THE MONSTER OF FRANKENSTEIN: A CRITICAL APPRAISAL
FROM ITS LITERARY ORIGIN TO THE FILMIC ADAPTATIONS.

Campina Grande – PB
2012
EUDES DINIZ LIMA

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Monografia apresentada à disciplina Trabalho de Conclusão de Curso (TCC) como requisito para a conclusão do curso de Licenciatura em Letras, com Habilitação em Língua Inglesa, na Universidade Estadual da Paraíba, sob a orientação do Profº Ms. Valécio Irineus Barros.

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The Monster of Frankenstein: A Critical Appraisal From Its Literary Origin To The Filmic Adaptations

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Média 10,0
Para os meus pais, José Tavares e Eleneuza;
minha amada esposa Mayara;
e minha filha Sophia.
AGRADECIMENTOS

Sou grato ao meu orientador, Prof. Ms. Valécio Irineu Barros, por sua disponibilidade, paciência e incentivo. Graças à sua orientação e revisão, durante meu processo de pesquisa acadêmica, pude aperfeiçoar e efetivar este trabalho.

Agradeço também aos professores e aos amigos de curso Maxwell, Tiago, Johnny, Paulo, Maurício, Miguel e Olívio (in memoriam) por contribuírem de forma significativa para meu enrandecimento acadêmico e pessoal.
“There is a violent streak in all of us: and if it can be exploded in the cinema instead of in some antisocial manner in real life, so much the better.”

Boris Karloff
RESUMO

Concebida pela imaginação da jovem Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein* é considerada uma das mais estranhas criações da literatura de horror gótico. Desde sua publicação, em 1818, a história do Dr. Frankenstein e a horren...
ABSTRACT

Conceived by the young Mary Shelley’s imagination, *Frankenstein* is considered one of the strangest creations of the horror-gothic literature. Since its publication, in 1818, the story of Dr. Frankenstein and the hideous creature conceived by him has been continually adapted in different media, especially in the cinema, where we may list more than fifty versions it all. The purpose of this work is to analyze the monster’s profile presented in the original novel, comparing it with the cinematographic images created during the twentieth century. In order to cover different periods of the cinema, we selected three popular adaptations: James Whale’s *Bride of Frankenstein* (Universal Studios, 1935); Freddie Francis’ *The Evil of Frankenstein* (Hammer Films, 1964); and Kenneth Branagh’s *Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein* (Columbia Pictures, 1994). Among the theoretical references used for this comparative analysis, we point out the contributions of Robert Stam, who deconstructs the fallacy of “fidelity”; and João Batista de Brito, who proposes simply categories of operations involving the intersemiotic adaptation. Using these categories, we analyze how the filmmakers deal with the complexity of Shelley’s novel and the gaps she intentionally left in the description of her monster. In fact, a novel cannot be faithfully transported to the cinema, nor is such “fidelity” desirable. A successful director is one who understands the essence of the story and the tone of the narrative.

**Keywords:** Monster of Frankenstein. Filmic Adaptations. Intersemiotic Analysis.
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1. INTRODUCTION

During the rainy summer of 1816, on the outskirts of Geneva, Mary Shelley, who was then just 19 years old, wrote a brilliant horror story, considered one of the strangest creations of the Romantic imagination: *Frankenstein*. The story of Dr. Victor Frankenstein and the hideous creature[1] conceived by him represents, together with Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*, one of the greatest classics of horror literature at all times. This monstrous being, immortalized in the cinema by a number of films, has been fascinating generations since the novel’s publication almost 200 years ago.

Since the monster appearance in the original novel, published in 1818, it has been repeatedly recreated in theater and, subsequently, in the cinema for almost two centuries. Nowadays, millions of people know the monster without ever having read the novel, and they do not even recognize the name of its author, Mary Shelley. This happened especially because one century after the story was written, it was adapted for Hollywood, where the actor Boris Karloff, the director James Whale, and the make-up artist Jack Pierce created together an unforgettable face for the creature. Since then, the monster has acquired the appearance deeply ingrained in collective imagination. Such an appearance is defined by a short list of characteristics: a monster which drags itself emitting few and indistinct words; green-skinned and having scars with apparent stitches; a flat head framed by dark straight hair; huge shoulders, hands and feet; and screws sunk into its temples and neck. Nevertheless, this is not exactly the creature presented in the novel. Incidentally, the author herself gives us little description, leading the reader to a more subjective interpretation of the monster.

