

INTRODUCTION

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The latent visual and iconographic features informing the genesis of *Frankenstein* have been brought to light both in the reception of the novel and in its numerous adaptations and rewritings. Exploring the complex relationship between *moulages*, science, superstition and *Frankenstein*, Jennifer Debie sheds light on a world of wax hidden in *Frankenstein*. Eternal, beautiful, and undamaged despite dissection and re-dissection through the ages, the *moulages* (wax models) of European medical schools have been tied to art and science since the Enlightenment. When Mary Shelley recorded seeing Clemente Susini's Anatomical Venus and her sisters in Florence in 1820, such reclining ladies had long been exhibited there, scandalizing British visitors for decades. Even before their use as anatomical instruments, wax models were symbolically used as tools for healing – reproductions of afflicted limbs were hung in churches in the hope they would heal physical ailments, something Mary Shelley noted in her *History of a Six Weeks Tour*. But the uncanny character of the wax masks highlights the relationship between representation of the body as a simulacrum and the effects of achieving that visual dimension.

The parodistic assumptions inherent in this dialectic would be developed in Mel Brooks' masterpiece, *Young Frankenstein* (1974) which, in Michela Vanon Alliata's interpretation, consolidates their effectiveness as a rewriting that takes the contents of the novel and of the Universal films to their extreme, presenting itself as something more than a comic parody. Mel Brooks' attention to the theme of the double and to the play on language makes *Young Frankenstein* an object of remarkable intellectual provocation that is susceptible to psychoanalytic interpretation.

In Gilles Menegaldo's reading of the film *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* (1994), which was produced by Francis Ford Coppola, British director Kenneth Branagh returns to the romantic sources of the narration twenty years later, paying homage to Mary Shelley in the prologue and restoring the narrative framework of the explorer, Walton. Visually the film's images celebrate the sublime polar and alpine landscapes. Branagh restores many scenes from the novel (while adding others) and recreates

its historical and cultural context, reclaiming the themes of childhood and family. The differences from the novel are nevertheless important, particularly with regard to the external focus upon the Creature, notably in the ice cave scene, but also to the re-imagined episode of the creation of the Bride, and finally the representation of science and the implications of transgressing the limits of knowledge. Branagh gives the word back to the monster and explores the relationship between the innate and the acquired. The film insists on the importance of memory in the constitution of identity, and highlights the incestuous subtext through the brother/sister relationship as well as in the relationship between the father and Elizabeth. A similar initial attention for Mary Shelley, author and conflicting character, is highlighted by Beatriz and Fernando Moreno who analyse the edition of *Frankenstein* illustrated by Elena Odriozola, and published in 2013. This version became important for two main reasons: on the one hand, because the illustrator was a woman; on the other, because it does not focus on the key moments of the text that are traditionally represented, but rather on Mary Shelley's preface to the 1831 edition and her personal experience during the creation/writing of the novel. Within the entire tradition of American illustrators, for the most part male (Carbé, Ward, Everett, Moser, Wrightson, etc.) who tackled the novel by moving away from stereotypes and simplifications, Odriozola is positioned along the path opened out by Broutin in 1968 and Marcia Huyette in 1977. Huyette was the first woman to illustrate *Frankenstein*, and Odriozola the first to exclusively illustrate the 1831 "Preface" by treating it as a mythical narrative linked to the theme of birth, which in turn establishes a feminist perspective.

Psychoanalytic and gender elements are also found in the most recent adaptation of the story of Frankenstein in *Penny Dreadful* (2014-2016), a British-American television series created by John Logan and analysed here by Greta Colombani. Starting from the duplicity of man and non-man in the personality of the monster, Logan explores and further develops this theme by making Frankenstein and the Creature overlap. Most interesting is that the absence of Victor's family coincides with a tripling in the number of his creatures, including a female one, for whom he eventually develops the same desire as his firstborn, and who replaces the novel's Elizabeth. Frankenstein is not only defined as a "monster" and a "demon" like his Creature, but also shares his profound isolation and desire for companionship. Finally, thanks to the insertion of a theatrical setting, the Creature has been represented as an eternal subject of "perpetual resurrection" and rewriting in literature, and in transpositions to cinema, a television series and video games.

As Jon Garrad demonstrates, by rewriting myths and stereotypes in video games, the player or players adopt a point of view similar to the Creature's, as an avatar and as a central character pursuing this playful itinerary. The adaptation of the literary work is always more indirect, although the narrative and the methods of transferal manage to evoke a similar way of "feeling" and "reliving" the plot. The essays published in this third section confirm the primacy of the visual factor in the transmission of the imaginary icons present in the source, and in the plot of the novel. Indeed they are part of it, even when the reader's point of view and the questions asked by the public seem to set new priorities for reusing the text, and invoke new ideological perspectives that are partly incompatible with the romantic context of the original narration.