Elizabeth, content with the "appearances of things" (E 81) but instead must "penetrate into the recesses" of film to discover how it works in its "hiding places" (E 92). Indeed, how film presents Mary's myth is in many respects as important as what it presents (or fails to present).

Mary, as I have discussed, uses a variety of narrative strategies, many of which unsettle and disturb the reader. She offers us a series of stories, and stories

within stories, leaving us the task of piecing them together. That task, however, is complicated by Frankenstein's dialogical openness and plurality, its polyphonal structure, and its subverting of the conventions of classical realism. Like the viewer of the film Citizen Kane, we are privy to all the facts, but we quickly discover that 'facts' are relative. Thus, even when we have heard all of the "evidence," we discover, as did Susan Alexander in Citizen Kane, that part of the puzzle will always be missing. In Frankenstein, there is no authorial voice to interpret the significance of events; there is no moral embedded in the novel's closing pages; and there is no sense of closure. Of the novel's lack of closure, Wolf persuasively argues:

Critics generally have taken the creature's word for the deed and have assumed that he had indeed gone off to die. But there is a hovering uncertainty about the matter, a poignant puzzle made particularly baffling because all the other deaths in this book have been so direct and unambiguous. Then why, since the author of a book has merely to write a fictive death to accomplish it, has the creature been left in the limbo of his own promise to die?

(332)

It is a question which Mary refuses to answer, yet it has become a question which Frankenstein films exist to answer. Whether by fiery inferno or fantastic explosions, the creature is always spectacularly destroyed in the movies. Indeed, as I have mentioned, his death is part of the "seek-

and-destroy" formula of the horror film genre. He may return by way of film sequels -- a return which seems to undercut the original film's sense of closure or finality -- but any anxiety his reappearance generates is dissipated by the sequel's own destruction of the monster. Thus, even though sequels tell us that the monster can re-surface at any time, they also reassure us that, each time he returns, he will be destroyed. Following the same formula as *Whale*, they too leave no doubt as to the creature's inevitable death.

Similarly, in film, there is no doubt as to what the creature looks like. By contrast, Mary offers only a limited description of the being, leaving it to her readers to fill in the gaps and to fashion -- as did Victor -- their own image of the monstrous. These gaps or areas of indeterminacy in the novel are, however, not a part of the *Frankenstein* films. Unlike the novel with its profusion of possible interpretations, *Frankenstein* films, because of the intervention of the camera, collect up "meanings which may be lying around in the text," streamlining "them into one, single coherent interpretation which it fixes as inescapable" (Holderness 184). Equally fixed is the Universal image of the monster. And, now that he has been given a face and a form, he no longer elicits our fear. His very familiarity diminishes the threat he once posed -- the threat of the strange, of the Other.⁵ Indeed, because of

the Karloffian monster's association with such characters as Abbott and Costello or the young children of the recent film The Monster Squad, Mary's creature has been reduced to a tame -- even affable -- figure.

But, long before these associations were made, the monster was tamed for the public. Part of this taming process stems from the narrative point of view of Whale's films. Using the point of view of a neutral third observer in conjunction with what is termed the "view behind" (Kuhn 62), classic horror films, as McConnell argues, literally "flatten the horror," converting "the potential depth-perception of panic into a two-dimensional tableau which ... underscores the facetiousness of the monster" (32). At the same time, McConnell counters, because "the remorselessly plain camera angles of these movies insist on the same vantage for humans and monsters," they "therefore inadvertently project flat visual equivalence between the 'normal' and the freakish which is finally a devastating reduction of humanistic perception" (32). This visual equivalence, however, is tame by comparison to the equivalence Mary offers between the 'normal' and the freakish. Repeatedly in the novel, she presents Victor and his creature as doubles of one another: both are Promethean figures; both alternately assume the roles of pursuer/pursued, master/slave, victimizer/victim; and both are eloquent and persuasive. Frankenstein films not only

eliminate this doubling but, by presenting a creature who is an inarticulate brute, also assure viewers that man is superior to the beast. This is not the case in the novel. In fact, as Bloom argues, the creature is, at times, "more human than his creator." Such a conclusion is particularly disturbing given that the creature is composed of dead animal as well as dead human parts. Indeed, the humanist's view that man, in rising above his own animality, is superior to the beast is radically subverted by Mary Shelley. The flat visual equivalence that McConnell identifies only serves, I believe, to inoculate us against the more deadly dis-ease the novel generates.

Moreover, in making this claim, McConnell overlooks, I would argue, the vast difference between the position of the spectator of the film and the position of the characters in the film. There may be a visual equivalence between the scientist and the creature but any uneasiness such equivalence may elicit is dissipated by the sense of mastery the film grants the spectator.

"Entertainment cinema offers," as John Ellis perceptively argues,

the possibility of seeing events and comprehending them from a position of separation and mastery.... Hence the spectator's position is one of power, specifically the power to understand events rather than to change them.... It is a position of knowledge ... [and] mastery.... The position of ultimate vision in any fiction film is not that of any of the characters, but that of the spectator. The

spectator can see everything the characters see, together with both the characters' acts of seeing, and those things that are kept hidden from the gaze of the characters.

(81-84)

Thus, rather than challenge our beliefs about man's privileged place in the world, horror films, by stimulating in the spectator feelings of superiority and mastery, actually function to reinforce them. Similarly, by granting the spectator ultimate vision, Frankenstein films radically alter Mary's novel, taming both its form and its content.

Thematically, films such as Frankenstein and Bride of Frankenstein also reduce the novel's subversiveness. Baldick's claim, for instance, that the Frankenstein myth "carries a skeleton story, which requires only two sentences" (3) owes, I believe, more to film versions of the myth than to Mary's novel. It is true that in Frankenstein Victor "makes a living creature out of bits of corpses," but it is simplistic at best to say that the "creature turns against him and runs amok" (3). This may be the impression Victor would like to convey, but it is not the impression which remains after we have heard the creature's side of the story. His acts of revenge, from the framing of Justine to the murders of Clerval and Elizabeth, are calculated and extremely rational. The inarticulate brute of Frankenstein films may run amok, or be remembered as a "monster" who "becomes an uncontrollable beast" (jacket cover of

Universal's home video), but Mary's creature is extremely controlled, and plans his revenge very methodically. And, after we hear his narrative, we cannot help but feel that his desire for revenge is, if not justified, at least understandable.

In addition, films, by perpetuating the myth of the uncontrollable monster, work to screen us from the damning fact that the creature learns how to "work mischief" (E 184) by following the example of others. As he asks Walton,

Am I to be thought the only criminal, when all mankind sinned against me? Why do you not hate Felix, who drove his friend from his door with contumely? Why do you not execrate the rustic who sought to destroy the saviour of his child? Nay, these are virtuous and immaculate beings!

(E 259)

This aspect of the novel is not, however, part of the skeleton story Baldick identifies. Nor is the remorse the creature feels once his creator has died. "Monsters" and "beasts" who run amok do not say such things as:

'But it is true that I am a wretch. I have murdered the lovely and the helpless; I have strangled the innocent as they slept.... You hate me, but your abhorrence cannot equal that with which I regard myself. I look on the hands which executed the deed; I think on the heart in which the imagination of it was conceived and long for the moment when these hands will meet my eyes, when that imagination will haunt my thoughts no more.
'Fear not that I shall be the instrument of future mischief.'

(E 260)

Due in large part to film, however, that moment of forgetting has (for the public) yet to arrive. Moreover, because we are continually haunted by images of an uncontrollable monster, we are manipulated into agreeing that man is justified in seeking out this beast and destroying him.

Another justification for killing the monster -- one which originates from Whale's Frankenstein rather than the novel -- is the monster's murdering (and it is suggested, raping) of little Maria. The scene of the young peasant girl befriending the Karloffian monster has become part of the Frankenstein myth. It is humorously used by Mel Brooks in Young Frankenstein; it is used again by Universal in its recent children's film, The Monster Squad; it is referred to in Victor Erice's The Spirit of the Beehive; and it is the subject of the following painting by Norris Church:



● Norris Church stood by her monstrous painting *Frankenstein and Friend*—yours for only \$4,500—at the Madison Galleries in Hollywood. Husband Norman Mailer stood by her talent.

(People 153)⁶

This addition to Mary's novel, an addition which has now become a 'well-known' part of the Frankenstein myth, greatly alters our perception of the monster. Since murdering (and raping) a little girl are unquestionably monstrous acts, the male peasants, we agree, were entirely justified in hunting the beast down and burning him. But this is not what occurs in the novel. First of all, Mary's creature does not drown a little peasant girl. In fact, the opposite is true; he rescues a drowning girl and successfully restores animation (E 182). There is a murder of a child in the novel, but that child is neither a peasant nor an innocent little girl. Young William Frankenstein is murdered by the creature, but

the murder is not, we discover, a wanton act of cruelty. Instead, it is a result of William's reaction to the creature. Believing the young boy to be "unprejudiced" and having "lived too short a time to have imbibed a horror of deformity" (E 183), the creature attempts to abduct him and make him his "companion" and "friend" (E 183). Yet, as soon as he sees the creature, William screams:

'Let me go ... monster! Ugly wretch! You wish to eat me and tear me to pieces. You are an ogre.... Hideous monster! Let me go. My papa is a syndic -- he is M. Frankenstein -- he will punish you. You dare not keep me.'

(E 183)

William's response is telling. Not only has he already imbibed a horror of deformity (acquired it seems through children's stories of ogres and child-eating monsters) but he is also well aware of his own privileged social standing and the power it brings. His father is, he makes clear, a syndic. Significantly, it is his invocation of the father which ultimately leads to his death. In fact, it is the creature's hearing of what he thinks is the name of his father which leads to all the deaths in the novel. Given that the novel often questions patriarchal values, it is, I believe, particularly revealing that the consequences of invoking the father are often fatal. Moreover, the deaths in the novel are not -- contrary to what film tells us -- the deaths of peasants; instead, they are the deaths of

members of the bourgeoisie. The creature, something which in the novel is literally made by the bourgeoisie, rises up against his maker and destroys him. A very different message, however, is sent by film. The creature murders a servant, then a peasant girl and is eventually destroyed by members of the peasant class. Henry (Victor) is saved, as is his fiancée, and the bourgeois family, thanks to the work of the peasants, lives happily ever after. The outsider and the threat he poses are eliminated from the Genevan society, and the "House of Frankenstein" is thus saved by the very class upon which it was built. This version of the myth marks a radical departure from Mary's original story -- a story whose subversiveness once stimulated its banning by the South African government.

The episode with Maria also raises some disturbing questions about the creature's sexuality as it gives the dark impression that the creature raped the young child as well as murdered her. This addition to the myth, like the film sequels, is not only exploitative but also tendentious since it screens us from the questions Mary herself asks about gender and sexuality. The creature, as I discussed earlier, combines those qualities which are culturally separated into the masculine and the feminine. He is, for instance, aggressive and destructive, but he is also life-loving and nurturing. He is, as Wolf notes, physically attracted to Safie (169), but, at the same time, he is attracted to

Felix. Indeed, the erotic language he uses to describe Safie is also present when he describes Felix:

Felix seemed ravished with delight when he saw her, every trait of sorrow vanished from his face, and it instantly expressed a degree of ecstatic joy, of which I could hardly have believed it capable; his eyes sparkled, as his cheek flushed with pleasure; and at that moment I thought him as beautiful as the stranger.

