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# THE **POPULAR** CULTURE STUDIES **JOURNAL**

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# *Frankenstein* Performed: The Monster Who Will Not Die

JEANNE TIEHEN

At first there is only darkness. The sound of a loud heartbeat fills the theatre. In a flash of light, there is a glimpse of what appears to be a naked man suspended from the ceiling. Before the eyes can make sense of what they are seeing, the stage goes dark again. There is another flash of light. The man-like creature groans painfully as he struggles to free himself. He finally succeeds, and he falls to the floor. He appears unable to stand. Blood seeps from his multiple sutures. He cowers on the floor. It is dark again. The London audience anxiously waits for another flash of light to witness the Creature come to life in the National Theatre's 2011 production of *Frankenstein*.

Nearly two hundred years after Mary Shelley first anonymously published her novel *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*, playwright Nick Dear and director Danny Boyle created a new adaptation of *Frankenstein* for the National Theatre. Despite countless film and stage dramatizations of *Frankenstein* the production created a “high-decibel buzz” that led to advanced ticket sellouts, due in part to Boyle's return to directing for the stage and the alternation of leading parts between actors Jonny Lee Miller and Benedict Cumberbatch (Brantley). Critics unanimously praised the show, claiming it achieved the “truly spectacular” by taking the familiar Frankenstein tale and making “the old story seem fresh” (Spencer). In their reviews, critics did not forget Shelley or the play's indebtedness to her characters and story. After all, Shelley crafted an engrossing novel composed of complicated characters, strange events,

and philosophical questions about what it means to be human. Mary Shelley wrote, “And now, once again, I bid my hideous progeny go forth and prosper” in an introduction to her 1831 text, years after she saw the novel capture the public’s imagination in numerous stage adaptations (“Introduction” 25). She could not have anticipated that her story would continue to “go forth and prosper” in such a celebrated fashion. The story of Frankenstein, much like the Creature itself, has taken on a life of its own

There is something particular about the story of Frankenstein. Playwrights and screenwriters claim that their adaptations are based on Shelley’s novel. However, early adaptations immediately diverged from the novel and created unique patterns that recur throughout the history of dramatizations. The 2011 production owes as much to previous *Frankenstein* plays and films as it does to Shelley’s novel. Even more so than retellings of *Jekyll and Hyde* and *Dracula*, Frankenstein as a story has often undergone severe modifications in its many incarnations. The story is staged year after year, but there is no singular or established adaptation. Instead the story has shifted over time, responding to variations in popular taste, medium, and to the world outside the theatre doors. Each adaptation has made changes to the narrative of the novel, and Dr. Frankenstein and his Creature are often uniquely characterized through each major adaptation.

The question remains: why is *Frankenstein* continually dramatized? I contend it is the mythology of Frankenstein, perpetuated by the fears of progress, which continues to give the story its relevance and potential for new dramatic reinterpretations. Comparing Shelley’s novel with trends in dramatizations and utilizing Roland Barthes’ *Mythologies*, it is evident that adaptations have perpetuated a fear of progress and created a myth that we culturally understand and embrace. The very word Frankenstein conjures distinct images: the mad scientist, the strange laboratory, the unstoppable Monster, and a path of destruction where fears of progress are

based. Through these components, the story of Frankenstein reflects social anxieties and mirrors a hope for returning to normative conditions through the demise or punishment of the Creature and Dr. Frankenstein in almost every adaptation. By explaining the mythic relevance of Frankenstein, it will be apparent why adaptations have continued to transform the story and why *Frankenstein* will resurface on our stages and screens for years to come.

