The Composite Frankenstein: the Man, the Monster, the Myth

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ABSTRACT

The Composite Frankenstein: the Man, the Monster, the Myth
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This thesis explores *Frankenstein*'s popular culture narrative, contrasting recent *Frankenstein* texts with the content of Mary Shelley's classic novel and James Whale's iconic films *Frankenstein* (1931) and *The Bride of Frankenstein* (1935). The research investigates how *Frankenstein*'s legacy of adaptations function intertextually to influence both the production and the consumption of *Frankenstein* texts, referring to this complicated and contradictory intertextual web as "the Composite Frankenstein."

This thesis present the Composite Frankenstein as a hermeneutic by which to view *Frankenstein*'s collaborative and cumulative identity in popular culture, drawing on the work of other scholars on adaptation and intertextuality. Sarah Milner investigates the context of the key *Frankenstein* texts, the novel and the 1931 film; this research's goal is to destabilize the perception of authorship as an individual's mode of production and to investigate the various social processes that influence text creation and consumption.

Keywords: Frankenstein, Mary Shelley, James Whale, intertextuality, adaptations, popular culture, film, authorship.

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Introduction

Everyone knows "Frankenstein"—that is to say, it is safe to assume that the majority of the population, at least in the Western world, has at least heard the name "Frankenstein" and has seen some form of the reanimated, probably square-headed, Frankenstein's monster. The image of Frankenstein's monster is ubiquitous, particularly around Halloween, when it appears in countless forms of visual media, from decorations to children's cartoons. It is a familiar icon, and it is a familiar story; however, this "familiar" story has a long history of popular adaptations that redefine the narrative and the "familiar" icons associated with *Frankenstein* today are predominantly informed by adaptations, rather than the original novel. The popularization of *Frankenstein* adaptations such as the 1823 play *Presumption; or the Fate of Frankenstein* and the 1931 film *Frankenstein* (1931) have complicated and expanded the term "Frankenstein" to signify ideas and images far beyond the content of Mary Shelley's 19th-century novel. Popular culture references to "Frankenstein" that do not refer to content from Shelley's novel are evidence of adaptations expanding *Frankenstein* in the popular imagination: for example, the creature possessing neck bolts or the "birth" of a female monster. The contemporary popular culture that surrounds "Frankenstein" informs how Dr. Frankenstein and his creation(s) are conceived of—both as general icons and as characters encountered in any given text. The almost 200-year legacy of *Frankenstein* adaptations has shaped the public's understanding of what "Frankenstein" is, far beyond what could be attributed to one single text.

While it is tempting to argue Shelley's novel is the "true" *Frankenstein* story, to do so ignores how the term "Frankenstein" functions as a signifier—the narrative implied by "Frankenstein" is not the plot of Shelley's novel. Rather, the story signified by "Frankenstein" is

a complex and contradictory set of expectations within the public's memory, built on a foundation of countless popular culture references. Mary Shelley's novel has the unique characteristic of being frequently referenced as a concept (i.e. "Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*") while the references themselves use content originating from adaptations. Contemporary popular culture typically references the version of *Frankenstein* popularized by James Whale's 1931 film *Frankenstein* (1931): the film that introduced a mute square-headed monster, brought to life via the power of lightning, with electrodes jutting out of his neck. Halloween decorations, children's cartoons, and even guitar designs, are typically based on this version of the story, and this conceptualization of the Creature (Appendix A: figures 1-4). Shelley's novel was one of the source materials used for Whale's film; however, Whale's film—which popularized *Frankenstein* more than any other adaptation (at least from a contemporary perspective)—possesses various creative divergences from Shelley's original text that collectively contradict and override the content of her story.

Despite its significant contribution to the popular conception of "Frankenstein," Whale's film *Frankenstein* (1931) does not possess all the iconic "Frankenstein" story elements as understood in 21st-century popular culture; for example, there is no character named "Igor" in this film, nor does the creature walk with his arms outstretched. Contemporary conceptions of *Frankenstein* include ideas introduced in later adaptations that build on Whale's original film, particularly the Universal sequels released between 1935 and 1948. For example, the *Frankenstein* (1931) sequel *The Ghost of Frankenstein* (1942) introduced the iconic Frankenstein's monster walk—the Creature walks in this manner in the film after becoming blind. Later Universal monster films repeat this behaviour, despite the character regaining his sight. This is one of several examples of *Frankenstein*'s intertextual "accumulation": a new idea

is introduced by an adaptation and is subsequently reinforced and developed by later adaptations. In some cases, the underlying explanation or motivation is lost: for example, the creature walking with his arms outstretched because he's blind, or Dr. Frankenstein's derangement resulting from an unhealthy obsession with scientific pursuit. *Frankenstein* texts disagree on even basic questions such as "does the creature speak?" or even "who is Frankenstein?" Not every *Frankenstein* text is a direct adaptation of Shelley's novel; yet, because these texts present as a "Frankenstein" story, they contribute to the public's understanding of the "Frankenstein" story. This web of Frankenstein stories presents a unique opportunity to observe the intertextual links among legacy texts—the spectrum of adaptations that share a common root source—and examine how these links inform a general narrative within popular culture.

This thesis frames authorship as a social process by examining *Frankenstein* as popular culture. *Frankenstein*'s legacy of adaptations and allusions heavily influence the public's understanding of Shelley's text; as a result, the Frankenstein story in popular culture is full of instabilities. The name "Frankenstein," for example, can refer to either the doctor or the monster—or both—depending on context. Film titles such as *The Bride of Frankenstein* (1935), *Son of Frankenstein* (1939) and *Frankenstein Must Be Destroyed* (1969) intentionally obfuscate who "Frankenstein" is, encouraging audience members to think of the film's subject—the monster—as "Frankenstein." The metafictional confusion of who "Frankenstein" refers to is engrained in popular culture—in the film *The Monster Squad* (1987), potential members of the monster fan club are asked "who is Frankenstein?" to test their familiarity with classic monsters. These films all assume the audience has some familiarity with the previous *Frankenstein* adaptations. *The Monster Squad* (1987) playfully reminds audiences of the classic films' existence through character dialogue: the children are fans of the classic monster movies and are

understandably shocked to encounter these figures in "real life." In the case of the Universal sequels, their titles actively reference previous adaptations by following a basic formula (*Bride of*, *Son of*, *Ghost of*, etc.); thus the texts are presented with an awareness of their place among other *Frankenstein* texts—after all, the main motivation of a sequel is to capitalize on the success of the original film.

Adaptations embed instabilities into the cultural imagining of "Frankenstein." This process is almost two centuries old and began with Richard Peake's *Presumption; or, the Fate of Frankenstein*, which was first performed in 1823. Peake's adaptation compressed the content of Shelley's novel, reduced Frankenstein's creation into a soulless mute monster, and introduced the comic servant Fritz—an early version of the "hunchback" lab assistant Igor (Butler *xlix-l*). Such changes were necessary to fit the content of the novel into the shorter format of theatre; to remediate Shelley's novel, Peake had to rewrite *Frankenstein*. In their book *Remediation: Understanding New Media*, Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin argue that this kind of remediation—the "borrowing" of "story content" from one medium transplanted or repurposed into another—reuses content in such a way that the content changes; however, the presentation of the material as an "adaptation" effaces the changes while simultaneously illuminating the new media: "With reuse comes a necessary redefinition, but there may be no conscious interplay between media. The interplay happens, if at all, only for the reader or viewer who happens to know both versions" (45). Peake's *Presumption; or, the Fate of Frankenstein* markets itself both as a pre-existing story (*Frankenstein)* and a new experience: the popular novel, now presented in the exciting medium of theatre; however, Peake's attempt to translate Shelley's novel into the medium of theatre effectively rewrites *Frankenstein*, transforming the narrative into a religious warning against presumption.

Peake's play was very successful and launched a theatre tradition of *Frankenstein* plays; it also launched *Frankenstein* into the realm of popular culture. As Jon Turney explains in *Frankenstein's Footsteps: Science, Genetics and Popular Culture*, Peake's play launched the *Frankenstein* story into the mainstream:

> The early stage productions also served to introduce 'Frankensteinian' as an adjective… They also began a process in which the story, in a much-reduced form, became familiar to much wider audiences. Some saw plays, which continued to proliferate. Some read new versions in print. Others read the original tale in one of its numerous reprinted editions, generally of the 1831 revision. And the image of a monster was linked to Frankenstein by political cartoonists through the rest of the century. (29)

Turney—relying largely on the *Frankenstein* scholarship of Steven Earl Forry—argues that *Frankenstein* became popular culture after the success of Peake's play, because the play and the attention it generated exposed the masses to the general story. He also suggests that the success of the play contributed to the continued public interest in the novel, allowing Shelley to publish a second edition in 1831. According to Turney, by the time Shelley published her second edition in 1831, audiences already read *Frankenstein* in relation to its popular culture legacy—the same process of intertextual collaboration that currently complicates how popular culture conceives of *Frankenstein*.

Peake's play is a particularly notable example of a *Frankenstein* adaptation because it had a direct impact on the subsequent (revised) edition of *Frankenstein*, published in 1831; scholar Marilyn Butler interprets Shelley's revisions in 1831 as "acts of damage-limitation" (l) following the play's success. For example, Peake added Victor's "religious remorse," (Butler

xlix) which was later incorporated—to a degree—in Shelley's own revisions: in the 1818 text, Victor is terrified of and disgusted by the monster, but it is not until the 1831 edition that his narration relates this to his spiritual health. Subsequent stage and film adaptations of Shelley's *Frankenstein* incorporate many of Peake's changes. For example, the films *Frankenstein* (1931) and *The Bride of Frankenstein* repeat the religious warning against presumption. *Frankenstein*'s (1931) prologue warns the audience that the film is about a doctor who "sought to create a man after his own image, without reckoning upon God" (*Frankenstein* [1931]); *The Bride of Frankenstein* begins with a prologue depicting a fictionalized Mary Shelley summarizing her novel as "the punishment that befell a mortal man, who dared to emulate God" (*The Bride of Frankenstein*). Peake's changes are still relevant within contemporary popular culture, despite the play no longer being a popular text, because its divergences are repeated in other more recognizable adaptations.

Each new adaptation of *Frankenstein*, borrowing qualities of previous versions and introducing new divergences, both resurrects and redefines the collective conceptualization of the narrative. This narrative is unstable; even the most basic elements of the Frankenstein story are continually reinterpreted via the process of "reconstitution"—a phrase Harold Love coins in "Early Modern Print Culture; Assessing the Models." Building from the work of bibliography scholars such as D. F. McKenzie and Adrian Johns, Love inserts the concept of reconstitution into the print cycle, stating "This is the point where new ideas, new experiences, new kinds of language, new instances of work are fed into the cycle, thus making it an open system, not a closed one" (80). Every *Frankenstein* adaptation introduces new ideas while eschewing others, feeding into this "open system" of text production. *Presumption*, *Frankenstein* (1931), and *The Bride of Frankenstein* are just a few of the adaptations within the diverse web of texts that

reconstitute *Frankenstein*. Such texts inform how readers approach and engage with Shelley's *Frankenstein*, and they will continue to inform readers as long as the stories remain culturally relevant.

The legacy of *Frankenstein* adaptations even influences the publication of Shelley's novel; although new editions contain the same text as in the 1831 edition (and less frequently the 1818 edition), the paratexts—particularly the marketing of the book—reflect the current cultural conception of "Frankenstein." How many versions of *Frankenstein* are packaged with covers depicting castles, lightning bolts, and green-skinned monsters? New editions of *Frankenstein* assume familiarity with the Frankenstein story in popular culture; this is especially true of the cheap editions, such as a recent edition available on Amazon with artwork depicting Boris Karloff's Creature as its cover art (Appendix A: figure 5). Such associations among *Frankenstein* texts persist within popular culture because they are maintained by reference and remediation; Whale's 1931 film continues to be iconic because images and story elements from his film are referenced within popular culture. Such references are not necessarily intentional: Whale's *Frankenstein* (1931) is imitated so often that it is plausible for authors who have not encountered Whale's films to incorporate aspects of *Frankenstein (*1931) into their own Frankenstein stories. As long as the basic story is promulgated by new texts, it will remain in popular culture. The recent surge in new *Frankenstein* texts—the film *Victor Frankenstein* (2015), the British television drama *The Frankenstein Chronicles* (2015–present), and even a film depicting Mary Shelley writing her first novel, *Mary Shelley* (2017)—suggests that *Frankenstein* is not at risk of falling from popular memory any time soon.

The story of *Frankenstein* is a "Frankenstein" monster in itself: a social construct, comprised of reanimated parts. Texts adapting or alluding to *Frankenstein* that persist within the

collective memory of the public inform how the public reads, interprets, and remembers the story; thus, the public is continuously "writing" the narrative signified by "Frankenstein." The body of texts that inform *Frankenstein* in popular culture form an elaborate intertextual network, collectively influencing the public's understanding of the "Frankenstein" story. These are texts that are immediately identifiable as "Frankenstein" either through title or the incorporation of iconography; in most cases, such texts are adaptations of Shelley's novel, with varying degrees of fidelity. The connective tissue within this body of texts is reader recognition/reference. I will be referring to this socially-held intertextual network as "the Composite Frankenstein."

The Composite Frankenstein

The Composite Frankenstein is comprised of the popular culture that surrounds the Frankenstein story, as demonstrated by textual references. Marilyn Butler uses the phrase "composite Frankenstein" (303-4) in her article "*Frankenstein* and the Radical Science" to describe how the public conflates elements from the 1818 and 1831 editions of Shelley's novel; I use the phrase to describe the collaborative and accumulative processes at work within *Frankenstein* as popular culture. How texts construct or reference "Frankenstein" reflects the current associations within popular culture; furthermore, the layered nature of such references allows for multiple readings based on one's knowledge of *Frankenstein* texts. In this thesis, I examine authorship as an intertextual process, demonstrated by the Composite Frankenstein. The Composite Frankenstein presents a unique opportunity to observe the layered and multidirectional social processes involved in authorship. Such processes manifest in two basic forms: the social mechanisms that influence the creation of a text and the reader-based "authorship" that occurs when intertextual reference and recognition creates meaning. In

examining the processes of intertextuality that maintain *Frankenstein* as a popular culture icon, I will demonstrate how mass media functions in relation to society as both an *informer of* culture, as well as being *informed by* culture.

I use the phrase "Composite Frankenstein" to describe the cumulative *Frankenstein* in popular culture; however, other scholars have adopted different terminology—and as a result, different strategies—to approach *Frankenstein*'s popular culture legacy. Thomas Leitch, for example, uses the phrase "fictional franchise" (207) in his book *Film Adaptations & its Discontents: From Gone with the Wind to The Passion of the Christ* to discuss the film legacy of *Frankenstein*, as well as of *Dracula*, *Tarzan*, and *Sherlock Holmes*. These are the four novels for which, according to his calculations in 2007, the titular character "has been played by the largest number of performers in film adaptations" (207). Jude Wright offers another term for describing the Composite Frankenstein in "Listening to the Monster: Eliding and Restoring the Creature's Voice in Adaptations of *Frankenstein*." Wright presents the phrase "*Frankenstein* complex" (250) to describe this "amalgamation of images, descriptions, and narratives from various versions of the story that have been stitched together and given a cultural life of their own" (250). The differing terminology reflects two different approaches to studying *Frankenstein* in popular culture: Leitch's investigation of fictional franchises focuses on film and television production and is primarily interested in how narrative elements are canonized in popular culture; Wright's interest lies in describing how previous texts influence how audiences encounter new adaptations. I present the alternative phrase, "the Composite Frankenstein," because I am not satisfied with either scholars' terminology. Leitch's "fictional franchise" implies singular ownership (no one person or body governs *Frankenstein* stories), while Wright's "*Frankenstein* complex" does not speak to the accumulative and collaborative nature of

Frankenstein in popular culture as well as "composite Frankenstein" can. Both Leitch and Wright offer insight into the intertextual relationships between adaptations and how these relationships affect, if not determine, the creation and reception of future adaptations; I combine their different approaches to conceptualize the social-authorship of the Composite Frankenstein.

Leitch's assessment of the fictional franchises demonstrates the collaborative and accumulative nature of the Composite Frankenstein. He suggests that the *Frankenstein*, *Dracula*, *Tarzan*, and *Sherlock Holmes* franchises are adaptations "organized around larger-than-life figures whose mythopoetic appeal is iconic rather than psychological" (207). Dr. Frankenstein and the Creature remain common figures within popular culture because of what they have come to represent as cultural icons. Leitch elaborates:

> …all four [franchises] draw their iconography not merely from their literary originals but from a mixture of visual texts, from illustrations to earlier film and television versions… [they] are therefore hybrid adaptations that depart from their putative originals at any number of points, often choosing instead to remain faithful to unauthorized later versions. (208)

For Leitch, the "franchise" consists of the texts that inform new adaptations. He argues that these are "canonical fictional franchise[s]" (230) in which the most successful adaptations are those that become informers within the canon. Leitch cites the dramatic expansion of Shelley's original creation scene popularized by Peake's play *Presumption; or, the Fate of Frankenstein* as an example (208); Whale's 1931 film is another example of a "canon" adaptation because it significantly informs the popular culture surrounding *Frankenstein*. According to Leitch's theory, adaptations are given lasting cultural significance when they are imitated by other texts;

however, such repeated remediations transform the source text into a myth within popular culture, with iconic and symbolic appeal.

Leitch focuses his theory of fictional franchises on *Sherlock Holmes* because he believes it “poses such unusual problems for adaptation studies that [it] deserves special attention” (207); however, many of his observations about the *Sherlock Holmes* franchise are true for the *Frankenstein* franchise as well. Both franchises contain adaptations that “often borrow from other quasi-canonical sources,” (214) and in both franchises, the original source material is fetishized—the source material is referenced by name but not by content. Adaptations of *Sherlock Holmes* and *Frankenstein* that claim fidelity to the original source material, such as Granada’s *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* series (1984–1994) and Kenneth Branagh’s feature film *Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein* (1994), demonstrate how these source texts are fetishized. Leitch argues the Granada series gives “the appearance of fidelity by concentrating on certain kinds of details but neglecting, correcting, or improving others” (230); this is also true of *Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein*, which presents a plot that departs from the original novel, despite the film’s title claiming that this is Mary Shelley’s version of the story. These significant divergences from the source material, such as Dr. Waldman being murdered, or Victor reanimating Elizabeth as a female monster, demonstrate how Branagh’s film does not attempt true “fidelity,” but invokes Mary Shelley’s name as an indicator of quality or artistic merit. Furthermore, *Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein* includes concepts introduced by previous *Frankenstein* adaptations—as does the Granada’s *Sherlock Holmes* series. True “fidelity” to original source material (a dubious concept itself, according to recent adaptation studies scholarship: see Chapter 4) is not possible for either franchise because Doyle’s and Shelley’s texts have been redefined by a legacy of adaptations.

Wright's discussion of the "Frankenstein complex" shifts the conversation away from text creation and focuses instead on audience reception. He argues that *Frankenstein* stories inform how other *Frankenstein* stories are read and presents this terminology to discuss the cultural influence of these various *Frankenstein* retellings: "The 'Frankenstein complex' provides a hermeneutic through which all Frankenstein texts, be they film adaptations, staged dramas, or the original novel, are to some extent viewed" (250). Wright draws on the previous scholarship of Kamilla Elliott and Marvin Carlson to explain how *Frankenstein* texts develop layered meaning over time through intertextual collaboration; he employs Elliott's concept of the "de(re)composing" model of adaptation to describe how *Frankenstein* adaptations merge within the audience's consciousness (250) and Carlson's theory of "ghosting" to describe how new *Frankenstein* adaptations are "haunted" (250) by the previous ones. In both cases, the audience constructs meaning through memory. Wrights suggests the "complex web of intertextual relationships" (264) surrounding *Frankenstein* influences how audiences read "Frankenstein" texts, causing audiences to "read into the [text] elements that are strictly speaking, not actually there" (264). According to Wright's analysis, fidelity to the source material is impossible because it is impossible to untangle Shelley's *Frankenstein* from the various popular culture imaginings of "Frankenstein."

The question remains, however, why the public insists on labelling the story as "Mary Shelley's," despite the Composite Frankenstein's core narrative increasingly departing from her influence and storytelling. Mary Shelley is an icon within the Composite Frankenstein, not only as the author figure, but also as a romanticized icon in her own right. Shelley presents a romantic account of her novel's origins in the Introduction to her 1831 edition; while this can be explained as an author dramatizing her novel's origins for the sake of a "popular edition" (Butler xxiii), it is

also Shelley staking a claim on the novel: Shelley published the 1818 edition anonymously, and some reviewers assumed her husband, Percy Shelley, was the author (Poovey 252). Mary published her revised edition naming herself as the author and provided evidence to back her claim through her account of the novel's origins, complete with naming Lord Byron as witness to her creation—which she famously refers to as her "hideous progeny." Popular culture fixates on this act of creation: James Whale includes a fictionalized Mary, Percy, and Byron in the prologue of his film *The Bride of Frankenstein*; Mary Shelley is a character in both the film *Frankenstein Unbound* (1990) and the television series *The Frankenstein Chronicles*; and the biopic film *Mary Shelley* presents the romance between Mary and Percy as the lead-up to her writing of *Frankenstein*. Such fictional accounts of Mary Shelley complicate the relationship between the authorship of *Frankenstein* and the social authorship of the Composite Frankenstein, both because they reinforce the notion that Shelley is responsible for the story "as we know it," but also because these depictions blur the distinctions between historic fact, romanticized legend, and artistic liberty.

On Adaptations

Thus far, I have been using the term "adaptation" loosely; the body of work informing the Composite Frankenstein is a vast spectrum of texts across virtually all mediums, many of which are not "adaptations" of Shelley's novel in the traditional sense. This further complicates the question of authorship: at what point does Shelley's *Frankenstein* cease to be the source material? Take, for example, the sequels to James Whale's *Frankenstein*, which incorporate content introduced by Whale's film—the monster's appearance and behaviour, the laboratory equipment, etc.—into otherwise original stories. *Son of Frankenstein* (1939) is labelled as a

"Frankenstein" story, but is it Shelley's *Frankenstein*? What about Universal's *House of Dracula* (1945), which features the Frankenstein's monster? To put it in other terms, are these sequels still "adaptations" of *Frankenstein*?

My research examines the intertextual web that informs the public's understanding of *Frankenstein*, which includes both adaptations and allusions; however, I am focusing on the texts that are "canonical"—to borrow Leitch's term—"Frankenstein" stories, such as *Presumption* and *Frankenstein* (1931), and have had significant cultural influence on the Composite Frankenstein. Put simply, I am most interested in texts that inform the audience of the Frankenstein story. For example, one could read *Edward Scissorhands* (1990) as a "Frankenstein" story because aspects of the plot and imagery parallel Whale's *Frankenstein* (1931) (it is included in *The Frankenstein Film Sourcebook*)[1]; however, the film effaces its connections to *Frankenstein* rather than emphasizing them—the film is presented as an original story with original characters, and it is up to the audience to make the intertextual connection. One's understanding or appreciation of *Edward Scissorhands* (1990) is not dependent on knowledge of *Frankenstein*, *Frankenstein* (1931), or any of the other texts that this film draws inspiration from. *Edward Scissorhands* is not presented as a "Frankenstein" story, and thus, it does not contribute to the mythology in the same manner as texts that are explicit *Frankenstein* adaptations.

As Leitch states in *Film Adaptation & its Discontents*, "Not all adaptations are created equal" (93). Peake's play *Presumption* demonstrates that adaptations do not necessarily translate a text as faithfully as possible into another medium. Furthermore, *Frankenstein* adaptations have various "canonical" sources to draw from, such as Peake's play, or the Universal films; adaptations drawing from these secondary texts remain tied to *Frankenstein* intertextually. Leitch argues that in such cases, the "spirit" (120) of a source text should be taken into consideration:

> Adaptation theory tends to assume that adaptation focuses on the plot of progenitor text, but arguments about fidelity to the earlier text's spirit should be equally open to adaptations based on a character like Sherlock Holmes or Frankenstein's monster with the ability to generate continuing adventures, especially if those adventures follow the same narrative formulas over and over again. (120)

In other words, one can recognize a "Frankenstein" story, even when the events of the plot do not mimic Shelley's novel. In many cases, such references are allusion, but in circumstances in which the text names the character "Frankenstein" or "Frankenstein's monster," "allusion" is no longer an adequate term to describe the intertextual relationship. Texts such as *Edward Scissorhands* that are not an adaptation but follow the basic plot of *Frankenstein* (man makes a monster, lonely monster seeks mate), and texts that do identify as *Frankenstein* but are not adapting the basic plot of Shelley's novel, such as *Ghost of Frankenstein* (1942) or *Victor Frankenstein*, further complicate the murky distinction between adaptation and allusion.

Leitch's chapter "Between Adaptation and Allusion" addresses the difficulty in identifying and qualifying the various forms of adaptation. He acknowledges that "adaptation" is a broad catch-all term, with indistinct parameters; defining the parameters of adaptation, however, is no simple task. Like Wright, he references the work of Kamilla Elliott and compares it to the work of Gérald Genette, identifying the problems with their approaches to discussing adaptation. He suggests expanding adaptation theory to include films critical discourse typically ignores because they are adaptations that do not fit into the existing conceptualization models:

> The problem with Genette's painstaking taxonomy, like that of other distinctions among modes or types of adaptation, is that it does not adequately demarcate the frontiers of adaptation, the places where it shades off into allusion…

> Most categorical discussions of adaptation ignore these problems entirely by privileging a small number of intertextual relations as exemplary of all adaptations and passing over the others in silence. (94-5)

Leitch expands the models proposed by Elliott and Genette to include various forms of intertextual reference, in what he describes as his effort to "propound a grammar of hypertextual relations as they shade off to the intertextual" (95). Leitch introduces ten "strategies" by which new texts incorporate source material: "*celebration*," (96) "*adjustment*," (98) "*neoclassic imitation*," (103) "*revisions*," (106) "*colonization*," (109) "*(meta)commentary or deconstruction*," (111) "*analogue*," (113) "*parody and pastiche*," (116) "*secondary, tertiary, or quaternary imitations*," (120) and "*allusion*" (121). These strategies are not exclusive categories but offer different frames for viewing the adaptation process.

The categories "analogue" (the appropriation of progenitor text's characteristics and/or formula) and "secondary, tertiary, or quaternary imitations" (i.e. copy of a copy) are particularly useful for discussing those *Frankenstein* texts that "focus more closely on a few central characters and situations from Shelley than on her plot" (Leitch 120). To answer the above question: yes, *Son of Frankenstein* is an adaptation of *Frankenstein*; it is both an analogue of *Frankenstein* (and more directly *Frankenstein* [1931]) because it repeats an established formula and is a tertiary imitation of *Frankenstein* because it impersonates *Frankenstein* through copying direct adaptations *Frankenstein* (1931) and *The Bride of Frankenstein*. Leitch, however, differentiates analogues from adaptations, arguing that an analogous relationship can be unintentional (115); Leitch is primarily concerned with adaptation as an author mode of creation and does not validate intertextual recognition as an audience mode of creation. I argue that the reader's ability to recognize a connection between texts is a significant component of the

consumption process; furthermore, an analogue that appropriates the name of its source text, such as *Frankenstein*, is prompting the viewer the interpret the text as an adaptation. *The Curse of Frankenstein* (1957), for example, is very loosely adapted from Shelley's novel, whereas its sequel *The Revenge of Frankenstein* (1958) is a completely original story. *The Revenge of Frankenstein* is not an adaptation, according to Leitch's categories; yet, the film adopts the title "Frankenstein" and thus instructs its audience to view the film as a *Frankenstein* film, rather than a film similar to, or inspired by, *Frankenstein*.

Both Leitch and Wright reference Elliott's "de(re)composing" (Elliott 157) concept of adaptation, which she introduces in her book *Rethinking the Novel/Film Debate*. The book addresses the word/image paradigm at the heart of previous scholarship on film adaptations of novels, destabilizes the "dogma" (134) that "form does not and cannot separate from content" (134), and presents alternative analogical models for approaching adaptation. In addition to the de(re)composing model, Elliott also suggests the following concepts of adaptation: psychic ("spirit of the text" [136]), ventriloquist ("empties out the novel's signs and fills the with filmic spirits" [143]), genetic (the novel's "deep [narrative] structure" [150] being manifested through film), incarnational ("rhetoric of incarnation, materialization, and realization" [161]), and trumping ("which medium represents better" [174]). Unlike Leitch, whose strategies of adaptation categorize different approaches for adapting a text, Elliott instead describes different approaches for conceptualizing adaptation. Elliott's semiotic analysis of written word and image is thorough and thought-provoking; however, because she limits her analysis to novels and their film adaptations and assumes a high degree of fidelity to source material, her theory is not applicable to most *Frankenstein* adaptations.

Leitch's approach to adaptation is less rigid than Elliott's, but he too focuses on film adaptations of novels. Linda Hutcheon's book *A Theory of Adaptation* presents an inclusive view of adaptation that does not privilege film adaptations of novels and addresses adaptation's dual nature as both "process and product" (9). This "double definition" (9) allows Hutcheon to discuss adaptations broadly, including forms that are often overlooked by scholarship such as licenced video games. Hutcheon argues an adaptation's appeal "comes simply from repetition with variation, from the comfort of ritual combined with the piquancy of surprise. Recognition and remembrance are part of the pleasure (and risk) of experiencing an adaptation; so too is change" (4). Hutcheon offers a clearer distinction between adaptation and allusions than Leitch, distinguishing adaptations from texts that do not "qualify as extended engagements" (9) and arguing that texts such as sequels, prequels, and fan fiction are not actually adaptations because their appeal does not derive from repetition with change: "There is a difference between never wanting a story to end—the reason behind sequels and prequels, according to Marjorie Garber (2003: 73–74)—and wanting to retell the same story over and over in different ways" (9). I, however, characterize texts such as *Son of Frankenstein* as adaptations—despite Hutcheon's dismissal of sequels and prequels—because they follow the basic narrative formula associated with *Frankenstein*: the creature is brought to life through dubious scientific means and havoc ensues. I combine both Leitch's strategies for, and Hutcheon's basic definition of, adaptation to develop a hermeneutic specific to *Frankenstein* texts as they are consumed today: a *Frankenstein* adaptation is thus a text that repeats the basic story (or stories) of the Composite Frankenstein.

Methodology

The aim of this research project is to imagine Frankenstein as a concept in popular culture in order to investigate the relationship between texts and the public; the research involves identifying the various social influences—such as self-imposed censorship and profits—that contributed to the developing Frankenstein mythos. *Frankenstein* presents an opportunity to observe the development of a social myth; the basic story resides in the public's imagination, where it exists in a state of constant flux, rewritten, reinforced, reviewed and reassessed continuously. The individual texts are fixed, but how audiences "read" them can change over time. Much of the current scholarship on *Frankenstein* focuses on either the novel or adaptations. I hope to fill this void by approaching *Frankenstein* in conjunction with, rather than isolated from, its 200-year legacy.

This approach to studying the Composite Frankenstein—as a web of texts that create meaning in relation to each other—is an intertextual strategy; however, the term "intertextuality" as it applies to scholarship has very broad implications, necessitating some clarification of the term and my approach to it. In the words of William Irwin, "the term *intertextuality* was coined by Julia Kristeva in 1966, and since that time has come to have almost as many meanings as users" (229). In this early conceptualization, intertextuality was an exploration of language's inherent instability, and thus was primarily a tool for semiotics and post-structuralism, used by the likes of Kristeva and Roland Barthes. The term was adopted by media studies scholars to describe how texts reference each other, both consciously and unconsciously. Brian Ott and Cameron Walter suggest "as the term has spread in popularity, its dual legacy and meaning have increasingly been conflated" (430). This "dual legacy" Ott and Walter refer to in their paper "Intertextuality: Interpretive Practice and Textual Strategy" is the application of "intertextuality"

as a *reader's* mode of production and "intertextuality" as an *author's* mode of production: Ott and Walter argue intertextuality can be a "*reading formation* that conceives of texts as fragments in a larger web of textuality" (429-30) as well as a "*stylistic device* consciously employed by the author" (430). In this latter form, "intertextuality" describes a device used by "media producers that invites audiences to make specific lateral associations between texts" (430). For example, in his book *Television Culture*, John Fiske uses "intertextuality" (1275) to refer to an audience's ability to recognize "links between producers, text, and audiences" (1275) of television, arguing intertextuality is how "texts interrelate in a network of meaning that constitutes our cultural world" (1275); Fiske's evocation of "intertextual" encompasses the text itself, the context, and the television-equivalent of paratext.[2]

Elliott, Wright, and Hutcheon suggest that previously-consumed adaptations influence how audiences experience new adaptations of the same source text; Hutcheon addresses this intertextual nature of adaptations when she argues that adaptations "are directly and openly connected to recognizable other works, and that connection is part of their formal identity, but also of what we might call their hermeneutic identity" (22). Intertextuality, when applied to popular culture, becomes a massive, sprawling knot of connections. In a property as large as *Frankenstein*, attempting to map out every text that has contributed to the contemporary popular culture narrative would be an exercise in futility; furthermore, it is undeniable that certain texts within the mythology are more "canonical" than others. Rather than attempting to address every *Frankenstein* adaptation that may be referenced in popular culture, I will be focusing on the most well-known and therefore influential *Frankenstein* adaptations. I view the social construction of the Composite Frankenstein as occurring *through* authorship, rather than independent of an author; as Irwin warns, "to treat the text as if its meaning were essentially independent of

authorial intent is to treat the text as if it were not a text at all" (240). While I am careful not to ground my research on presumptions of "authorial intent"—especially films, which have no true "author"—I will be contextualizing *Frankenstein* and its adaptations to demonstrate how social influences shape texts throughout the production cycle. In the case of films, I look at the director, the screenwriter(s), and the studios as the primary creative forces behind film production. My approach to intertextuality is a blend of the two modes described by Ott and Walter: I will primarily look at the popular culture Frankenstein as a cultural idea expressed through conscious authorial intertextuality, such as adaptation, allusion, or homage; however, I will also incorporate intertextuality as a reader formation, especially in my discussion in the cumulative development of icons in the Composite Frankenstein.

Chapter Outline

My first chapter examines the concept of authorship within the Composite Frankenstein. I begin the chapter "Whose Frankenstein Is It? Exploring the Author Function in Multiple Media," with a brief review of Roland Barthes' and Michel Foucault's theories on the author function in literary studies, as well as a discussion of "the Auteur" in film studies. I investigate how popular culture fetishizes Mary Shelley and compare that to how the monster fandom public credits director James Whale for "authoring" *Frankenstein* (1931) and *The Bride of Frankenstein*. The purpose of this chapter is to destabilize the concept of authorship and to lay the groundwork for an in-depth look at how both *Frankenstein* and *Frankenstein* (1931) were "written" by their respective social contexts.

My second chapter, titled "'It was on a dreary night in November'; *Frankenstein*'s (complicated) Origins, and Mary Shelley's Role as Author," reviews Mary Shelley's transformation into a social icon within the Composite Frankenstein. The chapter presents the

history of Shelley's classic novel, reviewing the text's development from ghost story to second edition. Relying on existing scholarship by *Frankenstein* scholars, I discuss the differences between the 1818 and 1831 editions of *Frankenstein* and discuss the probable social factors that influenced Shelley's revisions. Using the concept of reconstitution theorized by Harold Love and applying an intertextual lens, I explore how popular culture shaped the novel *Frankenstein*. Much of Shelley's notes, journals and early drafts of *Frankenstein* have survived, providing a rich source for scholarly interpretation. Mary Shelley kept a journal with her husband Percy, with whom she collaborated for her first novel. The extent of Percy Shelley's contribution to *Frankenstein* has been a topic of debate among scholars for some time—a debate to which I contribute in this chapter. I examine how Mary Shelley's "author function" has changed over time, and how that function manifests today as a cultural symbol.

The third chapter, "Fathering *Frankenstein* (1931); the Creation of James Whale's Classic Film Monster(s)," investigates the adaptation of *Frankenstein* that famously introduced Shelley's monster to the silver screen. Although Edison Studio's short film *Frankenstein* (1910) preceded the 1931 film, it was Whale's vision of a tragic child-like figure that truly resonated with audiences, launching the creature into the public consciousness. As a hero of classic horror film, Whale has a strong cult following; he, like Shelley, has been a topic of fascination for researchers—although a slightly different breed—and as a result, there is an abundance of published works detailing the history of *Frankenstein* (1931) and *The Bride of Frankenstein*, as well as Whale's life in general. I draw heavily from the James Whale biography written by James Curtis. Curtis befriended Whale's long-time partner David Lewis, who was an invaluable source of information about the notoriously private Whale. This chapter presents an analysis of Whale's contribution to the Composite Frankenstein, paying special attention to Whale's

aesthetic and his progressive treatment of otherness. I finish the chapter by investigating socioeconomic factors that influenced *Frankenstein* (1931) and *The Bride of Frankenstein*, including a review of film conventions and censorship during that period.

My final chapter, "Unpacking the Composite Frankenstein; *Frankenstein* within Contemporary Popular Culture," builds on the theory of the previous chapters to investigate how contemporary audiences read *Frankenstein*. I further examine the Composite Frankenstein through a close analysis of recent mainstream texts that represent the mythology's story and iconography through adaptation as well as allusion. *Frankenstein* is observable in popular culture through various references and representations, such as allusions or homages to the novel, in film adaptations, or as a general cultural icon. In the first half of the chapter, I explore allusions to *Frankenstein*, then examine how the creature is characterized in various *Frankenstein* texts, reviewing the history of the character's depictions and identifying various visual cues contemporary audiences associate with the Frankenstein's monster character. In the second half of the chapter, I present an analysis of *The X-Files* episode "The Post-Modern Prometheus" (1997), which I argue is an homage to the Composite Frankenstein. The episode demonstrates how *Frankenstein* is imagined in the popular consciousness, including the many intertextual connections commonly associated with the "Frankenstein" myth. The episode presents an interesting case study for such analysis as it is an homage to not just Shelley's *Frankenstein* story, but also the film *Frankenstein* (1931), classic horror films in general, and the monster fandom that celebrates—and perpetuates—this genre.