(F 158-59)

The creature's attraction to Felix, however, represents only one of the many close male relationships in the novel. Walton is strongly attracted to Victor; Victor is attracted to his boyhood friend, Clerval; and Victor also suffers a "homoerotic fixation upon his creature" (Mellor 226). The homoerotic tenor of these relationships echoes, I believe, the homoeroticism at the heart of Victor's experiment. Seeking to appropriate the female procreative function, Victor threatens to create a world from which women -- including women monsters -- are absented. Indeed, by the novel's conclusion all mothers and potential mothers are eliminated. But, and this is the logical conclusion to Victor's experiment, once women are no longer necessary and are eliminated, the only relationships which would in fact exist would be relationships between men. This conclusion, however, is screened out of Whale's films. The 1931 film may suggest that, while obsessed with his studies, Henry (Victor) suffers a temporary loss of virility, yet at no

time does it present relationships which carry the slightest hint of homosexuality (or incest). Indeed, by the film's conclusion, Henry is married to Elizabeth, and his father's toast to a "son of the House of Frankenstein" reassures viewers that Henry's manhood is restored. 'Normalcy' thus prevails, and 'proper' gender roles are reinforced.

Such, however, is not the case in the special interest films, Angelic Frankenstein and Hollow My Weanie Dr. Frankenstein, as both use as their pretext the implied homoeroticism of Mary's novel. Yet, because such films are marginal, their contribution to the Frankenstein myth is for the most part minimal. By contrast, the popular cult film The Rocky Horror Picture Show promises, because of its continued popularity, to offer a more lasting and provocative contribution to the Frankenstein myth. It too takes as its premise Victor's homoerotic attraction to his creature, and, like the novel, it challenges the rigidly defined gender roles society perpetuates. Dr. Frank-n-furter, a very sensual (and sensuous) transvestite, plans to construct a perfect Adonis for his private pleasure. He takes time out from his work to initiate the highly conventional and prudish Brad and Janet into the pleasures of what their culture considers illicit sexual encounters. Brad, a wholesome boy-next-door figure, discovers, much to his horrified sensibility, that he actually enjoys carnal relations with Dr. Frank-n-furter. Likewise, the virginal

and sexually frustrated Janet, once she is liberated by the doctor, confesses that she likes "to be dirty." Further, in a reversal of gender roles, she becomes the sexual aggressor, actively pursuing the innocent boy creature.

Yet for all its apparent subversiveness, The Rocky Horror Picture Show actually de-fuses its own power to disrupt conventionality. First, as I have mentioned, because it is so outrageous and "campish," it fails to threaten seriously the American values it purports to ridicule. Indeed, that campishness extends to members of the audience since part of the viewing experience is an active participation in the film. Audiences, in fact, arrive at the theatre dressed in the costume of their favourite Rocky Horror character, carrying with them an assortment of props to use at key moments in the film. Some audience members even take to the stage and thus appear to enter into the world of the film itself. The film experience is strikingly similar to carnival. As Bakhtin explains,

Carnival is a pageant without footlights and without division into performers and spectators. In carnival everyone is an active participant, everyone communes in the carnival act. Carnival is not contemplated and, strictly speaking, not even performed; its participants live in it ["don't dream it, be it," says Dr. Frank-n-furter], they live by its laws as long as those laws are in effect; that is, they live a carnivalistic life. Because carnivalistic life is drawn out of its usual rut, it is to some extent 'life turned inside out,' 'the reverse

side of the world.'

(122, his emphasis)

In the inside-out world of The Rocky Horror Picture Show, authority figures are turned into fools, virginity is de-valued, cannibalism, recidivism and incest are 'normal,' and gender roles are unfixed and constantly changing. But, because of its carnivalistic nature, any disruption to traditional values the film effects is always only temporary. Every Halloween -- a designated time of carnival -- audiences are allowed to dress up in costumes and play such tabooed roles as an incest-loving nymphomaniac or a flamboyant drag queen. The latter role, because it involves a sexual inversion (only males actually cross dress in the film), suggests that the film succeeds in challenging society's rigidly defined concepts of sexuality and gender. But for the same reasons Natalie Davis outlines in her discussion of "festive misrule," the film's ritualized sexual inversion actually reinforces the "sexual/social hierarchy" (129). "Through enacting gender disorder," Davis rightly concludes,

men and women learned the necessity for male dominant/female submissive order. At the same time, through a paradoxical yielding to sexual disorder, the male, in particular, was thought to gain sexual energy (that is the potency) he needed for domination. For since women were traditionally defined as the 'lustier sex' -- the sex made for sex -- it was only natural, if paradoxical, that a man could achieve sexual strength by temporarily impersonating a woman.

Through grotesque submission, he would learn dominance; through misrule, he might learn rule; through a brief ironic concession to 'petticoat government,' he would learn not androgynous wholeness but male mastery.

(quoted by Gilbert in "Costumes" 397)

A similar message is, I believe, received by audiences of The Rocky Horror Picture Show. Moreover, when a male audience member cross dresses, he (like an actual transvestite) "uses the ... apparatus of the female costume to convert 'humiliation' to 'mastery' by showing himself (and the world) that he is not 'just' like a woman, he is better than a woman because he is a woman with a penis" (Gilbert 397). Indeed, Dr. Frank-n-furter's provocative name and equally provocative garter belt both work to remind viewers he is not 'just' like a woman. Males who wear the costume of the "sweet transvestite" both send and receive, I would argue, the same message of mastery. Thus, any challenge the film purports to make to the male dominant/female submissive order is only illusory. And, precisely because carnival is "not contemplated," participants are, I believe, highly susceptible to accepting the film's illusion.

In addition, audiences receive, because of the film's heavy reliance on costuming, a traditional message concerning identity. The costumes reassure audience members that they are after all only playing a role: once the event concludes and they remove their costumes, they return to

being their 'true' selves. In fact, one of the film's subplots works on this premise, as once the inspector's cover (in this case a literal cover) is removed, we discover his 'true' identity. Society's belief in the existence of a single, unified identity which is discernible beneath the costumes we wear is, therefore, not seriously challenged. Unlike the novel which presents subjectivity as a process or a series of subject positions, The Rocky Horror Picture Show plays with the idea of the fluidity of identity, only to convince viewers of the obverse. Viewers may, in the safety of the film event's authorized licentiousness, both witness and simulate transgressive acts -- acts which challenge traditional beliefs concerning gender, identity and authority -- but that threat is, I believe, as illusory and transitory as the film event itself. Playing the part of a transvestite is one thing; being one, as Dr. Frank-n-furter illustrates, is quite another. By the conclusion of the film, both he and the threat he poses are eliminated. His death, like the death of the monster in Hollywood Frankenstein films, serves as a kind of communal purging of the Other. Indeed, the doctor, we learn, is literally not of this world. For a short while, he and his interplanetary assistants offer viewers a different world, one which differs radically from our own. Yet because the film actually belies its own subversiveness, any 'Brads and Janets' who dare enter the theatre find that their values

are not challenged but are in fact reaffirmed. They thus leave the theatre with the same values with which they arrived.

The Rocky Horror Picture Show's co-opting of the novel's subversive elements thus renders it similar to other Frankenstein films, as, like its predecessors, it also diminishes much of the anxiety which the novel generates. In particular, Frankenstein films effectively screen out Mary Shelley's indictment of masculine science. They do so by contributing to our collective sense of the Frankenstein myth the trope of the criminal brain and the two figures of the 'mad scientist' and the hunchbacked assistant. Taken together these three contributions work, by similar means, to deflect blame away from science itself.

The 'mad scientist' -- a character made (in)famous by Peter Cushing in the Hammer series -- has become for most present-day readers a standard figure in the Frankenstein myth.⁷ He has come to personify "science gone too far" and as such represents to a limited extent a condemnation of science. But, at the same time, the label "mad" -- a label critics cannot resist attaching to Mary Shelley's Victor -- actually works to undercut that condemnation. It is, after all, not science which leads to disaster but 'mad' science. The doctor's irrationality, because it stands in direct opposition to what we think of scientists, in effect works to protect science. He is, we quickly discover, an

aberration, not in any way representative of the rational, objective and detached scientist. Part of the horror of the films stems from our fear of the madman assuming the role of the rational scientist. Once again, though, it is not science itself which we should fear but science when practiced by the wrong person. The message the films send is not "look at what science is doing," but rather "look what can happen when science falls into the wrong hands." What results is not just a deflecting of blame away from science but a reinforcing of the very values which, Mary illustrates, makes science so dangerous. She exposes the consequences of an ideology which demands the suppressing of emotion, including the concern for the "moral relations of things." Film, by presenting a scientist or doctor who is all emotion, implicitly argues the opposite. Indeed, it is because the doctor's reason is clouded by emotion that he becomes dangerous. In fact, in most of these films the doctor is presented at the outset as being already emotionally disturbed. His madness is (and remains) in the popular imagination a standard aspect of the story. Unlike Mary's novel, films offer very little to suggest that Henry's scientific temper is actually responsible for his madness. Consequently, film screens us from the causality Mary presents between the demands of science and the resultant madness these demands effect.

The figure of the mad scientist has become what

Barthes terms an "acknowledged evil" (150), as we all agree that, given the potential power of science, a "mad" scientist is indeed a threat to society. But it is his madness that is the real threat, not science itself. Mary's scientist, by contrast, is to be feared not because he is mad, but because he embodies the values of masculine science. Frankenstein films not only shield us from this subversive view of science but also immunize us against the dis-ease which such a view elicits. By presenting a scientist who we all admit is mad, films, to quote Barthes, provide us with "a small inoculation of acknowledged evil to immunize us against the risk of generalized subversion" (150).

The doctor's assistant, variously named Ygor or Fritz, works in a similar way. He has become, as I have mentioned, a standard figure in the Frankenstein myth, emerging as early as 1823 in Peake's play Presumption. Physically deformed -- usually hunchbacked -- and limited in his ability to communicate, he is only slightly more developed than the creature himself. His role in the films, one which he seems to enjoy, is the collecting of the necessary body parts for Victor's experiment. His presence in films, however, works to deflect disgust and blame away from the doctor. After all, it is the deformed assistant (a deformity which symbolizes stunted intellectual and spiritual development), not the intelligent and attractive

scientist, who is associated with robbing graveyards and charnel houses. Consequently, these loathsome activities, because they are linked to the assistant rather than to Victor, are disassociated from Victor and the science he represents. There is, however, no such dissociation in the novel, nor is there a mitigating presence in the form of an assistant. In Mary's story, it is Victor -- the "man of science" (E 93) --, not Fritz or Ygor, who "dabbled among the unhallowed damps of the grave" and "tortured the living animal to animate the lifeless clay" (E 98). It is Victor who visits the "dissecting room and slaughter-house," fixing his "attention upon every object the most insupportable to the delicacy of the human feelings" (E 95-96). Indeed, his ability to distance himself from human feelings is exposed by Mary Shelley as being, first, a generally accepted prerequisite for the study of science and, second, a potentially dangerous prerequisite. After all, it is his lack of feeling for his creature which is responsible for the many deaths in the novel. Frankenstein films not only shield viewers from Mary's criticism of science but also provide a radically different explanation of the monster's violent acts.