The purpose of this work is to reassemble the monster’s original profile as presented in the novel, in order to compare it with the images created by and in the films. We shall begin, however, from a critical study involving literature and cinema, in which the contribution of Robert Stam will be preponderant, deconstructing the idea of ‘fidelity’, and João Batista de Brito, pointing out a practical diagram of intersemiotic operations. Then our research starts from the text used by Mary Shelley as introduction for the 1831 edition, in which she relates the genesis of her story: the environment, characters and circumstances that inspired her to conceive such an impressive creature. Next, in chapter 4, we shall undertake a more detailed

[1] Mary Shelley never named the monster; however, the name of its creator was transferred to the creature with the passing of years. Currently, most of the people call the monster unsuitably “Frankenstein”. We restricted the use of the words “monster”, expressing horror, or “creature” – a softer term which expresses identification and even compassion – to refer to the creation of Victor Frankenstein. We also highlighted the word *Frankenstein*, in italic type, to refer to the title of the book.
study, pointing to the monster’s descriptions within the narrative. At this point, we shall analyze the monster’s physical capacity and appearance, as well as its emotional and psychological complexity, comparing it here and there with its present-day stereotyped images.

Chapter 4 is dedicated to the analysis of three popular cinematographic adaptations from the 20th century: the first is James Whale’s *Bride of Frankenstein* (Universal Studios, 1935), with Boris Karloff starring in the role of the creature, which is considered one of the best films based on the novel; then we selected Freddie Francis’ *The Evil of Frankenstein* (Hammer Films, 1964), the third and best film of the Hammer series, with Kiwi Kingston performing the monster; finally, we analyze Kenneth Branagh’s *Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein* (Columbia Pictures, 1994), starring Robert de Niro as the creature, which is probably the closest adaptation to the book.

In short, in this study, we shall examine the monster as a whole; as the title indicates, its development from its literary origin in the 1818 novel — and even in Mary Shelley’s nightmares — to the ensuing adaptations in cinema. Questions related to plot, setting and style, for example, are not foregrounded in this work as our focus shall be exclusively the analysis of a single character: the monster created by Frankenstein.
2. THE DIALOGUES BETWEEN LITERATURE AND CINEMA

The connections involving literature and cinema are multiple and complex, characterized by an intrinsic intertextuality. Even so, many observers insist on the “fidelity” of film adaptations to their original texts. The critical literature on this “hybrid study” is not extensive, but the number of publications has been increasing since the 1960s (WHELEHAN, 1999).

Critical debates about literary adaptation tend to focus on the filmmaker’s interpretation in translating the novel, so as to verify on what level and to what extent the version is “faithful” or diverges from the original. This attitude is based on the concept of the literary work’s inviolability and results in superficial judgments, which often underestimate the adaptations. Such a strict attitude was more common in the last decades, especially for those who appreciate the writers of the adapted novels. They demanded “fidelity”, using critical studies as reference to judge the value of the film and to what extent there have been “betrayals” of the literary source. However, this demand has currently been abandoned.

Nowadays, the attention is turned to the inevitable cultural shifts, and the idea of “dialogue” is privileged, when one thinks about the creations of the film. The dialogue between literature and film adaptation is seen as a process, which allows the filmmaker the right of free interpretation, and even the possibility of reversing certain effects, so as to propose another way of understanding, redefining or re-creating certain passages or characters from the literary source.

In *Beyond Fidelity: The Dialogics of Adaptation* (2000), Robert Stam explains the notion of fidelity as the translation of our personal feeling about the adaptation. It becomes a persuasive point of view, when we see some adaptations as better than others, or when we feel that a film adaptation fails to capture that which we consider as the fundamental aesthetic features of its source novel.