Whose Frankenstein Is It? Exploring the Author Function in Multiple Media

Who is responsible for the story of Frankenstein? The obvious answer is Mary Shelley—after all, she wrote the novel that became a respected classic; yet, the story told in her novel is not the story popularly known today. James Whale's *Frankenstein* (1931) is responsible for most of the basic elements of the contemporary Frankenstein story. Whale's film introduced many of the Frankenstein tropes, such as the monster's neck "bolts," the elaborate laboratory equipment, and the creature's fear of fire. The film's most infamous scenes—Dr. Frankenstein's frantic cries likening himself to God, and the creature tossing flowers into a lake with the child Maria—remain fixtures in contemporary popular culture, 86 years after the film's initial theatrical release. Furthermore, Whale's sequel *The Bride of Frankenstein* (1935) contributes to the Composite Frankenstein further, introducing icons such as the female monster, or "bride," and, the evil white-haired, sharp-featured (and sometimes effeminate) version of the mad scientist trope, via the character Dr. Pretorius. The story elements the public typically associates with "Frankenstein" today resemble Whale's vision of *Frankenstein* more than Shelley's.

To further complicate matters, James Whale's sequel *The Bride of Frankenstein* reinforces the perception that *Frankenstein* (1931) is Mary Shelley's story, despite the differences between the adaptations and the novel. The prologue in Whale's *The Bride of Frankenstein* presents a fictional conversation between Mary Shelley (at the time, Mary Godwin), Percy Shelley and Lord Byron, set during the summer stay in Switzerland that she describes in the Introduction to the 1831 edition of *Frankenstein*. While the scene acknowledges that the novel was written by Mary (whereas *Frankenstein* (1931) credits the novel to Mrs. Percy Blythe Shelley), the cinematic dialogue among the three characters misleads its audience by obfuscating fact and fiction. The fictional Mary states her intention for writing the story was to

"write a moral lesson, the punishment that befell a mortal man who dared to emulate God," but the writer/author Mary Shelley made no such suggestion when describing the origins of *Frankenstein* in her 1831 Introduction. Whale's scene refers to Mary as Percy's wife, but, in reality, Percy was still married to his first wife when he ran off with Mary. Lastly—and most importantly—the fictional Mary Shelley recalls the events of *Frankenstein* (1931) as her story, then introduces *The Bride of Frankenstein* as the continuation of her story.[3] There is some truth to this claim: both *Frankenstein* (1931) and *The Bride of Frankenstein* are adaptations of *Frankenstein*, and as such contain some plot points taken from the novel; however, there are numerous significant departures from the original story. The prologue in *The Bride of Frankenstein* is misleading because it contains partial truths that efface the elements that are fiction. In other words, it appears completely reasonable for viewers of *The Bride of Frankenstein* to assume that Mary Shelley, wife of Percy Shelley, wrote a moral tale: the tragedy of a misguided scientist and the infantile monster he creates.

The figure of Mary Shelley is fixed within the narrative of *The Bride of Frankenstein*. The prologue shows audiences the woman behind the story, portrayed by Elsa Lanchester, the same actress playing the female monster; viewing this "doubling" at the end of the film, the audience reads the intertextual suggestion of Shelley's own monstrosity: an idea introduced in the prologue by Byron, who exclaims disbelief that such a pretty young woman could imagine such a gruesome tale. "James Whale's" *Frankenstein* (1931)—and "Mary Shelley's" *Frankenstein* are thus intertextually fused. "Mary Shelley's Frankenstein" becomes an oft-repeated phrase that does not (necessarily) exclude Whale's influence, such as the addition of a "hunchback" character, or the use of electrical equipment and lightning to bring the creature to

life. Whale's film marries the literary icon to the distinct popular culture icon, and Mary Shelley "the author" becomes the true "bride" of *Frankenstein*.

Consideration of the author-figure and his or her relationship with their text is an integral component of literary analysis. However, the suggestion that such study is often precariously balanced on assumptions regarding the relationship between writer and written word was popularized by Roland Barthes in his essay "The Death of the Author." Barthes argues that the concept of the author is the "epitome and culmination of capitalist ideology, which has attached the greatest importance to the 'person' of the author" (277). Details of the author's personal life were (and still sometimes are) presented as evidence to support an interpretation of the text based on authorial context. Referencing the work of surrealists and postmodernists, emerging trends at the time of this essay's composition, Barthes suggests that their "removal of the author... utterly transforms the modern text" (278) by freeing interpretation from historical/contextual limits. Every textual reading is based on the reader's context: current beliefs, knowledge, language, etc. Working under the postmodernist theory that a multiplicity of meaning is inherent in language, it is reasonable to approach texts as having multiplicity of meaning, resulting in a multiplicity of potential interpretations. Barthes argues that analysis based on authorial intention ignores such possibilities: "To give a text an Author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified" (279). The removal, or "death," of the author is necessary to break the restrictive conventions of literary scholarship.

Theorist Michel Foucault responded to Barthes' essay with one of his own, "What is an Author?" in which he agrees with some of Barthes' statements, while reframing the argument in more malleable terms. Foucault agrees that "the notion of 'author' constitutes the privileged moment of *individualization* in the history of ideas, knowledge, literature, philosophy, and the

sciences" (Foucault 281). However, while Foucault agrees with Barthes that the figure of "author" places limitations on interpretation, he does not agree that one can remove the author function all together, because, as David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery summarize, "'Authorship' was a cultural formation inseparable from the commodification of literature: literary reputation could and did shape cultural responses to texts in a manner not accounted for by Barthesian analysis" (275). Although Barthes suggested the concept of authorship was, in part, the product of capitalist ideals, Foucault brought this notion to its logical conclusion that authorship performs a necessary function within capitalist society. The author's name is a tool that classifies, defines, and differentiates texts, endowing certain texts with cultural status and providing texts with additional authority (Foucault 284-5). In contemporary capitalist terms, this is "branding."

Foucault describes the author function as an integral component of how contemporary readers approach literature (284). I posit that the author function includes the capacity to signify qualities as a marketing strategy; such marketing-potential occurs mainly when an author's name crosses the threshold into popular culture. Once an author is recognizable, their name alone can signify quality, topic, or even a formula. Take, for example, the work of romance writer Danielle Steel. The covers of Steel's novels prioritize her name; in a reversal of the typical cover layout, "Danielle Steel" frequently appears at the top, sometimes in the largest font on the cover, with the novel's title underneath (Appendix A: figure 6). In the case of *Frankenstein*, the name "Mary Shelley" endows the text with the cultural and intellectual significance of her own reputation and legacy. Popular culture increasingly fetishizes Mary Shelley as the author of *Frankenstein*: she is a romanticized icon, typically presented as a beautiful intelligent young woman, sometimes melancholy, and always very feminine. She was the subject of her own film, *Mary Shelley*

(2017), and is depicted in several *Frankenstein* adaptations, including the aforementioned prologue in *Bride of Frankenstein*.

Film adaptations marketed as "Mary Shelley's" *Frankenstein* make the claim of importance and quality; these films exploit the name recognition of the author, regardless of fidelity to her text. The promotion of *Victor Frankenstein* (2015) relied on this tactic: the preliminary press for the film predominantly characterized it as a new version of Mary Shelley's story (i.e. *Empire*'s "Exclusive First Look" at the film describes it as a "new iteration of Mary Shelley's Gothic tale"). Branagh's adaptation, *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* (1994), adopted this strategy to the extreme, attempting to circumvent the history of adaptations before it and distinguish itself as the one truly faithful film. This strategy did not succeed as intended, and the film received poor reviews. Audience members did not respond favorably to this version of the story, which was vastly different thematically from the existing Frankenstein canon, rooted in Peake's play and popularized for the 20th century by the 1931 film. Audiences particularly struggled with Robert De Niro's performance as a well-spoken, passionate Creature. As Janet Maslin of *The New York Times* remarked, "[*Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*] is a bland, no-fault 'Frankenstein' for the 90's, short on villainy but loaded with the tragically misunderstood" (Maslin). Although Whale's 1931 film characterized the Creature as sympathetic, he was still threatening. The most persistent overall depiction of the monster is of the lumbering, mute killer, heavily informed by Whale's—not Shelley's—*Frankenstein* (1931).

Although *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* was a critical and financial failure, it remains culturally significant as a case study for adaptation scholarship. Kamilla Elliott frames *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* as an example of a 1990s "titling trend" (141) of film and television producers appropriating the author's name "to authorize their adaptations" (141). Elliott argues

that these texts—which name the literary author in their titles and the text's author figure (i.e. the director) in the marketing—"extend the possessive construction, making directors and production companies the author's keepers rather than editors and literary critics" (141). Thomas Leitch's analysis is similar to Elliott's; he categorizes such adaptations—especially *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1992) and *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*— as *revisions*, explaining "unlike adaptations that aim to be faithful to the spirit rather than the letter of the text…revisions seek to alter the spirit as well" (107). Leitch argues that these titles are not reflections of fidelity, but "announce instead that the author and the author's world have become part of the subject along with the events of the novel" (108). Elliott quotes Branagh describing his approach to *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* as his attempt to translate Shelley's intentions for contemporary audiences, and Elliott summarizes: "Branagh claims to have fulfilled an authorial intent that the author herself had failed to realize. But in the slippery shift from 'times have changed' to 'I'm convinced [Mary Shelley] intended,' it is clear that 'authorial intent' elides with contemporary readings" (142). Branagh's quotation, in which he admits to revising *Frankenstein* to reflect what he thought Mary Shelley intended, demonstrates how knowledge of Mary Shelley's life colours readings of her novel. Mary Shelley is indeed a part of *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* (1994), revised and reimagined along with her iconic story; the "contemporary readings" Elliott refers to includes readings of the author herself.

Mark Jancovich, however, situates *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* (1994) in a different film trend, framing it as part of horror's "bid for respectability" (6) in the 1990s, inspired by the unprecedented critical success of the horror film *Silence of the Lambs* (1991). Jancovich points to the high-profile directors and cast of the films *Silence of the Lambs*, *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*, *Interview with a Vampire* (1994), and *Wolf* (1994) to argue that

these films "presented themselves as 'quality' productions not only through their directors and casts, but also through their clear allusions to the 'classic' horror movies of the 1930s" (6-7). With the exception of *Silence of the Lambs*, these films all feature Universal's most iconic monsters: the vampire, the werewolf, and the Frankenstein's monster (the mummy would get his own non-horror remake later in the decade with the action-adventure film, *The Mummy* [1999]). Jancovich views the inclusion of the literary authors in the titles *Bram Stoker's Dracula* and *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* as an extension of this attempt to legitimize the horror genre through referencing its "classic" roots. While Jancovich agrees that *Bram Stoker's Dracula* and *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* were "spuriously" (7) marketed as "faithful versions of the original classic novels, unlike earlier productions," (7) he notes that the films simultaneously evoked memories of their "classic horror monsters" (7); thus, audiences initially approached the films expecting quality as well as familiarity—which they received from *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, but not from *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*.

The financial failure of *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* deters other attempts to faithfully remediate Shelley's novel into film, further relegating "Mary Shelley" to being an empty term. Film production is a costly enterprise, and studio executives are unlikely to gamble on a film concept that has failed to generate profits in the past. As I mention in the Introduction, the "remediation" of *Frankenstein* on stage and film has kept the story relevant, and "reconstitution" of the novel is continually inserting new ideas: understanding the financial significance of reconstitution is key for investigating the "long-range relationships among texts, including 'social texts,'" (Love 80) such as *Frankenstein*. The print cycle relies on continuous consumption for the production cycle to remain active; thus, it is a system that rewards popularity over artistic merit. Neither Barthes' and Foucault's exploration of authorship, nor

Love's exploration of print culture, sufficiently explains how consumerism influences not just the publication, but the actual creation of texts. Linda Hutcheon argues adaptations are appealing projects from a financial perspective because "expensive collaborative art forms like operas, musicals, and films are going to look for safe bets with a ready audience" (86); in the case of *Frankenstein* adaptations, studios are more likely to greenlight projects that resemble recent successful texts. For example, *Frankenstein* (1931) followed the success of another gothic horror adaptation, *Dracula* (1931), and the financial success of Whale's *Frankenstein* (1931) led Universal Studios to produce films with Whale's version of the Frankenstein's monster until such pictures stopped being profitable. Similarly, *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* followed the 1992 box-office hit *Bram Stoker's Dracula* and Kenneth Branagh's successful stint as the writer, director and star of Shakespeare adaptations *Henry V* (1989) and *Much Ado About Nothing* (1993). Mary Shelley herself will continue to be referenced in popular culture, but her novel is unlikely to be "realized" in a faithful film adaptation, especially after the tepid reviews and poor box-office revenue of the latest *Frankenstein* film *Victor Frankenstein*, and the recent biopic *Mary Shelley*.

"Big budget" films are not the only texts created with profits in mind. Any author writing for a living depends on their work selling; thus, authors (may) experience social pressures to exclude content from their texts that could negatively impact sales. This is a form of self-imposed censorship that occurs during the writing and editing stages of authorship. Mary Shelley experienced such pressures when publishing *Frankenstein*: the changes made in the 1831 edition of *Frankenstein* suggest Shelley censored herself, likely to avoid a scandal and maximize sales. Similarly, Peake's *Presumption* premiered in illegitimate theatre to avoid the high levels of regulation and censorship subjected to "legitimate" theatre. Jude Wright explains that illegitimate

theatre plays often featured music and farce, because "unregulated theatres were not licensed to perform tragedy or comedy" (252); Peake's play had to contain various elements to seem "less serious" (252) and "skirt… theatrical regulation" (Wright 252). As Jude Wright notes:

> There is little doubt that a play based on Shelley's shocking novel would not pass the rigors of the censor's pen, and so *Presumption* from its inception was built (not unlike the Monster) from an assemblage of disparate parts in order to satisfy the conditions of its production.
>
> One of those parts, which came in many ways to dominate the play, was musical performance. (252)[5]

The social pressures that influenced the development of *Frankenstein* and *Presumption* are a significant aspect of authorship that is culturally effaced—especially in the case of Mary Shelley, who is commonly romanticized in popular culture in a manner that excludes her capacity to assess her audience and write according to social and literary trends (e.g. Mary Shelley as the conduit to Percy's romantic imagination and genius).

More traditional modes of censorship also shaped the narrative now associated with Mary Shelley's name; although Shelley's novel has largely evaded the censor's pen, the films did not. As I discuss further in my chapter "Fathering *Frankenstein*," various censorship bodies felt it necessary to expurgate both *Frankenstein* (1931) and *Bride of Frankenstein* upon release. Regional censorship boards demanded *Frankenstein* (1931) recuts; the scenes targeted by censors developed infamy and eventually became the most iconic scenes from the film. Hollywood also has a long history of self-imposed censorship; in the 1930s, studios commonly interfered with film production, censoring ideas or images that posed financial risk. In 1934, the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA) formed the Production Code

Administration (PCA) to oversee virtually all American filmmaking. The PCA was thus an organization authorized by the industry itself, rather than government regulation. The PCA supervised the production of *The Bride of Frankenstein*, dictating throughout the film's production what Whale could and could not include. There are numerous examples within the Composite Frankenstein of censorship or related social mechanisms and pressures altering or removing ideas and images; in Shelley's novel *Frankenstein*, Whale's film adaptations, and even Peake's original play adaptation, outside social pressures shaped the "Frankenstein" narrative.

The "Parents" of *Frankenstein*

Fans of his work laud James Whale as the "father of Frankenstein";[4] presumably, Mary Shelley is the mother. Shelley and Whale's co-parenting simultaneously encourages audiences to think of *Frankenstein* and *Frankenstein* (1931) as the same story, while reminding audiences that the texts are distinct. For example, Lester D. Friedman argues in his essay "The Blasted Tree" that "Whale viewed the *Frankenstein* story much in the same way as did Mary Shelley," (66) and even suggests that "Both Mary Shelley's novel and James Whale's film are crucial to thinking about [contemporary concerns regarding scientific progress], for if Mary Shelley wrote the word, James Whale made it flesh" (66). But how is it possible to view *Frankenstein* and *Frankenstein* (1931) as the same story, despite the significant narrative differences? Furthermore, why is James Whale credited as an author of a story he did not write?

In his chapter "The Adapter as Auteur," Leitch argues that "many directors whose films are based almost entirely on literary adaptations have nonetheless established a reputation as auteurs" (236). Leitch describes the film adaptations "authored" by the likes of Alfred Hitchcock, Stanley Kubrick, and even Walt Disney as texts that incorporate unique authorial

signatures into a retelling of another author's story. Most of James Whale's films, including *Journey's End* (1930), *Frankenstein* (1931), *The Invisible Man* (1933), and *The Bride of Frankenstein*, are adaptations, yet all contain common images and themes that reflect Whale's personal style, such as his dry wit or his incorporation of expressionist imagery. *Frankenstein* (1931) bears the markers of a James Whale film, even as it (claims to) reincarnate Shelley's novel into a new medium; thus, *Frankenstein* (1931) can be both Mary's Shelley's story and James Whale's creation. Hutcheon supports this seeming contradiction of authorship by framing adaptations as texts that both repeat a familiar story and reinvent a familiar story. She argues that "adapting can be a process of appropriation, of taking possession of another's story, and filtering it, in a sense, through one's own sensibility, interests, and talents. Therefore, adapters are first interpreters and then creators" (18). Whale, according to Hutcheon's description, is responsible for creating his own version of Shelley's story—the film is conceptualized as a translation of Shelley's novel because that is how audiences experience adaptations.

Both Shelley and Whale contributing their visions to the Composite Frankenstein; however, the question of authorship is not as straight-forward with films as it is with literature. The content of a film cannot be solely attributed to its director because many people participate in the filmmaking process. The unusually complicated writing credits for *Frankenstein* (1931) demonstrates the collaborative nature of film: the film came out at a time when standard film credits listed the basic contributing roles only, all of which fit into just a few title cards; yet, *Frankenstein* (1931) credits five different individuals with the story of the film, in various capacities: the film is "Based upon the composition of JOHN L. BALDERSTON;" "Adapted from the play by PEGGY WEBLING;" "Screen Play [written by] GARRET FORT [and] FRANCIS EDWARDS FARAGOH;" and of course, "From the novel by MRS. PERCY B.

SHELLEY" (*Frankenstein* [1931]). There are several more contributors to the *Frankenstein* (1931) story whom the credits do not name: Webling's play is from a theatre tradition Richard Peake established in 1823, and Whale himself likely wrote at least one scene included in the finished film ("The Frankenstein Files"). The film's first director, Robert Florey, is another uncredited contributor—he is notable for his inclusion of expressionist imagery in the film[6] and for written contributions to initial script draft ("The Frankenstein Files"). Also absent from the credits is Jack Pierce, who created the iconic look of Frankenstein's monster—he may not have contributed to the story directly, but his contribution to the Frankenstein iconography is unquestionable.

Hutcheon notes that various "artists" (82) involved in the production of a film function as adapters, yet "none of these artists—screenwriter, composer, designer, cinematographer, actor, editor, and the list could go on—is usually considered the primary adapter" (82). Western culture encourages the public to view films as the product of the director's leadership (and sometimes the Studio's financial support) effacing the many independent artistic contributions that make up a film; the frequency by which films are colloquially described as a director's, such as Steven Spielberg's *Jurassic Park* (1993) or Jordan Peele's *Get Out* (2017) are evidence of the tendency to conceptualize films as the creative product of one person. The title cards at the beginning of *Frankenstein* (1931), which denote a hierarchy of credit, privilege James Whale and Universal Studios as the film's creators. The first title card instructs the audience on the film's name and the studio responsible for its production: "Carl Laemmle presents" the film, which was produced by his son Carl Laemmle Jr., through their company, Universal Pictures Corp. The second title card lists the less-important production information, in much smaller font; this second card includes the writing and cinematography credits. The third title lists just one credit, written much

larger than the others: "DIRECTED by JAMES WHALE." As this is the only title card to list just one name, it is the easiest to remember. The final title card lists "the players;" the first three names are in a larger font, signifying their greater importance to the film (typically related to the individual's fame).[7] The monster is the fourth role listed, with a question mark rather than Karloff's name; this "mystery" was a strategy to build up suspense for the film. Boris Karloff receives credit at the end of the film, in the second of two end title cards: the first card contains the statements "The End" and "It's a Universal Picture," along with the studio's emblem, a globe; the second card lists the cast again, under the caption "A GOOD CAST IS WORTH REPEATING…" with Karloff's name replacing the question mark. The initial end title card reminds the audience whose film they are watching: Universal Studios'. The second reveals to the audience the actor behind the monster. The "encore" credits gave audience members an incentive to keep watching, to discover the man behind the monster. It is telling that the studio used the opportunity to remind audiences that they had watched a Universal property.

Frankenstein (1931) debuted during the Golden Age of Hollywood, when the studio system was in full effect. At the time, film studios like Universal often signed "stars," including directors, on long-term, multi-picture contracts. James Whale became such a star property with the critical and financial success of films like *Frankenstein* (1931) and *The Invisible Man* (1933); starting with the 1934 film *One More River* (1934), Whale's Universal films carried the credit 'A James Whale Production'" (Curtis 229). There is a long history of conceptualizing notable directors as "the authors" of their films, especially in cases where the director was heavily involved in various aspects of the film's productions. Take, for example, the film *A Trip to the Moon* (1902), which George Méliès wrote, directed and produced. The film's only credit is the title card, which presents the film as "'STAR FILM' Geo Méliès Paris." The more well-known a

director is, the more likely that a film will be marketed using the director's name—this is a common advertising practice that continues today.

The emergence of Auteur Theory in the 1950s popularized the critical practice of film theorists conceptualizing film directors as "authors." Originating from the French New Wave journal *Cahiers du cinéma* (Cheu 52), this "critical method" for approaching film (Corrigan and White 411) "asserts that a film bears the creative imprint of one individual" (410) and "designate[s] the director as *the artist* in a film production" (Cheu 52 italics in original). The articles in *Cahiers du cinema* praised the "exciting filmmaking" (52) of Hollywood directors such as Alfred Hitchcock and Orson Welles, who experimented with the medium, creating their own distinct and recognizable styles (Corrigan and White 410). Andrew Sarris summarizes this French New Wave approach to evaluating film in the early 1960s via *Film Culture* and *Village Voice* (411); Sarris applied Auteurism to create a "hierarchy of Hollywood talent… assigning relative status to a wide array of directors based on their personal signature" (411). Auteurism does not ignore the various roles that contribute to the production of a film; rather, it suggests that "Because it is the director who actualizes the decisions made regarding a film, he is in a position to create a stylized product from his co-workers' labour" (Cheu 52). Critic Pauline Kael countered Sarris's approach to analyzing Hollywood cinema in "Circles and Squares," published in *Film Quarterly* in 1962 (53). In her response, Kael dismisses Auteurism as a "desire for a theory that will solve all the riddles of creativity" (Kael 21) and systematically rebuts each of the three "circles" Sarris describes as his theory.

While Kael presents a thorough and thoughtful response to many of Sarris' arguments, she fails to comment on the dangers of reducing a film to the creative achievement of one individual. Sarris argues that a great director works with poorly-written scripts, privileging

mainstream directors like George Cukor over artistic writer/directors like Ingmar Bergman; Kael counters:

> Cukor's style is no more *abstract*(!) than Bergman's: Cukor has a range of subject matter that he can handle and when he gets a good script within his range… he does a good job; but he is at an immense *artistic* disadvantage, compared with Bergman, because he is dependent on the ideas of so many (and often bad) scriptwriters and on material which is often alien to his talents. (Kael 18 italics in original)

Kael's comments do not allow for the possibility of an artistic collaboration between a director and a screenwriter. Perhaps this is simply because Kael focuses on Sarris's claims regarding directors and artistic merit; regardless, Kael's position reveals a problem inherent in the language for film criticism. *Frankenstein* (1931) is an example of the many sources that "write" a film: the screenwriter(s), the director, the producers, the set designers, even the actors—these are all roles that shape a film during its production. Furthermore, filmmaking is shaped by the commercial systems behind production: the various social systems that permit a film to be made also shape its development, and even determine how accessible it is to the public.

The public is another source that "writes" a film—both directly, for example, in the form of censorship, but also as an individual process, because audiences "write" films through their interpretations. How an audience "reads" a text is influenced by their knowledge of the text's context, especially regarding the author, or in the case of media such as film, the author figure. Hutcheon argues "when giving meaning and value to an adaptation as an adaptation, audiences operate in a context that includes their knowledge and their own interpretation of the adapted work. That context may also include information about the adapter" (Hutcheon 111). Hutcheon presents the example of an author dying shortly after finishing a novel; she suggests "once

known, this fact likely cannot be ignored by any reader," (110) prompting readers to interpret the text as the author's last dying testament. Facts about Mary Shelley's life, and to a lesser extent James Whale, are presented with their respective texts to colour audience reception. What an audience knows about a text's context—or more accurately, what an audience thinks they know about a text's context—is not always factually accurate: for example, the oft-repeated Hollywood legend that Whale chose Frankenstein because it had the "strongest meat" of any property was Whale's own fabrication to romanticize his relationship with the film. This legend feeds into the cultural imagining of *Frankenstein* (1931) as Whale's challenge to heteronormativity despite historical evidence that Whale did not choose to direct *Frankenstein* (1931), nor did he have any desire to push a "gay agenda" (for more on this, see Chapter 3).

In the following two chapters, I examine the authorship of the two key *Frankenstein* texts—Mary Shelley's novel and James Whale's film—and explore the context of each text, with emphasis on the social pressures that led to self-imposed censorship of ideas. Hutcheon considers the adapter's motivation and influences as part of an adaptation's context (despite the general disregard for such study in contemporary scholarship) because "the political, aesthetic, and autobiographical intentions of the various adapters are potentially relevant to *the audience's interpretation*" (107, emphasis added). Mary Shelley and James Whale are public figures, whose personal experiences colour how audiences read their texts. I argue, however, that these two names transcend the typical author function Hutcheon describes, and today are icons within the Composite Frankenstein, representing certain ideas or politics. Texts such as *Through the Tempests Dark and Wild,* a children's book by Sharon Darrow that tells a fictionalized account of events in Mary Shelley's life leading up to *Frankenstein*, and the film *Gods and Monsters* (1998), a critically-acclaimed film that tells a fictionalized account of the days leading up to

James Whale's suicide, adapt the authors themselves, defining Shelley and Whale not just by their iconic texts, but by what these texts signify in the Composite Frankenstein.

I discuss the context of *Frankenstein* and *Frankenstein* (1931) to investigate how Mary Shelley and James Whale function as author figures within the Composite Frankenstein; I also discuss the origins of these texts to demonstrate how social conditions write texts. Shelley's novel *Frankenstein* and Whale's film *Frankenstein* (1931) originate from different contexts and different mediums; thus, these authors faced different social expectations and limitations that shaped their texts accordingly. In adapting Shelley's story, Whale encountered different social barriers than she had a century before; as Hutcheon notes:

> In the act of adapting, choices are made based on many factors, as we have seen, including genre or medium conventions, political engagement, and personal as well as public history. These decisions are made in a creative as well as an interpretive context that is ideological, social, historical, cultural, personal, and aesthetic. (108)

James Whale's *Frankenstein* films reflect the conventions—especially censorship—of 1930s American cinema and thus also reflects the socials concerns of his day. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* reflects the social concerns of *her* day, including debates on the ethics of science and whether "the soul" exists. To ignore the circumstances by which these authors wrote their texts is to ignore a significant factor influencing both the text's creation as well as its reception. Furthermore, the shift in social concerns and conventions between the novel's publication in the early 19th century, and the films' production in the early 20th century, results in differences between the texts; thus, examining the context of the novel and the films demonstrates how adaptations rewrite stories to address contemporary ideas, concerns, and values.

“It was on a dreary night in November”: *Frankenstein*’s (complicated) Origins, and Mary Shelley’s Role as Author

In June 2011, various online entertainment news websites announced that 20th Century Fox had hired Max Landis to write a screenplay “based on the iconic Frankenstein tale” (McClintock). Little information about the project was available until June 2014, when Collider released the official name, *Victor Frankenstein*, and the plot synopsis, “a unique, never-before-seen twist on Mary Shelley’s classic 19th century novel... Told from Igor’s perspective” (Goldberg). The comments posted on the Collider article suggest most readers seemed to view the premise of *Victor Frankenstein* (2015) as perfectly acceptable; however, fans of Mary Shelley’s novel will have noticed a glaring contradiction in this concept—there is no Igor character in the novel.

Victor Frankenstein’s initial marketing campaign demonstrates two aspects of the Composite Frankenstein. First, it reflects the dominant narrative that audiences presumably recognize as “Frankenstein”: Dr. Frankenstein and his assistant Igor harness the power of lightning to animate a monster composed of dead body parts. Second, the film’s marketing demonstrates that “Mary Shelley” is an icon within the Composite Frankenstein, performing the author function for all *Frankenstein* adaptations—regardless of their resemblance to her novel. *Frankenstein* is just one of many novels redefined in popular culture by adaptations. Respected classic novels such as *Pride and Prejudice*, *Oliver Twist*, and *Dracula* remain culturally relevant in today’s popular culture because of play and film adaptations. The adaptations of these classic novels transformed these stories and their central characters into cultural icons; however, the adaptations also reinterpret the stories and introduce deviations. The stories and characters are common knowledge, yet this knowledge derives from various remediated texts, many of which

creatively diverge from the source material. *Victor Frankenstein*'s characterization of Igor as a "troubled young assistant" (Goldberg) is the accumulative product of a 200-year remediation cycle; this characterization of Igor reflects the evolution of the assistant character, first introduced in Peake's 1823 adaptation *Presumption; or the Fate of Frankenstein*, and developed through countless depictions in various media.

Mary Shelley herself is another icon within the contemporary Composite Frankenstein—this is not the case for other similar classic stories with vast legacies of adaptation. For example, Jane Austen, Charles Dickens and Bram Stoker are recognizable names associated with their respective classic novels, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Oliver Twist*, and *Dracula*, but their role as authors has limited influence on the contemporary understanding of each story. By contrast, the circumstance by which 19-year old Mary Shelley conceived of her ghost story is an integral part of *Frankenstein*'s legacy—so much so, that some *Frankenstein* adaptations depict the event, such as the prologue in *Bride of Frankenstein* (1935), and the film *Mary Shelley* (2017). A fictionalized version of Mary Shelley even appears in the *Frankenstein*-inspired novel and movie *Frankenstein Unbound*, and her name is included in the titles of adaptations like *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* (1994) and *Mary Shelley's Frankenhole* (2010-2). A recent Apple commercial featuring an unnamed Frankenstein's monster hints at his identity by showing Mary's portrait hanging on a wall (for more on this, see Chapter 4). The same remediation process that integrated Igor into the Composite Frankenstein integrated Mary into the narrative she crafted: the figure of a young "girl" penning such a ghoulish tale is a romantic notion that has captured countless imaginations, as evidenced by depictions of her in various media.

The danger inherent in the Composite Frankenstein is that its concepts appear authentic or truthful because they are familiar; *Frankenstein*'s familiarity as an intertextual conflation of

ideas can lead to the dissemination of misrepresentation and misinformation. Mary Shelley, however she is depicted in popular media, was not a "girl" when she published *Frankenstein* but a woman, and she was more than just a conduit to supernatural forces encountered in a dream. The Composite Frankenstein presents a fetish of the author that emphasizes her youth and beauty at the expense of credibility and legitimacy as a "serious" author and effaces the numerous intellectual, philosophical, and social influences that shaped *Frankenstein*. Furthermore, this cultural perception of Mary Shelley as an ingénue freezes her literary legacy at the moment of *Frankenstein*'s creation, expunging her entire writing career from public memory. In addition to the obvious gender politics of Mary's Shelley's representation, her public image demonstrates an extreme form of the author function mentioned in the previous chapter. The icon "Mary Shelley, author of *Frankenstein*" is no longer Mary Shelley the historic person, but rather, a character—inspired by a fictionalized account she herself provided—who is an exotic commodification of a sweet innocent figure contrasted by her morbid and strange story.

Like many aspects of the Composite Frankenstein, the figure Mary Shelley has changed over time, as has her role as *Frankenstein*'s author. Today, Mary Shelley is a household name associated with classic literature; however, prior to her reclamation by second-wave feminist scholarship (Hunter xi), Mary Shelley was not considered an important author and was overshadowed by her husband poet Percy Shelley. This chapter examines the various social forces than influenced Mary Shelley's writing, destabilizing the romantic cultural perception of Mary Shelley as a young conduit to paranormal forces (or her husband's genius), and demonstrating how Shelley incorporated well-known public debates and concerns into her novel. By threading current philosophical concerns throughout the novel, Shelley appealed to her contemporary audiences with a story that was not simply shocking and gruesome, but also

poignant and thought-provoking. This chapter reviews *Frankenstein*'s history of publication and reception, with a focus on changing attitudes towards Mary Shelley's abilities as a writer; this historical review illustrates the author figure concept's instability. My review of *Frankenstein*'s context demonstrates the social nature of authorship, which is both a social function (i.e. Foucault's author function concept) and a social process; early 19th-century social forces influenced how Shelley wrote, and how audiences read, *Frankenstein*—a process that continues today.

Frankenstein's Origin Story: the Birth, Revision, and Revival of the Fluid Text(s)

Frankenstein has a complicated history; in addition to the long tradition of adaptations that redefined *Frankenstein*'s story, there is a long tradition of criticism that problematizes *Frankenstein*'s authorship—including attempts to discredit Mary as the author. The novel's origin has captured the imagination of the public and critics alike for almost 200 years; the appeal of *Frankenstein*'s origins is due to numerous factors that make *Frankenstein* unique among romantic-period texts. The first is simply how interesting the story's creation is: the 1818 text was published anonymously, challenging critics to speculate who was responsible for the novel; then "When the reprint appeared in 1823, reviewers were quite thrown to find that the author had been a woman" (Hindle viii).[8] The second—and "heavily revised" (Hunter xi)—edition, published in 1831, includes a new introduction describing the romantic events that inspired Mary to write *Frankenstein*: a rainy summer in Geneva, a ghost story competition with Lord Byron, and a waking dream. The surviving journals of both Mary (and Percy) Shelley and John Polidori (somewhat) substantiate the Introduction's description of the ghost story competition. The survival of the Shelleys's journals, including notebooks containing the revised

first draft of *Frankenstein*, is another factor that has contributed to continued interest in discussing the origins of this novel, particularly in determining who "really" wrote the text. Finally, the romantic origin story penned by Mary, and the work of critics who either wish to praise or discredit her as the author of *Frankenstein*, have transformed Mary into a character in the greater *Frankenstein* popular culture narrative: a young woman crafting a ghost story about ethics, murder, and science gone awry, is a vivid image within the Composite Frankenstein and an appealing topic of debate.

In her Introduction to the 1831 edition of *Frankenstein*, Mary Shelley describes the origins of her ghost story, including a brief account of her life; she describes the pressures of being the daughter of two prominent (and radical) philosophers, William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft, as well as the pressure applied by her husband to "prove [herself] worthy of [her] parentage" (Shelley ed. Butler 193). The majority of the Introduction, however, describes the summer in Switzerland with Lord Byron, where she first imagined the basic premise of *Frankenstein*. According to Shelley, it was a "wet, ungenial summer" (194) largely spent indoors. Byron proposed that he, Percy, Mary and their fourth companion Polidori, each write a ghost story; Mary's ghost story became the foundation for her first novel, *Frankenstein*. According to Mary, the basic idea originated in a waking dream inspired by a conversation between Byron and Percy about "the experiments of Dr. Darwin" (197). Mary describes the dream in vivid detail, clearly aiming to cultivate a romantic origin for her novel. She states in the Introduction that she immediately wrote the initial few papers of *Frankenstein* the morning after her dream; however, these pages (assuming they existed) are lost, as are "the discarded… early drafts of the novel she continued to write during July and August 1816" (Robinson 16).

Most of her first complete draft did survive and has been important source material for *Frankenstein* scholarship.

Mary's description of the now famous trip to Geneva, where she experienced "the grim terrors of [a] waking dream" (Shelley 197) is the dominant legend surrounding *Frankenstein*'s origins. Another more controversial legend is that the novel appropriates the story of a real-life castle Frankenstein: "In 1817 Mary Shelley… visited Castle Frankenstein, on the Rhine, and heard disturbing tales of an occupant who had lived at the castle 100 years before and experimented with human corpses, trying to bring them back to life with alchemy" (Shelley Collins Classics v). Jacqueline Foertsch cites this "legend" (which has enough credence to be included in a recent Harper Collins edition of *Frankenstein*) as originating from a popular-consumption text that—like other condescending male-authored criticism of Shelley's work—seeks to discredit Shelley as an author. She writes:

> Another striking example of male-authored "criticism" (in the strictest sense of that word) is a popular-consumption text produced by Radu Florescu, with the help of Alan Barbour and Matei Cazacu, all three "in search of Frankenstein." Retracing the several European excursions undertaken by the Shelleys, these critics voice their intent to "prove" the existence of an actual Castle Frankenstein in the Rhine Valley and to detail many of the similarities between the life of the curious "alchemist" who lived there and Mary's own Victor. The authors' tone is heavy with accusation: "Could it be that Mary deliberately destroyed all traces of her sources for this particular story to establish a reputation for the kind of creativity she really lacked ... ?" (19). Certainly what is notable here is the combative stance. (702)

Academics have not always been kind to Mary Shelley; in the above quotation, Foertsch references just one of several attempts by male critics to discredit Mary as an author. Mary Shelley inadvertently instigated such discussions by not asserting authority over the 1818 text and permitting Percy to be publically associated with the novel. Mary Poovey comments that "Presumably because it was unthinkable that a woman should refuse to moralize, most critics automatically assumed that the author of *Frankenstein* was a man" (252). The Preface is first person narration with male pronouns, suggesting the author is in fact a man; furthermore, the 1818 text's dedication is to William Godwin, leading critics to assume the author was "a 'follower of Godwin,' according to *Blackwood's*, or even Percy Shelley himself, as the *Edinburgh Magazine* surmised" (Poovey 252). Even after Mary Shelley revealed herself to be the author, critics continued to question her authority over the text. In their Introduction to *The Mary Shelley Reader*, Betty B. Bennett and Charles E. Robinson comment that some contemporary critics "have continued to have difficulty accepting her authorship, arguing that [Percy] materially changed, or even co-authored, the novel despite manuscript evidence that his contributions were primarily editorial" (Bennett and Robinson 4). The most significant example of such criticism is the work of James Rieger, whose 1974 edition of *Frankenstein* made Shelley's first edition accessible to modern readers for the first time. Rieger's motivations are problematic, however: the scholar positions the first edition as superior to the second because Percy did not oversee the second edition's revisions.