In Whale's film, the highly sensitive creature is cruelly taunted by the doctor's assistant. In retaliation for his treatment and out of fear of the fire Fritz threatens him with, he murders the assistant. This

rationale for his violent behaviour, however, is a gross simplification and distortion of one of the novel's premises. In the novel, the creature learns how to do evil not from a hunchbacked assistant who is slightly above him on the evolutionary scale but from 'civilized' mankind. It is mankind, not a demented assistant, who is exposed in Frankenstein for his violence, prejudice, and cruelty. La Valley concludes that "the tormenting of the Monster by Fritz, once with a whip and later with a torch, has no basis in the book but crystallizes a number of sadistic and violent images of humanity in the novel" (264), but I disagree. Fritz is not, for the reasons I have been outlining, 'one of us.' His presence in the films thus works to shield us from the blame Mary levels both at the civilized doctor and the world the doctor represents, because it is his cruelty, not humanity's or the doctor's, which is to blame for teaching the creature how to become a monster.⁸

This monstrous transformation is, in fact, expected by the audience, because we already know that the creature has received an abnormal criminal's brain. This addition to the Frankenstein myth -- one which owes its origins to Whale's 1931 film -- has now become part of the myth itself. Mel Brooks, for instance, draws on his audience's awareness of this aspect of the myth when, in his Young Frankenstein, he has Ygor steal a brain labelled "A. B. normal/Do not

use." The Globe and Mail article on brain transplants which introduces this study exploits for political purposes the public's knowledge (and fear) of brain transplants made famous by Frankenstein films. Likewise, the humour of the following Gary Larson cartoon depends upon our shared knowledge of the creature's receiving the wrong brain, while at the same time, it, like all the other references, works to reinforce that knowledge:



"For crying out loud, Igor! First there's that screw-up with the wrong brain business, and now you've let his head go through the wash in your pants pocket!"

The addition of the abnormal brain to the Frankenstein myth reduces, as I have noted, much of the novel's subversiveness because it explains away the creature's violent behaviour on the grounds of biological determinism. Unlike the creature of Mary's novel -- a creature who not only learns evil from watching those around him but actually chooses evil as his good (E 258) -- the creature of film is programmed from the beginning to be

monstrous. This change, as I have argued, not only biases readers against the creature but also sends a message about science which is in direct opposition to the message Mary offers. She exposes many of the tenets of masculine science and attacks them (by attacking their spokesman, Victor) for creating and then abandoning monsters. There is, I believe, no such attack in Frankenstein films. The criminal brain and the hunchbacked assistant who out of ignorance gives Victor the wrong brain both work to protect science. If the creature had received a normal brain what, we are left to answer, would have happened then? This question is, I believe, implicitly asked by Whale, and it is a question which functions to valorize rather than condemn science. Adding to this valorization is the position in which film places its viewer. Asked to identify with the scientist and marvel at his power to create, we become willing accomplices in both Victor's and the film's artifice. Seduced by the visual splendour of the creation scene, we may for the moment not only fail to consider the implications of Victor's actions but may also even take part (albeit vicariously) in his life-giving experiment. Yet, without the distancing which Mary Shelley's novel affords, viewers become poor judges of the science which Victor represents. The film's shadows of partiality thus obscure an important issue in the novel: masculine science is potentially both destructive and dangerous. Due to films' contributions of

Fritz, the abnormal brain, and the 'mad' scientist, it is a conclusion, however, which is literally screened from our view.

Film's treatment of science, or rather its reluctance to mistreat it, is consistent with its treatment of many of the novel's subversive ideas. The creature, as I have argued, is especially "not well managed." Not only does the film present the creature as an inarticulate brute, literally denied a voice in the story, but it also is responsible for spawning a seemingly endless number of reproductions of the Karloffian-styled monster, leaving present-day readers with the definitive image of Mary's creature. We all 'know,' prior to reading Frankenstein, that the monster has a flat head, a Neanderthal forehead⁹ with a large, freshly sutured incision, and a pair of electrodes in his neck. Our familiarity with this image breeds, if not contempt, at least complacency. The horror which the novel generates by asking us to image our own idea of the monstrous has been diminished by the ready-made figure of the monster which film has granted us. Culturally vaccinated with this image at a young age, an image which as I have argued is 'acceptably' threatening, we are immunized against the novel's subversiveness long before we read Mary Shelley's story.

Once we turn to the novel, we experience certain predictable reactions. Because, for instance, the creature

of film is a separate entity, a star in his own right, readers find it difficult to see him as Victor's double, inextricably bound to his creator. Part of the problem stems from the nature of film itself, as once characters are brought to life on the screen, it is difficult to see them as anything other than autonomous beings. Yet, as the silent film Life Without Soul illustrates, it is not impossible to capture on film the same fluid interchanges of identity that Mary dramatizes. The film presents the two characters as doubles of one another by using and arguably subverting one of our culture's most enduring symbols of identity: the mirror. After Victor creates his monster, he is shocked to discover that, where he should see his own reflection in the mirror, he now sees his creature's. The two are literally mirror images of one another. The doppelganger motif of the novel is thus made visual: Victor's monster is, the film's visuals and inter-titles tell us, a reflection of his creator. The mirror, a traditional symbol of a fixed, stable and unified identity, now records and reflects a body divided.

This aspect of the novel, however, has gone the way of the silent film. Presently, because of the notoriety both of the Karloffian monster and the Peter-Cushing-styled 'mad' scientist, readers cannot help but think of Mary's creature and creator as separate and distinguishable figures. Indeed, Whale reinforces such a view when he

saves Henry but not Henry's creation from the burning mill. He not only "snap[s] the bond between creator and created" (La Valley 264), a gross distortion of the novel, but he also sends a message that Henry the scientist is ultimately the victor.¹⁰ Thus, when we encounter Mary Shelley's novel, one which asks us to see the monster and his maker as aspects of one another, we find that Frankenstein films' visuals stand in our way. Because they have, to return to Lamb's essay, "materialized a fine vision to the standard of flesh and blood," their apparent corporeity and "strait-lacing actuality" make it difficult for readers of Frankenstein to see Victor and his creature as anything other than separate entities. We may, as I have mentioned, linguistically associate Victor and his creature through the words "animate" and "animation," but, as the proverbial saying reminds us, one picture is still worth a thousand words. Whether we can successfully suture the two back together depends on a variety of factors: the time elapsed since we were last exposed to the films or their sequels; the circulation and subsequent re-vitalization of afterimages of Frankenstein films in such media as political cartoons, news items or advertisements; and the continued evocation of the monster and/or his maker in our everyday conversations. We may unintentionally allude to the novel's motif of the doppelganger when we casually call the creature "Frankenstein," but, for the reasons I have been outlining,

I do not believe that, when we turn to the novel, we can always successfully fuse the two together. Their respective afterimages arrive with us when we turn to Mary Shelley's novel, finding a lasting home in the gaps she once left in her story. Asked to picture the creature, we have at hand the pre-scribed image of Boris Karloff. Left to imagine the actual creation scene, we find that it is difficult to resist recalling the Strickfaden laboratory, the spectacular lightning storm, and the egotistical exclamations of the mad scientist. Indeed, asked to name the unnameable, we refer to the creature as the "Monster." Because of the continued circulation of images of the Karloffian creature, we, like little William, have "imbibed" or rather have been inoculated with "a horror of deformity" (E 183). Like him, we are prejudiced against the creature even before we encounter him, biased by filmic afterimages into believing that he is a "hideous monster," an "ugly wretch" (E 183).

Reading Frankenstein in the shadow of film calls, I believe, for a special type of willing suspension of disbelief, because, in addition to taking on the role(s) the novel asks us to assume and to accepting the novel's own fiction, we have to contend with films' afterimages and their contribution to the story. In effect, we encounter two versions of the story when we turn to the novel: Mary Shelley's and our sense of the story as derived from film. The latter story is, because of the specificity and visual

power of film, difficult to forget. In our mind's eye we may see one thing, but at the same time the camera's eye shows us quite another. Reconciling these two views is the task of the present-day reader, but if Lamb was right and the sight does indeed destroy the faith, then it is a difficult task. I do not believe, for instance, that we can read Frankenstein without picturing at one time or another the Karloffian monster. Once we do, we accept not only Whale's and Pierce's image of the monstrous but also their idea of the agent of animation, electricity. Both, as I have already illustrated, tame the novel.

In fact, as early as 1823 -- the date of the first visualization of the novel -- Mary's story began to be tamed. Peake, in response to public protests over the impiety and blasphemy of the story, added a moral to his play Presumption which warned of the dangers of playing God. More than a hundred years later, Whale presented a similar reading. Henry is "punished for his hubris" (La Valley 264) or presumption, and, in an act which recalls Peake's concession to an outraged moral public, Whale removed Henry's impious speeches before he released the film. Not only is the novel thus provided with an "apt moral," something which Mary herself refused to provide, but, because of film and stage adaptations, its openness -- another source of reader dis-ease -- is also streamlined into a simple narrative structure.

At the same time that the novel was being adapted to the stage or the silver screen, Mary Shelley's reputation began to experience what seems to be an almost irreversible decline. Having learned the identity of the novelist, critics began -- and continue -- to find fault with Frankenstein, condemning it on stylistic grounds. They dismiss it as the work of an immature young writer who was either influenced by her famous husband or should have been. In addition, critics often reduce Mary's status even further by labelling her work a tale or a fable. This tendency to call the novel a tale, stems in part, I suspect, from film's appropriation and handling of the story. Critics -- like any present-day reader of the novel -- have also received their share of cultural vaccinations. They too have been exposed to film's shadows of partiality. Indeed, William Patrick Day, in his analysis of the novel, inadvertently reveals the power of film's influence when he more than once refers to Victor's father as "Baron Frankenstein" (141-2). This title in fact stems from film versions of the story; in the novel, Victor's father is, William proudly tells the creature, a syndic (or magistrate). A more extreme case of con-fusing film with Mary's story is Leonard Wolf's The Annotated Frankenstein. In addition to annotating Mary's 1818 text with comments about Frankenstein films, Wolf glosses her text with actual photographs from Whale's films.¹¹ Although technically anachronistic, Wolf's

strategy is appropriate; present-day readers do the same thing when they read Frankenstein. Our filmic afterimages gloss Mary's text as surely as do the photographs Wolf provides. And, like medieval glosses, they tell us how we are to interpret the text. That interpretation reads, as I have illustrated, like a moral fable or tale.