On the other hand, Stam points out a number of reasons which makes the notion of “fidelity” a highly problematic issue. First, the author shows that, because of the change of medium, any adaptation is automatically and inherently different from the original. The words of a novel have a symbolic meaning and we as readers have to deal with its indeterminacies. A film, by contrast, must choose specific settings or performers, for example, instead of
verbally conveying imaginative, constructed images. Elaborating on this difference, Stam declares:

The shift from a single-track, uniquely verbal medium such as the novel, which ‘has only words to play with,’ to a multitrack medium such as film, which can play not only with words (written and spoken), but also with theatrical performance, music, sound effects, and moving photographic images, explains the unlikelihood – and I would suggest even the undesirability – of literal fidelity. (2000, p.56)

Therefore, the author demonstrates that each medium has its own characteristics. A deeper understanding of the specificity of each medium suggests that a literary adaptation should be faithful much more to the essence of the medium of expression, than to the source novel. A novel has only the written word as its material, whereas a film has different tracks. In this sense, the cinema has not less, but greater complexity of resources for expression than the novel.

Another circumstance which makes “fidelity” in adaptation virtually impossible is the differences in cost and modes of film and novel production. Films are deeply dependent on material and financial contingencies, while novels are relatively unaffected by questions of budget during its production. This process is further complicated when we deal with historical or science fiction narratives – as in the case of Frankenstein – in which the demands for specific settings, costumes, makeup, and special effects increase considerably the cost of production and force the filmmaker to change certain scenes, or key passages.

The notion of fidelity is even essentialist because “it assumes that a novel ‘contains’ an extractable ‘essence’, a kind of ‘heart of the artichoke’ hidden ‘underneath the surface details of style’” (STAM, 2000, p.57). But in fact, it is assumed that a literary text is an open structure, it can generate myriads of possible readings. Such readings are influenced by the passage of time and by the change of place. From this point of view, the greater lapse of time, the less reverent the adaptations become to their source texts and the more likely they turn into present-day reinterpretations.

The demand for “fidelity” still ignores a more comprehensive question: Fidelity to what? Is it possible – or even necessary – for filmmakers to be faithful to the author’s intention? But authors often mask their intentions or, sometimes, they are not even aware of their own deepest intentions. How, then, can the adaptation be faithful to them?
Stam explains that “much of the discussion of film adaptation quietly reinscribes the axiomatic superiority of literary art to film, an assumption derived from a number of superimposed prejudices (2000, p.58). He presents noteworthy opinions to deconstruct the hierarchy between literature and cinema and open the way to a discursive approach to all arts, such as: the Bakhtinian “translinguistic” idea of the author as arranger of preexisting discourses; Foucault’s valorization of the persuasive anonymity of the discourse; Derridean suggestion that both “original” and copy” are included in the infinite play of dissemination; and Roland Barthes’s view of the film adaptation as a form of criticism or “reading” of the novel. A film adaptation, in these senses, is consequently no inferior or subordinate to the source novel.

In order to avoid the trope “fidelity”, the author proposes other terms – translation, reading, dialogization, transmutation, transfiguration – each one representing a different aspect of adaptation. For example, the comprehension of adaptation as a “translation” represents the inevitable losses and gains typical of any intersemiotic transposition. The trope of “reading”, on the other hand, suggests the infinite number of partial, personal and conjectural readings which a novel can generate. Indeed, many novels have been adapted repeatedly – *Frankenstein* has had more than fifty adaptations since 1910.

Building on the Bakhtinian concept of intertextuality, Stam conceives adaptations with an activist attitude toward the source novel. Intertextual dialogism suggests that every text is formed by an intersection of other texts. It refers to the infinite possibilities generated by the culture in which the text is situated, reaching it through a process of dissemination. For this reason, intertextuality transcends the fallacy of “fidelity”. An adaptation, in this sense, is “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” (STAM, 2000, p.66).

Much of the literature on adaptation focuses on the textual operations involving plot events and characters. Film adaptations often ignore key passages or characters of the source novel and usually make temporal alterations as well. As interesting as what is eliminated or added to the novel is why certain materials are changed.

Filmmakers can eliminate, change, and even add events and characters, for many different motivations: to take advantage of an important actor, to adjust the film to
contemporary cultural aspects, or maybe to transform the story for aesthetic reasons. Perhaps unconsciously, filmmakers also change novelistic events for ideological commitments. Film adaptations thus become involved in questions of ideology, rearranging the novel in terms of sexual, racial, and class politics.