Paul O'Flinn in his essay "Production and Reproduction: The Case of Frankenstein" writes, "There is no such thing as *Frankenstein*, there are only *Frankensteins*, as the text is ceaselessly rewritten, reproduced, refilmed, and redesigned" (22). Despite the absence of a definitive adaptation of Frankenstein, the 1930s Universal films *Frankenstein* and *Bride of Frankenstein* perhaps possess the most iconic hold on the public's imagination with Boris Karloff's monster. Yet, the silent monster Karloff crafted was indebted to the Frankenstein plays that were performed in England and France nearly a hundred years prior. In 1823, five years after Shelley published her novel, Richard Brinsley Peake's adaptation *Presumption; or, The Fate of Frankenstein* became a popular success on the London stage. By 1826 there were over fifteen different stage adaptations of Shelley's novel performed in England and France. The public excitedly devoured the popular story of Frankenstein as a dramatization.

The early melodramas were an immediate departure from Shelley's controversial novel, particularly in the characterization of Dr. Frankenstein and the Creature. Over the past two hundred years, writers and literary theorists have analyzed Shelley's novel. In Harold Bloom's examination of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* he writes, "it is only a strong, flawed novel with frequent clumsiness in its narrative and characterization," but it possesses "one of the most vivid versions we have of the Romantic mythology of the self" (4). Bloom's use of the word "vivid" is striking. Where Shelley's novel may fail in technique and consistency, she makes

up for by creating a story that is vivid, experimental, and exceptionally inventive. The story's very liveliness invites it to be embodied through performance.

For those familiar with dramatizations of *Frankenstein*, it comes as a surprise that the novel follows the three narrators: Frankenstein, the Creature, and Walton. Robert Walton, the young captain who leads his crew and ship into the uncharted regions of the Arctic sea, is absent in almost every dramatization. In the novel, it is through Walton that the reader first meets Victor Frankenstein. Paul O'Flinn describes the narratives of Walton and Frankenstein as "present[ing] two models of scientific progress" (26-27). Whereas Frankenstein dies in the pursuit of chasing his "discovery," Walton survives. O'Flinn argues the contrast between the two men lies in the fact that Walton's ambition to discover unknown regions of the world is curtailed by the democratic presence of his crew. Walton can never forget that failure will cost the lives of other men. Frankenstein, working independently and in secrecy, has no one to stop his unrelenting determination to succeed. In losing Walton, the comparison of different models of progress is absent, thereby allowing morals to be quickly applied to the story: man should have limitations in pursuit of knowledge or he will suffer. Shelley's *Frankenstein* portrays Dr. Frankenstein as a man driven to discover the secrets of life, but failing to envisage the consequences of his actions. After experiencing the destruction of his creation, Frankenstein tells Walton, "Learn from me, if not from my precepts, at least by my example, how dangerous is the acquirement of knowledge" (Shelley 35).

Many adaptations begin with the creation scene, losing the prior explanation as to why Frankenstein ever wanted to create life. The diversity of creation scenes on stage and in film illustrates the dramatic and exciting possibilities in staging the scene, including the unique interpretation by the Edison Film Company in 1910 where Dr. Frankenstein watches through a caldron window to observe the Monster

rapidly recomposing from a skeleton. The novel keeps the creation description brief and ambiguous. Marilyn Butler describes Shelley as a populist concerning scientific ideas, and that she had “to use what the public knew” (xxx). It is speculated Frankenstein uses Galvani-like methods for animation; however, the reader only learns that Frankenstein collects “the instruments of life around [him], that [he] might infuse a spark of being into the lifeless thing,” and then sees the “the dull yellow eye of the creature open” (Shelley 38-39). Victor instantly feels repulsed by the reality of the hideous creature before him. His immediate reaction of disgust and horror, as if he is awakened abruptly the second the Creature’s eye opens, becomes a recurring pattern in many adaptations. The Creature is left alone in the laboratory as Frankenstein flees. Shelley describes a creation of “yellow skin...hair...of a lustrous black...his teeth of a pearly whiteness” and having a “gigantic stature” (Shelley 39, 56). When the Creature reencounters Frankenstein, he tells him of the brutal alienation he felt, “half-frightened as it were instinctively, finding myself so desolate” (Shelley 80).