The fate of Frankenstein in the hands of such critics as Day or Wolf is typical of the fate of fantasy fiction in general. Argues Jackson:

The dismissal of the fantastic to the margins of literary culture is in itself an ideologically significant gesture, one which is not dissimilar to culture's silencing of unreason. As an 'art' of unreason, and of desire, fantasy has persistently been silenced, or re-written, in transcendental rather than transgressive terms. From a rational, 'monological' world, otherness cannot be known or represented except as foreign, irrational, 'mad,' 'bad.' It is rejected altogether, or polemically refuted, or assimilated into a 'meaningful' narrative structure [ie. the historic narration of film], re-written or written out as romance or as fable.

(173)

Moreover, Mary herself suffers a similar fate. Like her novel, she has been written out of history (the novel's authorship is for many readers unknown), re-written as an inept neophyte who chanced upon a good story, or made into the doting student and wife of the brilliant Percy. The consequences of this re-visionism are twofold. First, the more Mary Shelley the author is denigrated, the less likely

is her novel to be studied seriously. Second, because we are kept at a 'safe' distance from the original Frankenstein (both the 1831 and the more radical 1818 version), we are more susceptible to receiving and accepting without question as 'authentic' film's, or popular culture's versions of the story. In fact, as Jowett and Linton have argued, because movies have become our culture's "dominant form of communication," our shared visual memories become "more important than the personal, internal 'mind images' created by written material" (105).

Yet the relationship between film memories and the reading experience is often overlooked by reader-response critics. Stanley Fish, for instance, speaks of an "interpretive community," and an "informed reader," but he does not explore how filmic memories inform his reader. I believe that to focus on a reader in isolation from his or her visual heritage is to distort what happens when that reader approaches a written text, particularly a text such as Frankenstein. Films, as Jowett and Linton, Holderness, Ellis, Postman and Stuart Ewen argue, leave us with verbal shorthands, rhetorical points, and consuming images. And whether film offers us anything from images of our material culture to stereotypes of gangsters, lovers or even monsters, it does influence our reading experience. Indeed, indicative of the present-day reader's cultural/visual repertoire is the following exchange between a first-year

university student and a colleague of mine. After asking if anyone knew what the image of the peacock symbolized, my colleague was surprised to learn that to one earnest student it symbolized NBC (The National Broadcasting Corporation). To that student it surely does.

Today, readers have a vast collection of their own 'NBCs.' What I argue for is a new look at reader-response criticism, one which includes film's influence rather than precludes it in the analysis of the reading experience. The task is not without certain difficulties. It is not enough simply to speak of our filmic memories: we need to understand what they are like and how they function. They can, I have argued, be seen in terms of the concepts of filmic and narrative afterimages. Both concepts, I believe, capture the potency and evanescence of our film memories. Moreover, these memory traces can also, as I have illustrated, be reactivated or revitalized either within the theater or without. Thus, they may vary in intensity and vividness. We also know because of such factors as the historic mode of narration, the specificity and referentiality of film's images, the essential contemporariness of film's narrativisation, and film's ability to arrest the play of possible meanings that the memory film leaves us with is a highly simplified narrative which is primarily visual in orientation. It is this condensed narrative, remembered in visual terms, which we

bring to the reading experience.

Once we determine the nature of filmic memories, we can investigate the effect they have on the reading experience. Strangely enough, Mary Shelley offers some clues in this regard. Speaking of invention from the perspective of the writer, Mary explained in her Preface that "invention does not consist in creating out of void, but out of chaos; the materials must, in the first place, be afforded" (Introduction to Standard Novels Edition 54). As readers, we too are often asked to invent, to fill in gaps or to make the text less indeterminate. Indeed, Mary, by being vague, asks us to construct our own image both of the creature and of how he was created. But, like Mary, we do not create out of void; we too have been afforded the materials with which to co-create. Indeed, because of the appropriation of Frankenstein by playwrights, filmmakers, politicians and novelists, we need not worry about a shortage of materials. In fact, we face just the opposite: a seemingly endless supply of images and afterimages with which to reconstruct the novel.

These images or materials have become, as the history of adaptations of the novel illustrates, as indestructible as the creature himself. Yet, unlike Mary's creature, these images have become permanently 'fixed' or visually named and are, therefore, both known and knowable. Over time, audiences have received, with only minor

variations, the following consistent tropes or figures: the hunchbacked assistant, the mad scientist, the spectacular creation and destruction scenes, and, since the 1931 film, the criminal brain, and the enduring image of the inarticulate monster. At the same time, we have been offered a moral reading of the myth -- presumption leads to punishment -- and a simplified narrative which is reducible to a 'seek-it-out-and-destroy-it' formula. These contributions or readings of the novel have become as much a part of Frankenstein criticism as have the literary critics' comments on the novel's stylistic flaws. Both types of criticism function, I believe, to distance readers from the novel and its author.

But more than distance us from the novel, these criticisms of Frankenstein actually protect us from the disease which the novel elicits. Representatives of 'high' culture (literary critics) attack the novel on stylistic grounds and thus avoid facing, as Patterson Thornburg has argued, a "confrontation with an emotionally repellent whole" (11). Thus, by reducing Frankenstein to the work of an immature writer or by labelling it a flawed minor novel, critics screen both themselves and their readers from the novel's subversiveness. Yet, as I have argued, there is much in the novel to lead the critic for the Quarterly Review to call it the work of a "diseased" imagination (March 1818).

Moreover, just as literary critics have screened us from the novel so have the celluloid critics, the filmmakers. By linking Frankenstein inextricably to popular culture, filmmakers contribute, perhaps unintentionally, to the novel's marginalization. Seen now as part of popular culture, the myth is dismissed as 'simple' entertainment and is, as a consequence, relegated to the margins of literary culture. Indeed, for many potential readers of Frankenstein, the novel has actually been usurped by popular culture. Their surprise at discovering that the myth was once a novel illustrates the extent to which popular culture has appropriated the novel. But more than appropriate the myth, popular culture, in fact, protects us from the anxiety which it can still elicit. Rather than read the novel as members of an interpretive community, I believe that, because of film, we have become members of an interpreted community. Given regulated doses of a weakened version of the myth, we 'know,' in advance of reading it, what the myth is all about. Those versions are, as I have illustrated, a limited and limiting reading of the novel.

Yet they do more than limit the novel. They also actively inoculate us against the novel's subversiveness. Offered certain acceptably dangerous aspects of Frankenstein, we are immunized against its more disturbing and threatening aspects. The amount of protection such inoculation offers will, of course, vary depending on an

individual's constitution, but it is in effect, nonetheless. To ignore its presence is, I believe, to ignore what happens when we read the novel. And, rather than ignore these cultural inoculations, I advocate that we accept them as part of the reading experience. Once we do, we can return to the novel, if not with a cleansed perception, at least with a critical awareness of how our perception has been tainted.

I believe that we can no longer read the novel without being in some way biased by filmic afterimages. But I also believe that, instead of passively accepting this bias, we should re-view Mary Shelley's Frankenstein sensitized to popular culture's interpretation of it. Although the "marks" (E 243) and "inscriptions" (E 245) popular culture leaves us with appear to direct us away from the novel, they can, as I have shown, indirectly guide us back to the monster and his maker. Such a journey is well worth taking.

Frankenstein offers criticisms of society which are as pertinent today as they were in 1818. In fact, Mary's questions concerning the position of women in society, the role society plays in constructing the concepts of identity and gender, and the valorization of masculine science continue to be asked today. Mary Shelley may not have answered these questions, but she did leave us with a novel that challenged a society which attempted to prevent

the asking of them. To lose sight of Mary's novel in the darkness of a movie theatre, then, is to lose sight of what our own society is doing. Hollywood films, by inoculating us against the novel's dis-ease, also attempt to silence such questioning.

Re-reading Frankenstein with a clearer focus on popular culture's treatment of the myth offers certain advantages. First, unlike traditional reader-response criticism, it approximates the actual reading experience of novels which have been visualized. Because we have experienced a shift in thinking as we moved from a word-centered culture to an image-centered one, we need, I believe, to include the influence such a shift has had on our reading experience. Frankenstein represents, of course, an extreme example of the influence film images have on a reading experience, but it is not the only written work to be adapted to film. Indeed, the theoretical framework I offer can be applied to other written works which have been visualized. Rather than bemoan the fate of Shakespeare's plays when they are filmed and speak of handicaps, we can accept the presence of filmic afterimages and investigate how they are operating. In fact, these memories, as I have illustrated, can offer new ways of 'seeing' a written work.

Mary Shelley once explained that Frankenstein originated from a waking dream. Modern-day readers of her novel have, I believe, their own waking dreams: the daylight

dream of the movie theatre. Like her dream, ours arises "unbidden" with a "vividness far beyond the usual bounds of reverie" (E 55). And, like Mary, we too see with "shut eyes" an "acute mental vision" of "successive images" (E 55). I argue that we follow Mary's lead and allow these afterimages to possess and guide us (E 55). They may not be the images of her dream -- indeed they are often the complementary opposite --, but they are most certainly the collective images of our own.

.....

"And now" I bid my own monster go forth. "Its several pages speak of many a walk, many a drive, and many a conversation, when I was not alone."

Endnotes for Introduction

1. Growing up in southern Ontario in the 1950s, I was exposed to much American television and film, and, thus, my background in popular culture is American not British. The films, television shows, and advertisements referred to in this thesis are limited to American ones. Viewing "late night fright" shows with friends became a popular pastime for many of my generation, and it was on one of these occasions that I first met "Frankenstein."

2. James Monaco, in How to Read a Film, explains:

As a medium, film needs to be considered as a phenomenon very much like language. It has no codified grammar, ... it doesn't even have specific rules of usage, so it is very clearly not a language system like written or spoken English; but it nevertheless does perform many of the communicative functions as language does.... Film may not have grammar, then, but it does have a system of codes and of signs (44).... But what makes film distinctly separate from other languages is its shortcircuit sign, in which signifier and signified are nearly the same (340-1).

3. See also Christopher Small's Mary Shelley's Frankenstein: Tracing the Myth: "Frankenstein has been read -- and heard of in more or less garbled form, vastly beyond the number of actual readers -- by multitudes who have little or no idea who Mary Shelley was" (14). Small goes on to claim that to "some extent it might be argued that the myth has had most hold where the book hasn't been read" (15).

4. The importance of the soundtrack in horror films is evident, for instance, in The Bride of Frankenstein's being nominated for an Oscar in 1935 for Best Sound Recording. See Roy Prickard's The Hamlyn Book of Horror and S.F. Movie Lists (10). Monaco identifies two types of sound: "parallel sound is actual, synchronous, connected with the image," while "contapuntal sound is commentative, asynchronous, and opposed to or in counterpoint with the image" (182). "The Hollywood sound style was strongly parallel. The programmatic music of the thirties movies nudged, underlined, emphasized, characterized, and qualified even the simplest scenes so that the duller images as well as the most striking

were thoroughly pervaded by the emotions designed by the composers of the nearly continuous music track" (182).