The 1831 edition of *Frankenstein* is the most common version in print; however, the 1818 text has experienced a revival, particularly, but not exclusively, in scholarship.[9] It was Rieger who first brought attention to the discrepancies between Shelley's two editions of *Frankenstein*, as well as the merits of studying the original over the second edition. As Marilyn

Butler points out, it "is of course standard practice for an editor to select the last version the author revised, on the grounds that no-one has better right to determine its final form" (Butler "*Frankenstein* and the Radical Science" 304); however, since Rieger's 1974 publication, "[scholarship] now strongly prefers the first edition" (Hunter xii). There are now a number of critical editions of the 1818 *Frankenstein* text available. I own the Broadview, Norton, Longman (Pearson), Penguin,[10] and Oxford critical editions, Oxford's *The Mary Shelley Reader*, which contains the 1818 text of *Frankenstein*, and *The Original Frankenstein*, which presents two early drafts of the 1818 novel (one with Percy's revisions and one without). In *The Original Frankenstein,* Robinson references the aforementioned critical editions (including Rieger's), as well as reprints of the 1818 text by editors Nora Crook, Barry Moser, and Leonard Wolf.

Rieger unapologetically bases his preference for the 1818 text on his opinion that Percy Shelley is ultimately responsible for *Frankenstein*. Rieger suggests that Percy made significant contributions to the *Frankenstein* manuscripts, and because Percy was a superior writer to Mary, the revisions she made after her husband's death detracted from the original.[11] By asserting that Percy was a collaborator on *Frankenstein*, Rieger launched what would become a contentious issue for *Frankenstein* scholars. Foertsch suggests Rieger chose to "revive this obscure version as the superior *Frankenstein* largely because of the evidence he finds seeming to establish Percy's significant contribution" (702) and that he is attempting to "[advance] Percy's role from editor/proofreader to 'minor collaborator'" (702). Among contemporary *Frankenstein* scholars, Rieger has a reputation for being unfairly critical of Mary Shelley, noted by Butler in the Oxford critical edition, D. L. Macdonald and Kathleen Scherf in the Broadview critical edition, and Anne K. Mellor in "Choosing a Text of *Frankenstein* to Teach."[12] Rieger's prejudice is evident in his article "Dr. Polidori and the Genesis of Frankenstein" (published before his ground-

breaking 1818 revival edition of *Frankenstein*): in the article, Rieger criticizes inaccuracies in Shelley's recollection of the events leading up to her writing *Frankenstein* and concludes "When Mary Shelley admits to forgetting particulars, we may usually assume that she remembers nothing. No statement in her account of the writing party at Diodati, or even of the inception of her own idea, can be trusted" (465). Anne K. Mellor goes as far as suggesting that Rieger's 1818 text "is so inaccurate and so prejudiced in favor of Percy Shelley that students must be warned against its misleading combination of truths, half-truths, and unwarranted speculations" (161).

Rieger's position that *Frankenstein* is Percy's text is preceded by a critical tradition of implicitly discrediting Mary Shelley by explicitly crediting her husband for the novel. Maurice Hindle suggests in his Introduction to Penguin Classic's *Frankenstein* (first published in 1985) that "It was hard for nineteenth-century critics (and many later ones through the mid-twentieth century) to believe that young Mary was *that* good… literary critics for a long time credited the accomplishment essentially to Percy's influence and help" (x). Hindle comments that even the positive reviews of *Frankenstein* found ways to discredit Mary as the author: "Because of her youth at the time of her writing *Frankenstein*, some 'admirers' of Mary Shelly have somehow managed to praise her work only by presenting her talent as a fortuitous refraction of the 'genius' possessed by… Percy Shelley" (ix).[13] Take, for example, a review from *Knight's Quarterly Magazine* published in August 1823, which implies that the lack of Percy's influence on Mary's later novel *Valperga*, published after his death, is the reason for its "extreme inferiority" (398) to *Frankenstein*; the review states that *Frankenstein* "has much of [Percy's] poetry and vigour" (398) while *Valperga* is "cold and common-place" (398). *Frankenstein* was the only novel Mary published that Percy contributed to and promoted; the perceived lack of Percy's talent and

influence on Mary's later work likely contributed to popular history forgetting Mary's writing career post-*Frankenstein*.

For forty years, academics have followed Rieger's example, comparing the two editions of *Frankenstein*, identifying Shelley's influences and debating the extent of Percy's contribution. While Rieger prefers the 1818 edition because of Percy's influence, other scholars, such as Butler and Foertsch, argue that the 1818 edition is preferable for research largely because the 1831 revisions removed interesting aspects of the original novel. For example, Mellor argues that the 1818 text has "greater internal philosophical coherence, [is] closest to [Shelley's] original conceptions, and [is] more convincingly related to [her] historical contexts" (Mellor 160). Butler suggests that revisiting the 1818 text is important because the contemporary public's "understanding of *Frankenstein* is disproportionately impressed by passages introduced in what might be called the composite *Frankenstein*" (Butler, "*Frankenstein* and the Radical Science" 303-4). When she writes "composite," Butler is referring to fundamental changes made to the text, which she believes were due to controversy and "outside pressures," going as far as to suggest the 1831 edition is "almost a new book" (304) (Macdonald and Scherf also refer to the 1831 text as "composite," but do so in reference to modern editorial choices to retain aspects of the 1818 version, such as the *Paradise Lost* epigraph and/or the three-volume format [40]). The contemporary public's understanding of *Frankenstein* is also disproportionately impressed by stories about the novel's origins and its author's life. In the previous chapter, I discuss Kenneth Branagh's stated attempt to realize authorial intention with his film *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* (1994); specifically, Branagh presents Mary Shelley as a feminist figure and argues he strengthened the character Elizabeth to align with Shelley's values. While Branagh's claim of honouring Shelley's original vision may seem comically (and characteristically for him) self-

indulgent, it is not dissimilar to legitimate scholars like Butler and Mellor privileging the 1818 text by framing Shelley's 1831 revisions as censorship.

As I discuss further in Chapter 4, there is a trend in public discourse of arguing a "true' reading of *Frankenstein* that reflects authorial intention. The discrepancies between the 1818 and the 1831 text—as highlighted by the aforementioned scholarly comparisons—further destabilize notions of what *Frankenstein* the novel is "really about" and demonstrates how even minor changes can support vastly different readings. Shelley's second edition not only contains revised content, but also includes an Introduction that guides the way readers approach the text: Butler suggests in "*Frankenstein* and the Radical Science" that "Mary Shelley not only changed but, in a new Preface, interpreted" (303) her story for readers. We see this in the following line from the Introduction: "for supremely frightful would be the effect of any human endeavour to mock the stupendous mechanism of the Creator of the world" (Shelley ed. Butler 196). Although not as blunt as the fictionalized Mary Shelley in Whale's *Bride of Frankenstein*, who states that her intention was to write a "moral tale," this version of Mary Shelley certainly makes a statement to align her work with Christian teachings; this departs from the 1818 edition, which simply cautions in its Preface "nor is any inference justly to be drawn from the following pages as prejudicing any philosophical doctrine of whatever kind" (4). In other words, Percy's[14] preface acknowledges that the novel could be read as a mockery of Christian values, and responds by placing the work in neutral territory—Mary's Introduction, however, positions the text as re-enforcing Christian beliefs. In one sentence, Mary erases the ambiguous spirit of the first edition; perhaps this radical shift in religious/political perspective is responsible for the academic impulse to isolate a pure, early form of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, such as Charles E. Robinson's *The Original Frankenstein*: the earliest draft of *Frankenstein* with Percy's revisions, as well as an

isolated version that "removes as nearly as possible all of Percy's editorial interventions in the novel" (Robinson 16).

Mary Shelley's public image is coloured by gothic romanticism; Shelley herself cultivated this tone with her 1831 Introduction, which describes the novel's romantic beginnings. A much-less fantastic description of the ghost story contest appears in Percy's unsigned Preface included with the original 1818 publication:

> this story was begun in the majestic region where the scene is principally laid… The season was cold and rainy, and in the evenings we crowded around a blazing wood fire, and occasionally amused ourselves with some German stories of ghosts… Two other friends… and myself agreed to write each a story, founded on some supernatural occurrence. (Shelley ed. Butler 4)

Mary's Introduction elaborates on this story, providing the names of the people involved and horrific details from the German ghost stories. She also includes a description of a vivid waking nightmare. Butler, in her Introduction to the Oxford World's Classics edition of the 1818 text, interprets Shelley's description of such events as "conveniently self-promoting and novel-promoting," (Butler xxiii) suggesting that a "possible motive for the dubious tale is a professional author's instinct to make her book exciting and accessible, for the purposes of a popular edition" (xxiii). Macdonald and Scherf interpret Mary's "dream" differently; drawing on a suggestion made by Ellen Moers, they argue the waking dream reflects Mary's personal experiences: "Behind the nightmare of the disastrous birth of Frankenstein's monster, there may also have lain the thought of Mary Godwin's own birth, and her mother's death, eleven days of agony later (Moers 84-85)" (11). They also mention a less romantic dream Mary had shortly after the death of her first child, which she wrote about in her personal journal: a dream in which

Mary was able to revive her dead child. The tragic description in Mary's journal is more bleak and personal than anything appearing in her Introduction, further evidence that she wrote her "dubious tale" (Butler xxiii) of the novel's origins to sell books.

Macdonald and Scherf further comment on another statement Mary makes in her Introduction—her commentary on the nature of creation. Shelley writes: "Invention… does not consist in creating out of void, but out of chaos; the materials must, in the first place, be afforded: it can give form to dark, shapeless substances, but cannot bring into being the substance itself" (Shelley ed. Butler 195). Mary goes on to suggest that her idea for *Frankenstein* was inspired by discussions between Byron and Percy on the "principle of life" (195). Macdonald and Scherf use her metaphor to set up their own discussion on her sources of inspiration: "The 'dark, shapeless substances' that she shaped into *Frankenstein* were drawn partly from her personal memories, and partly from her knowledge of the texts that articulated her culture's deepest and most central concerns" (Macdonald and Scherf 12). In other words, *Frankenstein* reflects more than Mary's short time in Geneva: the novel was the product of her personal tragedies, her politics, and her education.

Mary Shelley's (1818) *Frankenstein*: Influences on the Original Novel

Frankenstein is a popular novel, readily available for purchase for over 200 years; however, historically it "had little reputation as 'literature'—increasingly less in the twentieth century than in the nineteenth, when its oddity had given it a certain prominence" (Hindle xi). Thankfully, *Frankenstein* is now considered as an important text, worthy of analysis and interpretation. Contemporary editions of *Frankenstein* typically contain some information about Mary Shelley's life, with the critical editions offering more in-depth investigations of the various

influences that shaped Shelley's story of monstrous creation, including major life events leading up to the story's publication. While this is an obvious approach for editors presenting any classic novel, the subject of authorship is particularly significant when discussing *Frankenstein* because of the aforementioned debate over Mary Shelley's role as the author. By relating *Frankenstein* to specific events in Mary Shelley's life, these Introductions combat the notion that Mary is somehow not responsible for crafting *Frankenstein*; however, the more detailed accounts are usually found in critical editions that are prepared by, and sold to, scholars. Popular editions of *Frankenstein* are more likely to align with the image of Mary Shelley perpetuated in popular culture: Mary as fifth business to the genius men in her life, whose only literary accomplishment worth mentioning is *Frankenstein*.

Earlier I mentioned a recent Harper Collins edition of *Frankenstein* that suggests Mary Shelley's story was inspired by visiting a Castle Frankenstein. Similarly, a free kindle edition of *Frankenstein* (AmazonClassics) mainly describes Mary's life through mentioning the important people she knew:

> Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley (1797–1851), daughter of political radical William Godwin and feminist writer Mary Wollstonecraft, grew up among the leading voices of the Romantic movement. She met and wed poet Percy Bysshe Shelley in 1816. When the Shelley's spent that summer on Lake Geneva with friends—among them, Lord Byron—Byron challenged the writers to a ghost-story contest. Mary Shelley's sketch inspired her novel *Frankenstein* (1818), influenced by her loss of her infant daughter in 1815. Four years after *Frankenstein*'s publication, her husband drowned. The tragedy haunted Shelley for the rest of her life, which she dedicated to annotating her husband's writing,

> publishing her own novels, and revising *Frankenstein* for republication. ("About the Author" AmazonClassics)

The above passage contains a few qualities worth investigating. First, the brief history of Mary Shelley's life implies that she was married to Percy when she was in Geneva—she was not. The same historical revision is found in the *Bride of Frankenstein* prologue, which depicts a fictional conversation between Percy, Mary, and Lord Byron. The passage also implies Mary *met* Percy in 1816, despite mentioning Mary losing her infant daughter the year prior. Second, the passage grants Mary very little agency: for example, it references Byron's ghost story proposition as prompting *Frankenstein*'s concept, then summarizes the novel as the product of Mary's grief. Note the lack of active language in the description. Lastly, while the passage does mention the existence of Mary's other novels, it generally glosses over Mary's accomplishments and defines her as the daughter of famous philosophers, the friend of an infamous writer, and the widow of an important poet.

The critical editions of *Frankenstein* present more flattering descriptions of Mary Shelley's life and work. Scholars often introduce these critical editions by discussing prominent themes of the novel, their original contexts, and how these themes are still relevant for contemporary readers. J. Paul Hunter writes in his Preface to the Norton critical edition of *Frankenstein*, "Experience, psychological complexity, friendly influence, competitive instincts, fear of success—all these played their part in the origins of this remarkable story" (x). Wolfson suggests that *Frankenstein* is a "vibrant intersection of interlocking cultural concerns," (Wolfson xix) many of which are virtually universal human concerns. The back-cover of Oxford's *Frankenstein* reads "*Frankenstein* confronts some of the most feared innovations of evolutionism: topics such as degeneracy, hereditary disease, and mankind's status as a species of

animal." In this edition, Butler provides an in-depth and thoughtful review of the various life experiences Shelley drew from to write *Frankenstein*, including the lessons on politics, science and philosophy she learned from her parents' own writing and the time she spent with Percy. All editions of *Frankenstein* that include some information about Mary Shelley's life are reinforcing her role as the novel's author and contribute to the public perception of her as a literary figure; by including social influences in these brief biographies of Mary Shelley, such as the experiments of Galvanni, or the politics of her Mary's feminist mother Mary Wollstonecraft, these *Frankenstein* texts connect Mary's authorship to the historic context she was writing within, refuting the notion that Mary passively channeled her supernatural dream into an accidentally-enduring novel.

Of all the social influences that shaped *Frankenstein*, Mary's interest in science set the novel apart; Mary Shelley is, after-all, a pioneer of the science fiction genre. Butler argues that Shelley drew on the period's scientific debate on the nature of life for her original 1818 novel, and that her revisions in the 1831 edition reflect a shift in public favor regarding such ideas. She connects the content of *Frankenstein* to a then well-known debate between scientists John Abernethy and William Lawrence. Abernethy had published a paper theorizing the existence of a substance, "perhaps a superfine fluid," (Butler xviii) as the source of life, "correlative to or confirmation of the idea of an (immortal) soul" (xiv). His former pupil William Lawrence responded with several lectures which disputed Abernethy's claim, insisting that "the Life question should be left to the real professionals" (xx)—the implication being, of course, that Abernethy's investigation of the human soul fell into the realm of philosophy, rather than science. The debate was known in the scientific community as "Lawrence's materialist case against [Abernethy's] spiritualized vitalism" (xx). Mary Shelley would have been aware of the

debate, as Lawrence was her spouse's physician, teacher and friend. In fact, according to both Mary's diary and Polidori's journal, the night before Shelley composed her ghost story, her spouse Percy and Lord Byron had had a conversation on this very topic (xxii).

Butler argues that Lawrence's influence did not end with the initial ghost story; she draws several connections between his theories and the second and third volumes of Shelley's 1818 edition of Frankenstein, which "use other parts of Lawrence's work, drawing strength from his impressive intellectual range" (xxxii). For example, Butler identifies numerous parallels between Lawrence's work on human abnormality in his "magnum opus, *A Natural History of Man* (1819)" and the third volume of *Frankenstein*: "the topics Lawrence considers in this book have been touched on by Mary Shelley, particularly in the third volume of *Frankenstein*—heredity, fosterage and nurturance, sexual selection, and the perverse adoption of choices which lead to extinction" (xliii). As intimate companions of Lawrence, Percy and Mary likely had intimate knowledge of the research, writings, and "hitherto unpublished lectures" (xlii) that became *A Natural History of Man* a year after Mary initially published *Frankenstein*.

Butler identifies similarities between Lawrence's writing on birth defects and the defective offspring created by Shelley's Dr. Frankenstein: "in early 1815 [Lawrence] studied a boy born without part of his brain, and had him cared for in his own house. Some of the findings of the resulting academic paper are summarized in Lawrence's contribution of the entry on 'Monsters' to Ree's *Cyclopaedia*" (xli). This entry, which Butler includes excerpts of, reasons that "aberrations" occur because of the "irregular operation of the powers concerned in generation" (xlii)—Dr. Frankenstein's method for generation is certainly irregular (and thus, created a monster). As Butler posits, "the plot of *Frankenstein* boils down to a scientist who

fosters, or fails to foster, a monster" (xli–xlii); thus, Mary's characterization of Dr. Frankenstein reflects both Lawrence's theories as well as his actions.[15]

Butler goes on to describe Lawrence's view of "the human species as a variety of animal" (xlii) and his interest in human evolution, heredity, and "sexual selection" (xliii). A clear parallel between the two books is the characterization of aristocratic families as sickly due to generations of incest. In his book, Lawrence suggests that the "in-breeding" (xliii) among the European royal families caused the exhibition of "madness and degeneracy" (xliii) (i.e. King George the Third). One of the most infamous themes in the 1818 text of *Frankenstein* (removed for the 1831 second edition) is the hint of aristocratic incest:

> The family and their blood-ties are carefully revised… The suggestion in 1818 (I. v. 44) that the boy Ernest was sickly as a child has also been dropped. Taken together with the improved health of Alphonse, these changes remove the theme of an aristocratic family's degenerative state which was originally so notable in the first and third volumes. (Butler 200)

The implication that the aristocracy suffers from illness or even madness because of incest is a common theme in Gothic horror, the iconic example being Edgar Allan Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher." Although the 1831 revisions of *Frankenstein* remove the incest theme, it persists in the larger Composite Frankenstein, as Elizabeth is Victor's adopted sister—not a blood relative, but certainly verging on taboo.[16]

In general, *Frankenstein* is preoccupied with inadequate parentage and other reproductive failures; thus, Lawrence's topics "heredity, fosterage and nurturance, sexual selection" (Butler xliii) are evident when reading both editions of *Frankenstein* (but are certainly more overt in the 1818 edition). As Butler points out, "When it comes to parenting, Frankenstein is himself a

monster" (xliv). Dr. Frankenstein fails to foster or nurture his creation, abandoning the Creature shortly after his "birth." Similarly, Elizabeth's father abandons her in both editions of *Frankenstein*: in the 1818 text her father sends her to live with the Frankensteins following the death of her mother, as he intends to remarry and feels living with her uncle is preferable to "her being brought up by a stepmother" (Shelley ed. Butler 20); in the revised version of Elizabeth's origin story in the 1831 text, her mother dies in childbirth and her father subsequently disappears. Both versions echo aspects of Mary Shelley's own childhood experiences: Mary's mother Mary Wollstonecraft died from an infection following Mary's birth, William remarried, and Mary's relationship with her stepmother was tense. Even the De Lacy family—the creature's introduction to familial relationships—lack a mother figure to nurture them: there is no mention of Felix and Agatha's mother, and Safie states her mother died prior to the events of the novel.

Scholars of Shelley's *Frankenstein* often connect the science of the novel to the well-known scientific milestones of the time-period: Galvani's infamous public displays of galvanization, which "sparked" the initial debates regarding the source of life; the writings of vitalist Erasmus Darwin, "probably the most popular scientific writer of the Romantic period" (Macdonald and Scherf 20); and, influencing the 1831 revisions, the "public hysteria because of the Burke and Hare murders in Edinburgh in the late 1820s" (Butler l). Shelley herself references Darwin as a source of inspiration in her Introduction. Benjamin Franklin is another clear influence, although more visibly in the 1818 text than in the 1831. In the original text, Victor's father teaches him about the power of electricity through demonstrations, including "a kite, with a wire and string, which drew down that fluid from the clouds" (Shelley ed. Butler 24). Shelley revised this section extensively for the 1831 edition: in the revised text, Victor's instructor is not his father, but a "man of great research in natural philosophy" (211) who taught Victor "a *theory*

[emphasis added] he had formed on the subject of electricity and galvanism" (211). The revision shifts the narrative from referencing specific science to describing Victor's education with vague—and cautionary—language, and characterizes Victor's family as ignorant of science.

Critics of *Frankenstein* have yet to reach a consensus on Shelley's knowledge of modern science and how that affected her writing. Macdonald and Scherf identify this problem: "Even among those critics who have recognized the importance of Shelley's science, its precise significance is still controversial" (18). Macdonald and Scherf position Rieger—ever critical of Shelley's writing—as assuming *Frankenstein* identifies "modern science [with] sorcery and alchemy" (18); they contrast Rieger's interpretation of the science in *Frankenstein* with that of Samuel Holmes Vasbinder, who positions the novel's "attitude toward science [as] largely affirmative" (18). They view Mellor's interpretation of the novel's science as "a distinction between the aggressive, masculine science of Sir Humphry Davy and the non-interventionist, ecologically sensitive science of Eramus Darwin" (18). Lastly, they reference Marilyn Butler's suggestion that Shelley's novel incorporates the materialism versus vitalism debate, as I mention above (18).

Macdonald and Scherf agree that there is evidence of scientific knowledge in *Frankenstein*, arguing Shelley "did, however, know more about natural science than Rieger gave her credit for, and she made extensive use of it in her novel" (17-8). Macdonald and Scherf identify problems with these different interpretations of science in Shelley's novel: "All three of these approaches are suggestive, but all of them are problematic" (19). For example, they support Butler's argument that Shelley was inspired by a vitalism versus materialism (mechanism) debate, but disagree that the novel is "essentially mechanist," (20) aligning with Lawrence's philosophy. They cite vitalist influences in Shelley's writing: "Butler is certainly correct in

identifying Victor's science as vitalist – he discovers the principle of life first, and then constructs a body to lodge it in – but it is hard to see how he is a blundering one, since he does, after all, succeed" (19). I would argue that Victor does not succeed—rather than achieving his goal of overcoming death, he creates a monster. While *Frankenstein*'s exact political leanings toward science are debatable, the influence of scientific debates on Shelley's writing is not.

In *Frankenstein*, Shelley intertwines her scientific knowledge with her education in philosophy and literature. Shelley fuses these various (and sometimes conflicting) influences of her intellectual parents and spouse to create a philosophy that is her own. Hunter argues "Knowledgeable readers can readily find in *Frankenstein* traces of the radical ideas of her father, mother, and husband, but they will also find… correctives she offered to their more strident views." In her article "'My Hideous Progeny': The Lady and the Monster," Poovey offers her interpretation of such "correctives"; Poovey makes arguments to separate the philosophy of *Frankenstein* from the teachings of Mary's family: William Godwin, Mary Wollstonecraft, and Percy Shelley. She suggests that Shelley "fuses mechanistic psychological theories of the origin and development of character with the more organic theories generally associated with the Romantics" (253) and that she creates a "model of maturation that contradicts the optimism of both mechanists and organicist" (253). Poovey argues that Shelley's description of Victor's childhood suggests that he is the product of his environment; yet, Shelley characterizes his innate desire "not as neutral or benevolent but as quintessentially egotistical" (253). Victor's egotistical nature and selfish ambition leads to his decline and demise.[17] While it is true that Mary, like her fictitious monster, is more than the collection of her parts, those parts are distinct and observable; Poovey's desire to show "The Lady" behind the monster arises because Shelley's influences are so prevalent and well-known, they risk overshadowing Shelley's own philosophy within the text.

Shelley's education shaped her writing abilities, as did the influence of her famous intellectual parents, Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin, the latter mentioned by name in *Frankenstein*'s acknowledgement. Although Mary Wollstonecraft died days after giving birth, her legacy inspired her daughter, who had a "habit of retiring to read on her mother's grave in St Pancras Churchyard" (Butler xi). Evidence suggests Mary adopted her mother's early-feminist ideas as well. Poovey identifies Wollstonecraft's intellectual influence on Mary in *Frankenstein*; for example: "Like Wollstonecraft… Shelley discusses desire explicitly within a paradigm of individual maturation: *Frankenstein* is Shelley's version of the process of identity-formation that Wollstonecraft worked out in her two *Vindications*" (253).[18] As the only child of two highly-influential writers, Mary Shelley no doubt felt a social expectation that she would follow in their footsteps. Mary's father William gave her an education, directed her readings, took her to public lectures, and encouraged her writing (Butler x). Mary was well-read and she directly and indirectly acknowledges the influence of such works as *Paradise Lost* (1667), *Metamorphoses* (8), and *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1798) in *Frankenstein*. Furthermore, Butler identifies Godwin's artistic influence throughout Frankenstein, from the structure of its title, to its key themes and ideas. William Godwin is also connected to the themes of *Frankenstein* through his emotional inadequacy as a father; for, while Godwin took great care in providing his daughter with the best education possible, his daughter "grew up in conditions of some emotional deprivation," (x) exasperated by Godwin's marriage to Mary Jane Clairmont, a jealous woman who "favored her own children, making life difficult for young Mary, who was often whipped for impertinence" (Johnson ix). There is a clear parallel between Mary, with her troubled childhood, filled with feelings of isolation, and her imagined monster, a lonely being whose creator abandons him.

There are echoes of Mary's own loss of her mother in *Frankenstein*. As previously mentioned, Elizabeth's mother dies from childbirth in the 1831 text. In both texts Victor's mother dies from performing maternal activities—in this case, caring for a child sick with Scarlet Fever and catching the disease herself. Victor's nightmare, which directly follows the animation of his creature, heavily implies that the death of his mother sparked his research pursuit. After recalling the events of the creature's awakening, Victor claims he pursued his work "for the sole purpose of infusing life into an inanimate body… I had desired it with ardour that far exceeded moderation; but now that I had finished, the beauty of the dream vanished" (Shelley ed. Butler 39). He then recalls a nightmare: "I saw Elizabeth, in the bloom of health… 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 I held the corpse of my dead mother in my arms" (39). The dream indicates Victor's motivation for his research was a fervent fantasy of bringing his mother back to life, or a desire to prevent Elizabeth—the other intimate female relationship in his life—from a similar fate. Victor discovers that his ability to "bestow animation upon lifeless matter" (36) was not comparable to "renew[ing] life where death had apparently devoted the body to corruption," (36) illustrated through the juxtaposition of the two female family members. The death of Victor's mother is a plot device: it provides the irrational motivation for Victor to pursue scientific experimentation beyond what is socially and ethically responsible.

Mary herself struggled with domestic expectations; like her Dr. Frankenstein, Mary's first attempt to procreate led to misery. Her first pregnancy ended in miscarriage: "seventeen-year-old Mary Godwin lost her first child, a daughter, who like Frankenstein's creature had no name: she had not lived long enough to be given one" (Macdonald and Scherf 11). Whether or not Mary channeled her own feelings of parental inadequacy into her characterization of Dr.

Frankenstein's failed experiment is conjecture; however, "Victor taking 9 months to complete the monster" is, at the very least, a reference to pregnancy (Badalamenti 428). Mary's family experienced several hardships and tragedies immediately before and during her writing of *Frankenstein*: the death of her first child in 1815, her sister Claire becoming pregnant with Lord Byron's illegitimate child during their travel to Geneva in 1816 (Butler xiii), the suicides of Mary's half-sister Fanny Imlay and Percy's first wife Harriet in the fall of 1816 (xiii), and Percy being "refused custody of his children by his first marriage" (lix) in early 1817. As Robinson writes, "The gestation and birthing of *Frankenstein*, this monstrous and hideous progeny of a novel, were not without complications" (Robinson 23).

Percy Shelley: *Frankenstein* ~~Author~~

Despite the cultural fascination with Mary and Percy's whirlwind romance and adventures with Lord Byron (i.e. *Mary Shelley* [2017]), life was often difficult for young Mary Shelley, particularly at the time she was writing her first novel. Percy was unable to support his wife financially (he was cut off from his family funds when he left his wife for Mary) and he added strain to the relationship when he "became convinced he had syphilis and was likely to die" (Butler xi). Likewise, Mary herself had no money, nor could she depend on her father, who himself had been depending on Percy's patronage. Mary received little emotional support from either her husband or her father. Butler reads this emotional inadequacy in *Frankenstein*'s construction as "a family drama, centred on parental nurture (or lack of it)" (xiii) and suggests the novel is an "imaginative reworking of [Mary's] experience" (xiii); Mary's own struggles with parenthood, as well as her childhood trauma, inform her novel's presentation of strained familial relationships.

Percy Shelley may have been "emotionally inadequate" (Butler xiii) as a husband, but he did support his wife—particularly her creative and intellectual endeavors. We know Percy edited Mary's drafts and contributed some of the writing because these drafts have survived. As mentioned previously, the extent of Percy's collaboration—and the extent to which he should be given credit for *Frankenstein*—continues to be a source of debate among *Frankenstein* scholars. The surviving *Frankenstein* notebooks provide excellent source material for investigating this topic, as the additions, subtractions and revisions are handwritten, and therefore are identifiable as either Mary or Percy's. These early drafts of *Frankenstein* are publicly available online in digitized format through the "partnership between the New York Public Library and the Maryland Institute for Technology in the Humanities, in cooperation with Oxford's Bodleian Library" (The Shelley-Godwin Archive) as a part of The Shelley-Godwin Archive. The website presents various "digitized manuscripts" of the Shelley-Godwin clan, which are isolated one page at a time, with various viewing options. In the case of *Frankenstein*, there is an additional option for the text transcription section that highlights text by Mary or Percy.[19]

Charles E. Robinson's 2008 book *The Original Frankenstein* separates Mary's earliest draft from Percy's revised version (the drafts before the Fair Copy revisions), presenting both. The Introduction of this book presents some insight into the development of *Frankenstein*—the context of its creation, Percy's role in supporting his wife's writing, and the events that led up to the novel's publication. Percy and Mary wrote together, collaborating on each other's projects.[20] Mary wrote *Frankenstein* in stages, presenting her husband with chapters for review; thus, Percy was involved throughout Mary's writing process. His suggested revisions, as observed in the surviving manuscripts, are predominantly stylistic in nature. For example, Robinson describes how Percy addressed the "punctuation, capitalization, and spelling" (26) of Mary's writing,

occasionally making more significant changes, such as “rewriting a phrase” and “reduc[ing] her wordiness” (26). Perhaps most interesting is Robinson’s assessment that Mary learned from Percy’s corrections, as her writing improved over the course of her first draft.

According to Robinson’s analysis of the notebooks, Percy “contributed at least 4,000 to 5,000 words to this 72,000-word novel” (Robinson 25). Robinson is careful to clarify his opinion that Percy should not be considered a co-author or major collaborator: “Despite the number of Percy’s words, the novel was conceived and mainly written by Mary Shelley, as attested not only by others in their circle… but by the nature of the manuscript evidence in the surviving pages of the Draft” (25). This argument opposes to the androcentric opinions of critics such as James Rieger, who find ways to credit Percy Shelley for his wife’s writing, interpreted by Jacqueline Foertsch as “Rieger’s claims of Percy’s strong hand and Mary’s corresponding weaker talent” (Foertsch 702). Robinson instead suggests that Mary’s capacity and willingness to learn allowed her to adopt incorporate Percy’s initial editorial suggestions into her later writing style. Furthermore, he recognizes Mary’s autonomy as the author, even as a protégé of her more experienced spouse; Robinson resists the tendency to discuss the collaboration of the Shelleys as Mary imitating her husband’s writing, as others sometime do.

While Robinson downplays Percy’s role in the writing of *Frankenstein*, he maintains that Percy was a minor collaborator. Robinson’s opinion is that “most but not all of Percy Shelley’s changes to Mary Shelley’s text in the Draft are for the better” (26). Robinson identifies numerous instances of Percy suggesting a revision that, when incorporated into the Fair Copy, affected meaningful aspects of the novel, such as themes or plot-points. For example: in the earliest draft of Volume II Chapter 10, Mary had Victor accompany Henry to England at his father’s suggestion; Percy proposed Mary re-write the section so that the idea to travel originates from

Victor. Although this may not seem like a significant change, Robinson rightly points out that this shift in character motivation makes Victor “the one to determine his own destiny” (Robinson 28). Robinson acknowledges that some of Percy’s style-based interventions may detract from Mary’s original draft, most notably tonal shifts to “Mary’s youthful voice,” (26) caused by “removing the colloquial tone of her prose—prose that might have been more in keeping with the character speaking” (26). Similarly, Anne K Mellor suggests that Percy’s more formal Latinate tone has less influence than Mary’s more direct colloquial phrases. Foertsch sums up Mellor’s argument nicely, as “Percy’s suggestions… misdirected the meaning or over-elaborated the style of Mary’s work” (Foertsch 703). Mellor argues that Mary’s “phrasings were often more graceful than her husband’s revised versions” (Mellor 161) and that “he introduced into the text his own philosophical and political opinions,” (162) citing as an example the original vitalist suggestions of “the existence of a sacred animating principle” (162) in Mary’s manuscript, which Percy replaced with language closer to his own mechanist philosophy. The fault in Mellor’s assessment of the *Frankenstein* manuscripts is her failure to acknowledge Mary’s agency as the author; Mellor’s arguments assume that Mary was unable to reject her husband’s suggestions. This seems unlikely, as Robinson has noted that Mary did not include all of Percy’s suggestions when she wrote her Fair Copy (Robinson 28).

While the extent of Percy’s contribution is still up for debate, he was inarguably key to *Frankenstein*’s creation. Percy was responsible for penning the Preface, as discussed earlier; he also made “some substantial changes … to the Draft when he wrote out the last twelve-and-three-quarter pages of the Fair Copy” (Robinson 28). In addition to his literary contribution, Percy also supported Mary through encouraging her to pursue writing; in the Introduction to the 1831 edition of *Frankenstein,* Mary states that she initially intended to write *Frankenstein* as “a

short tale," (Shelley ed. Butler 197) but changed her mind at the encouragement of Percy, who she states "urged [her] to develope [sic] the idea at greater length" (197). As well, it was Percy who found a publisher for the novel (Robinson 24). Percy had the social and professional connections necessary to get the novel printed; this is perhaps the most significant contribution Percy made to *Frankenstein*—being a conduit to Mary's genius.

Frankenstein: A Tale of Two Texts

While Percy's contributions to *Frankenstein* ended with his death in 1822 (Johnson xviii), he continued to influence the development of *Frankenstein* indirectly. The second edition of *Frankenstein* came out in 1831: nine years after the death of Percy, and eight years after Peake's play adaptation and the 1823 reprint of *Frankenstein*. Mary was in financial need at the time, largely because she was the sole breadwinner for herself and her son; Butler comments "She had little income except what she could earn, and her best chances of earning related directly or indirectly to *Frankenstein*" (l). As she needed the book to sell well, many of the revisions likely are her attempts to cater to the presumed market, or self-imposed censorship. The scandals surrounding William Lawrence's *Lectures on Physiology, Zoology and the Natural History of Man* are particularly of note, as Butler discusses in her comparison of the 1818 and 1831 editions of *Frankenstein*. Another influence on Shelley's revisions was the play adaptations that had popularized—and to an extent, interpreted, *Frankenstein*: Peake's 1823 play adaptation *Presumption; or, the Fate of Frankenstein*, and to a lesser degree, H. M. Milner's *The Daemon of Switzerland*, performed shortly after. Several *Frankenstein* scholars have compared the 1818 and 1831 editions of *Frankenstein*, identifying the changes made to the 1831 edition and

discussing the context of the revisions; discussing the findings of these scholars demonstrates the relationship between popular texts and public opinion.

There are various differences between the 1818 and 1831 text; some of Shelley's revisions are stylistic in nature, while others are more significant alterations to the story's plot, characters and themes. There are also structural changes separate from the narrative: the later edition of the novel is split into two volumes instead of three, and there is the addition of Shelley's Introduction. The most substantial revisions appear in the first few chapters of *Frankenstein*, which Butler describes as "the most crudely written part of the 1818 text" (Butler 198). Such revisions include: the modification of Victor's family; changes to Victor's early life, particularly his education; and, general revisions that "amplif[y]" the narrative (198). Butler suggests that the latter revisions "enhance the book," (198) both "[b]y the standards of early Victorian taste" (198) as well as the standards of today. Although the second volume of *Frankenstein* (second and third volume in the 1818 text) contains fewer revisions than the first volume, it does contain revisions with narrative significance, because there are modifications to themes and characters throughout the novel; for example, passages in Volume II are amended to alter the characteristics of Elizabeth and Henry to be less controversial.

The first volume of the 1831 edition contains extensive revisions of Victor's early life. Mary Shelley modified the characteristics of Victor's family members, including altering Elizabeth's origins and improving the health of Alphonse and Ernest (Butler 200). As discussed previously, Mary revised Victor's family in the 1831 text to remove the suggestion of aristocratic incest and to remove the family's culpability for educating Victor: "the family's ignorance of science is now stressed, so that the young boy is left to his own devices" (Butler 198). Butler suggests that this revision characterizes the family as blameless and Victor's "involvement with

Renaissance science or magic becomes a childish enthusiasm" (198). Throughout the revised edition of *Frankenstein*, the narrative frames Victor's tragic downfall as him falling victim to the seduction of "arcane magic under the name of natural science" (199); this reading vindicates *Frankenstein* of criticizing Christianity or science, instead laying blame to a vague arcane evil masquerading as "science." Victor's education at the beginning of the novel, and his scientific pursuits throughout the story, become less scientific in the 1831 text, as the language denotes the supernatural and fantastic, rather than the practical and mundane. Mellor notes, "The most striking thematic differences between the two published versions of the novel concern the role of fate, the degree of Frankenstein's responsibility for his actions, the representation of nature, the role of Clerval, and the representation of the family" (160); these are all changes that, to varying degrees, make the novel less severe, less politically charged, and generally less controversial. While Victor in the 1818 text "is morally responsible for his acts," (165) the revised Victor is "the pawn of forces beyond his knowledge or control" (165). The shift in Victor's character in the 1831 text is one of many revisions that "soften" (Butler 198) aspects of *Frankenstein*. Victor becomes more likeable—this includes the addition of "an explicitly religious conscience" (199). Similar revisions "soften" Victor's father Alphonse and the arctic explorer Walton (198); these male intellectuals are "made more sympathetic and admirable" (198) in the revised text.