Escaping the laboratory, the Creature ambles through the wilderness, learning to trust his awakening senses, discovering how to live, and terrifying those who stumble across his path. In adaptations from the 1820s, early films, and the 2011 adaptation, these scenes of discovery are charming and effectively simple. The Creature evokes audience sympathy as he struggles to make sense of the world he is confronted with. Eventually, he becomes consumed by vengeance and kills Frankenstein’s family and friends. The novel details the complex emotions experienced by Dr. Frankenstein as his repulsion is replaced by guilt, understanding he had a responsibility to the Creature he failed to acknowledge. Comparatively, the Creature is characterized as a complicated and observant human whose monstrous behavior is spawned by his inability to connect with another human. Shelley constructed her novel as a

remarkable modern narrative, vast in its scope and devoid of religious intervention.

It should be of little surprise why such a story would lend itself to dramatic adaptation. Yet, entertainment purposes alone do not explain how *Frankenstein* has endured or why it has been significantly modified over time. Turning to Roland Barthes's *Mythologies*, we can understand the transformation of Shelley's novel into a lasting modern myth.

Over the last two hundred years, the introduction of many ideas involving science, morality, politics, and religion have been woven through the *Frankenstein* story by numerous writers. The incorporation of these ideas and their hints at ideology are understood by examining Barthes's *Mythologies*. Barthes discusses how myths are comprised of a form, concept, and signification in a "second-order semiological system" (114). In his first-order semiological system, a signifier and signified construct a sign. In the case of *Frankenstein*, let us assume the Creature is a signifier and the signified is danger. The sign would then be the "dangerous Creature." In the second-order semiological system, the "dangerous Creature" becomes a signifier, or form, which is robbed of its prior meaning. The character of the "dangerous Creature" no longer exists simply in its original shape in Shelley's novel, representing a fictional being. When this form meets a concept, the form takes on an entire new meaning. What has frequently happened with *Frankenstein* in adaptations, political cartoons, and news stories is the form of the "dangerous Creature" unites with the concept that progress may produce uncontrollable and destructive results.

Going a step further, this concept (the dangerous Creature) attached to the form (progress equals destruction) creates an ideological signification or myth that progress, scientific or otherwise, should therefore be strictly monitored by social and/or governing bodies. Through this myth construction, which is reiterated by dramatizations and repeated in media sound bites and political cartoons, the word *Frankenstein* and/or the image

of the Creature are conflated and remind us of the risk of progress. For example, the term *Frankenstein* is used consistently today by news media and political leaders in the argument for limitations of progress, usually claiming a moral or ethical imperative. I recently received an email asking me, as a member of the social body, to sign a petition to stop the U.S. from allowing genetically modified fish, or Frankenfish, to be harvested and sold in grocery stores. Jon Turney's book *Frankenstein's Footsteps: Science, Genetics, and Popular Culture* investigates this phenomenon in recent history. He discusses several examples of how frequently the term *Frankenstein* has been thrown around to arouse fear in the public against scientific advancements. Of course the world today is not what it was in Shelley's day; therefore, the progress reflected and feared has evolved. If anything, this illustrates the durability of *Frankenstein*. Whatever progress creates anxiety and is currently relevant shapes the adaptation, both as a written and performed work.

Returning to Shelley's novel, in 1818 many societal circumstances appear to have influenced Shelley. After the French Revolution, many in England feared that riots and revolutions would occur within the country. By the time Shelley wrote *Frankenstein* fears of uprisings were still lingering. Johanna M. Smith says the Creature has often been viewed as Shelley's response to the plights of the poor. Smith describes the Creature as emblematic of "the rebellious working class: he has no right and no claim to the recognition he demands from his superior" ("Introduction" 16). Shelley's novel demonstrates justification of the Creature's anger as he is ignored and shunned by society and Dr. Frankenstein. The path of destruction made by the Creature accentuates the failure of Frankenstein to provide for the Creature, just as the government and aristocracy failed to provide for the poor, working class in England. Prior to the 1832 Reform Bill, the lower class populations in England were disenfranchised, demanding voting rights and better wages, and creating anxiety for those in power in the shadow of revolution. The Creature reflects an underlying

anxiety about the social progress of giving power to those below who demand it. The progress the Creature represents in Shelley's novel is largely social, but as the story developed, so did the dangerous Creature's application as a warning against progress.