5. As of 1983, Young Frankenstein, at \$38,823,000 was ranked fourth, behind (in descending order) Jaws, The Exorcist and Jaws II in the list, The Most Popular Horror Films of all Time. The ranking is based on "Variety's all-time box-office rental champs and refers to the American and Canadian markets" (Pickard 121).

6. Brooks, in an interview for The True Story of Frankenstein An Everyman/BBC Wales Production, said of the Frankenstein film cycle: "It had such a profound effect on me that when we were going to do it, I knew -- I did it -- part of it was a catharsis for me to make it funny so I would never have those terrible dreams again that had been so real about monsters killing us and taking us away" (quoted from WNED Oct 31, 1987).

Endnotes Chapter One

1. Other writers who argue that Frankenstein is an early science-fiction novel include: J. O. Bailey Pilgrims Through Space and Time: Trends and Patterns in Scientific and Utopian Fiction (1947); Kingsley Amis New Maps of Hell: A Survey of Science Fiction (1960); Sam Moskowitz Explorers of the Infinite: Shapers of Science Fiction (1963); Brian Aldiss The Billion Year Spree: The History of Science Fiction (1973); and Donald Glut The Legend of Frankenstein (1974).
2. The edition of Frankenstein which I am using is, as I have already specified, the 1831 edition. I will, however, discuss the 1818 edition in chapter three.
3. I am using this term in the same sense in which Rosemary Jackson in Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion and Catherine Belsey in Critical Practice use it. Jackson defines ideology as "the imaginary ways in which men [sic] experience the real world, those ways in which man's [sic] relation to the world is lived through various systems of meaning such as religion, family, law, moral codes, education, culture, etc.-- [and] is not something simply handed down from one conscious mind to another, but is profoundly unconscious" (Jackson's italics) 61. Belsey also adds that "ideology is both a real and an imaginary relation to the world -- real in that it is the way in which people really live their relationship to the social relations which govern their conditions of existence, but imaginary in that it discourages a full understanding of these conditions of existence and the ways in which people are socially constituted within them" (57).
4. The video in question is Huey Lewis and the News' latest hit Doing It All For My Baby. I might also add that the 1987 television hit Max Headroom is yet another variation on the Frankenstein theme.
5. I have noticed that critics prefer to use the neutral pronoun, "it," when referring to the creature. I can see no reason to perpetuate this practice nor the other practice of capitalizing "monster." Mary's monster is explicitly male and, in fact, demands a female mate. It is interesting to note that in the 1931 film Frankenstein, Henry (Victor in the novel) exclaims "It's alive! It's alive" yet, after making the female in the 1935 sequel Bride of Frankenstein, shouts "She's alive! Alive!" Further, since Mary deliberately refuses to name the creature -- and made

reference to Peake's playbill in which the creature is called '_____' -- she quite clearly desired a generic brand of monster -- a type of everyman/monster. Critics who capitalize 'monster' undercut this effect and de-fuse much of the novel's power.

6. Glut in Legend mentions that "during the time in which [T. P. Cooke] was acting the part [of the monster], he began to confuse the name of the creator Frankenstein with his nameless Monster [as there] was more dignity in referring to oneself as the actor who plays 'Frankenstein' than the actor who is always cast as the 'Demon' or worse, '_____' " (34). Christopher Small in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein: Tracing the Myth also argues that Cooke was responsible for the confusion: "In the production seen by Mary Shelley [the monster] was played ... by T. Cooke, who is also recorded elsewhere as having played Frankenstein: the same transposition was made by Boris Karloff who, as the first and best-known of screen Monsters, transferred in a later production, Frankenstein 1970 (1958) to Frankenstein himself" (18). He adds that the "popular confusion between the Monster and his maker, which has produced 'creating a Frankenstein' as a proverbial expression, is notorious ... [but] it is convenient to note, however, that simply as a matter of casting, both in the theatre and the cinema, they have been regarded as alternative roles" (18). Other confusions include: Hollywood's Bride of Frankenstein in which the 'bride' was "to be the monster's companion, not the scientist's" (Legend 41); and Hollywood, California News 20 June 1931 which advertised: "Bela Lugosi begins work soon on 'Frankenstein,' playing the name role at Universal. He is now studying makeup for the part" (Legend 92). Ketterer has documented the literary history of the term's conflation, explaining that, contrary to Glynn R. Gylls' claim, John Trelawny was not the first to call the monster Frankenstein (Notes 118). Ketterer cites two earlier instances: Elizabeth Gaskell's Mary Barton Chapter 15, and A Supplement to the Oxford English Dictionary which dates the year of the conflation at 1838 by Gladstone in Murray's Handbook Sicily (1864) (118).

7. See either Christopher Small's Mary Shelley's Frankenstein: Tracing the Myth (17) or Dennis Gifford's A Pictorial History of Horror Movies (91).

8. Walter Evans, in "Monster Movies: A Sexual Theory" Movies as Artifacts, argues that sexuality in horror films is "uniquely tailored to the pysches of troubled adolescents, whatever their age" (129). Ketterer adds the following about the depiction of love and sexuality in Frankenstein: "In a world where the concept of love is

rendered ambiguously akin to incest, homosexuality and masturbation by the human tendency to transform the other into a replica of the self, the monster is, it would seem, that unalterable Other, and therefore the potential source and object of genuine love" (57). Nestrick, in "Coming to Life: Frankenstein and the Nature of Film Narrative" The Endurance of Frankenstein, also argues that there are "incestuous and homosexual fantasies latent in the original novel" (312). I will return to the homophilic/narcissistic undertones in the novel in chapter three.

9. See Walter Evans (129-30) and Glut's Legend (120). Evans explains: "the key to monster movies and the adolescents which understandably dote upon them is the theme of horrible and mysterious psychological and physical change" (130). Glut, in a reference to Karloff's stardom, also acknowledges the monster movie's appeal to the young, citing as proof the fan mail which Karloff as the 'monster' received from children (120).

10. For a detailed examination of the development of cinema from its ancestors, melodrama, popular theatre, and popular fiction see Charles Eidsvik's Cineliteracy: Film Among the Arts, pp. 112-133 and pp. 145-150.

11. The Horror of It All PBS (Channel 17), Oct. 31/87. "Monstrous desire" was a common euphemism for sexuality during the time of Silent Films.

12. Roland Barthes in "Rhetoric of the Image," Image Music Text identifies two functions of the linguistic message: the diegetic value of relay and the substitutive value of anchorage, control. Barthes' comments on the effect of captions on photographs also apply, I think, to the function of captions in silent films. Whereas the linguistic message in films functions for the most part as a relay-text, the captions in silent films -- because they are used so sparingly -- work to anchor or fix the image rather than advance the action. The captions in silent films, I would argue, function in much the same way as they do with photographs: they are a "kind of vice which holds the connoted meanings from proliferating, whether towards excessively individual regions (it limits, that is to say, the projective power of the image) or towards dysphoric values" (39). Thus in the Edison silent film the caption helps viewers to "choose the correct level of perception" (39) because it linguistically informs them that the monster is the incarnation of the evil in Frankenstein's mind. The moral/morality of the image is thus anchored by the caption: evil thoughts are monstrous.

13. Mary's novel invites a Marxist approach. The monster, after learning about "the strange system of human society," concludes:

I heard of the division of property, of immense wealth and squalid poverty; of rank, descent, and noble blood....I learned that the possessions most esteemed by your fellow creatures were high and unsullied descent united with riches. A man might be respected with only one of these advantages, but without either he was considered, except in very rare instances, as a vagabond and a slave, doomed to waste his powers for the profits of the chosen few.

(E 161)

For Marxist interpretations of the novel, see: Darko Suvin, "Radical Rhapsody and Romantic Recoil in the Age of Anticipation: A Chapter in the History of Science Fiction," Science-Fiction Studies 2 (Nov 1974) 262-64; Lee Sterrenburg, "Mary Shelley's Monster: Politics and Psyche in Frankenstein," in The Endurance of Frankenstein; Paul O' Flinn, "Production and Reproduction: The Case of Frankenstein," Visible Fictions; Chris Baldick, In Frankenstein's Shadow; and Franco Moretti, "Dialectic of Fear," Signs Taken for Wonders. Argues Moretti: "Frankenstein's invention is thus a pregnant metaphor of the process of capitalist production, which forms by deforming, civilizes by barbarizing, enriches by impoverishing" (87). He adds:

Like the proletariat, the monster is denied a name and an individuality. He is the Frankenstein monster; he belongs wholly to his creator (just as one can speak of a 'Ford worker'). Like the proletariat, he is a collective and artificial creature. He is not found in nature but built Only modern science -- this metaphor for the 'dark satanic mills' offers them a future. It sews them together again, moulds them according to its will and finally gives them life.

(85)

For feminist views see: Ellen Moers, "Female Gothic," Literary Women; Kate Ellis, "Monsters in the Garden," The Endurance of Frankenstein; U.C. Knoepfelmacher, "Thoughts on the Aggression of Daughters," The Endurance of Frankenstein; Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's "Horror's Twin: Mary Shelley's Monstrous Eve," The Madwoman in the Attic; Mary

Poovey, "My Hideous Progeny," The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer; Mary Jacobus, "Is There a Woman in This Text," Reading Woman: Essays in Feminist Criticism; Mary K. Patterson Thornburg, Monsters in the Mirror: Gender and the Sentimental/Gothic Myth in Frankenstein; Anne Mellor, Mary Shelley: Her Life Her Fiction Her Monsters.

14. Samuel Holmes Vasbinder, in his Scientific Attitudes in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, refutes the popular view that Frankenstein is not grounded in nineteenth-century science, that it is, as James Rieger claims, "'switched-on magic, souped-up alchemy'" (1). Unlike the majority of critics, Vasbinder argues that "the novel is at its base built on the monistic, Newtonian science of Erasmus Darwin, Joseph Priestley, and Sir Humphry Davy" (2).

15. Frank Film, an animated montage by Frank Mouris (1973), exploits the self-reflexivity inherent in Frankenstein films. In this film, Mouris "rebuilds himself through an animated montage of pictures climaxing with a photo of the Frankenstein Monster from the General Telephone and Electronics advertisement" (Glut 220). For a fuller examination of this film see William Nestruck's "Coming to Life: Frankenstein and the Nature of Film Narrative" in The Endurance of Frankenstein. Another highly self-reflexive Frankenstein film is Tony Conrad's The Eye of Count Flickerstein. Alluding to both Dracula and Frankenstein films, the title also identifies the film as a flicker film. Conrad draws attention to film's artificial animation by exposing the audience to "intermittent presentations of light" (Nestruck 308). The flicker film reminds viewers of the actual mechanics of film animation and "the principle involved when we go to the flicks" (Nestruck 308).

16. Rosemary Jackson in The True Story of Frankenstein: An Everyman BBC Wales Production 1986. Hereafter cited as True Story.