The 1818 text tackled controversial topics in science, religion, philosophy and politics. Conversely, the 1831 text is much less daring. Foertsch points to the weakening of Elizabeth's and Henry's characters in the 1831 text as evidence that the 1818 text is the bolder of the two. Foertsch points to a passage in Volume III Chapter I (Volume II Chapter XVIII in the 1831 text) as an example of the silencing of Elizabeth's feminist voice: in the 1818 text, Elizabeth expresses regret "that she had not the same opportunities of enlarging her experience" (Shelley ed. Butler

127); whereas in the 1831 text, Elizabeth bids Victor "a tearful silent farewell" (Shelley ed. Butler 224). While the revisions of Elizabeth remove feminist themes from *Frankenstein*, the revisions of Henry add a pro-colonialism theme. Butler suggests "several remarks in the 1818 [text], and the Safie theme, imply disapproval of colonialism" (200); in the 1831 text, Mary contradicts these anti-colonial elements with an endorsement of colonialism through the character Henry Clerval. In Volume III Chapter II (Volume II Chapter XIX in the 1831 text), Shelley adds the following passage, modifying Clerval's storyline: "[h]is design was to visit India, in the belief that he had in his knowledge of its various languages, and in the views he had taken of its society, the means of materially assisting the progress of European colonization and trade. In Britain only could he further the execution of his plan" (Shelley ed. Butler 225). Clerval's new motivation for visiting Britain contradicts his established character; Foertsch describes Clerval's new "profit-oriented plans" (699) as an example of the "tremendous discrepancies in his character" (699) that reflect "the growing conservatism of his revising author" (699). This "conservatism," so prevalent in the rewriting of Elizabeth and Henry, is at the root of virtually all the significant thematic changes in *Frankenstein*.

What motivated Shelley's conservatism? Mellor acknowledges this shift in Shelley's writing, stating "Mary Shelley's philosophical views changed radically" (164) between 1818 and 1831. Mellor attributes the change to "the pessimism" (164) Shelley developed because of her numerous personal tragedies, most notably the deaths of her children, "the betrayals of Byron and Jane Williams," (164)[21] and the constant stress of her precarious financial circumstances. Butler also attributes life events to the changes she notes in the 1831 edition of *Frankenstein*; however, Butler reads the situation as intentional self-censorship rather than a changed outlook. Butler ties Shelley's revisions to "probable external pressure" to remove potentially controversial

content. Shelley needed a successful second edition of *Frankenstein*: "She had little income except what she could earn, and her best chances of earning related directly or indirectly to *Frankenstein*" (l). Butler thus views the revisions in the 1831 edition as Shelley "submit[ing] to respectable middle-class opinion" (li); furthermore, she identifies two key texts as Shelley's sources for this public opinion: William Lawrence's book *Lectures on Physiology, Zoology and the Natural History of Man* and Richard Brinsley Peake's play *Presumption: or, the Fate of Frankenstein*. The first text was a source of inspiration for the 1818 version of *Frankenstein*,[22] while the second is a play inspired by the 1818 version of *Frankenstein*. The public's response to both works in the 1820s likely informed the revisions Shelley made to her novel, as evidenced by the numerous parallels, and the unlikelihood of Shelley pursuing controversy.

The 21-year-old newlywed Mary Shelley had much more creative freedom publishing anonymously in 1818 than she did as a widowed middle-aged single parent in 1831, publicly known as the daughter of William Godwin, widow of Percy Shelley, and author of *Frankenstein*. In addition to the changes in Mary's personal life, the political climate in England had changed radically, particularly regarding evolution, or the vitalism versus materialism debate. The *Quarterly Review* harshly denounced Lawrence's book in 1819, calling on the Royal College of Surgeons to dismiss Lawrence unless he withdrew his materialist arguments; the college suspended Lawrence and would only reinstate him if he withdrew his book in entirety (Butler xlvii). The 1820s saw increased religious fervor, as those belonging to—or acting on behalf of—the theological party launched a "campaign to regulate 'family reading'" (xlviii); offending authors could have their works suppressed, or their claims of copyright denied by the court, as Lawrence experienced in 1822, and Lord Byron in 1822 (*Cain*) and again in 1823 (*Don Juan*) (xlviii). Mary and Percy were in Italy during this time period and therefore were unaware of

"how frightened moderate English public opinion had been by the violence, radical extremism, and press licence manifest in 1819-20" (xlix). Then, in 1823, Peake's *Presumption* sparked renewed interest in the novel, as well as inspiring further dramatizations; however, as I have already discussed, these adaptations reinterpret Shelley's story.

Peake's play was a sensation. Despite the fact that "the London Society for the Prevention of Vice… protested at the play's supposed immorality" (Forry 16) following initial productions,[23] the play—and the various other *Frankenstein* "melodramatizations" (24) that followed—were generally more conservative than the novel. Peake and Milner's plays injected a "cautionary reading" (Butler l) of *Frankenstein*; these and later *Frankenstein* adaptations "punished Frankenstein for his self-willed transgressions, while they presented the Creature as the incarnation of Frankenstein's vice" (Forry 24). Critical reviews of Peake's play were mixed (14); however, two *London Morning Post* reviews praised the play, one of which elevates the play as superior to the novel due to the novel's (potentially) offensive content: "In the novel the rigid moralist may feel himself constantly offended… But in the Drama… Nothing but what can please, astonish, and delight is there suffered to appear" ("Reviews and Reactions" 393). *Presumption* differs from the novel in three key ways, which have been repeated in the majority of *Frankenstein* adaptations: first is the introduction of a servant character; the second is that "The stage Monster does not speak, and has the mind of an infant" (Butler xlix); lastly, Peake added Victor's "religious remorse" (xlix) and "simplified Frankenstein's character into a parable of hubristic damnation" (Forry 14). Shelley incorporated the latter—to a degree—into her own revisions for the second edition of *Frankenstein*, as a part of her softening of Victor. The play also introduced various narrative and thematic elements that became part of the Composite Frankenstein, such as the dramatic and elaborate creation scene, and the doppelgänger theme.

Peake's *Presumption* inspired two other significant play adaptations of *Frankenstein*: Jean-Toussaint Merle and Béraud Antony's *Le monstre et le magician* (1826), and Henry Milner's *The Man and the Monster* (1826) (14). Together, these "three gothic melodramas" popularized the Frankenstein story, establishing the tone "not only of subsequent dramatizations, but of popular conceptions of the novel" (14). All three plays predate the second edition of *Frankenstein*. Upon returning to England, Mary Shelley attended a performance of *Presumption*. Based on Mary's letters, she was generally "impressed as well as amused" (Wolfson 326) with the play, despite the numerous changes; impressed enough "to incorporate a reference to Frankenstein's presumption into the 1831 edition" (Macdonald and Scherf 37). Wolfson identifies this reference in *Frankenstein*: "when she revised her novel, a memory of Peake's elaborate title prompted her to add these sentences to Victor's strained calm at Justine's trial… 'the existence of the living monument of presumption and rash ignorance which I had let loose upon the world'" (326). Forry notes that Shelley felt the story had flaws: "of a performance she attended the day before her twenty-sixth birthday, she wrote (I, 378): 'The story is not well managed'" (15).[24] Regardless of Shelley's feelings towards Peake's "compressed, reorganized, sensationalized staging of her novel" (Wolfson 323), Shelley was forced to respond to the play's success; the play not only popularized the story of *Frankenstein*, but a morality tale reading of the story *Frankenstein*. The plays opened the door for conservatives, who "[interpreted] the plot of *Frankenstein* as they wished to, and knew that their readers agreed" (Butler l). Shelley approached her second edition revisions knowing that the political climate had changed, and that the general public expected and/or wanted her story to be an explicitly moral tale of hubris and damnation.

Before Mary had returned to England, she had edited a copy of her 1818 text, which she left with a friend in Italy. These revisions were "almost all stylistic improvements" (Butler xlix). As Butler notes, following the events of the early 1820s, "now merely literary corrections would not be enough" (xlix). This early revised version of *Frankenstein* is evidence that Mary did not intend to revise the themes and characters in her novel until after she returned to England, which supports the theory that social pressures influenced Shelley to censor her work. Another possibility, not discussed by Butler, is that Mary was reverting to themes and language she had originally wanted to include in the novel, but removed because of Percy's pressure; perhaps Mary only felt able to include certain elements in *Frankenstein* after Percy's death. In her discussion of the original draft and Percy's revisions, Mellor notes "throughout her manuscript Mary assumes the existence of a sacred animating principle, call it Nature or Life or God, which *Frankenstein* usurps at his peril. But Percy… [added] his atheistic concept of a universe mechanistically determined by necessity or power" (162). Despite Butler's strong arguments for the text being originally tied to William Lawrence's mechanist philosophy, Mellor's observation suggests that Mary's personal philosophy was at least partially vitalist; thus, there were likely multiple sources influencing the addition of Victor's religious remorse to the 1831 edition of *Frankenstein*.

Victor's religious remorse in the 1831 text was no doubt a reaction, at least to some extent, to the play adaptations' rewriting of *Frankenstein* as a cautionary tale of hubris and damnation; likewise, the religious language suggesting Victor is at the whim of fate (e.g. "it seems to me as if this almost miraculous change of inclination and will was the immediate suggestion of the guardian angel of my life" [Shelley ed. Butler 211]; "Chance—or rather the evil influence, the Angel of Destruction, which asserted omnipotent sway over me" [213]) is

very likely related to Shelley's personal tragedies. The growing conservatism of English society meant Shelley had to remove controversial content from her novel, for the sake of a well-received, and therefore profitable, second edition; furthermore, not doing so could have resulted in Shelley losing protection of copyright due to perceived hostility towards religion, as happened to Lawrence and Lord Byron. All these factors are possible, if not probable, explanations for the 1831 revisions; none are the sole explanation, and likely there are other contributing factors scholars are unaware of.

The 1831 revisions demonstrate a relationship between the public and texts created for public consumption. Shelley wrote, then revised, *Frankenstein* for the sake of being published and sold. *Frankenstein* then went through cycles of remediation and reconstitution: *Frankenstein*, the fluid text, that is simultaneously a short ghost story, an anonymously-penned novel with feminist and materialist undertones, a morally-ambiguous story shockingly written by a woman (with the assistance of a man, of course), and a revised tale of hubris and damnation, first inspired by an infamous trip to Geneva. Among conflicting origins, conflicting presentations, conflicting interpretations, the only constant has been the sometimes-contradictory guiding hand of Mary Shelley. Perhaps this is why the name "Mary Shelley" is so frequently invoked within the Composite Frankenstein—in this ever-expanding network of texts, the novel is fixed as the starting point for this modern myth, and she is its maker. As the author, Shelley represents a vague notion of "origin" that maintains this ambiguity of what the first *Frankenstein* was, contributing to *Frankenstein*'s mythic quality.

The novel *Frankenstein* demonstrates the collaborative nature of writing; Mary interacted with various individuals and texts while *Frankenstein* was conceived, developed, written, and published. Authorship is an inherently social process; Mary's notebooks and manuscripts provide

evidence of her collaboration with Percy, and an analysis of her writing reveals probable influences of other texts, such as her mother's writing, or the work of William Lawrence. The evolution of *Frankenstein* from "dream" to novel is laid out in Mary's notes, and her personal journals provide a glimpse at the inner-workings of the mind that conceived this fascinating tale of a man-made creature. The cultural fascination with this authorship process is responsible for books like Robinson's *The Original Frankenstein*, or Butler's edition of the 1818 text; adding to the cultural fascination is the sheer romantic appeal of a teenage girl imagining such a horrific story while in the company of the notorious Lord Byron. Mary Shelley is, thus, appealing as an icon both in the realm of academia, as well as the popular imagination.

"First to destroy it, then recreate it. There you have his mad dream"

– Doctor Waldman, on Henry Frankenstein's experiments, (*Frankenstein* [1931])

Fathering *Frankenstein*: the Creation of James Whale's Classic Film Monster(s)

In David J. Skal's introduction to "The *Frankenstein* Files: How Hollywood Made a Monster," he describes *Frankenstein* (1931) not as "Hollywood's" monster, or even "Universal's" monster—he refers to the film as James Whale's creation, arguing that "James Whale's *Frankenstein*… [is] one of the most influential and imitated motion pictures of all time". Skal presents *Frankenstein* (1931) as the epitome of *Frankenstein* stories, praising it for creating "one of the 20th-century's most instantly-recognizable cultural icons": the Frankenstein's monster. This chapter addresses James Whale's role as the "author" of the contemporary concept of "Frankenstein." The 1931 film added to and altered the content of Shelley's *Frankenstein*, and many of these deviations remain dominant in the current Composite Frankenstein. Whale's sequel *The Bride of Frankenstein* introduced further icons to the mythology, such as the image of the female monster and the monster's stilted speech patterns. Although I argue that Whale is an "author" of the Composite Frankenstein, I also posit that authorship is a social process: *Frankenstein* (1931) and *The Bride of Frankenstein* are products of collaboration and circumstance. Furthermore, James Whale's denotation as an author is a social process; he performs the "author function" that Foucault describes: a social construction, providing a lens through which to view the text. *Frankenstein* (1931) thus becomes "James Whale's *Frankenstein*," distinct from "Mary Shelley's" *Frankenstein*.

Whale was one of the first horror film directors. He helped establish the basic formula and look for the gothic horror genre; his cultural significance as a pioneer of the much-loved genre led to the development of his author status. Whale directed four well-received horror films

between 1931 and 1935: in addition to directing *Frankenstein* and *The Bride of Frankenstein*, he also directed the horror films *The Old Dark House* (1932) and *The Invisible Man* (1933). *The Bride of Frankenstein* was the last horror film Whale directed, and film historians frequently cite it as his crowning achievement ("She's Alive! Creating The Bride of Frankenstein"). In his biography of James Whale, James Curtis comments that when the director approached *Frankenstein* (1931), "Lacking an established formula, he proceeded to invent one of his own" (2); Robin Wood summarizes this formula in his influential essay "The American Nightmare: Horror in the 70s" as "normality is threatened by the Monster" (31). Whale set the visual tone that would become standard for gothic horror. His influence as a director is evident in the work of contemporary horror directors Tim Burton and Guillermo del Toro, who incorporate elements of gothic horror aesthetic into their own recognizable styles. Tim Burton directed and produced an homage to the classic *Frankenstein* films, *Frankenweenie* (2012), and while del Toro has yet to make a *Frankenstein* adaptation of his own, he has referenced *Frankenstein* (1931) as a source of inspiration (Douglas).

Whale's contribution to the gothic horror tradition informs, if not defines, how contemporary popular culture depicts the Frankenstein story. Conversely, *Frankenstein* (1931) defines how James Whale in contemporary popular culture; although it was neither his most critically-acclaimed film,[25] nor his "biggest production" (*Show Boat* [1936] was), *Frankenstein* (1931) is, without a doubt, Whale's most well-known film. After retiring from the film business in the 1940s, James Whale faded from public memory. The British film magazine "*Sight and Sound* was the only magazine to publish an appreciation" (Curtis 5) after his death in 1957. Television syndication of Whale's horror films in the late 1950s and in the 1960s revived his

work in public memory, and today, fans and critics recognize Whale as a pioneer of the gothic horror film genre, with *Frankenstein* (1931) being his most recognizable film.

Like Mary Shelley, James Whale is a romanticized icon associated with his most iconic work. Popular culture frames Whale as an outsider in Hollywood because of his sexual orientation, transforming "James Whale" into an emblem of the "otherness" inherent to horror films. This transformation is evident in the film *Gods and Monsters* (1998)—a critically-acclaimed film that presents a fictionalized portrayal of Whale as the lonely and forgotten "father of Frankenstein." This characterization is problematic: it reduces Whale's history considerably, defining him by his sexual orientation and effacing his other cinematic accomplishments. While Whale is an icon for the gay community, and there have been many excellent queer readings of his work (eg. Harry M. Benshoff's *Monsters in the Closet: Homosexuality and the Horror Film* [1997]), the evidence James Curtis presents in his biography on James Whale suggests the director's feelings of otherness stemmed not from shame of his sexual orientation, but shame of his working-class upbringing. The depiction of Whale as a gay hero, rejected by Hollywood for his uncompromising lifestyle, is romantic but ultimately inaccurate, and it echoes the transformation of Mary Shelley—*Frankenstein*'s other parent—as a symbol within the Composite Frankenstein, discussed in the previous chapter.

It is a rare honour for a film director to be the subject of a popular film; James Whale received such an honour with *Gods and Monsters*. *Gods and Monsters* demonstrates the significance of Whale's contribution to film—particularly *Frankenstein* (1931) and *The Bride of Frankenstein*, which appear throughout film—as well as the transformation of Whale into an iconic figure. The title of the film is a reference to a line uttered by the memorable Dr. Pretorius in *The Bride of Frankenstein*, who toasts Dr. Frankenstein "to a new world of gods and

monsters." The film is an adaptation of a novel by Christopher Bram, originally published under a different title: *Father of Frankenstein* (in an interesting manifestation of intertextual relations, since the success of *Gods and Monsters* [1998], Bram's novel is now published under the same title as the film). The implication of this original title is clear: James Whale is responsible for creating "Frankenstein"—not *Frankenstein* the novel, obviously, but also not just *Frankenstein* the film; rather, Whale created "Frankenstein" the cultural icon. Just four years after the release of the disappointing *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* (1994), this film entered the public sphere, presenting Whale as a co-parent, and daring audience members to rethink *Frankenstein*'s authorial credit.

Father of Frankenstein and *Gods and Monsters* are not quite metafictions, adaptation or biography, but do contain characteristics of each genre. *Gods and Monsters* imagines James Whale's final days; like the prologue in *The Bride of Frankenstein*, *Gods and Monsters* blends fact and fiction. Real events from James Whale's life provide the underlying structure of a fictional story, depicting an unlikely friendship between the self-proclaimed "queen" and hyper-masculine gardener Clayton Boone. Boone—an invention of Bram's—is a narrative device that provides audiences a glimpse into Whale's personal life. *Gods and Monsters* culminates in Whale's suicide—a factual event— which serves as the film's dénouement. *Gods and Monsters* is a unique addition to the *Frankenstein* (1931) legacy. The film presents James Whale as a character to a broad audience that is unlikely to be familiar with his films or even recognize his name; thus, it informs its audience who he is, and why he is worth remembering. This echoes James Whale's inclusion of Mary Shelley in The Bride of Frankenstein prologue, discussed in the previous chapter: like the prologue, *Gods and Monsters* distorts its subject, reducing Whale to a lonely and stereotypical camp queen, discriminated against because of his sexual orientation.

Curtis' biography indicates that this was not the case—or at the very least, it is an oversimplification of a complicated man during a tumultuous historical period. The film further popularizes the reading of *Frankenstein* (1931) as inspired by Whale's experience as a marginalized individual and therefore influences how its audience approaches and reads the *Frankenstein* narrative.

The depiction of Whale in *Gods and Monsters* is accurate in many ways, despite the fictional plot; the film's suggestion that the success of *Frankenstein* (1931) and *The Bride of Frankenstein* haunted Whale is corroborated by film historians in both documentaries "The *Frankenstein* Files: How Hollywood Made a Monster" and "She's Alive! Creating *The Bride of Frankenstein*".[26] Whale biographer Curtis affirms Whale's dislike of being associated with the horror genre, particularly due to what Curtis refers to as the "ghettoization of the genre," evident as early as the year *The Bride of Frankenstein* came out (Curtis 250).[27] The film presents Whale as a dapper, dry-humoured, gay man dealing with the ailments of old age. Actor Ian McKellan portrays Whale, and his performance earned an academy award nomination. McKellan portrays a very likable character, charming who is struggling with his past. Whale fought in the first World War, and his trauma of trench warfare is a prominent theme in this film. This version of Whale also struggles with his working-class upbringing, feeling ashamed when he accidentally reveals to Boon that he grew up very poor. These are all qualities that Curtis's biography corroborates, particularly Whale's deep shame of growing up in an industrial working-class environment.

Gods and Monsters also characterizes Whale as flamboyant, flirting with much younger men and referring to himself as a queen. The film heavily implies that his alienation from Hollywood occurred because he was unable to "play nice." In reality, Whale left Hollywood for reasons unrelated to his lifestyle. In the years following *Bride*, Whale struggled under the new

leadership at Universal Studios, as well as the increasing constraints—and authority—of the Production Code Administration, a censorship body formed in 1934 and led by lay Catholic[28] Joseph I. Breen (Black *Hollywood* 2). Once Universal Studio's "most important director," (Curtis 284) by 1940, after "his seventh consecutive disaster, Whale found work almost impossible to get" (343). Whale's career as a director, as significant as it was, spanned only a decade. Whale fell into relative obscurity when he stopped directing films; as Curtis points out, "in the days before video tape and repertory theaters…without sporadic reissues, most films remained a dim memory" (Curtis 2). *Gods and Monsters* perpetuates the characterization of Whale as a gay-rights champion who directed films inspired by the persecution he felt as a gay man. Curtis' biography suggests that Whale did feel marginalized throughout his life, but that was because of his upbringing, not his sexuality; furthermore, Curtis describes Whale as an incredibly private individual, whose departure from Hollywood was due to a string of box-office disappointments, unrelated to his sexual orientation.

Whale has been (retrospectively) typecast as a horror director; however, only four of the 23 films listed in his IMDb page are horror films. The fact that popular culture remembers Whale as horror director is further evidence of his author-figure status; the romanticized icon of this author precludes works that do not conform to the social narrative. Just as Mary Shelley is forever the young woman who wrote *Frankenstein*, Whale is forever the gay director whose horror films challenge heteronormativity. Whale's horror films attract more critical attention than his other films partially because of their unique appeal as early examples of the horror genre. Some of his films are culturally irrelevant because they were flops. There were also circumstances unrelated to his films' artistic merits that determined which films maintain cultural relevancy and which films are forgotten. For example, MGM bought the rights to *Show Boat*

(1936) in 1938 intending to remake the film ("Showboat [1951]" *Turner Classic Movies)*, resulting in a lack of re-releases of Whale's version and the film's subsequent fading from public memory. Whale's war film *Journey's End* (1930) was a critical success, but the epic *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930) was released just two months after the former's debut and completely over-shadowed Whale's film (Curtis 105).

During his lifetime, Whale was remembered by two noteworthy horror fans: Curtis Harrington[29] and Gavin Lambert. Harrington, who would go on to become an important director himself for New Queer Cinema, was a film student when he sought out Whale in 1947. Gavin Lambert met Whale in 1952. Lambert worked with the British Film Institute (BFI) and planned a BFI tribute to Whale after learning the director was in England for the first time in 14 years (Curtis 371); at this time, "Whale had been inactive for over a decade… there were glimmers of recognition, but the films were still under-appreciated by students of the cinema" (2). This tribute—the only one Whale experienced in his lifetime—hinted at the recognition James Whale would eventually receive. It is worth noting here that, in addition to both being fans of horror films, Harrington and Lambert were also both homosexual men. The shared sexual orientation is not mere coincidence: James Whale's work has significance for the queer community, not only because Whale lived an openly gay lifestyle during a time when society persecuted homosexuality, but also because his horror films challenge heteronormativity. As Whale was a key figure in establishing the conventions of the newly-developing horror genre, his influence—particularly his queer themes—remain present in the genre today.

In the previous section, I discussed how scholars dismissed Mary Shelley until feminist scholarship reclaimed *Frankenstein* as literature. In another parallel to his co-parent, Whale was similarly "reclaimed" through scholarship: Andrew Sarris included Whale in his "seminal study

The American Cinema" (Curtis 388) in 1968, and by the 1980s, *Frankenstein* (1931) became the subject of "revisionist criticism [that] found a gay subtext to the isolation and scorn endured by the monster in *Frankenstein*" (143). The queer readings facilitated by Whale's horror films are a major factor in their lasting relevance, as those films reverberated with film critics such as Harrington, Lambert, and Wood. Whale's *Frankenstein* films were also successful because he found ways to honour the themes in Shelley's original novel, while also adding new elements to the story which captured the public imagination. As Linda Hutcheon notes, "we experience adaptation (*as adaptations*) as palimpsests through our memory of other works that resonate through repetition with variance" (italics in original 8). Whale's adaptations of *Frankenstein* launched a "fictional franchise" that has left an indelible mark on popular culture; although contemporary audiences may not have seen Whale's films, his work is no doubt familiar, as images from *Frankenstein* (1931) and *The Bride of Frankenstein* have been imitated countless times. This is partially due to Whale's films visually-realizing events from Shelley's novel; Hutcheon argues such adaptations cause the audience's "imaginations [to be] permanently colonized by the visual and aural world of the films" (122). Whale's *Frankenstein* adaptations thus demonstrate how isolated scenes or moments from a text can be intertextually kept alive in popular culture through allusion and/or repetition; both *Frankenstein*'s (1931) creation scene and the scene with little Maria are familiar in popular culture, despite *Frankenstein* (1931) being a special interest classic film.

Whale's films may not be as exciting or terrifying as contemporary Hollywood films, but they are rich in visual and rhetorical symbolism. These *Frankenstein* films are also rich with cultural and historical significance. In the following section, I discuss this cultural and historical significance as it relates to the films' authorship; I describe the social factors that influenced the

creation of *Frankenstein* (1931) and *The Bride of Frankenstein*, including a brief history of Hollywood censorship in the early 20th century. Given the context of their creation, *Frankenstein* (1931) and *The Bride of Frankenstein* provide a lens for the politics of early 20th-century American filmmaking, and how such politics—particularly profit-motivated censorship—shaped the foundational texts of Hollywood.

“Quite a good scene, isn’t it?”: The Production and Reception of Whale’s Iconic Films

The origins of *Frankenstein* (1931) is Hollywood lore: James Whale famously described *Frankenstein* (1931) in a *New York Times* interview as the film project with “the strongest meat” (Horton 18). Whale’s *Frankenstein* legacy includes the legend that he personally chose *Frankenstein* (1931) over every other available film project at Universal. The legend presumes the property drew Whale’s attention because he found an affinity with the content of Shelley’s *Frankenstein* as a marginalized individual. This legend feeds into the public image of Whale as an early champion for homosexuality: even reputable sources perpetuate this story, such as the film historians in *The Frankenstein Files*, as well as Horton’s “Cultographies” book, *Frankenstein*. Whale’s comment also implies that he recognized that Webling’s play had potential for film. In reality, Whale did not choose to direct *Frankenstein*— the head of production at Universal Studios, Carl Laemmle Jr., “forced” the project onto Whale (Curtis 127). This legend—disseminated as evidence of Whale’s genius, or “gay agenda,” or both—is a falsehood, fabricated by Whale himself; regardless, the story holds “truth” as an intertextual narrative associated with the Composite Frankenstein. The legend contributes to the image of James Whale the icon, which differs from James Whale the man.

James Whale is an icon within the Composite Frankenstein: this is the figure of the "auteur" filmmaker, the man behind the monster, as immortalized in *Gods and Monsters*. In this section, I investigate James Whale the man, the circumstances that lead to *Frankenstein*'s (1931) production, and the various individuals who collaborated with Whale during the film's production. In the previous chapter, I discussed the influence of Mary Shelley's social circumstances on her authorship of *Frankenstein*; Whale's social circumstances further influenced his own "authorship" because, as mentioned in the introduction, mainstream filmmaking is a much more collaborative process than writing. My purpose in making this comparison is not to diminish the artistic feats both authors accomplished, but to describe how authorship is a social function. Whale's access to the medium depended on numerous factors outside of his control because filmmaking at this level requires the support of an entire system; for example, *Frankenstein* (1931) was *assigned* to Whale, because he was a new employee of Universal without the "star power" required to be able to pick and choose his own projects. Universal acquired the property because of financial, rather than artistic, motivations: their adaptation of Webling's other gothic play adaptation, *Dracula*, was extremely profitable. The Composite Frankenstein perpetuates many myths about the authors of *Frankenstein*, Mary Shelley and James Whale—historical exaggerations and inaccuracies that romanticize authorship as an individual's creative achievement. In the previous chapter, I discussed the various parties who contributed to *Frankenstein* through their influence and support; in this section, I destabilize the myths surrounding James Whale the auteur to reveal the various individuals who, and circumstances that, shaped *Frankenstein* and *The Bride of Frankenstein (1931)*.

In Chapter 1, I described how auteur theory glorifies directors as artists, disregarding the many roles required for Hollywood filmmaking; however, not only does auteur theory dismiss

other creatives who contribute to filmmaking, it also effaces Hollywood's function as an entrepreneurial industry. Hollywood is profit-motivated—this was especially true during the early years of Hollywood history, when the American justice system deemed the industry a business, not an art form (for more on this, see Appendix B). The business mechanisms at work in Hollywood shape the production of films and determine what projects are made, when, and by whom. Film authorship is thus a social process; however, the concept of film authorship (i.e. the auteur) is also a social *function*: films are "authored" through the collaboration of various artists and the social circumstances surrounding production, and the author-figure/auteur (in this case James Whale) provides audiences with a hermeneutic for the film. To return to Linda Hutcheon's argument that adaptations are created in an "interpretive context that is ideological, social, historical, cultural, personal, and aesthetic," (108) Whale's creative choices for adapting *Frankenstein* into *Frankenstein* (1931) and *The Bride of Frankenstein* reflect both the social context of those films and Whale's own personal context. What audiences know about the social and personal context of Whale's *Frankenstein* films—largely informed by the aforementioned myths—creates the James Whale icon that represents the films' authorship, thereby instructing audiences how to view the films.

The Composite Frankenstein frames Whale's first *Frankenstein* adaptation as a personal venture for Whale; in reality, numerous circumstances led to *Frankenstein*'s (1931) production. *Frankenstein* (1931) was, initially, the passion project of Carl Laemmle Jr., a Hollywood executive who personally spearheaded the production of both *Dracula* (1931) and *Frankenstein* (1931). Junior—"known to be a sucker for foreign directors" (Curtis 116)—offered Whale a short-term contract to direct *Waterloo Bridge* (1931), the "artistic and… commercial success" (126) of which prompted Junior to offer Whale a five-year contract at Universal (126).

Frankenstein (1931) was the first project Whale directed under this extended contract. The film was Junior's follow-up to *Dracula* (1931), which had been a "surprising success" (127) for Universal Studios. Junior had to fight to get *Frankenstein* (1931) made. Junior's peers at Universal were justifiably doubtful that the "fluke" success of *Dracula* (1931) was repeatable. True, the studio had released successful "proto-horror" films in the past: Carl Laemmle Sr.'s *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1923) and *The Phantom of the Opera* (1925); however, these were big-budget pictures based on proven source material.[30] Universal optioned a popular play adaptation of a "relatively modern book," (Curtis 127)[31] for *Dracula* (1931), whereas Peggy Webling's *Frankenstein* play "had not been as great a success as *Dracula*," (127) and the hundred-year old novel *Frankenstein* was neither recent nor considered classic literature. Junior thus made two significant contributions to *Frankenstein* (1931): he brought Whale into the Universal family in the first place, and he convinced the skeptics—including Whale himself—that the property was worth producing.

Junior was not the only "sucker for foreign directors" in Hollywood in the early 1930s; it was an emerging practice in Hollywood in the late 1920s and into the 1930s to import theatre talent, often from England. After the release of the first "talkie" feature film, *The Jazz Singer* (1927), the industry very quickly shifted toward making exclusively sound films (Doherty 32). People with experience in delivering dialogue—such as stage actors, theatre directors and even radio personalities—were helpful assets during this transition. *Frankenstein* (1931) and *The Bride of Frankenstein* stars Colin Clive, Elsa Lanchester, and Ernest Thesinger all hailed from the same English theatre scene as Whale. Whale himself first entered America to direct the Broadway production of *Journey's End*, a war-time play he had directed in London's West End. The American production drew the attention of Hollywood executives, and Whale was hired to

"function as an uncredited 'dialogue director' on one or more productions" (Curtis 76) for Paramount. While at Paramount, Whale worked on just one film, *The Love Doctor* (1929), before his contract lapsed (81); he then found work on an independent project, directing dialogue sequences in Howard Hugh's *Hell's Angels* (1930), which was in the process of being converted from a silent film to a sound film (84). During this time, Whale knew *Journey's End* (the play he had come to America to direct) was being adapted for film, and was "preparing to [direct] *Journey's End* long before the job was officially his" (91). Whale cast Colin Clive to reprise his role as Stanhope for the third time; thus *Journey's End* (1930) would be Whale's film directorial debut as well as Colin Clive's introduction to Hollywood.

Although Whale's time at Paramount was brief, it did introduce him to the film industry, as well as a handsome young film executive, David Lewis. David Lewis is an indirect contributor to the Composite Frankenstein. Lewis was Whale's life partner for over 20 years. Curtis' description of Whale's career trajectory suggests that Lewis was an invaluable resource for Whale, helping his foreign partner navigate the politics of Hollywood. Whale depended on Lewis for professional and artistic advice; it was Lewis who fatefully said to Whale, after reading the novel *Frankenstein*, "I was sorry for the goddamn monster" (quoted in Curtis 133). This element of the novel was missing from the *Frankenstein* play adaptations and the screenplay drafts Whale was working with (133); thus, Lewis' observation influenced Whale's directorial decision to characterize the creature as a tragic figure—one of the most culturally significant aspects of the film.

David Lewis made another significant contribution to *Frankenstein* (1931): he recommended Karloff for the part of the monster, having seen Karloff in the play *The Criminal Code* a year earlier (Curtis 137). Whale's "discovery" of Boris Karloff, who replaced Bela

Lugosi for the role, is yet another legend born from *Frankenstein* (1931): the legend states that Whale noticed Karloff during a lunch period in the studio's commissary and, inspired by Karloff's facial structure and head shape, immediately Whale approached him to discuss *Frankenstein* (1931). Horton's Cultographies book and the documentary *The Frankenstein Files* both recall this story as a key event in *Frankenstein*'s (1931) origins. According to Curtis, however, this chance encounter narrative—which Karloff himself disseminated—is unlikely true based on the timeline (Whale and Karloff's previous studio work did not overlap). Curtis suggests David Lewis' account of events is more plausible: that Lewis recommended Karloff for the part and a formal meeting at the studio was arranged. In interviews, Whale encouraged the more romantic story of discovering Karloff (138), which perhaps explains why the former version persists, even among historians. The meeting led to the veteran bit-player—according to Horton, by 1931 Karloff had acted in over 70 movies— landing his breakout role at the age of 43, "long past the point of a big break" (19). Karloff would star in numerous beloved classic horror films following his portrayal of the monster, including *The Old Dark House* (1932), *The Mummy* (1932), *The Mask of Fu Manchu* (1932), *The Black Cat* (1934), and *The Raven* (1935); thus, Whale's relationship to the burgeoning horror genre includes, inadvertently, the contributions of the icon he discovered.

Another legend surrounding *Frankenstein*'s (1931) production is Robert Florey's contributions to, and influence on, the screenplay. In Chapter 1, I describe *Frankenstein*'s (1931) unusually complicated writing credits; this reflects a complicated history of adaptation and rewrites. The "story" in *Frankenstein* (1931) developed through the contribution of various individuals, each new screenwriter working with the previous draft. The studio purchased Peggy Webling's play adaptation of *Frankenstein* and assigned John L Balderston to adapt her play for

film. The *Frankenstein* (1931) script had already gone through numerous revisions and treatments by the time Junior assigned Whale to the project, replacing Robert Florey. Before being removed from the project, Florey had collaborated on the script with screenwriter Garrett Fort and filmed approximately 20 minutes of footage, (Curtis 131) including test reels of Bela Lugosi in makeup as the monster ("The Frankenstein Files"). Florey's influence on *Frankenstein* (1931) went uncredited, but has become Hollywood lore among film historians ("The *Frankenstein* Files"). Fort's contract ended a few weeks after Florey's departure (Curtis 135). Universal hired screenwriter Francis Edwards Faragoh to work with Whale (134). Whale supervised the subsequent script rewrites, collaborating with Faragoh (135), and likely wrote the scene in which Frankenstein and Waldman debate ethics and science (the scene is not included in the shooting script ["The Frankenstein Files"]). While Whale was not one of the main writers, he supervised the last period of script rewrites and therefore helped shape the final screenplay; because of his auteur status within the Composite Frankenstein, Whale's contribution to the developing *Frankenstein*'s (1931) screenplay is heavily emphasized within popular culture.

The monster's design is another complicated element of *Frankenstein* (1931), worthy of attention, given the subsequent proliferation of this icon within the Composite Frankenstein: in popular culture, the design is often attributed to James Whale, despite evidence to the contrary. The makeup that appears in *Frankenstein* exaggerates Karloff's natural features, and, as mentioned above, the "Karloff discovery" myth states that Karloff's bone structure inspired Whale, who then cast him for the part.[32] The exact origin of the monster design is still a debate: Universal's makeup artist Jack Pierce is most likely the creator, although popular lore states the design was a collaboration between Pierce and Whale; this is another myth reinforced by *Gods and Monsters*, in which James Whale claims ownership of the design. Biographer Curtis

suggests that a collaboration was likely, as he sees similarities between the general look and behavior of the monster and a character Whale performed as in a 1928 production of *A Man with Red Hair* (144-5). Whale directed Karloff's performance, and thus is at least partially responsible for the behavior associated with the monster icon. Karloff's unique facial structure was the underlying basis of the creature's design, so Karloff too contributed to the monster's design, in his own way. Film historians often note that makeup enhanced his existing facial features, allowing him to emote through the makeup, whereas other actors in the role wore such heavy makeup that they were unable to act effectively. Karloff's mute performance as the Creature (as he preferred to call it) evokes sympathy for the wretched being; this sympathetic quality is a unique aspect of *Frankenstein* (1931), and has become a key element of the Composite Frankenstein—the legacy of which I will discuss in more detail later in this chapter. The creature's design in *Frankenstein* is an example of collaboration, regardless of the exact origin; the origin of the familiar square-headed icon reflects various artists involved in *Frankenstein*'s (1931) production.