Peake's dramatic adaptation, *Presumption; or, the Fate of Frankenstein*, opened at the English Opera House on July 28, 1823. In response to the moral criticisms given to Shelley's story, Peake and other playwrights who adapted the novel in the 1820s rectified the absence of morality in the story. Fred Botting writes of *Presumption*: "Not only did the production supply [the story with a moral and start] the popular tradition of silencing the monster...it also signaled *Frankenstein's* transformation into a modern myth" (3). The Monster, as the character is aptly referred to in Peake's dramatization, is silent. Any justification for his actions and motivations are assumed or ignored. With the silence of the Monster, the complexities of Shelley's character are erased, leaving behind a character that is more monster than human as he perpetually pursues Dr. Frankenstein, usually kidnaps a woman or two, and sets a cottage on fire from which Frankenstein's family barely escapes. The now underdeveloped character has similar sensory experiences that the novel presents, such as a "sensitiveness of light and air," burning his hand in a fire, expressing "surprise and pleasure," and being soothed by the harp playing of the kind, blind man, De Lacey (Peake 146). These experiences provide opportunities to show the vulnerability of the Monster. Nevertheless, without the ability to talk, the increasing anger and violence of the Monster is more alarming than understandable. Steven Earl Forry writes, "Melodramatizations, concerned as they were with action, did not really desire to exhibit the mind of the Creature coming into Lockean awareness" (22). Silencing the Monster makes the character unsympathetic. The condemnation of his evil actions is easy.

In these early adaptations, which also include the successful play by Henry M. Milner titled *Frankenstein; or, The Man and The Monster*, we

meet a Dr. Frankenstein who feels tremendous guilt about his creation despite the monster's largely ineffective path of destruction. Frankenstein declares, "What have I cast on the world?" and "I am the father of a thousand murders" (Peake 43; Milner 198). His statements appear to solidify the moral tone of these plays, rather than illustrating significant despair, which is evident by how quickly his guilt dissipates through the course of the play. The moral ambiguity and guilt of Dr. Frankenstein is eradicated in the 1820s stage adaptations as he becomes driven to stop and kill the Monster. Unlike the novel, the melodramas show the evil Monster and his overly ambitious Creator dying abruptly, leaving the normal status quo intact and minimally affected. Neither character possesses a self-awareness that allows them to explain their failures before death as they do, eloquently so in Shelley's novel. Instead the playwrights depict the characters' actions as inherently corrupt and immoral. The question of morality in these early plays is not whether the Creature is threatening, but the act of even daring to create and experiment is dangerous and socially unethical. The early melodramas establish that society has no place for ungoverned progress and unbridled ambition. The lesson was clear: experimenting in such an immoral way is wrong theologically and socially, and it will bring terrible consequences for those who do so. This might include death by volcano, as seen in *The Man and The Monster*, when the Creature jumps into a volcanic crater after stabbing Dr. Frankenstein.

Through the rest of the nineteenth century, Frankenstein and his Creature appeared on stage in melodramas and burlesques. There were several parodies including *Frank-in-Steam*, *Frankenstitch*, and the 1849 *Frankenstein, or The Model Man* by Richard and Barnabas Brough. The Monster in this parody quickly speaks and even sings a song, much like we see in the film and musical *Young Frankenstein*. By play's end the Monster is a dapper, cleaned up gentleman, and Frankenstein tells him, "Come to my arms you wild young rascal do, I don't mind saying I'm

proud of you” (Brough 249). The story of Frankenstein had gained enough cultural currency that these parodies were understood as clever deviations from the novel, but they showed the Monster could only be tolerated if it were comedic and non-threatening.