Here we enter one of the main aspects of our study: the transmutation of character. Gabriel Muller (1980 apud WHELEHAN, 1999) states that the transference of characters from novel to screen undergo a process of simplification and, for this reason, the representation of complex psychological states is not very successful in films. This statement demonstrates the assumption that novels are more complex than films, suggesting that it is not possible to represent metaphors or symbolism in this chiefly visual art.

Such an opinion, which points out equivalences between words and images, enters into the field we call style. They take what is specific of the literary area and search for its translations in what is specific in cinema. This suggestion of stylistic equivalences between literature and cinema is supported in observations of rhythms, distances and shades, which are associated to emotions and experiences, as well as the figurative use of language (XAVIER, 2003). It is the most complicated field for critical evaluations of the relations between novels and films, as it discusses similarities which are based upon our personal sensibility and perception.

However, João Batista de Brito (2006) presents a relevant summary of the process of intersemiotic adaptation, combining his suggestions with the operations pointed out by Francis Vanoye. While Vanoye presents two basic categories: reduction and addition; Brito adds two others: dislocation and transformation, being this last subdivided in simplification and enlargement. Although simplistic, this scheme becomes more complex when it deals with different levels: plot, character, language, etc.

As mentioned before, this work focuses on the studying of the intersemiotic operations involving characters only. In general, characters are sometimes present in the novel, but not in the film (reduction); or present in the film, but not in the novel (addition); or finally present in both media, though in different ways (dislocation and transformation). For our purpose, we will first summarize each operation, providing now and then simple and superficial examples, and reserve a more detailed analysis for the last chapter.
According to Brito (2006), for obvious reasons, reduction must be the most frequent process of adaptation. A novel is usually more extensive than a film, not only because we spend more than two or three hours to read a book, but especially because the verbal language is more prolix and analytic than the iconic language. Therefore, cutting becomes practically compulsory in adaptations, which is commonly done during the screenwriting, but also in the filming or editing stages.

Although film adaptations have developed since J. Scarle Dawley’s silent version of *Frankenstein* (1910), which has only 16 minutes in length; nowadays films still summarize the novel’s events to produce a feature film with standard duration. Many filmmakers, in the same way, reduce the novel’s characters, selecting which ones will live or die. Film adaptations of *Frankenstein* often condense the plot into the relation between Victor, Elizabeth and the monster. In doing so, they simply eliminate important characters – like Captain Walton, Henry Clerval or Justine, for example – maybe with the purpose of reducting the plot and adjusting it to more cinematic features.

Occasionally, however, instead of eliminating characters from the novel, the opposite process takes place – addition. Filmmakers sometimes add new characters to the plot, compensating for verbal effects which were lost in other moments, or giving a more personal contribution. Although statistically less frequent than reduction, this operation has an important role in the process of adaptation, once it gives the film a degree of specificity.

In *Frankenstein* (1931), the first version of Universal Studios, James Whale brings back the hunchback Fritz[2], a faithful assistant of Dr. Victor Frankenstein, which was then played by Dwight Frye. The success of his addition is demonstrated by the reappearance of similar characters in the sequel *Bride of Frankenstein* (1935) and in subsequent adaptations of Shelley’s novel, despite the fact that no such character appears in the book. Since then, the Fritz-like characters have become part of the pop culture, where a mad scientist rarely works without a crazy assistant.

The third operation proposed by Brito is dislocation. In film adaptations, it is not unusual to see an intermediate scene of the novel, for example, being presented in the beginning of the film, or almost in its end. This process of reorganization of the story has

[2] In fact, the first appearance of the assistant had taken place in Richard Brinsley Peake’s *Presumption* (1823), the first theatrical adaptation of the novel. Peake created the character Fritz, a stupid server in accordance with Shakespearean mechanics. After *Presumption* ensued a long tradition of clumsy assistants, the most famous represented by Dwight Frye in 1931.
great influence on the film’s composition and final meaning. However, the dislocated elements are generally scenes, dialogues, or images. Such an operation is, therefore, more difficult to observe when we deal only with the sequential presentation of characters.