Linda Hutcheon notes that adaptations are often coloured by interactions between directors and actors that lead to script changes (83); Whale's casting choices influenced the shooting scripts for *Frankenstein* (1931) and *The Bride of Frankenstein*— another example of creative collaboration between Whale and the workers under his direction. The most significant example of such collaboration is Whale's request to screenwriter Francis Edward Faragoh, Garrett Fort's replacement following the end of his contract (Curtis 134), to "model the part of Henry Frankenstein with Clive's neurotic charisma in mind" (135). Whale had worked closely with Clive on the original theatric and film versions of *Journey's End* (1930), in which Clive played the unhinged veteran Stanhope (135). The "neurotic charisma" Curtis references is a

significant aspect of the original *Frankenstein* (1931) because it inspired the now-ubiquitous mad scientist trope. Similarly, Whale cast Elsa Lanchester to play both the parts of Mary Shelley and the female monster. According to Lanchester, Whale wanted someone to play both parts to show that “frustration and wrath in a woman often lay under an excess of sweetness and light” (quoted in Curtis 245). This also explains the choice to make the female monster beautiful, another decision of Whale’s: according to biographer Curtis, Whale provided sketches to Pierce of the female monster, which he modelled after the then-popular figure, Nefertiti (243).[33]

There is evidence to support Whale’s “auteur” status for *Frankenstein* (1931). *Frankenstein* (1931) undeniably reflects James Whale’s creative vision: his artistic abilities and “strong design sense” (Horton 20) allowed him to “sketch on paper his ideas for sets and costumes” (20). Whale’s background as a visual artist is a key component of his romanticized public image and is frequently cited by film historians praising his work (i.e. this fact is mentioned in both audio commentaries to *Frankenstein* [1931], in *The Frankenstein Files* and in Horton’s book).[34] *Gods and Monsters* characterizes Whale primarily as an artist, defining him by his love of drawing, his homosexuality, and his trauma from his time in the military—the biographical film seldom shows Whale directing his famous films. *Gods and Monsters* downplays Whale’s directorial efforts and instead romanticizes him as a tortured artist, implying he approached his films like a canvass, “painting” the scenes. In reality, lacking industry knowledge, Whale’s “vision” for *Frankenstein* (1931) was, by necessity, a collaboration with others involved in the production. Whale relied on his crew’s technical expertise because he had none. As the author figure of *Frankenstein* (1931), Whale is credited for visual elements of the film that he could not have possibly executed because of his lack of experience. For example, in “The Blasted Tree,” Lester D. Friedman describes aspects of *Frankenstein* (1931) in a manner

that credits Whale for technical accomplishments, such as “Whale positions the camera for low angle shots” (62) and “Whale’s sophistication is conspicuously evident in the intricate patterns of light and dark, both natural and man-made, that he weaves throughout the film” (60). Whale did not physically operate the cameras and lights used to film *Frankenstein* (1931); however, because Whale functions as the “author” of *Frankenstein* (1931), the technical crew is viewed as an extension of his artistry.

Whale worked closely with cinematographer Arthur Edeson, “a veteran of 18 years in the picture business,” (Curtis 134) to create the visual aesthetic of *Frankenstein* (1931). Edeson thus made a significant contribution to the look of *Frankenstein* (1931)—and by association, the classic gothic horror genre as a whole—yet he is virtually unknown in popular culture, despite receiving three Oscar nominations and being responsible for the visuals of incredibly important films, such as *The Maltese Falcon* (1941) and *Casablanca* (1942) (“Arthur Edeson”). Having worked with Edeson previously on *Waterloo Bridge* (1931), Whale knew “Edeson wasn’t afraid to move the camera” (135), despite such shots being “seldom seen in the early days of talkies” (134). Some of the most memorable scenes in *Frankenstein* (1931) feature moving shots that follow the action of the characters, rather than dividing the action with multiple cuts. For example, the camera follows the monster following his introduction, the shot panning as he slowly walks across the room, building the tension of the moment. The climactic showdown between the monster and Dr. Frankenstein in the windmill also contains a number of moving shots that similarly build tension, while also establishing the tight confines of the room, enhancing the scene’s claustrophobic feel. Fans of *Frankenstein* (1931) commonly praise Whale for the revolutionary visuals in the film; while the film reflects Whale’s direction, and therefore artistic vision, the actual shots are Edeson’s handiwork.

The general aesthetic of *Frankenstein* (1931) exhibits the influence of the expressionist artistic movement of the early 20th century, particularly German expressionist films. This influence is more sophisticated than Whale simply imitating a style; yet, often when film historians reference the expressionist influences, they limit the discussion to the technical aesthetics of the film, such as Whale's appropriation of high contrast lighting techniques.[35] German expressionism was more than a style—it was a philosophy born from collective traumatic experience. Expressionism was a counter-culture movement, challenging the authority at a time of social crisis:

> In early-twentieth-century art, the tendency to depict not objective reality but subjective emotions and personal responses to subjects and events was called *expressionism*, which emerged as an organized movement in Germany before World War I. Color, drawing, and proportion were often exaggerated or distorted, and symbolic content was very important. Line and color were often pronounced; color and value contrasts were intensified. Tactile properties were achieved through thick paint, loose brushwork, and bold contour drawing…
>
> Revolting against conventional aesthetic forms and cultural norms, expressionists felt a deep sense of social crisis. Many German expressionists rejected authority… They felt deep empathy for the poor and social outcasts, who were frequent subjects of their work. (Meggs and Purvis 264-5)

Expressionist theatre had a major influence on the "prototype horror movies produced in Europe during the 1920s" ("The Frankenstein Files"). Like other expressionists, Whale demonstrated sympathy for social outcasts. The monster in *Frankenstein* (1931) is incredibly sympathetic. Whale invites the audience to not only fear, but to feel empathy for the wretched being, who he

"viewed as a blameless, childlike creature" (Horton 21). In addition to the crooked lines and exaggerated proportions of the sets, there are several scenes in the film which contain close-up shots of Karloff expressing great fear, anguish or longing; these shots demonstrate the creature's vulnerability and innocence and invite the audience to sympathize with his plight, despite being the film's antagonist.

While the influence of German expressionism is obvious in the visual style used in *Frankenstein* (1931), *how* this imagery became a part of the film is not as clear. The original director, French-born Robert Florey, was a fan of expressionist cinema and incorporated many of its elements into his own "avant-garde" (Horton 16) style of filmmaking; film historians often refer to Florey's collaboration with screenwriter Garrett Fort (as well as his early test reels) as the origin of the expressionism in *Frankenstein* (1931): this occurs in the *Frankenstein* (1931) documentary "The Frankenstein Files," as well as Robert Horton's "Cultographies" book *Frankenstein*. While it is plausible that Whale embraced the expressionist themes in the Florey/Fort screenplay draft—for example, Garrett Fort explicitly refers to the expressionist film *Metropolis* in this screenplay (Curtis 149)—Whale also drew from German expressionist films directly. According to Curtis, "Whale had seen a number of foreign and experimental films in London," (149) before he began work on *Frankenstein* (1931). In interviews for Curtis' biography, Jack Latham, a life-long friend of Whale's, "recalled him watching [*The Cabinet of Dr.*] *Caligari* 'over and over'" (149), and both Latham and Lambert commented on Whale's admiration of director Paul Leni, the director behind German Expressionist proto-horror silent films *The Cat and the Canary* (1927) and *The Man Who Laughs* (1928). Whale himself referenced *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920) in a note he sent to Colin Clive describing *Frankenstein* (1931): "I want the picture to be a very modern, materialistic treatment of this

medieval story – something of *Doctor Caligari*, something of Edgar Allan Poe, and of course a good deal of us" (Horton 20-1). The similarities between *Caligari* (192) and *Frankenstein* (1931) are unmistakable, especially the distorted proportions of the backgrounds in both films. The "jumbled angles and harsh shadows" (149) found throughout both films disorient the viewer, creating a surreal space that reflects the emotional instability felt by the characters. These German Expressionist films employ shadows to a great effect, which Whale imitates, and omits, in some of *Frankenstein*'s (1931) most memorable scenes; the laboratory, with its uneven lines and severe lighting, is a stark contrast to the brightly-lit idyllic cottage where the creature stumbles upon poor Maria, amplifying the tragedy of the moment.

Whale approached *Frankenstein* (1931) with an artistic mindset—there is plenty of substance in the visuals of this film. Whale possessed a knowledge of art, and his inspirations are identifiable in the film. For example, the scene in which Elizabeth "is draped across the bed [is] an allusion to the famous 1781 painting 'The Nightmare,' by Henry Fuseli" (Horton 79). Whale's aforementioned note to Clive illustrates the director's desire to blend different artistic modes. The title cards "blend German Expressionist design with an Art Deco look not uncommon in the early 1930s" (47). "Edgar Allan Poe" is a reference to the gothic imagery; Whale included such gothic elements in *Frankenstein* (1931), such as Frankenstein's massive castle laboratory, and the lightning strikes that illuminate the creation scene. Whale blended aspects of previous adaptations of *Frankenstein* (1931) with source material; for example, the 1910 silent film also featured a monster with a square-head. Whale adopts the "longstanding *doppelganger* tradition in *Frankenstein* properties, from Mary Shelley onward" (44) for the climax of the film. The mise-en-scène of the windmill sequence, which juxtaposes the monster and Henry staring at each other through the mill's massive cogs, creates a "mirror image" ("The

Frankenstein Files") effect, and reinforces the theme of Frankenstein and his creation being reflections of each other.

The financial success of *Frankenstein* (1931) established Universal Studio's trajectory as a brand; this new trajectory led to numerous *Frankenstein* (1931) sequels that would redefine the *Frankenstein* narrative in popular culture. Whale completed his film with a modest budget ("The Frankenstein Files"), and *Frankenstein* (1931) would become the film that proved Junior's instincts had been correct: horror films *could* make money, even with such a limited budget. This was a vital factor for the struggling studio, which in the 1930s, simply could not afford to invest in big-budget productions. Unlike war-pictures or musicals, horror films could (and to a certain extent, still can) be made well for a relatively modest investment: according to Horton, "sets could be shrouded in shadow and thus cheapness disguised; monsters were more important than highly-paid stars; and European technicians were already adept at the [expressionist] style" (66-7). *Dracula* (1931) and *Frankenstein* (1931) demonstrate the efficacy of skilled makeup, thoughtful direction, and clever set-dressing—none of which are particularly costly. The 1931 film was a financial success during a difficult economic period in America. Thomas Doherty includes a list of top-earning films from 1930–1934 in his book *Pre-code Hollywood*; of the 65 titles listed, *Frankenstein* (1931) is the only Universal film (371-2). The success of *Frankenstein* (1931) was key in Universal's survival during the Great Depression: it was, according to Christopher Frayling, a "low-budget film that founded a genre [and] created a corporate image for a studio" (Frayling). *Frankenstein* (1931), and *Dracula* (1931), established the "Universal house style under Carl Laemmle, Jr." (Horton 67); thus, *Frankenstein* (1931) had a direct influence on the brand development of Universal studios, which became the leading producer of monster movies (Frayling) and thereby shaped the legacy of the gothic horror genre.

During this period of Hollywood history, studios survived by specializing; as individual studios refined their production techniques, they also "used and refined that expertise to develop… [the] genres" (319) that they were associated with. Following *Frankenstein* (1931), Universal Studios refined the horror film genre through films such as *The Mummy*, *The Invisible Man* and *The Black Cat*. Robert Horton argues that *Frankenstein* (1931) epitomizes the Laemmles' filmmaking, suggesting Whale's films contains all the qualities consistent with classic Universal horror:

> *Frankenstein* is also an expression of its studio, of the industrial *gestalt* of Universal in the 1930s. It connects with other Universal pictures as a work of art direction, casting, and tendency toward the lurid. The Mittel-European setting was consistent with the Laemmle family's frequent focus on their former homeland, and the crew is stocked with European talents. (66)

Frankenstein (1931) expresses the studio that produced it, but also predates the studio's public image as a horror studio; *Frankenstein* (1931) determined the studio's creative direction, providing a blueprint for future properties. Even today, Universal associates itself with these classic monster films, especially *Frankenstein* (1931) (Appendix A: figure 8). Universal's specialization in these horror films was a financial decision more than an artistic one; if *Frankenstein* (1931) had not profited so highly, it would have been followed by the higher-budgeted *The Invisible Man* or *The Bride of Frankenstein*.

The financial success of *Frankenstein* (1931) drove Universal to produce a sequel, with Whale being the obvious choice to direct. According to Curtis, the studio started pressuring Whale to direct the sequel shortly after *Frankenstein*'s (1931) original run, but he resisted until felt he no longer had a choice; as with *Frankenstein* (1931), Universal assigned Whale to direct

The Bride of Frankenstein rather than Whale choosing the project out of his own volition. Whale was given a larger budget and the unwavering support of Carl Laemmle Jr. while making *The Bride of Frankenstein*. Critically and artistically, the film was a success; in his audio commentary on the restored Blu-ray version, Scott MacQueen describes *The Bride of Frankenstein* as a "perfect" horror film, and Horton comments that *The Bride of Frankenstein* "is generally ranked as one of the greatest horror movies" (31). The original reviews for *The Bride of Frankenstein* were favorable—Curtis even states that "the reviews were among the best of Whale's career" (250). Despite these positive reviews, and record-breaking ticket sales, *The Bride of Frankenstein* failed to match the overall box-office success of its predecessor. Curtis attributes *The Bride of Frankenstein*'s lower box office numbers to a "ghettoization" (250) of the genre; *The Bride of Frankenstein* was an expertly-crafted high style film in a genre associated with artless thrills. Whale did not direct another horror film after *Bride*, likely because of the film's disappointing box office performance. Film historians have largely ignored his later films (apart from attributing *The Road Back* [1937] to the death of his career) because he is immortalized in popular culture as a horror director.

Frankenstein (1931) was a ground-breaking phenomenon. *Frankenstein* (1931) and *Dracula* (1931) were so well-regarded, in fact, that "desperate exhibitors in Los Angeles and Seattle" (Horton 32) paired the films as a horrific double feature to combat lagging box office sales in 1938. The plan worked and a revival of the "1931 terror twins" (34) "swept the world" (32); the renewed interest in the gothic horror genre led to the production of *Son of Frankenstein* (1939)— the franchise's transition from stylized "specials" (253) into campy lower-budget "programmers" (253). The renewed interest in horror films was not enough to offset the "ghettoization" of horror films, and it had become "wholly impractical to produce them in the

high style" of Whale's *Frankenstein* films (251). Beginning with *Son of Frankenstein* (1939), the portrayal of Frankenstein's monster "began a quick degeneration into the mute, lumbering cliché he is today" (Curtis 252).[36] It was during the "terror twin" revival that Universal produced the influential werewolf film *The Wolf Man* (1941), popularizing the Lon Chaney Jr. depiction. In the 1940s, Universal studio produced numerous cross-over films, like *Frankenstein Meets the Wolfman* (1943) and *House of Dracula* (1945), to capitalize on the popularity of the Universal monsters. Today, these are the monster archetypes most often associated with classic Hollywood and most often grouped together in monster ensemble media.

The monster ensemble films *Hotel Transylvania* (2012) and *Frankenweenie* feature female Frankenstein monsters, based on the iconic female monster introduced in Whale's 1935 sequel *The Bride of Frankenstein*. This character is present in some contemporary monster ensemble films, despite being absent from the classic Universal monster cross-over films (presumably, the moderate success of *The Bride of Frankenstein* discouraged her inclusion in those Universal cross-overs). Whale's female monster has long delicate features; mute, sharp, and bird-like behaviour; and a tower of black hair that features two white streaks. The female monster may not be as iconic as her male counterpart, but she is a recognizable icon. In the documentary "She's Alive! Creating *The Bride of Frankenstein*," film historian Bob Madison notes "the figure of the bride is so iconic that … she keeps cropping up in all sorts of films," citing the children's film *Small Soldiers* (1998) and the horror film *Bride of Chucky* (1998) as examples. The bride's hair is particularly iconic (T.V tropes lists this characteristic as the "skunk stripe" trope, and credits Elsa Lanchester as "the iconic example" ["Skunk Stripe"]).[37] For example, in *Young Frankenstein* (1974) the character Elizabeth's hair becomes streaked with white after a vigorous evening of sexual activity with the Creature, which foreshadows her

becoming the Creature's bride in the film's conclusion. The female dog in *Frankenweenie* develops white streaks in her "beehive" fur after being shocked by the reanimated "Frankenstein" dog Sparky. Whale did not invent the concept of a person's hair turning white due to trauma or supernatural forces, but his film certainly did popularize this image for female characters in the horror genre.[38]

A "triumph of creativity over budget restrictions," (67) *Frankenstein* (1931) was generally considered far more frightening than its predecessor *Dracula* (1931) (25); however, some of the "grislier" (24) aspects of *Frankenstein* (1931) were toned down for areas with regional censorship boards who requested certain scenes and dialogue be cut from the film. Furthermore, the studio itself intervened prior to the film's release and added content to soften the film; the studio added the prologue and epilogue, neither of which involved Whale. The prologue consists of an actor warning the audience about the film's shocking content. The epilogue changes the end of the film by showing Frankenstein recuperating; the previous ending implies he died in the flames. The studio added both scenes out of concern for how "Great Depression audiences" ("The Frankenstein Files") would respond to the film.

Both *Frankenstein* (1931) and *The Bride of Frankenstein* experienced censorship; however, the films premiered during two distinct periods of Hollywood history and, as a result, had different relationships with censorship. Universal produced *Frankenstein* (1931) during the pre-code era of Hollywood, while the sequel's production occurred in the early years of the censorship organization the Production Code Administration (PCA). The studio sent recuts of *Frankenstein* (1931) to regions with censorship boards, effectively showing slightly different films in different regions; *The Bride of Frankenstein* escaped regional censorship, but only because the PCA interfered throughout the film's production. The amount of studio interference

and censorship on *Frankenstein* (1931) and *The Bride of Frankenstein* is so significant that I am dedicating a separate section to discuss the additions and eliminations mandated by the studio and censorship boards. It would be a considerable oversight to not include censorship in the broader discussion of social authorship; however, this is a large topic to be addressing in the limited space of this chapter. In the following section I present is a condensed account of Hollywood's history of self-imposed censorship, followed by a brief review of censorship's effect on *Frankenstein* (1931) and *The Bride of Frankenstein*.[39]

"It may shock you": Censored Content in *Frankenstein* and *The Bride of Frankenstein*

The production of *Frankenstein* (1931) and *The Bride of Frankenstein* occurred during a pivotal decade for the history of American cinema. What began as a technological novelty in the late 19th century transitioned into storytelling during the nickelodeon era, and in the late 1920s the introduction of sound revolutionized the medium (Doherty 4–5). As mentioned in the previous section, the industry changed very rapidly once "talkies" became standard. The 1930s were a time of experimentation in Hollywood, as new techniques developed, genres shaped, and policies formed. The experiences of the Great Depression had changed the American public, challenging concepts of American Exceptionalism, and influencing the kinds of stories Americans wanted to tell and wanted to hear (16). This change in American tastes alarmed various social groups concerned with American morality. The 1930s saw increased self-regulation in Hollywood, with the introduction of the Production Code, a list of guidelines for filmmakers, in 1930 and the Production Code Administration (PCA), a third-party enforcer of the Production Code, in 1934; thus, the decade that generated classic Hollywood horror also generated classic Hollywood censorship.

In his book *Pre-code Hollywood: Sex, Immorality, and Insurrection in American Cinema 1930 – 1934,* Thomas Doherty states that concerned citizens believed the movie industry "warranted regulation and prohibition as a public health measure" (6); concerned Americans—many of them Christian—believed the film medium was highly influential, especially on morals, and felt that the public needed protection from this potentially corruptive force. "Watchdog" groups mixing religion and politics formed to protest the industry, calling for government measures to protect the public from the corrupting influence of films glorifying sinful and/or illegal behavior; because of these groups, virtually every Hollywood film released in the 1930s until the mid 1950s adhered to a code of moral guidelines. This code targeted content that is still regulated in film and television today, such as nudity and profanity; however, it also censored ideas and narratives deemed contrary to American values. For example, films from this period present moral stories in which "good" always triumphs over "evil"— this includes *Frankenstein* (1931) and *The Bride of Frankenstein*. Film scholar Robin Wood interprets such moral lessons as normality and the status quo being left unchallenged by the film's end. The Production Code guidelines thus functioned as a socialization tool to reinforce dominant ideology. As a representation of public interest, the Code reflects what was considered socially-acceptable during this period of American history; it demonstrates the social nature of authorship by revealing how social expectations and pressures determine what stories are told, how the stories are told, and how the public consumes and receives those stories.

The Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA), a trade association the major Hollywood studios formed in 1922 to protect their financial interests (Doherty 8), created both the Production Code and the Production Code Administration; while voluntarily imposing censorship on one's own industry seems contrary to self-interest—especially because

the studio system was an oligopoly—the decision was financially motivated. As Gregory D. Black argues in his book *Hollywood Censored* "The goal of the studios, and the corporations that controlled them, was profit, not art" (5). Scandals could harm ticket sales. It was in the studios' best interests to appease the concerned citizens, providing they could do so while also producing exciting content the general public would pay to see. Studio executives and producers often interfered with the production of films in attempts to limit risk and maximize public appeal. Like the novel they are based on, the content in *Frankenstein* (1931) and *The Bride of Frankenstein* reflects (their) public's concerns, especially the themes addressing religious belief. In the previous chapter, I discuss how the Lawrence scandal and Peake's *Presumption* pressured Mary Shelley to increase the religious language in her second edition of *Frankenstein*; similarly, the studio pressured James Whale to remove potentially "blasphemous" content and to add an explicitly moral lesson to both *Frankenstein* (1931) and *The Bride of Frankenstein*. Furthermore, Joseph Breen—head of the PCA—interfered with *The Bride of Frankenstein*, demanding Whale change parts of the script that Breen found offensive and/or blasphemous. *Frankenstein* (1931) and *The Bride of Frankenstein* reflect how pervasively social pressures dictated film production during this period in Hollywood history; not only did censorship boards review the films, but Universal pre-emptively altered and reframed the very plots of these films to meet social expectation and avoid scandal.

Frankenstein's (1931) production occurred during Hollywood's "pre-code" stage: the brief window of time when Hollywood studios produced sound films without the strict regulation of the Production Code Administration. In lieu of a central censorship body, many areas had regional censorship boards that reviewed films prior to release. Censored cuts of *Frankenstein* (1931) played in "at least a dozen states" (Curtis 156) with

the Kansa State Board of Censors originally requesting "31 separate deletions" (MPPDA intervention convinced the censors to compromise with 10 deletions) (156). Internationally, the film was "drastically cut in most markets," (Horton 25) and some areas of Massachusetts, (Curtis 156) Italy, Sweden, Belfast, Australia, and Czechoslovakia (158) banned the film outright. In addition to the cuts mandated by censors, studio executives ordered alterations prior to *Frankenstein*'s (1931) wide release as an attempt to prevent offending segments of the population. *The Bride of Frankenstein*'s (1935) production began after the MPPDA established the PCA, and the regulatory organization interfered with the film throughout its production. Below I outline various changes these parties made to *Frankenstein* (1931) and *The Bride of Frankenstein*; the list is not exhaustive, but includes the most significant examples and demonstrates how social pressures and expectations helped "author" these texts.

The most common subjects censored during the first half of the 20th century were sexual content, violence, and blasphemy; not surprisingly, the changes made to *Frankenstein* (1931) concerned violent images and potentially blasphemous sentiments. The first two censored sequences I will be examining are two scenes in *Frankenstein* (1931) identified by censors as too graphic ("The Frankenstein Files"). It is worth noting that in both scenes, the creature is the victim of violence, not the perpetrator; thus, the removal of these scenes undercuts the film's sympathetic treatment of the Creature. The first sequence is Fritz waving a torch in the face of the terrified monster; the second is the close-up of Dr. Waldman stabbing a hypodermic needle into the monster's back. It may seem strange to contemporary audiences that censors objected to such seemingly tame images, especially relative to other disturbing content in the film, such as the image of Fritz hanging or the grave-robbing scene; however, for audiences in 1931, the

close-up shots of violent acts were shocking and, to some, offensive. The Production Code specifically prohibited violence; however, there was nothing in the code against gruesome content, such as "psychic turmoil and social disorientation" (Doherty 297). In 1931, censors were more concerned with the harm of sex and violence than already-dead corpses.

The first censored sequence comprises four shots. The first shot is a cut on action of the monster falling backward, literally being forced into a corner by Fritz. He cowers, partially hidden behind a wooden bench, and crying out in a primal and fearful manner. The shot's framing is straight on, and it is lit with high contrast lighting; it is medium distance, allowing the audience to view details, such as the rope binding the creature's hands. The creature's face is illuminated, accentuating his horrified facial expressions. As the torch enters the frame from the right, the creature raises his hand in a defensive position and stares at his attacker. The second shot is from the creature's perspective: a close-up view of Fritz's face from a low angle. The low angle perspective forms a power relationship between the two characters, with Fritz occupying the dominant position and the creature occupying the subordinate. The torch occupies the foreground, as Fritz bobs back and forth behind it, snarling with menacing glee. The third shot is Fritz's perspective, looking down on the creature. Again, the shot is a medium shot of the creature; however, from this angle, the monster is directly facing the camera, and his expression of fear is much more vivid. The shot is disturbing, even by today's standards, because it depicts in amplified detail flames violently shoved toward the face of a terrified and defenseless being. The final shot returns to the previous long shot used for the majority of the scene. The second removed image occurs just a few minutes later, and is a single shot less than a second long. After the creature lunges at Frankenstein, Dr. Waldman rushes the creature from behind to sedate him. The film cuts to a close up of the doctor's hand as he jabs a hypodermic needle into the

creature's back. Some (not all) censors felt the image was too much for squeamish audiences, and as a result, some regions requested the clip be cut.

The removing of these images has a subtle effect on the overall film; the images contribute to the tragic quality of the Frankenstein's monster, and without them, the character is more two-dimensional. In both cases, the action frames the creature as an innocent victim of violence. The torture scene in particular evokes the audience's sympathy for the creature through expressionist imagery. While plenty of other shots depict Fritz torturing the creature, these are long shots, which visually and emotionally distance the viewer from the subject. The close nature of the censored shots invite the audience to humanize the monster through self-recognition in a way the other shots do not. The creature's subsequent murder of Fritz is less justifiable without the audience having experienced the monster's terror at the hands of the maniacal assistant. Similarly, removing the image of the needle puncturing the Creature's back removes (or at least diminishes) the character's motivation for lashing out at Dr. Frankenstein and Dr. Waldman.

The next example of censored material from *Frankenstein* (1931) also contains violent content; however, this scene depicts the monster committing a violent act, rather than being the victim of violence. This is also the most infamous scene from *Frankenstein* (1931): the creature's murder of the little girl Maria. The scene was controversial even in production; Karloff tried to convince Whale to change the scene, because he felt that "the monster would set Maria down gently on the water," rather than violently throwing her in (Horton 21). The argument was long enough to delay filming, according to James Whale biographer James Curtis (145). In his commentary, film historian Rudy Behlmer corroborates that Boris Karloff had opposed this scene. Whale insisted on filming the scene as written because "it's all part of the *ritual*" (qtd. in Horton 21). Like the previous censored content, this scene also contributes to the

tragic character of the Frankenstein's monster; however, the tragedy here lies in the creature's inability to understand the world around him, and the consequences of that lack of understanding.

The scene with Maria occurs in the film's second act, after the film establishes the monster as a dangerous being. In the previous scene, the creature murders Dr. Waldman (although arguably in self-defense) then flees. Following Waldman's death is a jarring cut to a bright, sunny scene of outdoor public celebration. This image fades into a grove of trees that the creature is stumbling through. The location and cinematography of this scene contrasts the rest of the film. The setting is a cottage by a lake; it is the only part of *Frankenstein* (1931) not filmed on the studio lot or immediate surrounding area (Behlmer). Bright low-contrast fill lighting replicates a bright sunny day. There are none of the expressionist crooked shadows and strange angles here. The creature approaches Maria, who—unlike every other character in the film—is not afraid of him. As they play together, the creature smiles. It is a wide child-like grin and is the only time the monster expresses happiness in the film. She hands him flowers, and he examines her hands, clearly pleased with the girl's beauty. Whale frames the shot beautifully and intimately—the creature and the girl in the centre, framed by tree branches, water in the background, and grass. She tells him she can "make a boat" and throws her flowers into the water, where they float. The creature imitates her, and gasps excitedly. Beaming, he stares at his empty hands, then reaches for the little girl off-screen, staring innocently and nodding excitedly. This is where the censors cut the scene.

The shots removed by censors are visually similar to the rest of the shots in the lake scene: medium and medium long shots with low-contrast lighting. In the first shot, at 50:21, the creature bends forward and scoops up the girl. She protests, "No, you're hurting me! No!"

Ignoring her, the creature tosses her into the lake and—unlike the flowers—she sinks.[40] Realizing the girl is gone, the creature falls to his knees and reaches out toward the water, moaning hopelessly. The next shot is a cut on action, as the monster quickly stands and turns to face the camera. Anguish and confusion mark the creature's face. He stumbles towards the camera, with his arms at his side clumsily, heading off-screen. The final shot reveals him disoriented and panicked, becoming tangled in a tree as he attempts to flee the area.

The torture scene is disturbing; the lake scene is tragic. It is clear the creature did not intend to hurt, let alone kill, the little girl. Upon realizing the ramifications of his actions, the creature is horrified. The sequence was removed by regional censors in 1931, and in 1938 the PCA removed the image from the master negative; "the sequence was shortened and its ending removed, so that it now left off before the Monster picked up Maria and threw her in the lake" (Horton 24). This edit actually makes the scene more sinister: the next time the girl is seen, she is a limp corpse being carried by her father. The audience hears the monster is responsible, but not how or why. As Horton argues, by removing the creature's reaction, the edit "robbed the Monster of a significant character beat—his response to her sinking is not malevolence, but abjectness—and it actually made the implications of Maria's lifeless body in a subsequent scene more disturbing" (24). The scene became infamous. As Curtis describes in his biography on Whale:

> Prints were shipped with the infamous drowning scene intact, but the shot of the monster actually throwing the girl in the water was eliminated in Massachusetts, New York, and Pennsylvania, as well as in many cities and towns. When the film was reissued in 1938, the scene was removed from the negative under the stricter dictates of the

> Production Code Administration and remained lost until 1985, when its partial restoration was made possible by the discovery of a trim from the original release. (Curtis 157)

The scenes that emphasize the creature's emotional state are crucial for developing it as a full character. The removal of these three sequences in *Frankenstein* (1931) changes how the creature comes across and interrupts Whale's "ritual."

The most infamous scene from *Frankenstein* (1931) contains violence; the most infamous line contains blasphemy. The line, "In the name of God! Now I know what it feels like to be God!" is delivered by Frankenstein in a nervous fit of glee, during the most iconic scene in the film: the moment the creature moves. The moment is significant and communicates the complex theme of presumption which is at the core of the film, the plays, and the novel. Dr. Frankenstein is obsessed with creation in both the novel and the film; yet, his attempt to become a Creator results in tragedy. As I discussed in the previous chapter on Mary Shelley, the novel skirts the question of whether or not the creature has a soul, instead warning against pursuing selfish ambition. The play and 1931 film adaptations of *Frankenstein* reduced the narrative to a warning against "playing God." In the context of the film, Frankenstein's manic claim to "know what it feels like to be God" is false, as the viewer recognizes that this man is not in control (the prologue tells them so). For religious groups, however, even saying "in the name of God" in this context was offensive. The Code explicitly states that "the name of *Jesus Christ* should never be used except in reverence" ("The Motion Picture…"). The Code also prohibits film content that "*throw[s] ridicule* on any religious faith honestly maintained" (italics in original "The Motion Picture…"). The offending line in *Frankenstein* (1931) both evokes the lord's name in vain and also criticizes "divine presumption" (Behlmer). As a result, the studio cut the line for select regional releases in 1931, and in 1938 the PCA required the studio to remove the line

permanently from the master negative. After 1938, all rereleases of the film had the line cut, covered by a crack of lightning ("The Frankenstein Files"): the result is Frankenstein hysterically crying "it's alive!" followed by a crack of thunder. This edited moment is the originator of the cliché (dramatic thunder) that still persists in popular culture today.

Frankenstein's (1931) prologue is another common *Frankenstein* (1931) reference in popular culture; like the thunderclap following Dr. Frankenstein's cry of "it's alive!" the moment is a product of social forces interfering with the film. As previously mentioned, the studio added the prologue out of concern about religious groups. US religious groups have long been a concern of the film industry— it is not a coincidence that a Jesuit priest wrote the Production Code and a Catholic Layman led the PCA for 20 years, claiming he was "doing God's work" (Black *Hollywood* 173). In the case of *Frankenstein* (1931), Universal added the prologue to address aspects of the film that may have been offensive to Christian viewers and to clarify the film's (and therefore Universal's) opinions on these ideas. The film opens to Edward Van Sloan, formally dressed, stepping out from behind a curtain to address the audience directly. Sloan introduces the film, framing it as "the portentous record of Frankenstein: man of science, who sought to create a man in his own image, not reckoning God" (*Frankenstein* [1931]). He finishes by warning the audience that they may find the content shocking, and suggests some may want to leave.

Historians often describe the prologue as both a tactic to increase interest in the film, as well as a genuine attempt to, in the words of Horton, "cover their bets with Catholic authorities who had expressed concerns about hubristic bent" (23); in this way, the prologue echoes Shelley's Introduction, discussed in the previous chapter. Christopher Frayling states in his audio commentary on *Frankenstein* (1931) that the prologue was "partially to tease audiences, partially

to warn" (Frayling), and argues that Universal's executives were genuinely concerned about how the public would receive their film, stating the scene was "added after the previews of *Frankenstein*, as the studios weren't quite sure how to handle it" (Frayling). Not much is known about the specific origins of the prologue; Curtis posits:

> Its wording… implies that Senior Laemmle had ordered its inclusion, and it may have been the result of a compromise reached over the retention of the drowning scene. It is unclear whether Whale directed it, or who, in fact, had written it. It is brief – just a few seconds – and shrewdly worded to imply that refunds would be made at the door without actually saying as much. It also had the effect of ratcheting up the audience's expectations before a single frame of the story unfolded. (155)

Regardless of the motivation behind the prologue's inclusion, the scene frames—and therefore interprets—the following events as a cautionary tale warning against hubris. The short prologue—which may or may not have involved the author-figure Whale—eliminates any moral ambiguity in the film, by accrediting Frankenstein's traumatic experience as the repercussion for not respecting God; thus, this short scene rewrites the film by telling its viewers how to interpret the narrative, similar to Mary Shelley's Introduction in the 1831 edition of *Frankenstein*, which I discussed in the previous chapter.

The studios made another change after the initial previews: concerned by the strong reaction of the preview's audience, Junior "made plans to soften the ending with an epilogue, allowing Henry to survive the fall from the mill" (Curtis 154). The film originally ended with the shot of the windmill burning, which implied the death of both Henry, whose lifeless form falls from the building, and the creature inside; however, "Universal junked [it] when test audiences disapproved" (Horton 80). According to Curtis, the scene was "hurriedly filmed the following

Tuesday” (154). The epilogue shows Henry recuperating in bed, tended to by his fiancé Elizabeth. It was unusual for Hollywood films to have tragic endings in 1931; in an interview regarding the film, Colin Clive—not involved in the epilogue’s filming and unaware of the change—commented (with pride, according to Curtis) how unusual it was for the film’s main character to die (154). Hollywood films during the Golden Age typically ended happily, even when this required making significant plot changes to source material. Such changes were not because of censors, however, but because studio executives thought films with happy endings sold better. For example, when Warner Bros. adapted the Broadway hit *The Glass Menagerie*, they changed the ending to a happy one “not because either the PCA or the Legion objected, but because Warner Bros. believed that an audience of bobby-soxers would not relate” (Black *Catholic*, 108) otherwise. The revision of *The Glass Menagerie* and the changes to *Frankenstein* (1931) are reminders that the industry at this time was a business; protests may have encouraged the studio to alter films, but only because that was the most profitable option. This is especially true for *Frankenstein* (1931)—a hero that lives at the end can star in a sequel.

Colin Clive and Boris Karloff reprised their roles in the 1935 sequel, *The Bride of Frankenstein*. Censors had a more direct involvement in *Bride* (1935) than its predecessor. The PCA supervised the sequel’s production. Joseph Breen reviewed the screenplay drafts, supplying his objections and suggestions. Such objections included inacceptable blasphemous or sexual dialogue—according to Curtis, Breen specifically cautioned against the word “mate,” or any implication that the monster desired a companion for sexual purposes (236). Curtis also states Breen suggested that the sequel should possess a moral lesson by its end (Curtis also relays Whale’s response that the proposed ending, being “blown to smithereens, provided ‘sufficient warning to anybody’” [237]). Film historian MacQueen identifies two further changes made to

the shooting script to meet Breen's approval: Dr. Pretorius' dismissive summation of scripture as "fairy tales" became "bible stories," and a scene in which the creature accidently topples a crucifix became the scene in which he attacks a gravestone (Macqueen). In both cases, Breen ordered the change because he felt the original content was blasphemous.

Unlike its predecessor *Frankenstein* (1931), there are no notorious scenes cut from *The Bride of Frankenstein* by censors; the PCA's involvement in the film's production flagged and removed objectionable content either before filming, or before the film was issued a seal for theatrical release. The cuts made to the film for PCA approval included Mary's line in the prologue, "we are all three infidels, scoffers at all marriage ties, believing only in living fully and freely" and "lingering views of her décolletage" (MacQueen). MacQueen also states that "a shot of Frieda's mother carrying the body was cut." The most significant cut mandated by the PCA was the removal of "an entire sequence of grim comedy in which Dwight Frye murders his uncle and pins the job on the Monster" (Curtis 250). According to Curtis, Breen had expected that, despite being issued a PCA certificate, *The Bride of Frankenstein* would be targeted for cuts by censor boards (250); however, the film "escaped cuts from most state censor boards" (251), with the exception being Ohio. Breen was a minor collaborator for *The Bride of Frankenstein*; the Catholic-layman turned censor demanded changes to the film and his suggestions resulted in new or altered scenes. Furthermore, screenwriters—working under the direction of James Whale and Carl Laemmle Jr.—wrote *The Bride of Frankenstein* with Breen's expectations in mind. According to Curtis' biography, Whale had butted heads with Breen previously over the sexual content of his film *One More River* (1934). Whale supervised the development of the script; it is reasonable to presume that Whale, as well as the film's producers, directed the development of the screenplay into a draft that could pass the PCA's—i.e. Breen's—initial review.

<u>"The End: A Universal Picture"</u>

Not all of the edits made to *The Bride of Frankenstein* prior to its release occurred because of the PCA. In the documentary *She's Alive! Creating The Bride of Frankenstein* (1999), film historian Gregory A. Mank suggests Universal cut approximately 15 minutes of the film to obtain PCA approval, citing the original length of Franz Waxman's score as evidence; Curtis, however, clarifies that "Whale made a number of eliminations that had nothing to do with the Production Code" (250), amounting to "almost ten minutes of material" (250). Whale voluntarily softened the ending of *The Bride of Frankenstein* following its initial film preview. Colin Clive, Valerie Hobson (who replaced Mae Clark in the role of Elizabeth) and Boris Karloff "were recalled for additional shots," (Curtis 250) which Whale used to create a new ending, in which the Creature spares the lives of Elizabeth and Henry. Curtis does not speculate why Whale changed the ending, but presumably Whale was reacting to the audience's response to the original ending shown in the preview. Whale recut both *The Bride of Frankenstein* and its progenitor *Frankenstein* after their previews based on audience response; Whale was an artist, but he also was a business-man and understood that the business of Hollywood necessitated profitable films.