During this time, the Monster also became a political cartoon favorite used to “lambast the passage of the Reform Bill, labor unrest and the Irish Question” (Forry 43). In the evolving mythology of Frankenstein, fears of progress by many social and political factions of the population became equated with the monstrous and unstoppable Creature that needed to be suppressed. Strangely, the early political cartoons conflated Frankenstein and the Monster. In many images the Monster is renamed Frankenstein. Today it is still hard to see an image of the Creature, often bearing a resemblance to Karloff, and not call it Frankenstein. George Levine is one of many to address the frequent “doubleness” of Frankenstein and the Creature. He writes, “So pervasive has been the recognition that the Monster and Frankenstein are two aspects of the same being that the writers...assume rather than argue it” (Levine 15). Levine adds that the confusion replicates the story’s theme of “the divided self,” where “Frankenstein’s obsession with science is echoed in the monster’s obsession with destruction” (15). Although part of the elision of the Creature and Frankenstein is due to their shared ambition, it is worth noting the characters similarly share parallel feelings of overwhelming isolation and loneliness. This very duality of Frankenstein and the Creature was engagingly played within the 2011 production where two actors alternate between the roles. In the developing mythology of Frankenstein and its recurring use as a warning against progress, both the image of the dangerous Creature and the word *Frankenstein* have become equal forms linked to the concept that progress may produce uncontrollable and destructive results. The Creature and Frankenstein may be viewed as “two monsters,” equally complicit in the terror of progress (Smith, “Contextual” 191).

The myth of Frankenstein embraced its most formidable shape in the 1930s Universal Studio films directed by James Whale. Loosely based on Peggy Webling's 1927 play *Frankenstein: An Adventure in the Macabre*, the first film kept Webling's version of the monster as a simple-minded character. From the crackling sounds and lightning strikes of the creation scene, to Karloff's strange appearance and stilted walk, to Dr. Frankenstein's mad cry, "It's alive!," the 1931 *Frankenstein* has left a monolithic imprint on public imagination. Unlike prior dramatizations, in the 1931 film, the Monster is given an abnormal brain. That decision makes the Monster sub-human, and a character incapable of being reasoned with. The zombielike creation, perhaps a sign of the times, can "be interpreted as a premonition of the dangers of the then rising fascist ideology" (Zakharieva 419). The only option to stop the Creature is death. The *Frankenstein* film ends with a lynching mob chasing the Monster into a windmill, which is then set on fire with torches. The dominant ideological belief that social bodies should govern acts of progress is shown in the "traditional and reactionary" vengeance of the angry mob, which is "ambiguously endorsed" (O'Flinn 39). Returning to Barthes, the ending depicts how social bodies should govern acts of progress through communal violence. As Noël Carroll suggested in his book *The Philosophy of Horror*, the ideological significance of the ending shows the norm reconstituted and the Creature "vanquished by the forces of normal" (199). The dangerous progress created by Dr. Frankenstein was no match for the community that collectively acted to preserve society. That is until the sequel proves otherwise.

Frankenstein continued to be dramatized for film and stage through the second half of the twentieth century. If the 1930s films depicted an increasing social isolation and "general disillusion following World War I and preceding the Great Depression," the dramatizations post World War II and in the midst of the Cold War exemplified fears that had been realized (Forry 93). The scientist capable of using his knowledge to create

an act of terror was witnessed in the horrors of the concentration camps and the Manhattan Project. O'Flinn discusses the changes seen in the popular film adaptation *The Curse of Frankenstein* where there is a definite "shift in the structure of fears within the dominant ideology" (O'Flinn 42). In the film, Dr. Frankenstein recklessly murders without any sign of guilt, and he enjoys the horrific acts carried out by his pawn, the Monster. The Monster is simply the destructive agent released upon the world by the evil and mad Dr. Frankenstein.