17. For various opinions on the relevancy of the Frankenstein story see: Elizabeth Nitchie "The Stage History of Frankenstein," The South Atlantic Quarterly, 41 (1942) 384-98; Donald Glut, The Frankenstein Legend: A Tribute to Mary Shelley and Boris Karloff (1973); Martin Tropp, Mary Shelley's Monster: The Story of Frankenstein (1976); Albert J. La Valley, "The Stage and Film Children of Frankenstein: A Survey," The Endurance of Frankenstein (1979); Paul O'Flinn, "Production and reproduction: The Case of Frankenstein," Popular Fictions (1986). I agree with O'Flinn that "there is no eternal facet of our psyche that horror stories address themselves to." Those "mysterious fears of our nature" to which Mary Shelley speaks are fears

which, "like our nature itself, are produced and reproduced by the processes of history itself" (218).

18. Peter Haining in The Frankenstein File calls Boris Karloff the Frankenstein monster (6).

19. The most recent female Frankenstein film is Lady Frankenstein (1972), in which Dr. Frankenstein's daughter creates a handsome, well-built monster to satisfy her lusty desires. In this film and the early film, The Model Man, female Frankensteins, unlike their male counterparts, do not create monsters in their own image.

20. The interdependence is also evident in Mary's reference to Prometheus. As Ketterer points out, there are two Prometheus figures present in Frankenstein: Prometheus pyrphoros, the rebel figure who stole fire from the gods; and Prometheus plasticator, the shaper out of clay (19, see also Wolf xxvii and Small 48). The former is the monster who rebels against his creator and the latter is Frankenstein. Thus the subtitle, The Modern Prometheus links together both the creator and the created.

Endnotes for Chapter Two

1. See also Andrew Tudor's Image and Influence: "Try to imagine, a world without the movies or their inheritance. Though their days of universal popularity are gone, their influence still waxes" (13). Tudor also argues that the "gangsters, the cowboys, the clean-limbed heroes, the vamps, and all the many characters come to us in our childhood and remain with us for life" (13). Jowett and Linton also claim that the "movies were powerful sources of 'image-formation'" (76).
2. Regarding an "interpretive community," Jowett and Linton claim that the "movies have done a remarkable job in creating a type of visual 'consensus' movies were among the first of the media to create a new form of collectivity, the 'mass' public" (75). Although Tudor refutes the idea of a mass homogeneity, arguing that "individuals have different needs and will draw different meanings" from movies, he adds, nonetheless: "with the coming of film, for the first time there was a widespread articulation of the beliefs, aspirations, and doubts of huge populations of modern societies" (13) and "by continually demonstrating that one's beliefs and attitudes are not mere personal eccentricities, the movies, like other expressions of culture, can act as legitimators" (234). With respect to interpreting movies, Tudor adds: "I am inclined to think that a film (and, indeed, a genre) offers some fixed structure which sets limits on selective interpretation" (235). That fixed structure, I might add, is carried by filmgoers to the novel.
3. Under the entry "Name" in The Women's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets, Barbara Walker explains that "the Christian church taught that no demon could be exorcised before his own name was known, following the example of Jesus who demanded the names of the devils he cast out of the Gadarene (Mark 5:9)" (715).
4. For a more detailed account of the origins and uses of the terms, "author" and "authority" see Gilbert and Gubar in The Madwoman in the Attic pp. 4-16.
5. Steven Earl Forry in "The Foulest Toadstool: Reviving Frankenstein in the Twentieth Century" identifies the 1915 farce, The Last Laugh as the first Frankenstein adaptation to use electricity as the means of animation (192).

6. Knoepfmacher and Levine in The Endurance of Frankenstein imply that the motif of the doppelganger is commonly accepted in Frankenstein studies when they "assume rather than argue" its presence (15).

7. See, for instance, the description of young Elizabeth:

Among these [five hungry babies] there was one which attracted my mother far above the rest. She appeared of a different stock. The four others were dark-eyed, hardy little vagrants; this child was thin and very fair. Her hair was the brightest living gold, and despite the poverty of her clothing, seemed to set a crown of distinction on her head. Her brow was clear and ample, her blue eyes cloudless.... She continued with her foster parents and bloomed in their rude abode, fairer than a garden rose among dark-leaved brambles.

(E 79)

Argues Vlasoplos: "In Elizabeth's case, the distinction strikes one as acutely racial. The poor children are 'dark-eyed,' 'dark-leaved,' whereas Elizabeth would satisfy the strictest Aryan requirements" (126).

8. On the narrative structure Ketterer rightly explains:

In the case of Frankenstein, the reader is required to put himself [sic] in the role of Margaret. Walton has prepared the narrative specifically for her eyes. By means of this narrative strategy, the reader is drawn into a construct of reflecting mirrors and forced to identify with what may be seen as the injured party.

(49)

O'Flinn also adds that "In the case of Frankenstein, the shift of medium [from novel to film] is particularly important because it must inevitably obliterate and replace what is central to the novel's meaning and structure -- namely the patterned movement through three narrators as the reader is taken by way of Walton's letters into Frankenstein's tale and on to the monster's autobiography before backing out through Frankenstein's conclusion to be left with Walton's last notes" (207-8).

Thornburg concludes: " Victor, like the narrator of some of Poe's stories, is scarcely to be trusted as an objective reporter, and without some larger frame of reference, his tale and in fact his very existence would be acceptable only conditionally.... Walton is the real person, the Wedding Guest, from whom we are able to accept Frankenstein, his story, and the Monster as being even ambiguously true" (66).

9. Transylvania has become, in the popular imagination, home to more than Count Dracula. It has also become the homeland of werewolves, mad scientists and Frankenstein's monster.

10. In Charles Kochman's colouring book entitled Monsters (1986), Frankenstein's monster is the Karloffian figure, and he receives an abnormal brain, stolen by the assistant Fritz. The images and brief story-line derive from the Universal film, not from the novel. The exposure to filmic afterimages thus begins at a very young age.

Endnotes Chapter Three

1. Leonard Wolf, in his Annotated Frankenstein, sensitively argues that this sentence is "the most superbly realized achievement in the whole of Frankenstein":

To savor the tact that informs Mary Shelley's choice of phrasing here one must pause for a moment to remember what an elaborate structure of pain and self-loathing the creature's autobiography has now become. This meeting of the visibly appalling with the blind is stunningly imagined and made graceful by the language of diffidence and courtesy in which it is couched. As an epigraph (or an epitaph) for humanity, 'Pardon this intrusion' is unsurpassed.

(191)

2. Ellen Moers in Literary Women calls Frankenstein a "birth myth" (92). Levine and Knoepfelmacher in The Endurance of Frankenstein argue: "Frankenstein seems to be distinctly a woman's mythmaking on the subject of birth" and upon "the trauma of afterbirth" (81). In the same collection, Levine calls the novel both a "secular myth" and a "tale of a 'modern Prometheus'" (4). Levine, as I show later in this chapter, tends to choose his words carefully, using "myth" when he speaks of 'serious readers' and less authoritative terms (i.e. "popular traditions," "an adolescent flight") when speaking of non-serious readers. Other critics who refer to Frankenstein as a myth include Martin Tropp and Anne Mellor (see respectively, Mary Shelley's Monster 85-6; Mary Shelley: Her Life Her Fiction Her Monsters 38). Critics who call the novel a tale include S. L. Varnado and Terry Heller. In Haunted Presence Varnado includes Frankenstein in a section on "supernatural tales" (42). Heller, in Delights of Terror, refers to Frankenstein as "a 'marvellous' tale of terror" (33). Heller also claims that "Many tales of terror are like fairy tales" (45).

3. The Cambridge Guide to Literature in English (1988), by contrast, lists Frankenstein as "A Gothic novel by Mary Shelley" (369).

4. Johan Lyall Aiken, in Masques of Morality identifies the same tendency among critics of Virginia Woolf. What Aiken says of Woolf's critics also applies to Mary Shelley's:

Sometimes ... fear of content is masked by an undue concern for method....In an effort to repress content it is still easy to hide behind the gods of traditional literary criticism -- logical progression, beginnings, middles and ends, consistency of voice, separation of subject and object, and a dependence upon the correct sources.

(18)

5. In taking this position, Mary is like other women writers who attempted to become authors. Susan Gubar explains:

until the end of the nineteenth century the woman writer really was supposed to take second place to her literary brothers and fathers [or husbands]. If she refused to be modest, self-deprecating, subservient, refused to present artistic productions as mere trifles ... she could expect to be ignored or (sometimes scurrilously) attacked.

(The Madwoman in the Attic 61-2)

Indeed, Horace Walpole once called Mary's mother "'a hyena in petticoats'" (Gubar 31).

6. When Percy reviewed Frankenstein, he again spoke for his wife. Referring to an anonymous male author, he kept Mary's identity a secret, but, as Mellor correctly adds,

Percy is both promoting Mary and protecting her from possible adverse criticism. He deliberately defines the gender of the author of Frankenstein as male, a gesture that might increase the public respect for the novel but which simultaneously denies its actual authorship; indeed, there were some who thought that Percy Shelley had written the novel. His review is thus an act of appropriation as well as of tribute.

(69)

Mary's father also appropriated the novel. In 1823, while

Mary was ill and away in Italy, Godwin, notes Rieger, "On his own initiative, and in order to capitalize on the success of the stage version, ... authorized the firm of G. and W. B. Whittaker to bring out a 'new edition' in 1823." This new edition was Godwin's own rearrangement of the text into two volumes (Rieger xxi-ii).

7. Luce Irigaray, in This Sex Which Is Not One, explains that it "is the proper name, the name of the father, that determines ownership for the family, including the wife and children" (83). In the Notes which conclude her text, the following comment is made concerning the word cluster, "proper, proper name, property, appropriate (propre, nom propre, propriete, approprier):

This word cluster suggests close connections between the related systems of capitalism and patriarchy -- more specifically, between the demands for order, neatness, the proper name, and the proper or literal meaning of a word, on the one hand, and the concepts of property ownership and appropriation, on the other.

(221)

In the case of Frankenstein the monster is named in two ways: the first is the common mistake of fusing the name of the progenitor with the progeny; the second is the visual naming of the monster as the Karloffian figure. The latter 'name' was copyrighted, and thus literally became the property of Universal studios.

8. Rieger, perhaps influenced by Garnett, describes Percy's role in the creation of Frankenstein using the same imagery: "his companionship had galvanized her imagination in her earlier efforts" (xx). Again, the passive Mary needed an active principle before she could create. Both magnetizing and galvanizing seem to me thinly veiled euphemisms for another form of collaborative creativity -- procreation.

9. The static image of a painting is also very fitting given that, in the world of the novel, "domestic affection ... is imprisoning" (Levine "Ambiguous Heritage" 14).