Carl Laemmle Jr. believed in the profitability in horror films, and believed in Whale's talents as a director. Junior became a vocal proponent of Whale's following their collaboration on *Waterloo Bridge*, and that support is responsible for the artistic freedom Whale enjoyed while making *Frankenstein*, *The Invisible Man*, and *The Bride of Frankenstein* ("The Frankenstein Files"). Junior's departure from Universal Studios in November 1935 (Curtis 268) and Carl Laemmle Senior's sale of the studio in March 1936 (274) was the beginning of the end for Whale's career because the stubborn director had difficulty adjusting to the strict management

that followed the Laemmle regime ("The Frankenstein Files"). Whale's final successful film, the musical *Show Boat*, coincides with the departure of the Laemmles from Universal. *Frankenstein* (1931) sequels continued without Whale's participation, however, and the characters he brought to life on film—the Creature, the mad scientist, and the deformed assistant—became cultural icons that took on a life of their own. Whale too became a culture icon, representing artistic brilliance and resilience in the face of adversity. Like *Frankenstein's* author Mary Shelley, whose other writing is largely ignored (at least by the general public), popular culture associates Whale with *Frankenstein* (1931) and *The Bride of Frankenstein*—both because of the films' popularity, and also because of the tertiary adaptations that feature his monster.

There are numerous parallels between the "parents' of Frankenstein, Whale and Shelley: both authors collaborated with peers; both revised their work after feedback from their audience; both were financially vulnerable and made decisions based on prospective sales; both experienced marginalization, and both became icons within the Composite Frankenstein, representing something larger than themselves. The Composite Frankenstein transforms Whale and Shelley into characters, immortalized alongside the characters they created. Shelley is the dominant "author" in popular culture, while Whale's name is specialized knowledge; however, the film *Gods and Monsters* broadens the pool by instructing its viewers on Whale's history. The film also instructs its audience that Whale is worth remembering, both through romanticizing his life and also by demonstrating how he is responsible for highly-influential films, *Frankenstein* (1931) and *The Bride of Frankenstein*, which still inform popular culture today.

<u>Beyond Adaptation: Unpacking the Composite Frankenstein in Popular Culture</u>

How many times have you heard the story of Frankenstein? Not just Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein*—published in two slightly-different editions—but also every adaptation, reconstruction and subversion of the classic gothic/anti-gothic tale? Frankenstein's monster, often referred to simply as Frankenstein, has appeared in virtually every story-telling medium: from stage production (e.g. *Presumption; or, the Fate of Frankenstein* by Richard Brinsley Peake [1823]), to song (e.g. "Feed My Frankenstein" [1991] by Alice Cooper), to video games (e.g. *The Adventures of Dr. Franken* [1992]). Shelley's story and its many adaptations are responsible for several cultural icons: the mad scientist, over-the-top electrical lab equipment, a "hunchback" assistant in a robe, and, most notably, a man-made monster with green skin, a flat head, and neck bolts. Whale's 1931 film adaptation introduced many of these icons—Robert Horton claims there may be as many as 400 titles in the "ongoing legacy" (Horton 97) of James Whale's *Frankenstein* (1931); however, the 1931 film is certainly not the only text to inform how today's audiences understand these popular culture icons.

In the previous two chapters I discuss how the Composite Frankenstein presents authors Mary Shelley and James Whale as romanticized icons, circulating the mythic circumstances of their authorship and defining the figures by what they—and by extension, their texts—represent culturally. *Frankenstein*'s origins are so well-known in contemporary popular culture that Elizabeth Kostova argues "The genesis of *Frankenstein* has become almost as famous as the monster himself" (xi). In her Introduction to the Penguin Classics Deluxe Edition of *Frankenstein*, Kostova admits to her own conflation of *Frankenstein* and its popular culture legacy:

> When I began rereading Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*… I received—like the corpse Victor Frankenstein brings to life—a galvanic shock: I was not rereading. I had never read the book before. I turned page after page with the growing conviction that although I knew the story, its settings, the characters, the flavor of its language, the history and philosophy that underlie it, the tale of its creation, and even the novel's structure, the actual prose was new to me. (ix)

Kostova approached *Frankenstein* so well-informed by the Composite Frankenstein that she assumed her familiarity came from experience. Kostava describes her mistake as unsurprising, arguing "Frankenstein… is an icon of such magnitude that we all know him in some form… we often speak of the Frankenstein 'myth' or 'legend,' when actually the monster in question is the creation of a single, known author" (ix). *Frankenstein* is a modern myth and Mary Shelley is a part of that narrative. Like all myths, *Frankenstein* is valued for what it represents; adaptations aid in redefining and disseminating the myth for contemporary audiences.

The Composite Frankenstein is not solely the product of *Frankenstein* adaptations: it is expressed through various forms of remediation, such as sequels, parodies, and homages. The inclusion of identifiable *Frankenstein* themes or ideas in other texts evinces the story's continued relevance; as more texts enter this remediation network, there are more texts to allude to and/or recreate. As I discussed in the previous chapters, *Frankenstein* adaptations have been rewriting Shelley's text for almost as long as the novel's publication history; popular adaptations are now *Frankenstein* canon because their content is alluded to and imitated in other texts. The Composite Frankenstein demonstrates that adaptation is not a linear process of translation. Universal's *Frankenstein* (1931) is, of course, an adaptation of Mary Shelley's novel, but it is also an adaptation of Peggy Webling's play, which is based on the theatre tradition established

by Richard Brinsley Peake's adaptation of Shelley's novel. The equally (if not more) culturally-significant *The Bride of Frankenstein* (1935) is both a sequel to *Frankenstein* (1931) and an adaptation of the novel; the sequel expands *Frankenstein* on film to incorporate content from the novel traditionally excluded from previous adaptations, including a scene dramatizing the novel's origins (based on the description provided in the 1831 edition Introduction), and the creature's desire for Dr. Frankenstein to make him a mate. Mel Brooks's film *Young Frankenstein* (1974) is a parody of the Universal *Frankenstein* films, rather than an adaptation of Shelley's novel; it extracts and extends ideas from these films, while eschewing other ideas completely. For example, the film incorporates the creature's love of the violin, introduced briefly in *The Bride of Frankenstein*, as a reoccurring plot device; the film also expands the "hunchback" role to replace Dr. Frankenstein's best friend (Henry in the novel, Victor in Whale's film). *Young Frankenstein*'s lab assistant Igor is a parody of a character named Fritz in Whale's film (as well as Peake's play, from which the character originates); in today's Composite Frankenstein, however, the character's name is Igor. The name change occurred because of *Frankenstein* texts conflating ideas from other texts, culminating with the inclusion of an Igor character in Mel Brooks' *Frankenstein* parody *Young Frankenstein*. *Young Frankenstein* thus subtly redefines *Frankenstein* in popular culture by expanding and conflating on existing ideas from previous *Frankenstein* texts.

I cannot pinpoint a specific text responsible for renaming the Fritz character Igor. I can identify the first *Frankenstein* text to feature a character named Igor (actually "Ygor"—*The Ghost of Frankenstein* [1942]), and I can identify the 1960s into the early 1970s as the period when parodic texts commonly featured a robed "hunchback" assistant character as Igor. No single text introduced this deviation; furthermore, Fritz's development into the contemporary

Igor character occurred outside of *Frankenstein* adaptations, in texts such as Bobby Pickett's hit single "The Monster Mash" (1962) and the children's sketch show *The Hilarious House of Frightenstein* (1971). As Robert Stam suggests "Film adaptations… are caught up in the ongoing whirl of intertextual reference and transformation, of texts generating other texts in an endless process of recycling, transformation, and transmutation, *with no clear point of origin*" (emphasis added 66). The Igor trope demonstrates that the current Composite Frankenstein developed through references to *Frankenstein* and *Frankenstein* adaptations: such references are found in *Frankenstein* adaptations themselves, as well as texts that, apart from those allusions, are unrelated to *Frankenstein*.

The power *Frankenstein* adaptations and allusions have to redefine their source material is exemplified by cultural expectations that are projected onto the *Frankenstein* story, despite contradictory material. The character Igor is one example; another example is the monster's ability to remove and reattach body parts—a trope frequently found in children's media incorporating the Composite Frankenstein's iconography (e.g. Mattel's toy line and television show *Monster High* [2010–6] and the children's film *Hotel Transylvania* [2012]). Such children's media also typically characterizes the Creature as an ultimately well-meaning but misunderstood wretch and Dr. Frankenstein as his cruel and villainous master, possibly with nefarious motivations. As I discuss in the Introduction, this interpretation of the Creature as the victim has seeped into the general public's understanding of Shelley's novel: when *The Sun* published an online article by Gary O'Shea and Thea Jacobs rebuking "snowflake" readers of the novel who interpret the Creature as "a misunderstood victim," the article was smeared on social media by users who share this interpretation of the novel. The perpetuation of these expectations—that the Creature is a victim, or that there is a bumbling assistant named Igor—

demonstrate the fluidity of the Composite Frankenstein and the power adaptations and references possess to disseminate interpretations of, and infuse new ideas into, the popular culture surrounding a classic text.

Outside of *Frankenstein*'s "legacy" of adaptations are countless allusions to the basic story, which reinforce *Frankenstein* as a cultural myth; such allusions are typically references to the monster and/or the experiments of Dr. Frankenstein and may be based on the novel, the classic films, or just the general myth of scientific hubris gone awry. For example, the plot of the *Star Trek* episode "What Are Little Girls Made Of?" shares much in common with Mary Shelley's story: a mad scientist, isolated from his fiancée in a frozen wasteland, is driven mad by his morally-dubious scientific pursuit to overcome death and create life. This is an updated Frankenstein story, with constructed android copies of living beings rather than reanimated dead tissue. The plot of the film *The Lazarus Effect* (2015) also alludes to *Frankenstein*: the film presents a team of scientists attempting to "cheat" death, which results in the creation of a monster. Both examples present a "mad" scientist attempting to overcome death by creating a monster, and each plot is driven by the evil nature of these creations; thus, although neither contains *Frankenstein* iconography, the stories are recognizable as *Frankenstein* allusions because they resemble the *Frankenstein* myth, and, more importantly, what the myth represents.

The Composite Frankenstein is a blend of various texts which describe the same basic moral; because of this, it can be difficult to isolate *Frankenstein* (the novel) as a popular culture icon. Take for example this brief allusion in the 1985 novel *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* by Jeanette Winterson, which conflates *Frankenstein* and *Frankenstein* (1931). The allusion occurs at the end of a fairy tale within the dominant narrative, featuring a prince obsessed with finding the perfect woman:

> ‘Wait a minute,’ said the man suddenly, ‘I got this.’
>
> And he pulled from his pocket a leather bound book. ‘I don’t know if it’s up your street, it tells you how to build a perfect person, it’s all about this man who does it, but it’s no good if you ain’t got the equipment.’
>
> The prince snatched it away.
>
> ‘It’s a bit weird,’ continues the old man, ‘this geezer gets a bolt through the neck…’ (Winterson 86)

The fairy tale itself is about a prince’s vain attempt to find, and then make, the perfect woman. It functions within the narrative as a representation of the main character’s response to a sermon she hears regarding mankind’s perfection before the fall (i.e. original sin). The context of the reference prompts readers to compare the religiously fanatical mother’s misguided attempt to create a perfect Christian protégé (told through the allegory of the prince) to Dr. Frankenstein’s misguided attempts to create a new, perfect, being. It specifically references the novel *Frankenstein*, described as a “leather bound book.” This in itself is not unusual; *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* contains a plethora of biblical and literary allusions, and the comparison to *Frankenstein* works well as both novels pose difficult theological questions without providing answers. The reference itself is problematic, however, as the neck bolt mentioned is an attribute the 1931 film *Frankenstein* introduces. Winterson is either confusing or combining the classic text with the popular culture iconography for Frankenstein. Perhaps it is necessary for Winterson to refer to such a visual cue from the iconography in order for the allusion to be clear to contemporary readers—another example of how tangled the novel and film versions of *Frankenstein* are.

Winterson's allusion to *Frankenstein* reveals the intertextual bonds constantly at work within the Composite Frankenstein and demonstrates how allusions encourage readers to compare texts through intertextual recognition and reference. Increasingly, the terminology for such devices is unclear: for example, William Irwin suggests in "Against Intertextuality" that the concept of allusion has been "displaced by intertextuality" (229), and Gregory Machacek states in "Allusion" that "[f]or many critics, *intertextuality* is synonymous with *allusion*" (italics in original 523). Machacek divides allusion into two forms: "learned or indirect reference and phraseological appropriation" (526). Reference, he suggests, is apparent and the information can be provided through annotation, (526) whereas phraseological appropriation, which he likens to the more general term "echo," is integrated "so that uninformed readers will generally not be aware that they are missing anything" (527). Machacek' limits his discussion of allusions to examples in literature; however, his theorizing presents a useful starting point for conceptualizing all allusions to *Frankenstein* and observing how they express the Frankenstein myth.[41] I extend Machacek's basic premise to include various forms references can take—especially in media such as film or television, in which references can be verbal, aural or visual.

I further posit that allusions colour audience reception of their alluded texts. As I discuss in my Introduction, Kamilla Elliott describes the possibility of such "read[ing] in both directions" (157) for adaptations—the theory can be extended to allusions as well. Like adaptations, allusions to *Frankenstein* interpret the story through implementation, selectively highlighting and effacing aspects of the original narrative; this process instructs how audiences interpret and remember Shelley's novel. Allusions have less influence on the popular imagination than adaptations—allusions typically lack the "authority" of adaptations because allusions are a reference, rather than a retelling, of a separate story; furthermore, allusions

require a "knowing audience" (Hutcheon 121)—to borrow Hutcheon's phrase—to be recognized, whereas adaptations (typically) state their source material. However, herein lies a problem unique to *Frankenstein*: it is difficult to distinguish some *Frankenstein* adaptations from *Frankenstein* allusions, as the "canonical" texts within the mythology are vastly different, and the social myth is incredibly pervasive.

The Composite Frankenstein is a complicated beast. *Frankenstein* evokes popular culture associations that are diverse and vast, which renders *Frankenstein* particularly vulnerable to audience conflation; furthermore, the considerable cultural footprint of the 1931 film—exemplified by Horton's claim that its legacy is at least 400 texts—has no doubt reverberated through the history of horror and speculative fiction, inspiring texts that are themselves influential. In his book *Film Adaptation and its Discontents: From Gone with the Wind to The Passion of the Christ*, Thomas Leitch argues that allusions in film are "microtexts embedded in a film's larger structure," (121) characterizing such allusions as pervasive and self-effacing. Leitch's primary concern is with determining whether the appropriation of an iconic image or sequence is a true allusion, or if it is simply evidence of that film technique being incorporated into the grammar of film. While Leitch focuses on directors as a site of reference-making, this sort of intertextual confusion also occurs among audiences. A director's reference to a previous text—whether that be an appropriation of an iconic image, or the imitation of a sequence, or even a passing reference in dialogue—may be unperceivable to the audience; conversely, a director may inadvertently include an image or idea that audiences may recognize as originating from another text, making the intertextual comparison at the point of text consumption, rather than creation.

The iconic *Frankenstein* texts feature allusions to other works; how these allusions manifest relates to the respective text's medium. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* alludes to various written texts, such as Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and Genesis 2, whereas Whale's *Frankenstein* (1931) visually references German expressionist films such as *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920) and *Metropolis* (1927);[42] both *Frankenstein* texts reference Henry Fuseli's famous painting *The Nightmare* (1781), although Whale's allusion is more recognizable.[43] Stam argues that intertextuality renders "fidelity" concerns for adaptations pointless, because even the most faithful adaptation "picks up some intertextual cues, but not others" (68). Using the example *Tom Jones* (1963), a British film adaptation of Henry Fielding's classic novel, Stam notes that even this "sensitive adaptation" (68) forms different intertextual connections than the source material, arguing "It picks up some aspects of the novel's reflexivity… but it also mingles the literary cues with specifically filmic devices in such a way as to find the filmic equivalents of literary techniques" (68); such filmic devices include a parodic sequence of silent film melodrama—a recognizable "classic" filmic style—to imitate Fielding's "excursuses into pastoral, meditative, philosophical, and literary styles as well as that of Homeric simile" (68). While the film replicates the effect of Fielding's prose, the intertextual associations, i.e. silent film, allude to—and thus situate the text among—distinctive bodies of work. *Frankenstein* (1931) similarly draws comparisons to German Expressionist films, associating itself among this genre rather than the classic literature Shelley alludes to in her *Frankenstein*.

Texts that appropriate the basic "Frankenstein" (not necessarily *Frankenstein*) narrative allude to, and (re)interpret, different aspects of the Composite Frankenstein. *Frankenstein* adaptations themselves allude to texts, including texts with pre-existing intertextual ties to *Frankenstein*, creating a semiotic feedback loop; Fritz' transformation into Igor, for example, is

the consequence of *Frankenstein* adaptations informing and being informed by “classic horror” parodies. Stam’s discussion on “Adaptation as Intertextual Dialogism” (64) sheds light on the complicated intertextual processes at work within all texts, including adaptations:

> The concept of intertextual dialogism suggests that every text forms an intersection of textual surfaces. All texts are tissues of anonymous formulae, variations on this formulae, conscious and unconscious quotations, and conflations and inversions of other texts. In the broadest sense, intertextual dialogism refers to the infinite and open-ended possibilities generated by all the discursive practices of a culture… which reach the text not only through recognizable influences, but also through a subtle process of dissemination. (64)

Peter Dickinson incorporates Stam’s theory for his own analysis of film adaptations, arguing that “transforming the written word into the visual language of film is necessarily an open-ended process, one that involves the quotation and intersection of a number of different ‘texts’ not all of which may be recognizable as originary or even literary” (3). These scholars transcend concerns of fidelity for their analysis of adaptation studies, instead focusing on the “openness” of intertextual relations in various textual and paratextual forms.

The Composite Frankenstein exists in different forms for different audiences: the more experienced an audience is with *Frankenstein* texts, the more expectations and associations they have for *Frankenstein*. Possessing extended knowledge of *Frankenstein*, however, does not overwrite an audience’s understanding that it also functions as a cultural symbol: for example, although I have relatively extensive knowledge of Shelley’s novel and Whale’s film, I understand that Matt Zoller Seitz’s description of *Jurassic World* (2015) as “basically a dino’s version of Frankenstein’s monster” (Seitz) does not mean that the Indominus Rex was created

from dead bodies, or that the dinosaur heavily identifies with *Paradise Lost*. This is because I understand that Seitz's comparison is a reference to the cultural icon, not a specific version of the character from any one text. References to "Frankenstein" or "Frankenstein's monster" are references to the basic myth in popular culture; in other words, the icon is a metonym for the Composite Frankenstein. Leitch points out that "whenever a reviewer compares a character to Frankenstein… a case is implied for a particular allusion, yet such comparisons are usually so offhand that they imply universal cultural currency, not acquaintance with any one textual manifestation" (123). Frankenstein's monster is the ultimate icon from *Frankenstein*—so much so, that the very name "Frankenstein" signifies the character.

The "cultural currency" of *Frankenstein* is thoroughly expressed in the homage "The Post-Modern Prometheus"—a unique *The X-Files* episode which celebrates *Frankenstein* and its dedicated monster fandom. Leitch locates the celebratory devices homage, parody, and pastiche on his continuum from adaptation to allusion, describing homages as a form of "adaptation whose leading impulse is to celebrate the power of its original" (96); however, he also suggests that an homage "most often takes the form of a *readaptation* [emphasis added] that pays tribute" (96). Like allusions, homages highlight, rather than efface, their relationship to the source material: the traditional adaptation remediates a story, while an homage celebrates a story through imitation and reference, typically delivered in an original story. The homage may or may not name the source material, and can be the entire text, or brief sections of the text. Unlike allusions, homages necessarily have positive connotations and a sophisticated intertextual connection to the source material, such as the appropriation of themes or aesthetics. Later in this chapter I will investigate the various sources that inform the *Frankenstein* homage "The Post-Modern Prometheus"; however, first I will further explore the figure of the monster as a cultural

icon by reviewing the character's history of portrayals, and examining the various physical, behavioural and social characteristics associated with the Composite Frankenstein's primary icon.

Frankenstein in Contemporary Media: What Does the Monster Look Like?

The presence of a Frankenstein's monster is the most common marker of a *Frankenstein* adaptation or allusion. In adaptations, the monster is typically named Frankenstein or Frankenstein's monster; in allusions, the character typically has a unique or related name (e.g. Adam from the television show *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*) but other characters within the text may compare the creation to "Frankenstein" or "Frankenstein's monster." Such texts subtly reinforce elements from the Composite Frankenstein through their depiction of the Creature; thus, investigating these texts reveals their contemporary *Frankenstein* popular culture associations. Below I examine the dominant themes, images, and plot devices common in contemporary *Frankenstein* adaptations to reveal how *Frankenstein* functions as a cultural symbol; my examination identifies various ideas within these stories, revealed through the Frankenstein's monster's characteristics. I argue that the Creature's depiction in contemporary media reflects currents associations with, and assumptions about, Shelley's character, informed by popular culture's dominant interpretation of the social myth.

The contemporary images texts associated with *Frankenstein* are the culmination of countless depictions of the story in various media. In this way, Frankenstein's monster is similar to icons such as Sherlock Holmes and Tarzan, which are "hybrid adaptations that depart from their putative originals at any number of points, often choosing instead to remain faithful to unauthorized later editions" (Leitch 208).[44] Such "hybrids" incorporate recognizable traits from previous adaptations, often because that adaptation is already in the public consciousness, more

so than the source material. Early film adaptations of novels such as *Frankenstein* and *Dracula* offered (static) visual manifestations of characters and events for the first time; because the novels themselves do not offer visual content, these films became the authoritative versions of the text's visuals. To put it plainly, *Frankenstein* (1931) presents a picture of the Creature while the novel does not; the repetition of these cues in later adaptations or allusions —green skin, neck bolts, etc.—only furthers *Frankenstein*'s (1931) status as a canonical text.

Frankenstein's monster was "brought to life" prior to the 1931 film in the various play adaptations—most significantly Peake's *Presumption* (1823), the play that popularized the Frankenstein story for mass audiences, and Peggy Webling's 1927 adaptation, the source material Universal Studios purchased for the 1931 film. While there is little visual record of the costuming and makeup used for Peake's plays,[45] we do know that Thomas Potter Cooke, billed as T. P. Cooke, was famous for playing "the Creature" (Forry 14)—so famous, in fact, that there are some surviving illustrations and colour lithographs that capture Cooke in this role (Appendix A: figure 9). In many ways, Cooke was the public image of *Frankenstein*, as illustrations of his menacing character dominated the play's print materials. Not all of Cooke's performances as the Creature were specifically Peake's *Presumption*: Peake also wrote a burlesque of his own play, *Another Piece of Presumption* (15), that starred Cooke as the Creature, and Cooke was hired to reprise the role in the 1826 French adaptation *Le monstre et le magician,* by Jean-Toussaint Merle and Béraud Antony ("Le monstre et…"). The documentary *The Frankenstein Files* compares Cooke's popularity as the monster in the 19th century to that of Boris Karloff in the 20th ("The Frankenstein Files"). Steven Earl Forry corroborates this in his essay "The Hideous Progenies of Richard Brinsley Peake: *Frankenstein* on the Stage, 1823 to 1826," quoting London newspapers that "laud[ed] the performance of T. P. Cooke as the Creature," (Forry 14) and

references an estimate in the October 15, 1853 edition of the *Illustrated London News* "that by the half-century T. P. Cooke had played the role of the Creature at least 365 times" (17). Cooke's character was silent and menacing, billed in the "dramatis personae" with a blank line and referred to in the performance text alternatively as "the MONSTER" and "the DEMON" (Peake 328-68). In the first half of the 19th century, T. P. Cooke provided a visual manifestation of Shelley's character, as well as a popular interpretation of the character as beastly, dangerous, and violent.

Cooke's version of the Creature lost its cultural foothold due to the ephemeral nature of theatre; however, Peake's play did influence subsequent *Frankenstein* play adaptations. The Peggy Webling play—produced by the British actor-manager Hamilton Deane, who also starred as the Creature—followed the theatre tradition established by Peake, with variations ("The Frankenstein Files"). Ivan Butler, who was a member of Deane's company, describes Deane's portrayal of the monster in the documentary *The Frankenstein Files*: "he had to rely wholly of course on stage makeup … mixtures of greens and yellows and blues, and a matted wig on top… He wore lifters under his shoes to make him a bit taller." This description is similar to the lithographs of T. P. Cooke's Frankenstein's monster (Appendix A: figure 9); however, a key difference between the two is in the character's clothing, which in Deane's play added thematic significance: according to film historian Rudy Behlmer, "Hamilton Deane in the stage production actually dressed very much like… Henry Frankenstein, the creator" ("The Frankenstein Files"). According to Behlmer, Deane's play reflects a trend among *Frankenstein* adaptations in the late-19th to early-20th century of staging Dr. Frankenstein and his creation as mirrors of each other, drawing out the duality theme in Shelley's novel ("The Frankenstein Files"). The duality or "doppelgänger" theme persists in Whale's film, as does the Creature's

large stature; however, 1931 film abandons the matted wig found in Deane's and Cooke's plays, instead opting for the now-familiar square crop-cut.

The Composite Frankenstein reflects the most popular, and therefore most influential, *Frankenstein* adaptations. *Frankenstein* (1931) was not the first adaptation to present the Creature in the static medium film; *Frankenstein*'s (1931) lasting relevance as the "iconic" *Frankenstein* film is due to the repetition of images from the film. The first film adaptation of *Frankenstein* is the 1910 silent film *Frankenstein* (1910). The Edison Manufacturing Company's 1910 adaptation lacked the cultural significance necessary to remain in popular memory, and thus its image of the Creature was overwritten by the 1931 film. The creature in the silent film has thin, almost skeletal, limbs, elongated hands and feet, a bulky torso, a wild mane of long shaggy hair, and dark facial features. This creature is nimble, distinctly evil, and intelligible. His creation is much more arcane than his 1931 counterpart—this creature is grown from a vat of chemicals in a visual display akin to a magician's act.[46] The vaguely-sinister creation sequence, which hints at the dark arts, is thematically similar to Shelley's original creation scene.[47] Whale's film interprets the scene differently, presenting the character's birth as a technical spectacle and achievement of science. Despite the thematic similarities between the 1910 film and the novel, Whale's creation scene is the most influential version of the three for most (if not all) subsequent *Frankenstein* adaptations. Whale's film is visually, thematically and stylistically very distinct from 1910 film.[48] Whale did not incorporate elements of the earlier film into his version of *Frankenstein* and thus failed to remediate that adaptation.

Whale's films *Frankenstein* and *The Bride of Frankenstein* created the iconic Frankenstein's monster design; this image developed lasting cultural significance because Universal Studios reused the Jack Pierce makeup in several film sequels, as well as the T.V.

show *The Munsters* (1964-6) and the children's film *The Monster Squad* (1987). Whale's films—the most critically and financially successful films of the Universal run—inspired countless imitations, which perpetuate *Frankenstein*'s (1931) cultural relevancy; however, such imitations also diverge from Whale's film, thus complicating the public's understanding of what "Frankenstein" means and what Frankenstein('s monster) looks like. Leitch suggests the Composite Frankenstein iconography is "not merely from [its] literary originals but from a mixture of visual texts, from illustrations to earlier film and television versions" (208). In his "cultographies" book on *Frankenstein* (1931), Horton describes how various interpretations of the Frankenstein story, frequently broadcasted via television syndication, have collectively affected the public understanding of the story:

> *Frankenstein* was in the regular 'Nightmare Theatre' rotation and thus aired every six months or so… Because of the hodgepodge nature of the schedule, one could see (entirely out of logical order) all of the original Universal *Frankenstein* pictures along with entries from the Hammer Films *Frankenstein* run, as well as such *outré* items as the drive-in schlocker *I Was a Teenage Frankenstein* (1957) and the Japanese *Frankenstein Conquers the World* (1965). Those early *Frankenstein* viewings blend together with the film's sequels, which extended the story and increased the sense of a complicated mythos around the Monster. (9)

The Universal Studios films feature consistent makeup and costuming for the Frankenstein's monster character; the other films Horton mentions drew inspiration from the Universal version, incorporating visual cues such as facial scars, green skin, and flat black hair. Leitch refers to Frankenstein's monster as a "larger-than-life [figure] whose mythopoetic appeal is iconic rather than psychological" (207); in other words, it does not matter that the Composite Frankenstein is

informed by narratives that contradict each other since the icons associated with the narrative—especially the Creature—are appealing *because* they are recognizable as icons.

The familiarity of *Frankenstein* icons—epitomized by Frankenstein's monster—and how those icons represent contemporary concerns are evidence of *Frankenstein*'s transformation into social myth. As various texts perpetuate *Frankenstein*'s myth, the content shifts and merges in unpredictable ways; however, these repeated viewings also reinforce the story's recognizable icons and the implications they carry (i.e. the "mad" scientist or the sympathetic monster). Apart from the critically-panned films *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* (1994) and *Victor Frankenstein* (2015), there have been no mainstream Hollywood films adapting Shelley's novel since Universal's *Frankenstein* and *The Bride of Frankenstein*.[49] More recent films featuring Frankenstein's monster as a character do not adapt the plot of *Frankenstein*, but instead use the recognizable character in an original story, such as *Frankenstein Unbound* (1990), *Van Helsing* (2004) and *Hotel Transylvania* (2012). Typically, these films allude to the Frankenstein's monster's creation, but do not depict those events—contemporary audiences are assumed to already know the creature's story. Pervasive *Frankenstein* allusions remind audiences of the creature's story, often through retelling its myth of a man-made monster. The Composite Frankenstein renders the character's creation story unnecessary, and perhaps even uninteresting, for contemporary audiences already familiar with the story.

Recent texts that feature the Frankenstein's monster icon may depict the creature's creation, but more often, such texts allude to it through visual cues. In the last 20 years, media with a Frankenstein's monster—including television shows (i.e. *Monster High*) comics (i.e. the *Madman* series [1990–2012], *Seven Soldiers* [2006], *I, Frankenstein* [2014]), and general visual media, (i.e. Halloween decorations, toys, etc.)— rely on common visual cues to indicate the

character's history: pale skin, monstrous frame, and scars. These traits may shift in minor ways, but still reference the original icon, as well as the character's origins: for example, the monster's neck bolts (originally electrodes) are sometimes replaced with screws, or are shifted up, above the ears; the creature may have additional scars across the forehead and/or face, etc. Such visual traits represent dead tissue being reanimated through surgical means, and thus the cues alone reinforce the character's back story. These shifts, however, contribute to audience conflation: for example, texts depicting the monster with obvious screws or bolts in his neck encourage audiences to interpret the original icon's electrodes as bolts.

Frankenstein's monster is so engrained in popular culture that the icon is recognizable across various artistic stylings. The "classic" Frankenstein's monster, with green skin, a prominent brow, and neck bolts, has appeared in virtually every medium: including in giant statue form (eating a Burger King Whopper) at the "House of Frankenstein" tourist attraction in Niagara Falls (Appendix A: figure 10). The prevalence of Frankenstein's monster in this context is perhaps only rivalled by the titular character of its twin property, Count Dracula (Leitch 28). The Dracula and Frankenstein's monster icons are based on Bela Lugosi's and Boris Karloff's respective portrayals, but typically manifest as artistic interpretations; Universal's copyright on these images—characters otherwise in the public domain—prohibits new properties from adopting the "classic" look of these monsters, requiring some creative alterations that maintain thematic and/or iconic signifiers representing the monsters' history (Horton 9). The common attributes for Frankenstein's monster include the above-mentioned pale skin, black hair, and scars, as well as gigantic stature, tattered clothing, a square head, a prominent brow, black fingernails, and large stitches and surgical staples. The signifiers are not restricted to physical characteristics: Frankenstein's monster often is unable to speak, fears fire, and is a

misunderstood and tragic figure. Many of these physical and behavioural characteristics, commonly associated with this character today, have no foundation in Mary Shelley's novel, and are purely the product of repeated remediation.

In Shelley's novel, the creature is often described as hideous, monstrous and demon-like. Apart from the brief descriptive passage during the creation scene, and occasional brief descriptions given by characters, Mary Shelley does not provide a detailed picture of the creature in *Frankenstein*—instead, she alludes to the creation's composition and uses vague and disturbing terms, allowing the reader to imagine its hideous form. The reader is told that "The dissecting room and the slaughter-house furnished many of [Dr. Frankenstein's] materials" (Shelley, ed. Johnson 52) used for his "filthy creation" (52); the suggestion being that the monster is pieced together from dead tissue. The creature's dead-tissue composition is a core idea for most adaptations, although rarely (if ever) do adaptations explore the "slaughter-house" implication of animal parts. The creature identifies as "hideously deformed and loathsome," (140) "horrible" (171) in appearance, with "defects" (171). Dr. Frankenstein initially describes his creation as "about eight feet in height, and proportionably large" (51); possessing "dull yellow eye[s]" (55); "yellow skin [that] scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath" (55); hair that is "lustrous black, and flowing" (55); "teeth of a pearly whiteness" (55); "watery eyes, that seemed almost of the same colour as the dun white sockets in which they were set" (55-6); a "shrivelled complexion" (56); and "straight black lips" (56). The image presented here is a mixture of the features Dr. Frankenstein had "selected… as beautiful," (56) and images associated with death, decay and lifelessness. The character Walton describes the creature as "gigantic in stature, yet uncouth and distorted in its proportions," (270) with skin "in colour and

apparent texture like that of a mummy" (270). The word "scar" is never used. The overall image presented to readers is vague, yet horrific.

Shelley's original Frankenstein's monster does bear some resemblance to the character's typical depiction in contemporary media; however, there are also some substantial differences. The Frankenstein's monster Shelley describes is a creature with supernatural, or at least post-human, qualities. Contemporary *Frankenstein* adaptations usually incorporate the Creature's inhuman resilience, a being who is "more agile" (140), "could subsist upon coarser diet," (140) and could "[bear] the extremes of heat and cold with less injury" (140) than a human. The most significant difference between Shelley's creature and the typical version in contemporary media is his intelligence. Shelley's creature learns to speak through observation, becoming articulate and well-spoken all within a matter of months. Shelley's Creature learns to read and discovers his origins through reading Dr. Frankenstein's diary.[50] He matches wits with his creator, who himself is a scientific genius; this Frankenstein's monster certainly possesses no "abnormal" or criminal brain, as his film counterparts often do. Another difference is this Creature's relationship with fire: in the novel, he describes feeling "overcome with delight at the warmth" (119) when first discovering fire and chooses to end his life "triumphantly" (275) through self-immolating on a funeral pyre; this is a stark contrast to the contemporary assumption that the character is afraid of fire.[51] In television and film adaptations—especially animations—the creature often walks with a shuffling, jerky and/or clumsy gait: this concept comes from Boris Karloff, who wore massive boots to appear taller in *Frankenstein* (1931), hampering his movement ("The Frankenstein Files"). In the novel, the creature's nimble strength and speed are among his most threatening characteristics. In many adaptations, the monster's large stature, violent temperament, and general imperviousness make him a threat, but such traits are balanced

by how easily he can be out-maneuvered. There are traces of Shelley's Frankenstein's monster in the common contemporary depictions, but in general, the characters' behaviour is different, their function within the plot is different, and what they represent thematically is different.

Contemporary *Frankenstein* adaptations typically draw inspiration from the classic 1931 monster, but may also draw from other *Frankenstein* texts, or creatively diverge from Whale's film. For example, the Frankenstein's monsters in *Van Helsing* (2004) and *Hotel Transylvania* (2012) have blue, rather than green, skin; are of average or above-average intelligence; and are well-spoken and personable. Stitches appear to be a common feature in most contemporary depictions that otherwise depart from the Boris Karloff model: the creatures from *Frankenstein Unbound* and *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*, as well as Adam from *I, Frankenstein*, lack the discoloured skin so commonly found in depictions of Frankenstein's monster, but instead emphasize disfigurement by horrific scars. All three characters lack the infantile nature of the Karloff model. Robert De Niro's creature in *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* and Aaron Eckhart's Adam in *I, Frankenstein* have average proportions and lack particularly "monstrous" attributes; in fact, *I, Frankenstein* presents Eckhart's Adam unclad form for "sex appeal," similar to the teenage "exploitation" film *I was a Teenage Frankenstein* (1957) (in the latter, the monster is initially horrific, but is given a sexy new face and physique near the film's climax).[52] In all of the above-mentioned adaptations, the creatures are neither a continuation of an established icon, the "classic" Frankenstein's monster, nor a return to the original source material—rather, they are re-imaginings of the basic myth, which adopt some visual/behavioural cues while eschewing others.

The Frankenstein's monster's scars, neck bolts, and green (or blue) skin are key images that readers will expect to encounter when approaching a *Frankenstein* text, and will recognize as "Frankenstein" in non-*Frankenstein* texts. How these images are employed or omitted is a

statement; the omission of green skin and neck bolts in Robert De Niro's stitched-together portrayal of the creature in *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* is part of the film's (claim of) fidelity to Shelley's novel. In a comedic text, an omission can be a self-reflexive joke: in the children's cartoon *Gravedale High* (1990), the character Frankentyke's short stature is a comedic reversal of the expectations for a Frankenstein monster. Frankentyke's teenage behaviour is another comedic reference; rather than acting infantile and non-verbal, Frankentyke is simply less mature than his fellow high school monster peers, constantly punctuating his sentences with an attitude-laden "man"—the typical teenage slang of its day. *Gravedale High* is one of several children's shows with characters based on classic monster archetypes, despite the unlikelihood of children having encountered these films;[53] other examples include *Groovie Goolies* (1970–1) and *Monster High* (2010–6). The "Frankenstein" archetype is evidence of the Frankenstein narrative existing within popular culture, and being disseminated as popular culture, independent of the source material. In other words, the audience is expected to "get" the joke without having read *Frankenstein* or seen *Frankenstein* (1931).

A recent Apple commercial contains a Frankenstein's monster, easily identifiable because his appearance echoes the classic Universal version; however, the commercial repurposes the character for a sentimental, rather than horrific, story ("Frankenstein gets…"). The commercial's characterization of Frankenstein's monster demonstrates the discrepancies between contemporary readings of the icon and the character that appears in Shelley's novel; furthermore, the commercial's appropriation of Frankenstein's monster to represent contemporary ideas demonstrates the icon's malleability. In November 2016, Apple released a holiday commercial in which a Frankenstein's monster attempts to befriend the local villagers at Christmas through the gift of holiday song—made possible, of course, by his iPhone. This

Frankenstein's monster lives in a comfortable, furnished cozy cabin and drinks tea (he even has a framed photo of Mary Shelley on his wall).[54] We never hear his name, but his identity is obvious from the prominent surgical scars, mottled dead-looking skin, neck bolts, and shuffling clumsy walk. His dirty mirror and dusty top hat hint at neglect; literally living on the outskirts of the village, he is the ultimate outsider. Wearing his best clothing and accessorizing with festive Christmas bulbs in his neck sockets, he approaches a festive outdoor gathering in a village square. The villagers initially react to him with fear. When he pathetically struggles to sing "(There's No Place Like) Home for the Holidays," he is approached and joined by a young girl, prompting the other villagers to join in. The creature silently cries happy tears, knowing he has been accepted by the village. The text appears onscreen: "Open your heart to everyone."