The narrative technique used by Shelley in *Frankenstein* is complex, as her epistolary novel has many narrators. Thus, for instance, the story of the monster is told by himself, when he accosts his creator in Mont Blanc. The story of Victor Frankenstein is, in turn, inserted in Captain Walton’s narrative, as the explorer sees the monster escaping beyond the glacier and takes Victor on board of his ship. Victor becomes friend of Walton and tells his adventures to him, who writes it in letters addressed to his sister. It is a structure in which a narrative is embedded inside other narrative, as seen in the diagram[3] below:

```
letters
1 to 4
Walton

chapters
1 to 10
Frankenstein

Chapters
11 to 16
Monster

chapters
17 to 24
Frankenstein

ending of the
novel/letters
Walton
```

Although not original – the literature of the 18th century already used it –, this narrative technique is complex because it deals with different points of view. Each narrator tells the story, describes the settings, scenes and characters according to their own possibilities and intentions. For this reason, one must bear this narrative scheme in mind when studying the novel. Its complexity becomes even more relevant in the cinema, as many filmmakers prefer to use just a single narrator. Most of the adaptations of *Frankenstein* are presented from the point of view from one narrator only.

Besides the cuttings, additions and dislocations, there is still a subtle and generic procedure – transformation. Brito (2006) explains that it is the most difficult operation to characterize because, most of the time, it consists in giving a cinematographic equivalence to the verbal sources of literature.

Maybe, the most obvious example of transformation is the frequent attempts to make certain novel up-to-date. Shelley’s novel received some adaptations in this sense – most of them without great repercussion –, among which we point out *Frankenstein-1970* (1958), with Boris Karloff performing Victor Frankenstein, now a disfigured victim of Nazi torture who brings back his ancestor’s creature by using an atomic experiment.

On the other hand, intesemiotic transformations are not always obvious. In many cases, they are micro-structural and require a great deal of attention to be detected and evaluated. It is easy to notice when the novel receives alterations in time and space. However, we cannot say the same when a recurrent figure of speech – a metaphor, for example – turns into certain illumination or photographic effect in the film.

Furthermore, transformation, as a procedure, presents two variants: simplification and enlargement. Thus, for example, it is not rare for two characters from a novel to condensed, in its filmic adaptation, into only one character, that brings the qualities and attributes of the two originals. On the other hand, a very complex character from the same novel can be divided into two others in the film.

In other words, eliminations, additions, dislocations and transformations of characters are frequently carried out in the films as an attempt to make the film more “cinematic”. The character from the novel experiences a kind of incompatibility or fragmentation within the film adaptation. Although novels have only verbally constructed characters, film adaptation has both characters and performers, “an uncanny amalgam of photogenie, body movement, acting style, and grain of voice, all amplified and molded by lighting, mise-an-scène, and music” (STAM, 2000, p.60).

In short, we would have the table\[41\] below with the combination of Vanoye’s and Brito’s suggestions for the processes of adaptation involving characters:

<table>
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<th>OPERATION</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
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<tr>
<td>REDUCTION</td>
<td>Characters or elements from the literary text which are not presented in the film</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADDITION</td>
<td>Characters or elements presented in the film which do not exist in the literary text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISLOCATION</td>
<td>Characters which are in both, film and literary text, but not in the same chronological or spatial order.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[41\] Adapted from the table presented by João Batista de Brito in “Texto literário e filme: como ler o confronto?” See references.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>TRANSFORMATION</th>
<th>Characters which have equivalent meaning in the novel and the film, but with different configurations.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SIMPLIFICATION</td>
<td>Transformations which consist in reducing in the film the dimension of characters that was greater in the novel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENLARGEMENT</td>
<td>Transformations which consist in amplifying in the film the dimension of one or more characters from the novel.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is obvious that this table does not exhaust the intersemiotic strategies of adaptation involving characters. Our intention is to present an instrument whereby we can support our analysis and which allows us, from now on, to start more extensive and detailed comments. Researchers in the field of comparative analysis between literature and cinema, may eventually discover and propose new variations, subdivisions or categories different from the ones described in the table above.

Of course our research will not be limited to describing such operations. More than that, it proposes the analysis of an individual case: the study of a fictional monster, which became part of the popular tradition, exceeding the limits of the literary text and embodying, time after time, the incredible possibilities of the cinema.