10. Regarding Mary's prototypical "Angels in the House," I agree with Leslie Fiedler that Mary parodies and assails cliches "by exaggerating them to the limit of grotesqueness" (quoted in Day 351). Moreover, as Day adds,

Clearly the male and female protagonists of the Gothic fantasy act out, not only romance archetypes of masculine and feminine identity, but the dominant archetypes of Western culture. What is important here is that both these archetypes are shown to be self-destructive and inadequate, leading, not to the fulfillment and fruition of identity, but to its fragmentation and destruction.

(20)

11. In the 1818 edition, Elizabeth expresses her dislike of lawyers and judges in a letter to Victor:

My uncle had an idea of his [Ernest's] being educated as an advocate, that through his [Alphonse's] interest he might become a judge. But, besides that he is not at all fitted for such an occupation, it is certainly more creditable to cultivate the earth for the sustenance of man, than to be the confidant, and sometimes the accomplice of his vices; which is the profession of a lawyer.

(Wolf 85)

12. Aitken argues that today such labels as "'shrewish,' 'waspish,' 'fallen' and 'strident' confirm the male concocted notion that the female of the species is more deadly than the male" (37).

13. Juliann Fleenor, in The Female Gothic, argues that Victor's response stems from male disgust, hatred and fear of "woman's awful procreative power and her 'otherness'" (124). Mellor also points out Victor's fear:

a woman who is sexually liberated, free to choose her own life, her own sexual partner (by force, if necessary), and to propagate at will can only appear monstrously ugly to Victor Frankenstein, for she defies that sexist aesthetic that insists that women be small, delicate, modest, passive, and sexually pleasing -- but available only to their lawful husbands.

(120)

Concerning Mellor's last point, I would add, in support, that the popular expression "the bride of Frankenstein" originates from the same aesthetic. Even in the world of

the monstrous, the female must only be available to her lawful husband.

14. Leonard Wolf also detects a note of satire:

Certainly the God-Adam Victor-creature analogy is implicit in Frankenstein from the first moment when Victor succeeds in animating his creature, but Mary Shelley seems not to exploit the biblical parallels nearly as much as she does the Miltonic ones. Still, one would not be wrong to think that, buried beneath the surface of the fiction, there is at least a tentative satire of the creation story as it is found in the Old Testament.

(140)

Like Wolf, Baldick argues that to Mary's first readers it would seem "that the novel was calling into question the most sacred of stories, equating the Supreme Being with a blundering chemistry student" (40).

15. Punter sees in Mary's novel a parallel to the position of the worker in capitalistic societies. "Under capitalism, he adds, 'man is also alienated from his 'species-being,' from his sense of human-ness, reduced to a series of discontinuous roles" (418).

Gary Larson also recognizes this aspect of Frankenstein. In the following cartoon, he humorously visualizes Mary's violating of the boundary between man and animal:



"Dear ... Have you seen the beef brains I bought for supper tonight?"

Of this boundary between man and animal, Freud concluded that children "recognize no frightful gulf between human beings and animals; the arrogance with which men separate themselves from animals does not emerge until later" (Introductory Lectures 209). He also includes this boundary in his explanation of the perverse. I provide his complete list because of its relevance to Frankenstein:

What in adult life is described as 'perverse' differs from the normal in these respects: first, by disregarding the barrier of species (the gulf between man and animals), secondly, by overstepping the barrier against incest, thirdly that against incest (the prohibition against seeking sexual satisfaction from near blood-relations), fourthly that against members of one's own sex and fifthly the transferring of the part played by the genitals to other organs and areas of the body.

(Introductory Lectures 208)

16. I am referring to what Easlea terms "masculine science." This science, explains Easlea, is an

obsessive quest not only for power over nature, described in metaphors of sexual penetration and phallic creativity, but also for public acclaim and glory.

(36)

17. Marie Curie wrote of her husband that he had,

in renouncing the pleasures of life, resolutely subordinated his thoughts and desires to this 'anti-natural' dream, 'adapting himself to it and identifying himself with it more and more completely. Believing only in the pacific might of science and of reason, he lived for the search of truth.'

(quoted in Easlea 45)

Like Victor, Pierre was destroyed by his own creation.

18. Mary repeatedly draws our attention to the limits of language and its inability to describe 'reality.' Walton introduces this idea when he explains to his sister:

I cannot describe to you my sensations It is impossible to communicate to you a conception of the trembling sensation, half pleasurable and half fearful, with which I am preparing to depart.

(E 65)

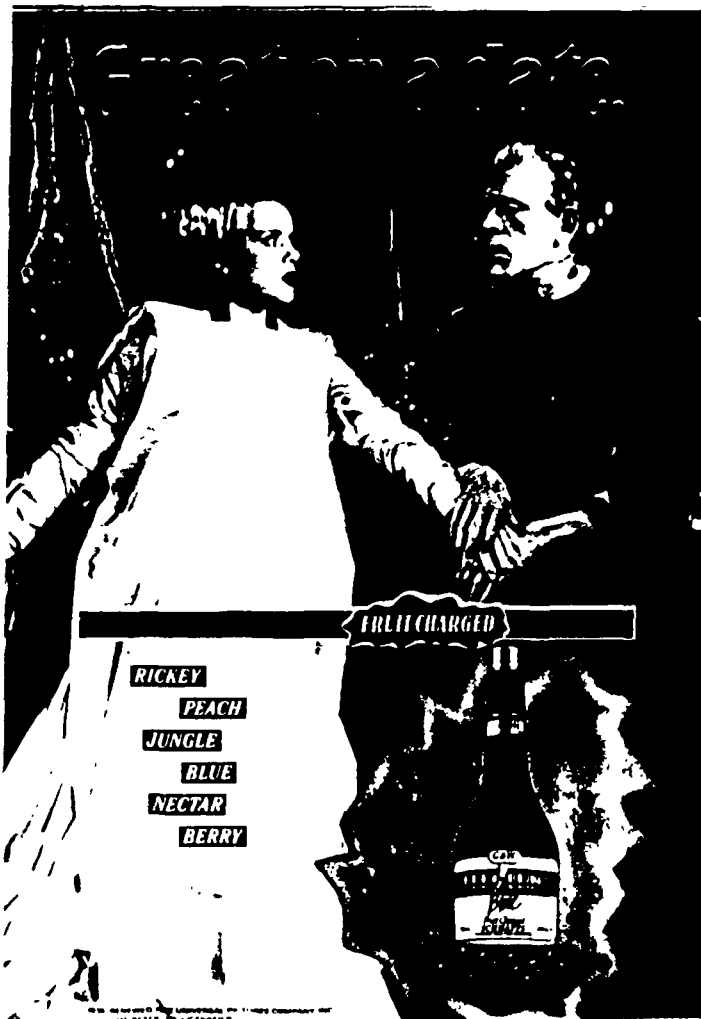
Later, when he sees the creature, he again discovers that he "cannot find the words to describe" what he sees (E 257). Similarly, Victor relates that he dreaded a "thousand nameless evils" but was "unable to define them" (E 117). He confesses to having "committed deeds of mischief beyond description horrible" and to suffering "intense tortures such as no language can describe" (E 132). He is, he tells us, "wretched beyond expression" (E 143). Mary herself, in her rough copy of the novel, wrote three times "no parallel" (Murray 62, 64) to describe events in her novel. Adding to the problem of reading 'reality' are the complementary pairings of sight/blindness, dream/reality, and madness/sanity.

19. For a more detailed discussion of the relationship between art and reality see Peter McInerney's "Frankenstein and the Godlike Science of Letters" and Jerrold Hogle's "Otherness in Frankenstein: The Confinement/Autonomy of Fabrication."

On this same subject, Mary once said of herself: "perhaps he [Percy] is planning a poem in which I am to figure. I am a farce and I play to him, but to me this is all dreary reality" (quoted in Veedor ix). Similarly, commenting on her first year with Percy and Claire, she explained that "it was acting a novel, being an incarnate romance" (Clairmont Journals 21).

Endnotes Chapter Four

1. In addition to Seagram's advertisement for Fruit Schnapps, the following greeting cards use the Frankenstein myth:



*You two were made
for each other.*



Have a monstrosly good birthday!

2. Frankenstein's monster has now been linked to Canadian Amateur Sport. Responding to questioning during the "Dubin Inquiry," into steroid use among Canadian athletes, the American doctor responsible for introducing sprinter Ben Johnson and others to the 'benefits' of steroids claimed that he was not making a bionic man; he was making a "Frankenstein." The following cartoon accompanying Allan Fotheringham's column in Maclean's alludes to the 'making' of supermen in the world of sport:



(64)

3. Freud, in fact, reached a similar conclusion. In The Psychopathology of Everyday Life, he states: "Thus the 'childhood memories' of individuals come in general to acquire the significance of 'screen memories' and in doing so offer a remarkable analogy with childhood memories that a nation preserves in its store of legends and myths" (48). The story of Frankenstein is, I believe, one of these myths.

4. Weedon is referring to popular fiction, but her comment is equally true of the Hollywood film.

5. The Other, Robin Wood explains is,

that which the bourgeois ideology cannot recognize or accept but must deal with (as

Barthes suggests in Mythologies) in one of two ways: either by rejecting and if possible annihilating it, or by rendering it safe by assimilating it, converting it as far as possible into a replica of itself. Its psycho-analytic significance resides in the fact that it functions not simply as something external to the culture or to the self, but also as what is repressed (but never destroyed) in the self and projected outwards in order to be hated and disowned.

(168)

6. The effect of this photograph and its caption is strikingly similar to the effect of the review of Anne Mellor's Mary Shelley: Her Life Her Fiction Her Monsters and its accompanying caricature of Mary Shelley. The presence of Norman Mailer works here in ways analogous to Percy's association with Mary. Both husbands "stand by" and authorize their wife's "talent." Moreover, both women artists are linked to the monstrous.

7. Tropp also concludes that the "Mad scientist and Monster are figures in a modern myth," and adds that the monster's "creator has spawned a whole range of demented scientists" (2).

8. La Valley reaches a similar conclusion concerning Dr. Praetorius' role in Bride of Frankenstein: "Here the evil Dr. Praetorius absorbs some of his [Henry's] darker raving qualities" (265). Once again, science is protected from criticism.

9. La Valley notes that the "word 'Neanderthal' frequently occurred in press releases" (262). These releases in addition to the make-up "suggested the desired lower intelligence" of the creature (263, see also Glut 100). In the novel, the creature is, many of us are startled to discover, our intellectual equal.

10. In the 1931 Whale film there is, argues La Valley, "a moralistic compromise." The doctor is

injured but not killed by his creation;
he is punished for his hubris and he
willingly singles himself out to confront
the Monster in the burning windmill.
Risking death, he finds life.

(263-4)

The reverse is the case in the novel: seeking to create life, Victor ultimately finds death.

11. Wolf is not original in this regard. Indeed, as early as 1914, "book publishers, were promoting limited editions of novels illustrated with the stills from the film" (John Izod 57). Wolf adds in his work that in "an unspecified year in the thirties, Grosset and Dunlop published an edition of Frankenstein that was illustrated with stills taken from the Universal Pictures photoplay" (345).