The Apple commercial presents the quintessential Frankenstein's monster for today's Composite Frankenstein. The creature's appearance is similar to the classic Universal makeup, with some alterations: his skin is pale, rather than green; he's wearing a top hat—an anachronistic fashion choice that vaguely acknowledges the character's 19th-century origins; and he is generally more human in appearance and behaviour. Despite these differences, the commercial is so confident that the icon will be recognized that it neither uses the name "Frankenstein" nor does it contextualize the creature with laboratory equipment or a mad scientist. The commercial presents a lovable Frankenstein's monster, who is pathetic and misunderstood, rather than threatening or malicious. The young girl's lack of fear is a common trope for *Frankenstein* stories that suggest non-judgmental children see the creature for who he "truly" is (i.e. how the audience views the character). The young girl becomes a surrogate for the audience, contrasting the nameless mass of villagers representing societal intolerance and prejudice. The commercial demonstrates the popularity of inclusionary readings of *Frankenstein,*

framed as a counterculture activity. While purporting to promote inclusion, Apple is capitalizing on a *Frankenstein* reading that simultaneously interprets the creature as victim while assuming this reading is contrary to "mainstream" beliefs; after all, Apple predominantly brands itself as a countercultural and trendsetting company (their iconic slogan is "Think Different"). The commercial's nonconformist message is clear: stand out from the crowd and be different (buy Apple).

The Apple commercial presents the Frankenstein's monster as a sympathetic icon. The tone of the commercial is whimsical and overly-sentimental—the change in tone reflects a transformation that rewrites the Frankenstein myth to be heart-warming, rather than horrific or tragic. This characterization of Frankenstein's monster almost condescendingly suggests the "correct" reading of Shelley's *Frankenstein* is that the monster is the victim. The commercial morphs the Creature into such a pathetic figure that he could not possibly be feared or viewed as dangerous; yet, the Frankenstein's monster *is* dangerous—the versions in Mary Shelley's novel and the majority of adaptations are capable (and guilty) of violent acts. Despite the visual reference to the author, this commercial does not adapt the original *Frankenstein*, nor does it have any relation to Shelley's text—rather, the commercial appropriates what Shelley's text represents today: a figure who was once viewed as a monster, but now is regarded as a tragic, misunderstood victim. It is not coincidental that just a year later *The Sun* ran its article on *Frankenstein* being read as a story about a misunderstood victim. Today's Composite Frankenstein represents acceptance, overcoming prejudice, and the triumph of kindness, justified by a cultural assertion that Shelley's novel is "really about" the creature being misunderstood and victimized—a claim that does not require (or encourage) audiences to have read Shelley's text, and no doubt colour the interpretations of those who have.

In the next section, I examine the homage "The Post-Modern Prometheus"; this episode of *The X-Files* features a non-traditional Frankenstein's monster. As I discuss in more depth below, the character's development over the course of the episode plays with the audience's expectations for a Frankenstein's monster, as well as the general popular culture surrounding *Frankenstein*. The homage celebrates various texts that contribute to the Composite Frankenstein's central myth, emphasizing Shelley's novel and the Universal classic films; examining the episode's references sheds light on the various paratextual associations within the Composite Frankenstein. As a general device, an homage is an exercise in intertextuality within popular culture: the homage's efficacy depends on the audience's ability to recognize the references, which are then contextualized in relation to each other through the homage. An homage thus identifies and affirms pre-existing textual associations within the popular imagination, with the potential to introduce new links. Because an homage is celebratory, its inferred associations have authority—compared to a parody's sometimes flippant comedic references.

"The Post-Modern Prometheus": a (Post-Modern) Homage to the Composite Frankenstein

"The Post-Modern Prometheus" (1997) is an homage to *Frankenstein*, classic horror films, and monster fandom—an embodiment of the Composite Frankenstein. In celebrating the Composite Frankenstein, the episode reflects the spectrum of texts that contemporary popular culture associates with *Frankenstein*. I read the episode's celebratory intertextual references as an homage in order to identify and demonstrate the multilayered associations underlying *Frankenstein*'s popular culture and to further the theory of homages as a distinct intertextual device. Although this form of adaptation has not received the same degree of academic attention

as the other postmodern celebratory devices, parody and pastiche, I argue that homage is uniquely efficient lens for investigating intertextuality within popular culture, especially for highly mythic narratives such as *Frankenstein*. Unlike parody, which is typically mocking or critical, and pastiche, which imitates style, an homage combines celebration and imitation within a unique narrative; the homage pieces together various intertextual references into a unique text that can be read independently or as a postmodern device. In the case of *Frankenstein*, homage allows the author and audience to bridge a vast spectrum of disparate texts meaningfully, without parody's dismissive connotations.

"The Post-Modern Prometheus" could be labelled as a pastiche or a parody; I instead choose the term "homage" to discuss "The Post-Modern Prometheus" for two reasons: the first, is that this episode is not primarily parodying *Frankenstein*, nor does the form and content of the episode imitate a specific style; the second reason is simply because homage is a more inclusive term with fewer connotations than parody and pastiche. Leitch argues that a pastiche is the full text imitating the style of a previous text or artist, and Fredric Jameson characterizes pastiche as "the imitation of a peculiar or unique, idiosyncratic style… a neutral practice of such mimicry, without any of parody's ulterior motives" (Jameson). The episode does imitate the classic horror aesthetic but blends that style with other (related) styles; furthermore, it is following the formula of *The X-Files* rather than the monster film formula. "The Post-Modern Prometheus" is more self-aware than the kind of "blank parody" Jameson criticizes. "The Post-Modern Prometheus" does contain elements of pastiche and parody, but blends those devices with its own celebratory model that honours various *Frankenstein* texts across different mediums, while also maintaining the series' characteristics. "The Post-Modern Prometheus" is a *Frankenstein* story, but it is also an *X-Files* story.

The X-Files show creator Chris Carter wrote, directed, and produced the episode "The Post-Modern Prometheus," and no doubt, the episode reflects Carter's own love of *Frankenstein*, horror, and the culture surrounding such texts. While the episode's title (which appears onscreen following the opening credits) is a clear reference to Shelley's novel, the episode alludes to several other texts. "The Post-Modern Prometheus" presents a general homage to classic Hollywood horror films and the nostalgia/fandom they inspire. This homage is combined with references to the Composite Frankenstein, including elements of Shelley's novel which are not found in the classic *Frankenstein* films. The episode's references associate the Composite Frankenstein with classic horror films and the monster fandom culture; the fluidity by which "The Post-Modern Prometheus" references the three simultaneously demonstrates the multifaceted nature of "Frankenstein" iconography in contemporary popular culture, as well as the difficulty in isolating "Frankenstein" as a cultural symbol. Thus, *The X-Files* episode presents an excellent case study to observe how the contemporary Composite Frankenstein contains various, sometimes conflicting, influences, and illustrates the culmination of my research thus far.

"The Post-Modern Prometheus" immediately establishes that this is not a typical *X-Files* episode with its opening sequence; the sequence also establishes that this episode is an homage to classic horror, monster fandom, and American nostalgia. The episode opens with a shot of a comic book titled "The Great Mutato." The comic book opens, the camera zooms in, and the black and white art of the comic dissolves into black and white live-action footage. The cover illustration depicts gothic horror imagery: in the background is a typical expressionist-inspired mansion, cast in shadows, with bright yellow windows, and in the foreground is a creature with two faces. The creature is an echo of the classic Frankenstein's monster: like Boris Karloff's

iconic character, this creature has green skin, wears a tattered suit, and appears helpless, isolated, dull, and sad. The comic itself evokes the horror comic books and magazines from the 1950s and 1960s (Appendix A: figure 11),[55] while the caption "PREMIERE EDITION – COLLECTOR'S ISSUE" nods specifically at the nostalgia-driven culture of collectors and fans (Appendix A: figure 12).[56] The opening shot's transition from comic book to live action serves two purposes: the first is to set-up the content and tone of the episode; the second is to frame the episode *as* the comic book, suggesting the episode may not be canonical to the rest of the series. It is a metafictional wink to the audience, daring them to decide whether or not this is "real life" (within the *The X-Files* universe).[57]

The episode's initial live-action sequence introduces the episode's small-town setting and sets the nostalgic tone at the heart of the story. The first few images the audience encounters are timeless, emphasized by the black and white film: an American suburb, classic cars, and even a retro diner. The opening scene introduces colourful small-town characters who are noticeably quirkier than the show's typical fare.[58] The score is non-diegetic and conjures a whimsical and nostalgic mood. This feeling of timelessness, or even purposeful anachronism, is a reference to the unique tone of *Frankenstein* (1931) and *The Bride of Frankenstein* (MacQueen). Shelley's *Frankenstein* is set in the late 18th-century in locations across Europe and the Arctic; however, Whale creates an alternate reality for *Frankenstein*'s (1931) setting—a world with some modern conveniences and technology, but with contrasting rural pre-industrial characteristics; Whale's anachronisms fuel the film's gothic and expressionist elements, weaving whimsy and fantasy into the film's otherwise dark plot. Whale's films combine contemporary (to 1931) concepts and fashion (i.e. women attending medical lectures, x-ray images of skulls, characters wearing contemporary suits, etc.) with a pre-industrial Germanic village, populated by villagers donning

traditional clothing and living a traditional lifestyle. There is no consistency among the costumes, sets, or even characters' accents in *Frankenstein* (1931). In *The Bride of Frankenstein*, Whale further develops the playful and fantastic elements he experiments with in his first horror film, mixing dry wit and overt camp humour with the film's gruesome and terrifying content. Humour is not a part of Shelley's narrative, but is a key component of today's Composite Frankenstein.

"The Post-Modern Prometheus'" Americana imagery and whimsical score are complicated intertextual references. The episode echoes *Frankenstein*'s (1931) and *The Bride of Frankenstein*'s playful anachronistic setting. Mulder and Scully visit an isolated mid-western small town with modern conveniences mixed with classic cars, antique furniture, and a retro American diner—a spiritual parallel, rather than imitation of, the village in Whale's *Frankenstein*. The colourful townsfolk echo Whale's camp-humor characters, such as Minnie the comic housekeeper. The episode's humor is both a subtle reference to Whale's films' specifically and a continuation of the series' own history of comedic episodes, such as "Humbug" (1995) and "Small Potatoes" (1997). The episode's Americana imagery additionally alludes to the 1950s and 1960s television revival of the Universal classic films, and the subsequent monster fandom subculture. The episode's implied association between classic monster horror films and post-war America—despite the films originating 20 years prior—demonstrates the Composite Frankenstein's complicated nature. The popular culture surrounding *Frankenstein* is loaded with multifaceted and contradictory associations that simultaneously tie the narrative to various time periods, mediums, and even genres; the homage structure allows the episode to address these various elements despite their contradictory nature.

The next scene in "The Post-Modern Prometheus" sets a different tone, shifting the narrative from celebrating monster fandom to referencing the classic horror genre; accompanying this focal shift is a necessary change of style, content, and tone. The mother from the previous scene, Mrs. Berkowitz, transitions from comedic relief to a typical horror-film victim:[59] she is watching television alone at night when an intruder enters the house, presumably to attack her. The scene's cinematography imitates the expressionist aesthetic of classic horror films, characterized by high-contrast lighting, frequent shadows, and disorienting lines. For example, in this scene there is a high-angle shot of a shadowy doorway with light illuminating from the cracks; the angle makes the door appear wider at the top than the bottom, while the light accentuates the lines of the door frame, as well as the lines of the wood floor which intersect at the bottom (Appendix A: figure 13). In the same scene, a Dutch angle (tilted) establishing shot pans through empty and shadowy rooms of the home, creating further disorienting angles and lines. The effect is subtle, yet builds the suspense and tension. Although the episode maintains realistic sets, never matching the almost-surrealist proportions of Whale's stairways and brick walls, such shots employ similar techniques to Whale's expressionist aesthetic, eliciting suspense where appropriate for the plot. The homage incorporates expressionist techniques, celebrating the style not through blank imitation, but through implementing the style's characteristics, where suitable, in a manner palatable to contemporary audiences and conducive to the episode's narrative goals. In other words, the expressionist cinematography serves a dual purpose: it is a reference to classic horror film and a strategy to bolster the scene's suspense.

The episode is an homage to the Composite Frankenstein and thus celebrates Shelley's novel as the progenitor text. Carter implements intertextuality as a stylistic device, reminding the audience that "Frankenstein" refers to both the classic novel and the classic film, which are

historically, aesthetically, and thematically distinct. In addition to referring to the novel's subtitle, the title "The Post-Modern Prometheus" also refers to a line from the show used by Mulder in his criticism of Dr. Pollidori's work:

> When Victor Frankenstein asks himself 'whence did the principle of life proceed' and then as a gratifying summit to his toils creates a hideous phantasm of a man, he prefigures the postmodern Prometheus, the genetic engineer whose power to reanimate matter—genes—into life—us—is only as limited as his imagination is.

Despite Scully's rebuttal that Mulder should not "reduce this man to a literary stereotype—a mad scientist," Carter encourages the viewer to do so. By referring to the doctor as "Victor Frankenstein" and "a literary stereotype," Mulder and Scully are specifically alluding to the novel *Frankenstein* (Dr. Frankenstein's first name is Henry in the Universal Studios Frankenstein films). There are further references specific to the novel: for example, Dr. Pollidori tells the agents he is travelling to Ingolstadt to give a lecture—the University of Ingolstadt is where Dr. Frankenstein receives his education in the novel. Dr. Pollidori's manner of speaking is a "phraseological appropriation" referencing Shelley's Dr. Frankenstein, and he at times repeats phrases from the novel, including "repulsive physiognomy" (Shelley ed. Butler 32)—a description Victor provides for M. Krempe.

As "The Post-Modern Prometheus" progresses, the references shift away from the generic tropes of classic horror toward specific—and more sophisticated—content of Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1931). Dr. Pollidori's lie that the farmer was "a pale student of [his] most hallowed arts" and Mulder's use of the phrase "phantasm of a man" are direct references to the author's introduction Shelley added to the 1831 edition of *Frankenstein*. The actual phantasm of a man—Mutato—is much more akin to the creature of Shelley's novel than the classic Universal

Studios version. Initially, the episode presents Mutato as a mentally-inferior and dangerous monster, like the Frankenstein's monster depicted in the classic Universal Studios films: for the majority of the episode, Mutato is depicted grunting, singing along to music in an infantile manner, and being easily baited with a peanut-butter sandwich. When the monster finally speaks during the climax of the episode, however, it is not in the strained broken sentences typical of the movie monsters, but with the tragic eloquence of Shelley's creation (i.e. he explains that his gruff voice is the result of throat damage from inhaling "gaseous chemicals"). Mutato is so polite and well-spoken that he successfully elicits sympathy from the angry mob of townspeople. Further, Mutato's actions are driven by his loneliness like his counterpart in *Frankenstein*. Mutato describes his motivation thus: "I am alone and miserable, but one as deformed and horrible as myself could not deny herself to me." This sentence is almost verbatim what the creature asks Dr. Frankenstein in Shelley's novel: "I am alone, and miserable; man will not associate with me; but one as deformed and horrible as myself would not deny herself to me" (Shelley ed. Butler 118).

Chris Carter's homage includes celebratory imitations specific to the film *Frankenstein* as well. The episode alludes to and recreates iconic shots from Whale's film. A long shot of Mutato early in the episode, in which he is standing in a doorway with his features cast in shadow, recreates the moment in Whale's *Frankenstein* (1931) when Frankenstein's monster is first revealed to the audience, post-creation scene. A later shot of Mutato peering into the bedroom of his unsuspecting female victim is also reminiscent of another iconic scene in Whale's *Frankenstein*: the scene in which the monster attacks Elizabeth. In Whale's film the sight of Elizabeth in her bedroom, with the creature visible in the background looking at her through a window, is one of the most thrilling and suspenseful images in the entire film. The

episode references this bedroom scene a second time, halfway through the episode; the second reference imitates, rather than alludes to, the moment in Whale's film. Mutato enters the bedroom of Dr. Pollidori's wife—appropriately named Elizabeth—which features ornate decoration with bright porcelain lamps, elegant antique furniture, and decorative garland, flowers, and ribbons draped over virtually every surface. The unconventional set dressing is a reference to Elizabeth's bedroom in *Frankenstein* (1931), which also features antique furniture and an abundance of flower arrangements. Elizabeth Pollidori is even found by the agents lying in bed covered in a white sheet, echoing Elizabeth being found in *Frankenstein* (1931) sprawled across the bed dressed in all white.[60]

In addition to recreating iconic moments from *Frankenstein* (1931), "The Post-Modern Prometheus" also references specific characters and themes from the film. Elizabeth Pollidori is a reference to Elizabeth in *Frankenstein* (1931),[61] making Dr. Pollidori Dr. Frankenstein. John O'Hurley's portrayal of Dr. Pollidori echoes Colin Clive's Dr. Frankenstein, as both characters wear comparable clothing and are approximately the same age and build; with his slicked-back hair, dark features, handsome square facial structure, and dramatic booming voice, Dr. Pollidori possesses traits specific to Clive's Dr. Frankenstein that are not typically associated with a generic mad scientist character. The locals Mulder and Scully encounter in "The Post-Modern Prometheus" are distinct from the villagers in Whale's film until the episode's climax, when the towns' inhabitants transform into an angry torch-wielding mob; in another recreation of an iconic *Frankenstein* (1931) scene, "The Post-Modern Prometheus" presents high-angle shots of this mob—led by Dr. Pollidori—marching into the wilderness in search of the "monster." These references are specific to the film *Frankenstein* (1931), suggesting Carter's familiarity with the

text. The presence of these references also suggests Carter expects his audience (at least in part) to be familiar with these images, demonstrating the 1931 film's cultural significance.

"The Post-Modern Prometheus" makes specific references to the core texts of the Composite Frankenstein: Shelley's novel and Whale's film; "getting" these references to reward the "true" fans who are familiar with the source material as well as the popular culture. These references are examples of intertextuality as a stylistic device; by including indirect references to *Frankenstein* and *Frankenstein* (1931), Carter rewards the audience members who possess the specialized knowledge necessary to recognize the reference, without alienating viewers who do not. In his article "Allusion," Machacek describes a "playfulness" (527) inherent in indirect references and phraseological appropriations, comparing them to "a riddle or trivia question" (527) for readers to solve. This form of intertextual reference goes beyond the most basic popular culture concept of *Frankenstein* and offers an opportunity for members of the monster fandom to self-recognize. As Ott and Walter argue, "the intertextual allusions found in postmodern texts allow viewers to exercise specialized knowledge and to mark their membership in particular cultures" (440). The very inclusion of these elements in a mass-media text, however, presents the potential that they may be repeated in future remediations of the *Frankenstein* story; thus, the division in the Composite Frankenstein between what is general popular culture knowledge and what is specialized fan knowledge is blurry and unsettled.

The references made in "The Post-Modern Prometheus" (1997) are self-aware. The characters Izzy Berkowitz and his friend Booger, enthusiastic members of the fandom this episode celebrates, are strategically placed in the background of the scene in which Scully and Mulder first encounter Mutato, watching the action unfold, mirroring the audience watching the action onscreen; Izzy and Booger are thus the audience's own metafictional doppelgängers,

which implies the audience too belongs to this fandom. This witness motif continues throughout the episode, with various townsfolk in the background of shots, watching and listening to Scully and Mulder discuss this case, mirroring the episode's own audience. The episode explains the behaviour as the small town's interest in receiving national attention for its hometown monster; however, the behaviour is also a self-aware motif that breaks the fourth wall by acknowledging its existence as a text among the other *Frankenstein* texts the episode celebrates.

The episode contains references to *Frankenstein* (1931) and other classic horror films that are metafictional because their inclusion is at the expense of logical narrative continuity. These metafictional incidences are playful critiques of Composite Frankenstein tropes. The mob of angry townsfolk that hunts the monster relies on torches for lighting, despite how impractical and unlikely that is for a contemporary story—another intentionally anachronistic choice (Mulder and Scully use their flashlights, which in itself is an iconic image for *The X-Files*). Lightning strikes, signified with flashes of light and thunderclaps, punctuate dramatic moments—a reference to the dramatic lightning in *Frankenstein*'s (1931) creation scene. The episode's lightning occurs without accompanying rainfall; as the show's skeptic, Scully is the first to notice the continuous lightning strikes and reacts with a metafictional curiosity. Mutato's admission that he, with the help of his well-meaning farmer guardian, impregnated several women with farm-animal DNA is accepted as true, even by Scully (the victims do not seem to be concerned). "The Post-Modern Prometheus" never provides a satisfactory pseudo-scientific explanation for the lightning or Mutato's experiments. The episode's dismissal of such scientific anomalies is unusual for the series. This episode is generally more whimsical and fantastic than the typical *The X-Files* episode, spiritually imitating the tone of core Composite Frankenstein texts, such as *The Bride of Frankenstein* and the parody *Young Frankenstein*.

There are references to books and other print texts throughout "The Post-Modern Prometheus"; while this is a common attribute of adaptations, these references distinguish the text as an homage because they are tongue-in-cheek acknowledgments of familiar concepts and clichés relating to *Frankenstein*'s popular culture. Characters mention Mary Shelley's novel numerous times, especially Mulder, who explicitly compares the episode's events to the events in the novel (e.g. Mulder's above-mentioned quotation regarding Dr. Frankenstein's experiments and Scully's rebuttal). Leitch argues that adaptations often "fetishize the apparatus of literature: printed words and books, authors and their collected works" (172) to remind audiences of the source material's "cultural cachet" (158). The episode's references to *Frankenstein* do emphasize the novel's classic status, but the references celebrate the novel rather than "borrow cultural capital" (158). The textual references frame the episode as an homage, rather than a parody or an adaptation. For example, the episode's opening and closing shots frame the episode as a fictional comic book, "The Great Mutato." Leitch notes that "One of the enduring clichés of adaptations… is running their opening credits over a shot of the book under adaptation" (158); however, the comic book is not an actual property and it only exists within the episode's narrative. The opening sequence is a subversion of the adaptation cliché: the comic book represents the kinds of texts *Frankenstein* has inspired, as well as *Frankenstein*'s associations within popular culture—the opening sequence thus indicates this episode is an adaptation not of *Frankenstein*, but of the Composite Frankenstein.

The episode's preoccupation with storytelling and books represents a common theme within the Composite Frankenstein: storytelling. Storytelling is a central theme in Shelley's *Frankenstein*: the *Frankenstein*'s narrative is structured as a series of letters written by the character Walton, who is repeating the story he heard from Victor Frankenstein; Frankenstein's

story includes stories he hears from other characters, most notably the monster himself, multiple times (the Creature himself tells Walton a brief account of events at the very end of the novel). *Frankenstein* contains various references to books that situate such texts as important and/or influential: Dr. Frankenstein's foray into science is initially inspired by his chance discovery of a Cornelius Agrippa book; the Creature's sense of self is heavily informed by his reading of *Paradise Lost*; and the Creature's discovery of his creator's journal inspires his subsequent quest for retribution. *Frankenstein* adaptations often feature books as prominent images or plot devices; Dr. Frankenstein's journal in particular appears in adaptations frequently, typically representing the secret to life: this occurs in *Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein* (1948), *Young Frankenstein* and *I, Frankenstein*[62].

Printed texts are plot mechanisms in "The Post-Modern Prometheus." The local newspaper appears onscreen multiple times, its headline propelling the plot forward (e.g. a newspaper headline informs the agents of Dr. Pollidori's research). Izzy's comic book "The Great Mutato" also appears onscreen and is integral to the episode's plot. Scully finds the comic in the Berkowitz home and assumes the mother based her letter to Mulder on the comic; Izzy explains he based his comic book on a real-life creature and agrees to show the agents "Mutato." The comic book thus serves as a plot device, leading the agents to learn about a local monster legend. After Mulder and Scully arrest Pollidori and Mutato near the episode's conclusion, Mulder references the comic book; however, this reference transforms the comic into a metafictional representation of the episode itself. Mulder states a desire to "rewrite" the ending of Mutato's story; after asking "where's the author?" Mulder looks to Izzy, the comic book's author. The subsequent events are unbelievably fantastic, noticeably altering the episode's tone: the entire town rallies behind Mutato, women from town appear on *The Jerry Springer Show*

(fulfilling the town's aspiration), and the remaining townsfolk, the FBI agents, and Mutato attend a Cher concert[63] where the iconic performer pulls Mutato onstage while the crowd cheers—the ultimate gesture of acceptance. The episode's final image, Mulder and Scully dancing happily, transforms into an illustration, and the episode ends with a hand closing the comic's back cover.

The episode's ending is a metafictional commentary on the monster fandom's desire to give Frankenstein's monster a happy ending. As I discussed previously, this same inclusion narrative is found at the Apple commercial's "core"; the commercial's appeal depends on audiences recognizing the Frankenstein's monster as a victim undeserving of his circumstance. Mulder's assertion that Mutato's arrest is wrong because "this is not how the story's supposed to end"[64] (while he examines a book: Mutato's photo album), and the fantastic sequence of events that follows, further suggest the episode is not "real"; rather, it is Izzy's comic book—a text he authors reflecting his desires. Because the episode previously establishes that Izzy represents both the monster fandom and the audience itself (through the doppelgänger motif), his fantasy is read as the audience's fantasy. Like the Apple commercial, Carter's homage to the Composite Frankenstein corrects the basic "Frankenstein" narrative by rewriting the Creature's fate, arguing he is redeemable, can fit into society, and deserves love and acceptance. The correction assumes the audience views the Frankenstein's monster as a tragic and sympathetic character, thus asserting that interpretation of the basic myth. Also like the Apple commercial, this turn of events is made possible in a whimsical—rather than realistic—setting, suggesting in a "real" *Frankenstein* story, the creature's tragic fate is unavoidable because it is a key aspect of the basic myth. The episode's ending is a metafictional reminder of *Frankenstein*'s mythic status: a story that is freely adapted and changed to represent cultural fears or desires.

Carter's references in "The Post-Modern Prometheus" are multifaceted, combining various textual references into the homage. Such discrepancies and deviations situate the episode as a homage, rather than an adaptation; furthermore, these deviations from strictly "Frankenstein" source material reflect the intertextual nature of the Composite Frankenstein: Carter weaves these additions into the film seamlessly because such ideas are already a part of how the audience approaches *Frankenstein*. "The Post-Modern Prometheus" imitates "classic" black and white Hollywood films, which includes 1940s/50s film styles that are unrelated to *Frankenstein* (1931), apart from the intertextual connection as "classic" black and white film. While Dr. Pollidori is a reference to Dr. Frankenstein, his laboratory does not contain the tesla-inspired equipment found in the Universal films. Instead, his laboratory alludes to the generic laboratories of the 1940's horror and 1950's science fiction films[65] because it is predominantly decorated with the various science fiction clichés from the classic "science gone wrong" horror films of the 1950's—test tubes, bizarre specimens preserved in old-fashioned glass jars, and retro industrial desk lamps. Furthermore, Dr. Pollidori's description of his scientific work with the "homeotic hox gene" and his accompanying visual of the magnified mutant fly head, are reminiscent of the 1950s mutant insect films, such as *Them!* (1954), *The Wasp Woman* (1959) or, obviously, *The Fly* (1958). These insect films are intertextually connected to the Composite Frankenstein through the monster fandom; the same monster magazines featuring stories about *Frankenstein* (1931) and *Dracula* (1931) contained coverage of the insect films.

Throughout "The Post-Modern Prometheus" (1997) are "echoes"—to borrow Machacek's phrase— of film noir: industrial windows with horizontal blinds, low-angle and high-angle establishing shots of contemporary brick buildings, dark figures in trench coats, and rolling clouds of mist and/or smoke. Such shots establish another intertextual connection:

between the shared German expressionist roots in classic horror and film noir; the episode suggests a conflation of gothic horror and film noir imagery.[66] Both genres are highly stylized, utilizing high-contrast lighting and dramatic shadows. The scene in which Dr. Pollidori kills his father in "The Post-Modern Prometheus" exemplifies a conflation of film noir and classic horror. Dr. Pollidori strangles his father in a tiny room by a table, reminiscent of the *Frankenstein* (1931) scene in which Frankenstein's monster strangles Dr. Waldman in a tiny room by a gurney; however, Carter directs the scene differently than Whale's film, imitating the aesthetic found in film noir and (incorporated into) later classic horror films.[67] The scene is staged with the farmer sitting at a table in the foreground facing the camera; his attacker enters the shot via a door in the background. The farmer continues to stare toward the audience as the two converse, a trope of film noir.[68] The scene is lit to appear as though the single dangling light bulb, hanging above the table, is the sole source of light. When Dr. Pollidori attacks his father, he knocks the bulb, causing it to cast dramatic shadows throughout the tiny room during their struggle. The scene ends with a shot of the wall where we can see the shadows of the two men as the farmer is strangled to death. All the violence in *Frankenstein* (1931) either occurs onscreen, or between shots; in this scene, however, the drama of the farmer's murder is enhanced through the use shadow representing action—a familiar film noir cliché.

"The Post-Modern Prometheus" embodies the complexities of the Composite Frankenstein, which occupies various spheres in popular culture; in this episode, "Frankenstein" is associated with classic literature, black and white film, and Eisenhower-era Americana. "The Post-Modern Prometheus" illustrates how complicated the Composite Frankenstein is in popular culture because popular culture associates "Frankenstein" with various contexts, plot points, symbols, themes, and styles; this is the result of the "myth" being continually retold and

redefined for contemporaneous audiences by a diverse range of texts. These texts become the sources that inform what "Frankenstein" signifies, often introducing new concepts into the myth; furthermore, these new *Frankenstein* texts are intertextually associated with other non-*Frankenstein* texts with similar contexts, introducing another layer of content for readers to engage with. For example, "The Post-Modern Prometheus" (1997) associates "Frankenstein" with the basic story of a "mad scientist" creating a monstrous being, but it also associates "Frankenstein" with science horror films, classic monster fandom, and American nostalgia. "The Post-Modern Prometheus" is a particularly good case study for *Frankenstein* in popular culture because it is an homage, which celebrates the culture surrounding a text as well as the text itself. As an homage, the episode celebrates the *Frankenstein* story as popular culture: it adapts the basic myth into an original tale of science gone wrong, but it also celebrates Shelley's *Frankenstein* through Mulder's summary and/or interpretation of the novel's plot. "The Post-Modern Prometheus" (1997) demonstrates the contrasting contexts and mediums that *Frankenstein* is associated with in popular culture: *Frankenstein* is a classic novel and a classic film; the story was written in the early 19th century, rewritten for film in the early 20th century, and re-popularized via television syndication post World War II. The "myth" at the heart of *Frankenstein* is continually rewritten to represent ideas relevant to its audience, both literally by adaptations that reinterpret the story, and conceptually by audiences who interpret the story having been influenced by outside forces. The episode serves as a reminder that adaptations, while affirming some aspects of plot, themes, symbols, etc. of the original, do not necessarily provide faithful retellings of their source material, which itself is being constantly rewritten by agents of intertextuality.

Conclusion

Since I began researching *Frankenstein* as popular culture, I have encountered countless versions of the iconic disfigured visage, depicted in virtually every medium imaginable. My initial plan to document these encounters in an image gallery was quickly abandoned, and instead, I selected a few examples that represent the common trends among the images, contextualized in the following Appendix. I am lucky to have caring family and friends who supported my research, often by sharing social media posts, as well as any unusual *Frankenstein* texts they encountered; such artifacts include: a Frankenstein's monster nutcracker; Charles E. Robinson's book *The Original Frankenstein*; the Babylit book *Frankenstein: An Anatomy Primer*; various Frankenstein's monster stickers and buttons; the video game *Dr. Franken*; and, predictably, many Halloween decorations. While I was not able to address every example in this thesis, the texts collectively provided a general "feel" for the Frankenstein's monster as a popular culture icon.

One Facebook post, which friends have shared on my wall multiple times since 2016, is worth mentioning: Chip Zdarsky posted a picture of the last page of *Frankenstein* with the following text handwritten beneath:

> As he drifted away I could just make out his final words.
>
> "It's okay if you just call me 'Frankenstein' instead of 'Frankenstein's monster.'
>
> I really don't mind."
>
> The end. (Zdarksy)

The Frankenstein versus Frankenstein's monster debate is at the core of the Composite Frankenstein. As I discuss in the Introduction, the Universal Studios film franchise encouraged audiences to think of the monster as "Frankenstein." There is a trend in contemporary media of

naming a Frankenstein's monster character "Frank" or "Frankie," such as *Alvin and the Chipmunks Meet Frankenstein* (1999), *Hotel Transylvania* (2012), and *Monster High* (2010–6); the trend is a compromise, referencing the icon's recognizable label while acknowledging it is a misnomer. The Composite Frankenstein is full of such compromises, texts that attempt to reconcile irreconcilable differences between Shelley's novel and its legacy of adaptations. *The X-Files* episode "The Post-Modern Prometheus" explores the Composite Frankenstein's instabilities, reminding audiences that "Frankenstein" is a classic novel *and* a classic film franchise *and* a beloved iconic monster. Shelley never named her monster, but the public has—regardless of how "erroneous" it is, the name "Frankenstein" signifies the green-skinned icon, first popularized by Whale's revolutionary film.

The Universal Studios *Frankenstein* films have titles such as *Bride of Frankenstein* (1935), *Son of Frankenstein* (1939) and *The Ghost of Frankenstein* (1942); these titles obfuscate who "Frankenstein" is, drawing a comparison between the doctor and the Creature. This "doubling" of Dr. Frankenstein and his creation is a prevalent theme within the Composite Frankenstein. The Hammer Films *Frankenstein* series also include "Frankenstein" in all the titles, but to a different effect: the Hammer Films are darker and more gruesome than their predecessors and the titles reflect this tonal shift. *The Revenge of Frankenstein* (1958), *The Evil of Frankenstein* (1964), *Frankenstein Must Be Destroyed* (1969), and *The Horror of Frankenstein* (1970) indict "Frankenstein"; because the titles do not specify "Dr. Frankenstein," the indictment applies to both the creator and creation. The Creature is the constant of the Universal *Frankenstein* films—Dr. Frankenstein only appears in *Frankenstein* (1931) and *Bride of Frankenstein*. The Hammer films instead all feature Peter Cushing in the titular role, creating new abominations in every installment. This Dr. Frankenstein is a true fiend; he is a grave-

robber, an adulterer, and a murder. His creations evoke some sympathy, but are two-dimensional and their main function within the narrative is wreaking havoc. Mary Shelley's novel, the Universal films, and the Hammer Horror *Frankenstein* series all follow the same basic formula; however, each property presents different interpretations of the characters and events.

The Composite Frankenstein is a highly mythic text; new adaptations and allusions to *Frankenstein* repurpose the basic story to suit varying ideological goals. Like all myths, the Composite Frankenstein narrative is representative. As I discuss in the previous chapter, Apple's 2016 holiday commercial features a Frankenstein's monster story as an allegory for social prejudice, with the goal of promoting inclusion. This "reading" of Shelley's story echoes a recent cultural trend of arguing that the Frankenstein's monster is a victim in the original narrative; texts such as the Apple commercial encourage that interpretation of Shelley's text, despite not containing supporting content from the novel. In short, the commercial appropriates what Shelley's *Frankenstein* represents culturally. The Composite Frankenstein's versatility, however, renders it vulnerable to misinformation and conflation.

In the last few years of conducting research, I observed a surprising number of individuals stating mistruths regarding *Frankenstein* and Mary Shelley with conviction. In one such case, an individual argued so vehemently that Shelley's monster names himself Adam, I found myself double-checking my novel later that evening. In another case, I listened to an individual ponder aloud for several minutes why Mary Shelley never wrote anything past her teenage years, stating it was "one of life's great mysteries." If nothing else, the experience demonstrates that the public's conception of *Frankenstein* comes from stories *about* the novel, rather than the novel's story itself: several *Frankenstein* allusions name their Creature "Adam" (i.e. *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* [1997–2003]) and as I discussed in Chapter 2, texts that

romanticize Mary Shelley into an icon emphasize her youth, beauty, and inexperience as a writer, defining her by *Frankenstein* and effacing her long career writing professionally.

My goal with this research is to destabilize the perception of authorship as an individual's mode of production and to investigate the various social processes that influence text creation and consumption. I present the Composite Frankenstein as a hermeneutic by which to view *Frankenstein*'s collaborative and cumulative identity in popular culture, drawing on the work of other scholars on adaptation and intertextuality. Expanding Foucault's concept of the "author function," I explore Mary Shelley's and James Whale's roles in the Composite Frankenstein, contrasting the two icons with their historic counterparts. I examine popular "myths" about these two authors, as well as myths surrounding their texts' origins. As Hutcheon notes, an audience's knowledge of a text's context can influence their interpretation (110); I describe the context of *Frankenstein*, *Frankenstein* (1931), and *Bride of Frankenstein* (1935)—including social pressures and censorship—both to investigate how Shelley's and Whale's authorship reflects their social circumstances, and to also identify the myths in the Composite Frankenstein that colour audience interpretation. For example: Mary's young age and her relationship with poet Percy Shelley are a part of her public image. In the past, critics challenged Mary's authority over her text because of such traits; in today's popular culture, these traits are key to her appeal as an icon. Similarly, Whale's sexual orientation is fundamental to his public image in contemporary popular culture, prompting many to read his films as queer texts (i.e. Harry M. Benshoff's *Monsters in the Closet: Homosexuality and the Horror Film* and Gregory Mank's interview in *The Frankenstein Files*). As I demonstrate in Chapters 2 and 3, such readings of Shelley's and Whale's authorship is reductive, effacing the various social factors that guide textual creation, distribution, and consumption.