In the next section, we start our discussion about the development of the monster of Frankenstein in the media and the relations between the motion picture and the literary character. Our comparative analysis examines the way some films adapted this character and what principles guided the process of selection, when the novel was being adapted.
3. MARY SHELLEY’S NIGHTMARE

Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley was born in London in August 1797. She was the only daughter of the philosopher William Godwin and the radical feminist writer Mary Wollstonecraft. Her mother died tragically during her difficult birth, so that she was brought up by Godwin and his second wife. Because of a lack of emotional attention, Mary spent much of her childhood reading, imagining stories and day-dreaming.

In 1814 Mary fell in love with the young married poet, Percy Bysshe Shelley, who often visited her father. Afraid of her father’s scorn, Mary eloped with Shelley in July of the same year, travelling over the continent for several weeks until her return to England as they ran out of money. Only after the death of Shelley’s first wife, Harriet Westbrook, in 1816, were they able to marry. Most of their married life was spent travelling in Italy and Central Europe.

In the summer of 1816, Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley and her husband Percy Bysshe Shelley visited Switzerland, becoming neighbors of the famous English poet Lord Byron, who had leased the Villa Diodati, an elegant property on the shore of Lake Geneva. At that place a group of young intellectuals who often met each other, was formed. Poetry took up a great part of their thoughts, but the discussions also revolved around the significant scientific advances, which were taking place at the beginning of the 19th century.

After the important discovery made by Benjamin Franklin, experimenters started to work in machines to collect, control and generate electrical energy. Using an electrically loaded metal stick, Luigi Galvani, a famous Italian scientist, managed to move the leg muscles of a frog, which had been dismembered. His experiments led to the understanding of what we know as galvanism, or animal electricity. At the beginning of the 19th century, Luigi Aldine, a nephew of Galvani, traveled around Europe demonstrating the effects of galvanism in the body of an assassin who had been recently executed. Soon after connecting the criminal’s body to an enormous battery of copper and zinc, it was possible to perceive that the jaw, then the right hand, legs and thighs of the corpse started to move convulsively. According to a report made by an eyewitness of the experience, to the uninformed part of the audience it looked as if the poor man were just about to be restored to life (HITCHCOCK, p.39). At that time, it did not seem an exaggeration to consider electricity as the primordial force for engendering life. These experiments were frequently discussed among the poets of
the gatherings of Byron’s circle, and the possibility of joining together the component parts of a creature and of providing it with the vital energy fascinated the members of the group.

Besides the discussions about science and poetry, a collection of supernatural stories became a nightly entertainment for the attenders of Villa Diodati. It was a volume of certain popularity, Phantasmagoria (Histories of ghosts), which had been translated from German to French in 1812 and was entitled Recueil d’histoires d’apparitions, de spectres, revenans, fantômes, etc. traduit de l’allemand, par un amateur (Collection of histories about apparitions, specters, dreams, ghosts, etc. translated from German by an amateur). After having read some of these stories, Byron challenged each of his companions to write a ghost story, and the proposal was soon accepted by the poets in question: John Polidori, Mary and Percy Shelley.

The group of poets quickly got bored with such unpleasant prose and abandoned their tasks. Byron soon interrupted his story, he just wrote a passage with two thousand words which he placed at the end of his poem about Mazeppa. Shelley only began a story based on his early experiences. Polidori wrote two short novels, which are not well known, both were published three years later.

In spite of her constant effort, Mary Shelley did not manage to conceive a story which could rival with those that impressed her so much, being thus obliged to respond negatively to her companion’s daily questions. In silence, she watched conversations between Byron and Percy about many philosophical doctrines, including the nature of the principle of life and the possibility of transferring it to something. On a rainy night, while she was trying to sleep, these ideas were fresh in her mind, when a scene appeared to her, as Mary Shelley recalls in the preface of her now famous novel:

My imagination, unbidden, possessed and guided me, gifting the successive images that arose in my mind with a vividness far beyond the usual bounds of reverie. I saw — with shut eyes, but acute mental vision, — I saw the pale student of unhallowed arts kneeling beside the thing he had put together. I saw the hideous phantasm of a man stretched out, and then, on the working of some powerful engine, show signs of life, and stir with an uneasy, half vital motion. (pp. 8-9)