The Living Theatre's 1966 *Frankenstein* also commented on the troubling state of the world, but did so distinctly differently than popular films. At one point during the play Dr. Frankenstein asks the audience, "How can we end human suffering?" (Biner 121). The Creature/Monster is not a character in Judith Malina's groundbreaking play. Instead, the Creature is an assembly of ideas shaped by human experience and visually represented by a group of people and the outline of a head constructed within the stage design. The Living Theatre's *Frankenstein*, with its broad themes of how to end turmoil and suffering, illustrates the damage and authentic anxiety that technological and scientific progress had already caused and could potentially continue to cause. Yet, the Living Theatre's *Frankenstein* portrays a hope for a "new universal humanity, not merely the Faustian power of the creator" (Lavalley 278). The Creature becomes a symbol of the potential for creation and progress to be good, despite cycles where humanity acts otherwise. Albert J. Lavalley writes, "The Living Theater's insight into the positive side of Mary Shelley's novel is perhaps the most striking feature of the production" (279).

Arguably the most common use of the Frankenstein myth in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century is its application to science and technology. What were once scientific fantasies are becoming realities. The ability to create life in a laboratory is no longer an impossibility given the progress in fertility sciences and artificial life. The Creature in response to these advances has returned from characterizations

of being a silent Monster to once again being an intelligent speaking character. This was evident in Victor Gialanella's 1981 failed Broadway adaptation, where Frankenstein states before his Creation, "We stand at the threshold of a new age of man. The dawn of a new species who will bless us as their creators" (23). The machines pulsate, lightning crashes, but the creation appears a failure. The Creature is left alone in the laboratory, but then "sits bolt upright with a deep horrendous scream...sits for a moment, breathing deeply as it recovers from the violence of its birth" (Gialanella 26). As soon as the Creature sets out into the world and is greeted by the terror and hatred of humanity, he resembles Shelley's Creature.

In these later dramatizations, the Creature is once again articulate and thoughtful, developing a sharp awareness that "I am not as other men. I have memories...pain" (Gialanella 41). The Creature seeks answers, help, and companionship from Frankenstein, yet Frankenstein is incapable and unwilling. The complicity of both characters is evident in Gialanella's script, where their lives end in the laboratory, juxtaposing where life began. Despite the adherence to the novel, Gialanella's play was a critical and commercial failure. After closing the day after its premiere director Tom Moore told the *New York Times*, "We didn't attempt to say anything with a message in 'Frankenstein.' We attempted to make a grand entertainment - a spectacle - and we did" (Lawson). Despite it being a Broadway flop, the adaptation continues to be staged in theatres across the country. Of course there are many dramatic adaptations of Frankenstein that have equally failed in terms of quality or commercial success. This has seldom deterred writers from adapting the work again.

The evolution of the myth is apparent in Clive Barker's *Frankenstein in Love*, which retells the story as a post-Frankensteinian world where the evil doctor never stopped creating a series of Creatures. As conventional as Gialanella's adaptation is, Barker's play heads in the opposite direction. The darker, anarchic themes introduced in *The Living Theatre's*

*Frankenstein* from Clive Barker's adaptation. Barker, one of the most prolific film directors and authors in the horror genre, crafted the play full of shocking descriptions and gory events, yet it manages to find moments of humor based in its own ludicrousness. Frankenstein, now an old man, never stopped with his first Creature and instead assembled and tortured masses of new beings. The progress portrayed here is ripped from a scary movie: the future could be horrific if the Dr. Frankensteins of the world continue their experiments. If there is a hero in this performance, it is the Creature, named El Coco. The monstrosity of El Coco pales to Frankenstein. Frankenstein has men tear the flesh off the Creature's body, demanding "Unman him, unmake him" (Barker 199). Yet, El Coco survives and sews himself together again. He pursues Frankenstein, as he always does, and reappears before his maker stating, "Couldn't I pass for a man?...And so, appearing to be a man, I claim the right of every natural son: to murder his father" (Barker 238). With new subplots, characters, and a guerilla revolution backdrop, the story's base is composed of the same enduring binary of the Creature and Frankenstein and their strange, unresolvable relationship. Barker's play continues to be popular due to his careful and entertaining manipulation of the Frankenstein story. It is an exciting adaptation due to its originality and its celebration of the horror undertones that have always been present in the novel.