In my last chapter, I frame *The X-Files* episode "The Post-Modern Prometheus" (1997) as an homage, which I argue represents the Composite Frankenstein because it reveals the public's many intertextual associations with *Frankenstein*. There are several other *Frankenstein* texts that I did not include in this thesis, but I believe warrant further research. The Hammer Films *Frankenstein* series is a significant body of work for the Composite Frankenstein; although these films are not as iconic as the Universal *Frankenstein* films, they did influence popular culture. The Hammer Horror films are highly-regarded within the monster fandom and received wide coverage in magazines such as *Famous Monsters of Filmland*—a magazine that, during its peak run, repeatedly referenced Hammer Films director Terence Fisher on the cover (Michelucci 54–66). The Hammer films were the first *Frankenstein* films in colour and were, at the time of their release, groundbreaking for their depictions of violence and gore; furthermore, these films are British productions and therefore can be read as reflections of British identity (as Peter Hutchings does in his article "The Problem of British Horror"). I chose not to analyze these films for this thesis because they are less iconic than Whale's *Frankenstein* adaptations; although the monster fandom holds the Hammer Horror series in high regard, and the films did contribute to the developing Composite Frankenstein, their influence on *Frankenstein*'s contemporary popular culture is less evident than the Universal Films, which continue to dominate the Composite Frankenstein's iconography.

Mel Brooks' parody *Young Frankenstein* (1974) is another significant *Frankenstein* text worth investigating; the film parodies Whale's *Frankenstein* (1931) and *Bride of Frankenstein* in a faithful manner, recreating the films' aesthetic and clichés. Not only was Brooks' film a critical and commercial success upon release, but it remains a well-known and highly-regarded film. *Young Frankenstein* and other comedic *Frankenstein* adaptations function similarly to "The

Post-Modern Prometheus" within the Composite Frankenstein because their comedy depends on audiences recognizing content from other *Frankenstein* adaptations. "The Post-Modern Prometheus" is more representative of the contemporary Composite Frankenstein than *Young Frankenstein*, which is a specific parody of one *Frankenstein* text rather than *Frankenstein* as general popular culture. Similarly, children's media that adapts the Composite Frankenstein is another possible area of research because such media appropriates *Frankenstein* ideas and images for an audience unfamiliar with the source materials; thus, such children's media reflects the popular culture surrounding *Frankenstein*, referencing and reinforcing clichés and tropes. Children's media, such as the film *Alvin and the Chipmunks Meet Frankenstein* (1999) or the book *Frankenstein: A Monstrous Parody*, repurposes the Composite Frankenstein for a young audience, reducing the complex themes and nuances of Shelley's and Whale's stories into easily-consumed narratives, often with the purpose of promoting positive values (i.e. tolerance, inclusion, acceptance, etc.).

Almost since its inception, *Frankenstein* has been a creature of adaptation; Peake's 1823 play *Presumption; or, the Fate of Frankenstein* play popularized, but also interpreted, Shelley's novel, and her 1831 revisions reflect the play's influence. The public's confusion over the very name of the iconic Creature epitomizes the Composite Frankenstein, embodying the creature's transformation into an icon that transcends particular texts, time periods, and cultures. We live in the time of the Composite Frankenstein: a socially-constructed intertextual narrative, a contemporary myth, mutable and unstable, and able to reflect changing ideology. The Composite Frankenstein will continue to shift and change as mainstream social concerns shift and change. Shelley's story has burst forth from the pages of *Frankenstein*, developing a life of its own that popular culture incubates. It's alive.

Endnotes

1. *The Frankenstein Film Sourcebook* is a catalogue of films that "explore the Frankenstein myth" (Picart, Smoot, and Blodgett). *Edward Scissorhands* is among the films listed in the book.
2. I recognize that "paratext" is primarily a literary term, but I find it a useful term to distinguish between aspects of creation (context) from aspects of delivery, such as marketing, distribution, accolades, etc.
3. According to Scott McQueen, the screenwriter wrote this scene with "anachronisms… for the benefit of the censors" (McQueen Commentary *Bride of Frankenstein*). For more on the effects of censorship, see section 3 of this Unit.
4. In fact, *Father of Frankenstein* is a book by Christopher Bram, describing a fictional account of James Whale's final days. The book was adapted for the film, *Gods and Monsters* (1998), which takes its name from a line in *Bride of Frankenstein* spoken by Dr Pretorious: "To a new world of gods and monsters."
5. Wright argues that the association between the Creature and violin-playing in popular culture, as evinced by Mel Brooks' *Young Frankenstein*, is rooted in the musical performances of Peake's plays.
6. Based on screen tests, which various film historians in "The Frankenstein Files" argue Whale saw and integrated into his own vision for the film. I believe Whale incorporated expressionist imagery because he too was a fan of German expressionist films. For more on this, see the section "Fathering *Frankenstein* (1931); the Creation of James Whale's Classic Film Monster(s)."

7. Colin Clive and Mae Clark are the first two names, as they play the roles of the leading man and woman respectively; however, the third role listed is not the monster, as one may expect, but "Victor Moritz," Dr. Frankenstein's best friend in the film, played by the handsome John Boles. The character is largely forgettable, having little effect on the narrative and mostly serving as an escort to Elizabeth, the doctor's fiancée. Boles, however, had starred in several successful pre-code Hollywood films, such as the operetta *The Desert Song* (1929), the comedy *Rio Rita* (1929) and the Oscar-winning revue *King of Jazz* (1930); thus, the credits (likely) list him prominently on the title card as one of the few recognizable names (Aliperti).
8. Technically, three editions of *Frankenstein* were published during Mary's lifetime: initially in 1818, an 2-volume reprint of the 1818 edition in 1823 (with Mary's name on it), and finally a revised edition in 1831 ("Study Aids: Editions of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*"); however, I am primarily concerned with the 1818 and 1831 texts, and do not consider the 1823 reprint a "true" second edition. According to Robinson, this "new edition" contained 123 word changes, and "no more than 250 or 500 copies of that edition were published" (Robinson 17).
9. An example of a non-scholarly *Frankenstein* 1818 text is the graphic novel, *Gris Grimly's Frankenstein*. Arguably, this edition is an adaptation, as Gris Grimly is reinterpreting the story with his accompanying illustrations; however, it uses a substantial amount (but not all) of the 1818 text. The 200 year anniversary no-doubt has fuelled a recent surge in 1818 reprints.
10. Penguin recently published a new critical edition of *Frankenstein*, edited by Charlotte Gordon. The text I have is the 1992 edition, edited by Maurice Hindle. Hindle also

provided the annotations for Penguin's 2007 deluxe edition of *Frankenstein*, which I also own; however, this edition presents the 1831 text rather than the 1818.

11. At least, that is how his work has generally been interpreted. See Macdonald and Scherf, Foertsch, Butler and Mellor.
12. J. Paul Hunter, editor of the Norton critical edition, does not comment on Rieger's scholarship, nor does he on the previous *Frankenstein* scholarship, other than to acknowledge that "twentieth-century scholarship has continued to debate just exactly what Percy is responsible for, and whether he improved or injured Mary's work" (Hunter x).
13. Hindle describes Percy's as "then virtually unknown" (ix). After his death in 1822, Mary devoted herself to immortalizing her late husband through publishing his works. There is some irony in Mary Shelley being obscured by a shadow she helped create.
14. In her 1831 Introduction, Mary states that Percy wrote the original preface; perhaps this is why the preface, which is written from the perspective of the author, uses male pronouns.
15. Another interesting parallel between Lawrence's work and the Composite Frankenstein is the significance of an abnormal brain—in many *Frankenstein* film adaptations, the insertion of the monster's brain is a significant plot point, often followed by repercussions because of the brain's inadequacy (i.e. in Whale's 1931 *Frankenstein*, Fritz takes the "abnormal" criminal brain; in Terence Fisher's *The Curse of Frankenstein*, Dr. Frankenstein murders a brilliant professor for his brain, only for the brain to be damaged in the process, resulting in a violent and psychotic monster). This similarity is purely coincidental however, as Shelley's *Frankenstein* does not mention the monster's brain.

16. Incest is a clear theme in the film adaptation *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* (1994); Elizabeth and Victor even have a conversation about how scandalous it is for them to be siblings as well as lovers.
17. Victor is an anti-hero and the creature as both victim and villain. This is true for modern readings of the book as well as initial interpretations; for example, the reviewer from *Knight's Quarterly Magazine* in 1824 states "*my* interest in the book is entirely on the side of the monster. His eloquence and persuasion, of which Frankenstein complains, are so because they are truth. The justice is indisputably on his side" ("Contexts" ed. Wolfson 397)
18. Safie's mother, who died before the events of the novel, "taught her to aspire to higher powers of intellect" (Shelley ed. Butler 99) —another parallel between Mary's life and one of her characters.
19. The landing page for the *Frankenstein* section of the archive includes links to "Resources" that contextualize the notebooks, written by Charles E. Robinson, a leading scholar in this field.
20. Robinson cites some examples of the Shelley's collaborations, stating "Mary Shelley often transcribed Percy Shelley's poems; Percy contributed lyrics to Mary's mythological dramas for adolescents, *Proserpine* and *Midas*; and each encouraged the other to write a drama about Beatrice Cenci" (Robinson 24).
21. Jane Williams was a friend of both Mary and Percy. Percy was enamored with Jane, and wrote several love poems dedicated to her. Jane informed Mary of her relationship with Percy four years after his death, which devastated Mary. G. M. Mathews discusses

Percy's feelings for Jane, and the ramifications for Mary, in his article "Shelley and Jane Williams" (Mathews).

22. More accurately, the lectures comprising Lawrence's book were a source of inspiration for *Frankenstein*; technically the book came out after *Frankenstein*.
23. Butler also references protests following H. M. Milner's *The Demon of Switzerland* (Butler l).
24. Shelley did, however, praise Cooke's performance (Forry 15). Similarly, many of the mixed reviews of the play praised Cooke but criticized the script, one reviewer describing some of the dialogue as "miserable prattle" (15).
25. *Bride of Frankenstein* is critically considered a superior film; as well, *Show Boat* (1936) was highly-regarded upon release.
26. According to Curtis, there are just two short clips of video footage featuring Whale; perhaps the documentaries include clips from *Gods and Monsters* to add some visual excitement among the still images and talking heads.
27. For evidence, Curtis references various reviews of *Bride of Frankenstein* that imply the genre is falling out of public favor (250).
28. Breen's lack of professional training and/or official status did not prevent him from speaking and acting on behalf of Catholic values, exercising control to the point of near megalomania. For more on this, see the later section on Hollywood censorship.
29. When Whale met Harrington, he "took a liking to the young man" (Curtis 357), and the two became friends. I suspect that the effeminate film student character in *Gods and Monsters* is loosely based on Harrington.

30. As well, neither film relies solely on suspense and fear: there is a strong romance element to both *Hunchback* and *Phantom* (hence the designation "proto-horror").

31. For clarification, the source material for *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1923) is a novel from the same period as *Frankenstein*; however, the property would have felt more contemporary for 1920s audiences because it had already been adapted for film several times. Furthermore, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1923) was the passion project of popular character actor Lon Chaney, whose role as a producer and actor would have brought much-needed public attention to the film.

32. The studio originally attached Lugosi to the project for the part of the monster because of his success in the title role of *Dracula* (1931); however, Lugosi was not attached to the project for long. The reason(s) for Lugosi's departure from the film are not known, although Curtis suggests Whale simply did not want Lugosi for the role because of his fleshy appearance.

33. Curtis states that the script called for the creature to look like an "Egyptian Mummy" (243) but he does not specify which screenwriter is responsible.

34. Friedman's "The Blasted Tree" repeatedly references Whale's "visual sense" or "sensibility" but curiously omits any explicit reference to Whale's background as an artist. I am undecided if this reflects the "fashion" of English scholarship at the time—to ignore the author's biographical details and to focus analysis within the text(s)—or if Friedman was ignorant of Whale's personal life. Either way, Friedman's analysis frames Whale as the auteur of *Frankenstein* (1931) without citing any contextual information.

35. Robert Horton, Jan-Christopher Horak, and Rudy Behlmer are all guilty of this, just to name a few.

36. From an original (1939) review in *The New York Times*: “if Universal’s ‘Son of Frankenstein’… isn’t the silliest picture ever made, it’s a sequel to the silliest picture ever made… But its silliness is deliberate… perpetuated by a good director in the best traditions of cinematic horror” (“THE SCREEN” 9).
37. T.V. Tropes lists various examples of the skunk stripe trope. Notable examples from horror/fantasy films include Narcissa Malfoy and Belatrix Lestrange in the *Harry Potter* series, the mother from *Poltergeist* (1982) (the streaks appear due to the events of the film), Magenta from *Rocky Horror Picture Show* (1975), and Malita, the mad scientist antagonist from Tod Browning’s *Devil Doll* (1936).
38. Coincidentally, James Whale himself was subject to some “fanciful stories” (Curtis 20) involving his hair turning white “in 48 hours under the stress of capture” (20) during World War II. This story is not true—Whale’s hair did not turn white until he was in his early 40s.
39. For my discussion on Hollywood history, I rely heavily on two excellent books on the subject by Gregory D. Black: *Hollywood Censored: Morality Codes, Catholics, and the Movies* and *The Catholic Crusade Against the Movies, 1940 – 1975*, as well as Thomas Doherty’s *Pre-code Hollywood; Sex, Immorality, and Insurrection in American Cinema 1930 – 1934*.
40. There is a second shot that is a jump cut (it is the same angle as the previous shot, just slightly further away). While it is possible that this was an artistic choice—jump cuts are jarring and can add tension to a scene—the subtlety of the cut suggests it was an unintentional consequence of having to film the scene twice: the first time Karloff threw the girl in, she did not sink, and Whale had to reshoot the scene (Behlmer).

41. For example, *The Simpsons*' first "Treehouse of Horror" Halloween special opens with Marge standing in front of a red curtain, warning the audience about the episode's content; this is an "echo" of the prologue to the 1931 film *Frankenstein*, because it is not obvious that this scene is a reference, and thus its "derivation can go unnoticed" (527). Conversely, *The Simpsons*' second Halloween special contains a direct reference to *Frankenstein* (1931) with a segment in which Mr. Burns, depicted as a mad scientist, attempts to create the perfect employee. The premise and style parodies *Frankenstein* (1931), dressing Mr. Burns in unusual attire and surrounding him with anachronistic laboratory equipment, drawing attention to the allusion. Burns even references *Frankenstein*, when he mockingly asks Smithers "who is it? Frankenstein?" The difference between the two examples is subtle: in the former, the reference is hidden; in the latter, the reference is more explicit.
42. The creepy graphics in *Frankenstein* (1931)'s opening credits reference Fritz Lang's visual style, particularly the spinning image of eyes, which echoes a similar shot in *Metropolis* (1927).
43. Whale stages Elizabeth's bedroom scene in *Frankenstein* (1931) to reference *The Nightmare* (1781); Maryanne C. Ward argues Mary Shelley similarly wrote Victor's discovery of Elizabeth's corpse to reference the painting. See her article "A Painting of the Unspeakable: Henry Fuseli's 'The Nightmare' and the Creation of Mary Shelley's 'Frankenstein'."
44. Leitch references the monster's creation scene in the *Composite Frankenstein* to argue this point. While the creation scene in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* was described in a brief paragraph, Peake and Milner extended this moment to be a pivotal scene in their

play adaptations. The creation scene is now one of the most iconic aspects of the Composite Frankenstein.

45. There are some facsimiles of the play's lithographs and posters, as well as copies of magazine reviews of the play that include descriptions of the character. Susan J Wolfson reviews some of these sources in her Longman Cultural Edition of *Frankenstein* (2007).
46. I suspect that the effect of the monster "growing" was accomplished through burning a puppet and playing the footage backwards; however, I have not found a source to confirm this. Regardless, the visual is itself is quite disturbing.
47. Film historian Rudy Behlmer characterizes Shelley's creation scene as thus in the documentary *The Frankenstein Files*, and contrasts it to Whale's more scientific interpretation.
48. The documentary *The Frankenstein Files* implies the 1910 version of the monster inspired the Whale/Pierce makeup collaboration, but I suspect any similarities between the two are coincidental.
49. *Victor Frankenstein* (2015) was marketed as such, despite evidence to the contrary. There have been some "made-for-tv movies" that adapt *Frankenstein*. An American/German independent film, *Frankenstein* (2015), offers a modern-day reimagining of Shelley's story. The film (predictably) echoes iconic moments from Whale's film that are absent in the novel. I have chosen not to discuss *Frankenstein* (2015) in this thesis because it is a largely-unknown film.
50. Perhaps the origins of Dr. Frankenstein's diary as a popular culture icon in its own right, as discussed earlier.

51. Phil Hartman popularized the catchphrase "fire bad!" with his performance as "Frankenstein" on *Saturday Night Live*.
52. And later *Rocky Horror Picture Show* (1975) took this to its logical conclusion, presenting the creature as Dr. Frankenfurter's attempt to create a perfect man (in regards to physical attractiveness). *Frankenstein: The True Story* (1973) also features an attractive male monster; however, this creature degenerates into a hideous form and chaos ensues.
53. Many of the monsters speak according to certain stereotypes, loosely associated with their character design. The very cool Dracula student sounds like a 1950s greaser (or "the Fonz"), while the swamp creature speaks with a California "surfer" accent.
54. The Creature's tea drinking is possibly a reference to a famous behind-the –scene photo from *Frankenstein*'s (1931) production.
55. As Horton describes in his Cultographies book, Universal's 1957 "Shock!" television syndication package was surprising popular: "A flood of vintage horror hit the airwaves, and its smash success startled TV programmers and cultural observers alike. Ratings shot up everywhere the movies were broadcast" (37). These late-night horror films became a cult phenomenon, which was perpetuated by new materials designed for fans: according to Robert Horton, "Television, comic books, and fan magazines brought the cult to countless more households" (38). *Famous Monsters of Filmland*—an influential monster fan magazine that is still published today—was founded in response to this emerging fandom. The magazine was an immediate success: "The first issue of the first professional fantasy movie periodical… was released in February 1958 in a quantity of 125, 000 copies—and went back to press and sold out a second edition of 75, 000

(Michelucci 8). Other similar publications were founded around this time period, such as *Horror Monsters* (1961 – 1964), *Mad Monsters* (1961 – 1965), and *Fantastic Monsters of the Films* (1962 – 1963) (88-100).

56. The similarities to Frankenstein's monster is not surprising, as this monster is arguably the most popular and influential figure in the classic horror fandom—a Boris Karloff style Frankenstein's monster was depicted on the very first edition of the most significant monster fan magazine, *Famous Monsters of Filmland*.
57. I would be very interested to know if the events of this episode are ever mentioned in a later episode; I do not recall any episodes referencing back to "The Post-Modern Prometheus," but I did not re-watch the whole series looking for a reference either.
58. But not completely alien (forgive the pun) either; such quirky characters are typically present in the uncommon comedic *The X-Files* episodes.
59. In Whale's film universe, the purely-comedic characters are sparred. For example, in *The Bride of Frankenstein* (1935) Minnie discovers the Creature but flees the encounter unscathed. The comedic villains are not so lucky.
60. This scene in *Frankenstein* (1931) is itself a reference to another text; the shot is constructed to imitate Fuseli's famous painting "The Nightmare." For more on Whale's influences, see Chapter 3.
61. The character could also be read as a reference to Elizabeth in Shelley's novel; however, there is more evidence for the film reference (further demonstration that the two texts are difficult to untangle).
62. Technically *Young Frankenstein* features Dr. Frankenstein's secret library. Van Helsing's journal is a similarly common symbol; for example, the heroes in the ensemble film

Monster Squad (1987) use Van Helsing's journal to defeat Dracula. The character Van Helsing is a common intertextual cross-over from *Frankenstein*'s (1931) twin film, *Dracula* (1931), and he is often included in texts that contain Frankenstein's monster, such as the film *Van Helsing* (2004) and the television show *Penny Dreadful*.

63. The episode establishes Mutato loves Cher because of the film *Mask* (1985), in which she plays the loving mother of a boy with severe deformities.
64. Mulder then inaccurately summarizes *Frankenstein's* ending, stating the evil doctor pays for his crimes while the Creature seeks out a mate; given Carter's specific references to the novel earlier in the episode, I read this error as Mulder stating how the monster fandom *wants* the novel to end.
65. The *Frankenstein* (1931) sequel *House of Dracula* (1945) has such a laboratory, so there is a direct connection here; however, the scientist in this film is a medical doctor rather than a "mad scientist" inventor.
66. Arthur Edeson, the cinematographer who worked with Whale on his iconic films, also was the head cinematographer of the classic film noir, *The Maltese Falcon* (1941).
67. The *Frankenstein* (1931) sequel *House of Frankenstein* (1944) does feature a scene in which Daniel (billed as "the hunchback") attempts to strangle Dr. Niemann (billed as "the mad scientist"), and the action is depicted through shadows. This is *not* an iconic scene, and only audience members *very* familiar with the Universal classic horror films would make the connection. This is a good example of intertextuality as a reader's mode of production rather than an employed stylistic device.
68. Actually a general melodrama trope; for example, this staging is common in soap operas.

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Appendix A: Image Gallery

Figure 1: inexpensive and "unofficial," this wall-hanging was found at a Dollarama in 2016. Note the square head, bolts (at the top of the head), green skin and scar.

Figure 1: Basic Halloween decoration (author's personal collection).

Figure 2: Part of the Lemax "Spooky Town" seasonal miniature village line. The audio plays "Frankie" talking to his wife in broken English.

Figure 2: Broken Skull Bar village piece by Lemax (author's personal collection).

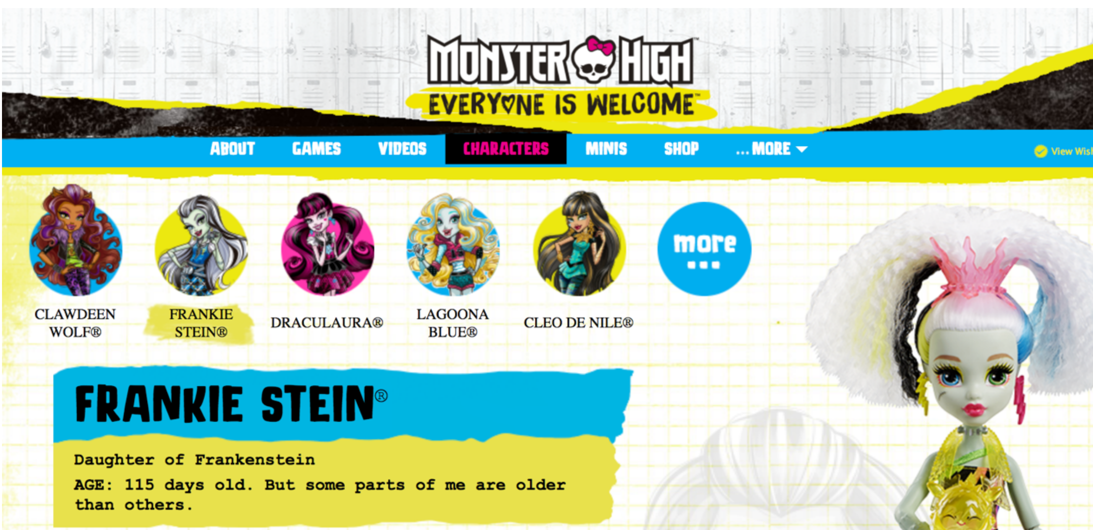

Figure 3: Frankie Stein from *Monster High* (screenshot). "Frankie Stein." *Monster High*. Mattel, 2018, play.monsterhigh.com/en-ca/characters/frankie-stein. Accessed 26 August 2018.

Figure 4: Artwork echoes the classic monster: bolts (at the temples), flat head, green skin, and heavy brow. This version also incorporates the forehead gash, high cheekbones, and forehead staples of the original Boris Karloff 1931 makeup.

Figure 4: Special Edition Fender guitar (author's personal collection)

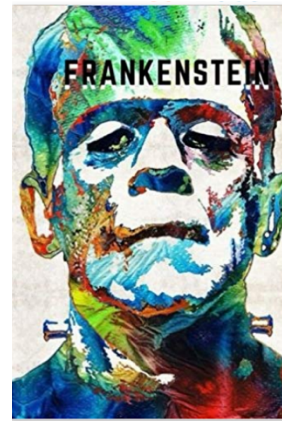

Figure 5: Frankenstein edition featuring Boris Karloff's Creature as the cover art.

Figure 5: Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein*, CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2017. *Amazon*, permalink: a.co/d/gBkab1M. Accessed 26 August 2018.

Figure 6: Danielle Steel novels. "Danielle Steel Romance Novel Collection 21 Book Set." *Amazon.com*, uploaded by Rephisto Used Books, permalink: a.co/d/eRArQSb. Accessed 17 July 2018.

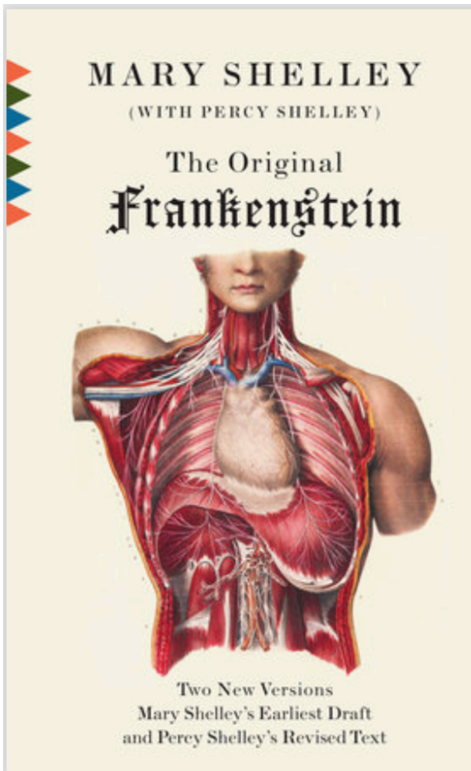

Figure 7: Robinson, Charles E, editor. *The Original Frankenstein*, by Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley (with Percy Bysshe Shelley), Vintage Books, 2008.

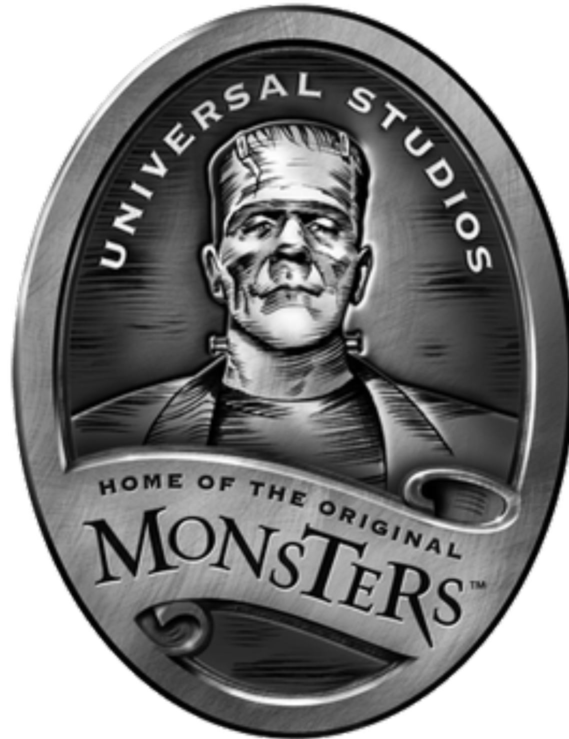

Figure 8: Universal Monster's Logo; "File: Universal monsters logo.png"; *Wikipedia*, 2004, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Universal_monsters_logo.png.

Figure 9: Cooke as the "Daemon" in Le monstre et le magicien. "Le monstre et le magicien d'Antony Beraud et Jean-Toussaint Merle : documents iconographiques." *Gallica*, Bibliothèque nationale de France, 3 May 2010, gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8405918d. Accessed 12 August 2018.

Figure 10: The Burger King Frankenstein beside Niagara Fall's "House of Frankenstein" attraction; "Photo: 'The House of Frankenstein'"; *TripAdvisor*, uploaded by JimDeBerry, 4 August 2017, www.tripadvisor.ca/LocationPhotoDirectLink-g154998-d4091269-i66471134-The_House_of_Frankenstein-Niagara_Falls_Ontario.html.

Figure 11: The cover of *Famous Monsters of Filmland* issue #14. "FamousMonsters14.jpg"; October 1961, *Wikipedia*, 25 October 2008, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:FamousMonsters14.jpg.

Figure 12: "The Great Mutato" comic book. Still from "The Post-Modern Prometheus." *The X-Files*. 20th Century Fox Television, 1997. *Netflix*, www.netflix.com/title/70136138.

Figure 13: Still from “The Post-Modern Prometheus.” *The X-Files*. 20th Century Fox Television, 1997. *Netflix*, www.netflix.com/title/70136138.

Appendix B: A Brief History of Early Hollywood Censorship

According to Thomas Doherty, film has been paradoxically viewed as both mindless entertainment and a medium with "potential for social damage and moral blight" (5) since the medium's beginning, and the "motion picture morality, or the lack of it, had been monitored by guardians of civic virtue since the chaste peck between the middle-aged lovebirds in *The Kiss* (1896)" (5). By 1907, "nickelodeon" films were attracting "more than two million customers daily" (Black *Hollywood* 6); contextually, this was "during the height of the Progressive reform movement in the United States" (7). Because the nickelodeons were so popular, the potential impact of this new form of entertainment on the public's physical and mental health, particularly for the "hordes of unsupervised children" (6) who crammed themselves into the dark, unventilated theatres, concerned such Progressives. City and state censorship boards formed in response to the concerns and criticisms raised by progressives, which ranged from the films being evil (17) and "corrupting children" (13) to the nickelodeon theatres themselves being a fire hazard (12). The Mutual Film Corporation responded to the new policies by seeking an injunction against the Ohio censorship board in 1915; the Supreme Court denied the injunction, arguing that because films are a business, free speech protection did not apply (15-6). Because of this ruling, "for the next four decades, Government censorship of movies prior to their exhibition was legal" (18). This ruling set a precedent for government-mandated censorship of films, and led to the PCA's formation as a preventative measure: self-censorship became an attractive option for filmmakers wanting to prevent censorship boards from appearing in every state, both because of the threat it posed to creative control, as well as the threat of numerous costly film recuts customized to each state censorship board.

The next wave of public calls for censorship occurred in the 1920s, which led to the formation of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA): the organization responsible for the Production Code Administration. Two significant cultural changes in America during this decade prompted the renewed call for censorship: the first being the shift from short films shown in cheap and shabby nickelodeon theatres to high-budget films shown in "massive picture palaces that seated thousands" (Black *Hollywood* 21); the second being the surge in organized crime, which flourished during the prohibition. The criminal activities of bootleggers and bank-robbers "were sensationalized in the press" (105); the public outlaws inspired books like *Scarface*, and, naturally, film adaptations. Black suggests that the glorification of illegal activity in films like *Doorway to Hell* (1930) and *Scarface* (1932) (both novel adaptations) drew the attention of lawmakers: "traditional denouncers of film were joined by police, judges, lawyers, mayors, newspapers, and civic organizations in condemning the harmful effects of the genre" (109); the addition of these voices strengthened the call for film censorship. A key concern in these discussions was the impact of such films on impressionable youth, because the predominate belief was that "films based on the activities of criminals led to an increase in crime and juvenile delinquency" (108). The advocates for censorship framed such "corrupting" films as a social concern, pointing to tangible ramifications for the public, such as increased crime rates. This argument worked in tandem with spiritual anxieties, championed by Christian citizens concerned with film's capacity to morally corrupt their fellow man.

The film industry changed during the 1920s, however, and filmmakers could resist critics of the industry much more effectively than previously. In the 1920s "the modern film studios emerged" (Black *Hollywood* 22) and formed monopolies that controlled the distribution of films until 1947 (24). The largest studios in Hollywood also owned theatre chains: a vertical

integration strategy that formed an oligopoly, edging out foreign competition. In 1922, these studios joined together to form The Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA)—a trade association to protect their financial interests (Doherty 8). The MPPDA's president was William H. Hays, who "defended the industry from attacks, recited soothing nostrums, and negotiated treaties to cease hostilities" (6)— this is why the MPPDA is colloquially known as the Hays Office. The MPPDA tasked Hays with ending the calls for government censorship; thus, the MPPDA at this time was largely a public relations tool to avoid, as much as possible, the formation of new censorship boards. While the MPPDA wanted to avoid imposed censorship, they also wanted to produce inoffensive films: as Black explains, "ever fearful of losing any segment of their audience, the studios either carefully avoided controversial topics or presented them within a tightly constructed framework that evaded larger issues" (5). The studios may have been powerful, but this power was dependent on American's willingness to pay for their films.

As the threat of government censorship loomed closer and closer towards the end the 1920s, the MPPDA took control of the situation by writing their own censorship terms; however, it would still be a few years before the MPPDA would form the PCA to enforce these terms. In 1929, Hays hired Catholic layman Martin Quigley and Jesuit priest Father Daniel A. Lord to write a set of moral guidelines for the studios to adhere to (Doherty 6). After a period of revision and collaboration with studio heads, the MPPDA agreed to abide by standards outlined in Hays' Production Code on March 31 1930 (2). Black suggests the goal of the Production Code was "to prevent questionable material, both moral and political, from reaching the screen" (Black *Hollywood* 6). This process involved Code administrators reviewing scripts and films; however, from 1930 until 1934, such administrators had no way of enforcing the code: "members of the

MPPDA could appeal unfavorable decisions by Code administrators to the next level of executive authority, namely themselves" (Doherty 8). Doherty identifies this period as the "pre-code era," which he describes as "a fascinating and anomalous passage in American motion picture history" (2).

Doherty's characterizes this period as a brief window when studios produced films free from the shackles of administrative interference; however, this is an exaggerated and romanticized view of the politics during this time. According to Curtis, Whale's supervisors at Universal expected him to adhere to the Code, and Whale did deal with Code administrators. Black's basic description of this period corroborates Curtis's description of events. Doherty is correct in his assessment that filmmakers had more freedom to bend the rules of the code prior to the formation of the PCA. It was during this period of lax regulation that Whale directed not only *Frankenstein* (1931), but also *Waterloo Bridge* (1931), and *The Impatient Maiden* (1932)—two films with content so salacious, that after the PCA's formation, it became impossible to reissue them (Curtis 126).

The PCA, or Production Code Administration, formed to enforce the Code in 1934 in response to public backlash at the inefficacy of the Production Code. The combined threat of citizens with spiritual and social concerns banding together with government officials finally prompted the MPPDA to act. As Doherty explains:

> Beginning in late 1933 and with escalating vehemence throughout the first half of 1934, [American Catholics] launched a crusade against Hollywood immorality. When the New Deal in Washington insinuated the probability of federal censorship, and a reformist educational group called the Motion Pictures Research Council published a series of

> reports linking bad behaviour to bad movies, the studios found themselves fighting a three-front war against church, state, and social science. (8)

The PCA was a third party organization that answered to "moneymen behind the industry" (9). The PCA's power came from providing films with seals of approval: only movies conforming to the Code received a seal, and those that did not were restricted from the major theatre chains, severely limiting viewership and earning potential. This system worked because, as I mention earlier, the film industry was an oligopoly, and it was in the best interests of the studios owning these theatre chains to agree to the terms.

The PCA even had the power to vet scripts and reject projects in pre-production; this makes sense, considering the risk of investing in films that the PCA would never approve. The ramifications for this new system, however, was that one man—Joseph Breen—had significant influence on what projects entered production and in what form. In his biography of James Whale, Curtis describes the director's struggles with the new censorship body and the man who ran it:

> Gone were the days of voluntary compliance and convenient interpretations of the Code. Breen now had as much power as the men he regulated, and a film without the PCA seal could not be distributed or exhibited. Suddenly, the fussy objections of Breen and his people became more than mere annoyances; the PCA could kill a picture. (Curtis 224)

Sexual content was a common offender (as in *Waterloo Bridge* [1931] and *The Impatient Maiden* [1932]). Violence was another concern; for example, Breen instructed Whale to lower the death count in *Bride of Frankenstein* (1935) ("She's Alive").

At times, filmmakers added scenes to promote a moral in accordance with the code's values: as Black states in *Hollywood Censored*, "Every film, according to Breen, must now

contain 'sufficient good' to compensate for any evil that might be depicted" (173). Such changes either occurred during the production of the film, and as a result became a part of the artistic process, or post-production, editing the master negative prior to release to permanently remove offensive content. The master negative was recut to make the PCA's censorship permanent. In some cases, censored content is now lost; some pre-code films are now "lost films" because "unsavory pre-Code films were pulled from circulation" (Doherty 19). Films not in circulation had little-to-no monetary value for studios; furthermore, the medium itself—nitrate film—is highly flammable and instable; natural decay and vault fires destroyed many stored negatives (see David Pierce, "The Legion of the Condemned – Why American Silent Films Perished").

Generally, Christian groups were a large concern for the film industry. According to film historian Rudy Behlmer, Universal requested the prologue to *Frankenstein* (1931) in anticipation of "objections from religious groups over divine presumption" (Behlmer). The Legion of Decency was another source of interference for Hollywood during this period. The group formed in 1933 to act as an independent watchdog group for Catholic Americans; although the Legion had no official authority over the Hollywood studios, it had authority over American Catholics, which were a sizable demographic in the 1930s. Black argues "Hollywood did not dare challenge Catholic authorities" (2). The Catholic population was more valuable as an ally than an adversary, and thus the Legion of Decency could force compliance from the studios:

> The Catholic church was able to force Hollywood to submit every film it produced to a small group of Legion reviewers in New York before its release. The Legion then issued a rating for the film, which could vary from approval for all age groups to the most feared rating, "C" (condemned)—forbidden viewing for all Catholics (Black *Catholic* 1).

By condemning a film, the Legion declared viewing it a sin for Catholics; the studios worked with the Legion for fear of a rating that would forbid millions of Catholics to view their film. Breen and the PCA often worked in tandem; according to Black, Breen took pride in the fact that PCA-approved films rarely received "C" rating from the Legion (238).

The Production Code, the PCA, and the Legion of Decency all originate in the early 1930s. The timing of these events during the Great Depression is not coincidental: the industry boomed during the 1920s, but suffered after the market crash in 1929 (Black *Hollywood* 28). Compounding the problem was the "corrosive competition" (35) of radio, as families could listen to broadcast entertainment provided at no cost; Doherty argues that radio "was the first serious threat to the cultural centrality of the movies" (18). Self-imposed censorship was a cost-effective strategy for studios to embrace because it saved the costs incurred by editing prints to meet the individual standards of local censorship boards. In other words, studios hoped that by creating their own centralized censorship organization, they would catch objectionable material before a film's release, gambling that state censorship boards would not request additional cuts. Furthermore, there was money in safe filmmaking: according to Black, "the wholesome family pictures took off at the box office" (*Hollywood* 335). By the close of 1934, the film industry experienced an "astonishing financial rebound" (336). During a time when American spirits were low and businessmen were increasingly hesitant to take financial risks, the self-imposed censorship and regulation of the PCA proved a dependable business strategy—further reinforcing the notion that filmmaking was business, not art.