This is the exact moment of creation of the monster. According to the author, the scene simply appeared in a half-waking nightmare in a moment of inspiration.
This text, though, gives us only a vague description: a “thing” that was “put together” by the hands of a “pale student”; the “hideous phantasm of a man”, who begin to move himself because of “the working of some powerful engine”. Suddenly, in horror, she opened her eyes looking for something to bring her back to reality. “I could not so easily get rid of my hideous phantom; still it haunted me”, she recalled. At that time she recalled the ghost story challenge. Mary Shelley realized that the hideous creature which had terrified her nightmares would certainly fill the others with horror. The next morning she began to write her story, starting from “It was on a dreary night of November...” and transcribing the terrors of her waking dreams.

Although this narrative, published in the 1831 edition of her novel, was written fifteen years after Mary Shelley’s extraordinary experience, and may therefore present some distortions, these vague descriptions are the most reliable source we have to understand the genesis of Frankenstein.
4. THE MONSTER IN THE NOVEL\textsuperscript{[5]}

Once provided with the inspiration, all Mary Shelley had to do was to turn her extraordinary vision into a story. It was necessary to imagine a plot that would lead to that scene – the moment in which the monster is created –, but also flow beyond the terrifying nightmare.

Then, starting from the vision of the “phantasm of a man stretched out”, the author wrote a complex fiction. “It was on a dreary night of November that I beheld the accomplishment of my toils.” (p. 55), this was the first sentence written by her, which corresponds to the opening of chapter five. The four previous chapters concern the origins and childhood of Victor Frankenstein, his interest in science, and his studies at Ingolstadt University. We learn Victor’s history when he tells it to Robert Walton, a sailor who finds him unconscious during a scientific expedition to the North Pole. Walton, in turn, relates this narrative in letters, which he sends to his sister, framing the novel in epistolary nature. The first image of the monster is described through the observations related by Walton in his fourth letter:

We perceived a low carriage, fixed on a sledge and drawn by dogs, pass on towards the north, at the distance of half a mile; a being which had the shape of a man, but apparently of gigantic stature, sat in the sledge and guided the dogs. We watched the rapid progress of the traveller with our telescopes until he was lost among the distant inequalities of the ice (p. 23).

Here, the monster is still just a gigantic figure that passes on at a great distance. The scene in which he comes to life occurs in the fourth chapter of the novel. However, in Mary Shelley’s imagination and for most of the readers the history begins at this moment. Many of the present-day readers are surprised even disappointed, when they discover that the scene of the monster’s creation, presented in \textit{Frankenstein}, does not correspond to the more recent idealizations, which constitute the more sensational and grotesque images of the filmic versions of the scene.

First of all, apart from the abstract observation that the monster comes to life by “the working of some powerful engine”, Mary Shelley never wrote anything about alchemist’s furnaces or a lightning conductor. There is also no mention of electrical, steam or mechanical

\textsuperscript{[5]} There are two versions of \textit{Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus}: the first edition anonymously published in 1818; and the third, completely revised by Mary Shelley and published in 1831 (in which is based a great number of the recent editions and translations). All references to the text were taken from the Penguin Group edition published in 1994.
power systems. Even so, popular imagination quickly began to associate the monster of Frankenstein with such machines. Although the theatrical and filmic adaptations performed this scene through the creaking and squeaks of much inside a futurist laboratory, the novel itself describes the technology for life transference vaguely:

With an anxiety that almost amounted to agony, I collected the instruments of life around me, that I might infuse a spark of being into the lifeless thing that lay at my feet. It was already one in the morning; the rain pattered dismally against the panes, and my candle was nearly burnt out, when, by the glimmer of the half-extinguished light, I saw the dull yellow eye of the creature open; it breathed hard, and a convulsive motion agitated its limbs (p. 55).

This is the way Mary Shelley describes the setting of the monster’s birth. During a sad and rainy night, alone in his laboratory in Ingolstadt, illuminated by the light of an almost entirely burnt out candle, Frankenstein collects the “instruments” necessary to bring to life that “lifeless thing” he had just created. Because of this void, intentionally left by the author, it was possible to retell such a hideous moment in so many different forms, remaking different settings, and re-creating different ways of giving life to the gigantic creature.