The story of Frankenstein reappears on stages and screens introducing new dramatizations every year. The recent 2012 Tim Burton film *Frankenweenie* demonstrates that Frankenstein still has fruit to bear. The adaptation is a homage to the 1931 film and focuses on a young boy reanimating his deceased dog. The history of Frankenstein as performance shows the endless possibilities as previous adaptations have ranged from melodramas in the 1820s, multiple comedies and parodies, films throughout the twentieth century, and dramatic adaptations in the last half of the twentieth century that are bizarre or conventional. Few other stories have had as many lives as Frankenstein. While some of these

dramatizations are now a mere footnote, they contributed to the lasting fascination of Frankenstein and sustained or created the patterns that dramatizations continue to use. The lively creation scenes, the lowly, laboratory assistant, the maniacal Frankenstein, and the silent Monster are just some of the recurring patterns that consistently resurface in dramatizations that do not appear in Shelley's novel. In the 2011 production Nick Dear and Danny Boyle crafted their play with the history of dramatizations in mind and were aware they owed as much to that performance history as they did to the novel. They created an adaptation that merges patterns with their own originality by placing the Creature as the central character.

The Creature in the National Theatre's 2011 adaptation evolves from a wailing, immobile newborn to a highly articulate and rational Creature who grasps the suffering of humanity. The Creature is frustrated by the inability to explain his own existence in the world, "I discover how much I do not know. Ideas batter me like hailstones. Questions but no answers? Who am I? Where am I from?" (Dear 22). The Creature is introduced to a world that continues to bombard his senses as he slowly develops the ability to walk and speak. He is incapable of relating to people because he does not look, walk, or speak "normally." At one point "*He stands and addresses us: a speech of confusion and sometimes distress, but without actual words*" (Dear 8). With no one to talk to and no one to care for him, the Creature pieces together the world he encounters. With De Lacey, the Creature forges a friendship that lasts for months, unparalleled in previous dramatizations. The Creature is fascinated and repulsed by the ways of man. He questions De Lacey why people choose to live in cities, why humans are good but massacre each other, and why De Lacey has to live a life of poverty.

Dr. Frankenstein in comparison is a cold and naïve scientist who is urged to create a companion for the Creature after the Creature appeals to his egotism. Victor is an arrogant, single-minded man who may have been

drawn to science given his complete incompetence in understanding human beings beyond their organic matter. Frankenstein, unable to confide to anyone the cause of his anxiety, appears cold and “cruelly distant, arrogantly self-involved” (Taylor). Frankenstein in the many films and plays has appeared in a range of characterizations from the faulted hero, to the guilty but crazed scientist, to the man with no remorse at all, and to the overwhelmed youth who cannot forgive himself for his creation. Here Victor is keenly intelligent, calculatingly composed despite moments of terror and anxiety, and never entirely remorseful given his pride and inability to reach emotional depths. His loneliness is obvious, but appears as a result of his natural demeanor.