Appendix I

Frankenstein Adaptations: Comic, Satiric and 'Silent'

Goon with the Wind was an amateur comic production, worth remembering primarily because the role of the monster was played this time by a young newcomer to drama, James Dean (Legend 45).

Frankenstein's monster also appeared in The Maniac (1950s), in which he played cards with a magician and a skeleton. The mask of the monster was supplied by the "Universal make-up department" (Legend 46).

He also appeared in Get the Picture, a "satire performed in Chicago in the mid-sixties about Frankenstein and local politics" (Legend 46). Of note is the presence of a female monster and her similarities to the Elsa Lanchester 'bride.' She had crossed eyes and a "fright wig that stuck out from her head as though charged with electricity" (Legend 46).

The San Francisco Mime Troupe produced Frankenstein in 1967 (Legend 46). The monster wore facial bandages "in the fashion of a mummy" (Legend 46).

The Living Theatre began in the mid-1950s and was originated by Julian Beck and his wife Judith Malina. It was a "company of the Radical Theatre Repertory, a commune of free-thinking performers" which at first "performed avant garde plays and Greek Classics" (Legend 49). Frankenstein Poem opens with an unsuccessful attempt to levitate "'The Victim' (Mary Mary) off stage" (Legend 49). Dr. Frankenstein in the midst of mass murder and violence begins "to dismember the various corpses so that the dead could be given new life" (Legend 49). Sharing the creation scene with Dr. Frankenstein are Jewish cabbalists who attempt to build a female Golem, and Sigmund Freud who, as stage directions record, "appears and orders the sexual graft" (Legend 51). Also present is Paracelsus who "directs the graft of the third eye," while Norbert Wiener (in a probable allusion to his influential work Cybernetics) "advises the use of electrodes" (Legend 51). And, in a further departure from previous adaptations, the monster speaks, passionately uttering Mary's own words concerning man's perversity. The play ends with the monster and his maker exchanging kisses - an act which "inspired the various characters in the play to free their prisoners" (Legend 50). Not a critical

success, the play did succeed in appropriating the Frankenstein myth for ideological purposes; as Glut points out:

what the play continuously emphasized was that our society was conceived in violence and thrived upon it to survive. Only by reconstructing society through peaceful revolution can man escape his violent nature. The creature of Frankenstein was not destroyed at the end of the production. As we have all contributed to the creation of the Monster, it is also our task to contend with it -- or destroy it.

(52)

Appendix II

More 'Sightings' of Frankenstein

Charles Dickens, like Gaskell, also alludes to the Frankenstein monster and his artificial creation. In Great Expectations, Pip, after having learned of Magwitch's role in his life, recalls Mary's student of unhallowed arts:

The imaginary student pursued by the misshapen creature he had impiously made, was not more wretched than I, pursued by the creature who had made me, and recoiling from him with a stronger repulsion, the more he admired me and the fonder he was of me.

(354)

But, if in this instance, money makes the man, in Hard Times, money -- or the capitalist's drive for money -- can also dismember the man. Here, the synecdochal "hands" of the workers are literalized (Baldick 108), as Dickens presents a monstrous world in which the division of labour literally leads to the division of the labourers.

This is the same world which Karl Marx described as made up of dead labour, a labour which capitalism creates "'by constantly sucking in labour as its soul, vampire-like'" (Baldick 129). Although Marx frequently describes capitalism using vampire images, he also describes its alienation of labour in terms reminiscent of Frankenstein. For readers familiar with Mary Shelley's novel, his description of the "primary separation of labour from the means of production" (Baldick 132) echoes Victor's artificial creation:

'The combination of this labour appears just as subservient to and lead by an alien will and an alien intelligence -- having its animating unity elsewhere -- as its material unity appears subordinate to the objective unity of the machinery of fixed capital, which, as animated monster, objectifies the scientific idea, and is in fact the coordinator, does not in any way relate to the individual as his instrument; but rather, he himself exists as an animated individual punctuation mark, as its

living isolated accessory.'

(quoted by Baldick 132)

Indeed, Victor's scientific project, as Mellor notes, is actually an attempt to appropriate the womb, and to "usurp the power of reproduction is to usurp the power of production as such" (112). Thus, Victor would take childbirth -- Marx's "primary example of pure unalienated labour" and transform it into yet another form of alienated labour (Mellor 112).

Six years after the publication of Great Expectations, Frankenstein (the name of the monster) became a symbol of the dangers of Reform:



THE DRUMMAVEN FRANKENSTEIN

From the SAT. - ILLUSTRATION OF THE "AND BOLD GO" - THE TOWN'S PEOPLE - A PROMPTING

(Cartoon History 172)

In the twentieth century, "Frankenstein" continues to serve as a warning. On 3 May 1971, the Daily Telegraph ran an article which read: "'There are growing indications that the Nationalists in South Africa have created a political Frankenstein which is pointing the way to a non-white political revival'" (cited by O'Flinn 206).

After the Watergate scandal, The New York Post (27 June 1973) offered the following visual comment, using once again the Frankenstein theme:



(Haining 122)

Roughly three years later, Frankenstein became linked to the politics of Chairman Mao. Claimed a headline from The Observer (11 April 1976),

Rioters send a warning to 'Frankenstein' Mao

from DENNIS BLOODWORTH in Singapore

THE most turbulent week Peking has seen since the Cultural Revolution in the 1960s has ended with the announcement that the new Chinese government has decided to open its doors to the world. The decision is a political move, it is said, to show the world that the new government is not a threat to the world.

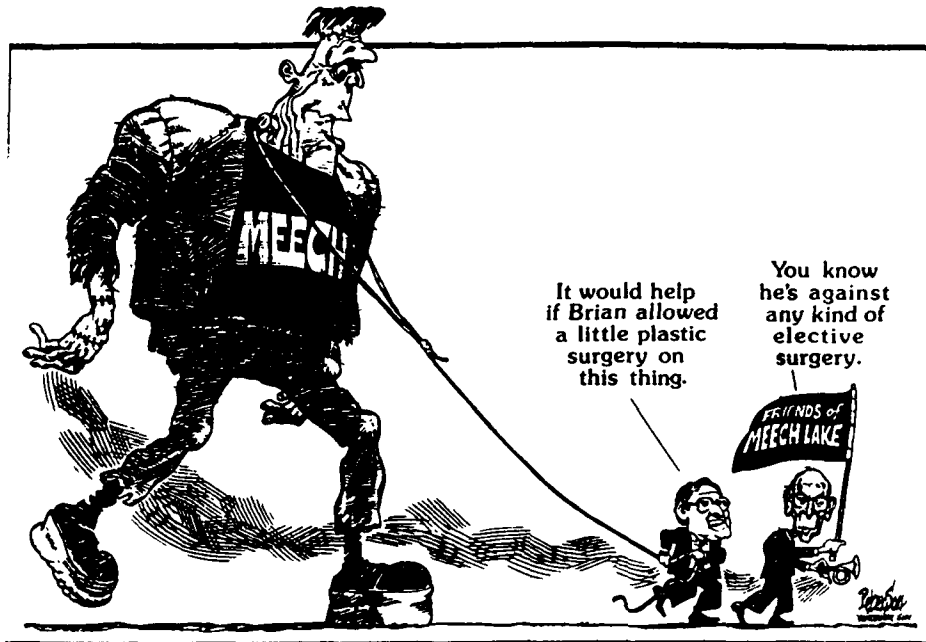


Mao the creation means on being too human

Chairman Mao Zedong is the central figure in the Chinese Revolution. He is the creator of the new Chinese government. He is the one who has led the Chinese people to the present day. He is the one who has created the new China. He is the one who has made the Chinese people proud of their country. He is the one who has made the Chinese people proud of their government. He is the one who has made the Chinese people proud of their future.

(Haining 122)

More recently, Frankenstein's creature (still misnamed) has been used to warn of the potentially 'monstrous' consequences of Canada's Meech Lake Accord:



(The Kamloops Daily News A6 26 Jan. 1990)

Finally, there is the following visual comment, concerning the reunification of Germany:



(Calgary Herald A4 26 Feb. 1990)

Here, as with all the examples, the message the Frankenstein reference sends is one of warning. As long as the myth continues to be appropriated for political purposes, Mary's creation will be kept alive. But, in the hands of filmmakers, playwrights, novelists, and politicians, it is seldom the myth as Mary Shelley once envisioned it.

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Frankenstein Conquers the World. Dir. Inoshiro Honda. With Nick Adams, Tadao Takashima and Kumi Mizuno. Toho, 1965.

Jesse James Meets Frankenstein's Daughter. Dir. Willaim Beaudine. With Narda Onyx, Carl Bolder and John Lupton. Circle Films, 1965.

Frankenstein Meets the Space Monster. Dir. Robert Gaffney. With Robert Reilly and Nancy Marshall. Vernon Pictures, 1965.

Frankenstein Created Woman. Dir. Terence Fisher. With Susan Denberg, Peter Cushing, Thorley Walters and Robert Morris. Hammer/Seven Artists, 1967.

Frankenstein Must Be Destroyed. Dir. Terence Fisher. With Freddie Jones, Peter Cushing, Simon Ward and Veronica Carlson. Hammer Films, 1969.

The Horror of Frankenstein. Dir. Jimmy Sangster. With Dave Prowse, Ralph Bates, Dennis Price and Graham Jones. Hammer Films, 1970.

Frankenstein and the Monster From Hell. Dir. Terence Fisher.
With Dave Prowse, Peter Cushing, Shane Briant and Madeline
Smith. Hammer Films, 1972.

Frankenstein. Dir. Glenn Jordan. With Bo Svenson, Robert
Foxworth, Susan Strasberg, John Karlen and George Morgan.
Dan Curtis Productions, 1973.

Frankenstein: The True Story. Dir. Jack Smight. With Michael
Sarrazin, James Mason, Leonard Whiting, David McCallum,
Jane Seymour, Agnes Moorehead, Ralph Richardson and John
Gilgud. A Universal Television Film, 1973.

Andy Warhol's Frankenstein. Dir. Paul Morrissey. With Srdjan
Zelenovic, Dalila Di Lazzano, Udo Kier, Joe Dallesando and
Monique Van Vooren. Carlo Ponti Production, 1974.

Young Frankenstein. Dir. Mel Brooks. With Peter Boyle, Gene
Wilder, Marty Feldman, Cloris Leachman, Teri Garr and
Madeline Kahn. Twentieth-Century-Fox, 1974.

The Rocky Horror Picture Show. Dir. Jim Sharman. With Tim
Curry, Peter Hinwood, Susan Sarandon, Barry Bostwick,
and introducing Meatloaf. England, 1975.

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With Richard Cox and Terri Austin. 20th Century Fox,
1984.

The Bride. Dir. Franc Roddam. With Clancy Brown, Jennifer
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Ilan Mitchell-Smith and Kelly Le Brock. Universal, 1985.

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Ed Begley Jr., Carol Kane and Jeffrey Jones. New World
Pictures, 1985.

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Duncan Regehr and Tom Noonan. Tri-Star, 1987.

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