Boyle and Dear knew the Creature in past dramatizations had been relegated to a one-dimensional monster, or as Boyle says, “a dud” (Boyle and Dear). The largest consideration for Dear in adapting the story was placing the Creature in the center to add vitality to the story. The explanation of Victor Frankenstein’s interest in his experiment, his connections to his family and friends, and the empathetic appeal of Frankenstein are in many ways reduced to the background. Michael Billington writes that the focus on the Creature “downplay[s] some of Shelley’s themes,” and Victor’s “initial hubris in animating lifeless matter is minimized.” Focusing predominantly on the Creature shapes the audiences’ perception and inevitably loses aspects of Victor’s history and relationships. Nevertheless, as Billington argues, “If there are losses, there are also huge gains.” In the history of dramatizations the myth perseveres. The hopes of these writers and directors is that what is lost is not mourned, and what is added successfully brings a new life to the story. Dear and Boyle attempted to try something different with *Frankenstein*. They succeeded.

The play interestingly ends unlike many before. The two characters remain alive. Dear and Boyle’s play ends with both men exiting into the “icy distance, the Creature prancing in front of Victor, who struggles after

*him*” (Dear 80). There is no rewarding redemption or punishment of death for either. The ambiguous resolution, where both characters live their last days in a mixture of dependence, loneliness, and hatred, exemplifies the confusing times in which we live. Paul Taylor describes the last scene as a “luminously ice-green Arctic” where both men “survive, umbilically linked in the kind of perpetual deathly symbiosis that would pass muster in Dante’s *Inferno*” (Taylor).

As stated previously, endings of *Frankenstein* dramatizations often provide what Noël Carroll has described as a reconstitution of norms. The death of one or both characters resolves the harm caused by them, and the characters embody what happens when man crosses too many boundaries. If an ideological message can be derived from the 2011 ending, it would seem to reflect that man has perhaps passed the ability to be governed in his ambitions of progress. Today our fear of progress is realized. The progress in industrial development in the last two hundred years has led to devastating pollution and global warming. The push for financial dominance, fostered by greedy individuals, banks, and corporations, seems unstoppable despite the recession and slow recovery. Despite our progress in technology, anxiety rises as certain countries develop nuclear weapons and we are uncertain how they will use them. We hear words like bioterrorism, and we do not know all the ways ‘scientists’ are working on experiments with unknown catastrophic consequences. Our fears of progress are justifiable, given how progress can create long-lasting and damaging results. Critic Charles McNulty for the *Los-Angeles Times* watched the 2011 play and reflected on how *Frankenstein* still speaks to our culture. McNulty writes:

But the story of a scientist rivaling God for earthly dominion seems to me uniquely pertinent at a time when the costs (economic, political and ecological) of mankind’s breathtaking scientific advances have never been more evident.

The story of Dr. Frankenstein and his Creature continues to find resonance as the myth continues to adapt to the times. The story has proven to be malleable to the many additions writers have made and the public adheres to and uses the myth of Frankenstein. In reflection on Barthes's explanation about the making of myths, Frankenstein has transformed into a collectively owned myth with a multitude of uses. In many ways Frankenstein has become unilaterally applied to so many moments of progress and anxieties that the story is "evolving in ways which are hard to pin down exactly" (Turney 26). George Levine acutely summarizes that the myth "has achieved its special place in modern consciousness through its extraordinary resistance to simple resolutions and its almost inexhaustible possibilities of significance."(18).

The fear of progress the myth conjures has been focused primarily on the scientific and technological in the twentieth century, but the rogue scientist who refuses to listen to government in 2011 is parallel to the rogue monster who represents the disenfranchised working class in the 1800s. Both represent a fear of the individual who acts in a potentially disruptive way that counters socially accepted norms. The use of the Frankenstein myth as a tool to frighten the public embodies a Barthesian-constructed ideology. The actual complexity of the Frankenstein story and the Creature's reasons for being destructive are lost when the word *Frankenstein* is used to reference potentially uncontrollable manmade disaster. Barthes analyzed how history is transformed into nature by mythologies: the idea seems natural by now that *Frankenstein* is something to fear. Maybe this is why the story is continually performed. After all, every time Dr. Frankenstein animates his Creature the entertained audience is not surprised but still curiously awaiting to see what happens next.

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