The monster’s total disproportion, moreover, became an obstacle for those who adapted the romance subsequently. Since the first theatrical representation to the most recent films, the idea of representing a creature of such monstrous size has been a serious challenge, even for the most experienced directors. Even the tallest and biggest actors could not match the original creature’s size, as Dr. Victor Frankenstein resolved to make “the being of a gigantic stature; that is to say, about eight feet[6] in height, and proportionally large” (p. 51).

The re-creation of the monster is also a difficult task for makeup artists. “The dissecting room and the slaughter-house furnished many of my materials” (p. 52), remembers Victor. Although he has used parts of dead bodies collected from damp graves and from the slaughter-house, the Frankenstein in the novel had the intention of creating an attractive being; even so, when he looks at his accomplished work, his dream is extinguished and his heart is filled with horror and disgust:

How can I describe my emotions at this catastrophe, or how delineate the wretch whom with such infinitive pains and care I had endeavoured to form? His limbs were in proportion, and I had selected his features as beautiful. Beautiful! Great God! His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath; his hair was of a lustrous black, and flowing; his teeth of a pearly whiteness; but these luxuriances only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes, that seemed almost of the

same colour as the dun-white sockets in which they were set, his shrivelled complexion and straight black lips (p. 55).

In the novel, this is the most complete description given by Mary Shelley for the monster’s appearance: with its yellow skin which “scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath”, pearly white teeth, lustrous black hair, grayish eyes and black lips, the creature of the novel differs almost completely from its modern stereotyped image.

At this point of the narrative, Victor Frankenstein is overwhelmed by repugnance at the peak of his scientific success. He tries to escape from reality in his sleep, however, it is filled with terrible nightmares, and his attempt is frustrated by the image of that creature which had just come to life:

[...] by the dim yellow light of the moon, as it forced its way through the window shutters, I beheld the wretch – the miserable monster whom I had created. He held up the curtain of the bed; and his eyes, if eyes they may be called, were fixed on me. His jaws opened, and he muttered some inarticulate sounds, while a grin wrinkled his cheeks. He might have spoken, but I did not hear; one hand was stretched out, seemingly to detain me, but I escaped and rushed downstairs (p. 56).

Far from wanting to welcome his creature, Frankenstein abominates “the wretch, the miserable monster”, he has created.

The feeling of loathing only happens because of the creature’s repulsive appearance, which, together with its inability of speak, makes him a being incapable of communicating any feeling. It is possible, and even probable, that the creature was well-meaning when “he muttered some inarticulate sounds” and stretched out one hand, “seemingly to detain” his creator. However, Victor runs away in terror, searching for a refuge where he passes the night in extreme agitation.

On the following day, the monster is no more in the laboratory and Frankenstein contracts a terrible illness, which we can understand as a serious depression. During months, the illness takes away out from reality. His childhood friend Henry Clerval, who had just come to Ingolstadt, is responsible for taking care of him. There ensue four tedious chapters in which the reader practically forgets the monster. In chapters 7 and 8, through Elizabeth and his father’s letters, it comes to Victor knowledge that his younger brother William has been violently murdered, and then he decides to go back to Geneva. By a flash of lightning, he recognizes the figure of that gigantic creature, which he realizes to be the murderer of his brother. However, the young adopted servant Justine Moritz is the one accused and –
ironically – unfairly sentenced to death, which worsens the illness of Frankenstein considerably.

Seeking a recovery, Victor Frankenstein ventures alone into the uninhabited region of the Mont Blanc, where he finds himself face-to-face with his creation again: “He approached; his countenance bespoke bitter anguish, combined with disdain and malignity, while its unearthly ugliness rendered it almost too horrible for human eyes” (p. 95). Such an impression shocks Victor profoundly and, consumed with hate, he attacks the creature with words of abomination and contempt: Devil, is the first word to come out of his mouth; then, Frankenstein calls him “vile insect” and accuses him of having diabolically murdered his brother William. But the creature immediately replies:

Be calm! I entreat you to hear me before you give vent to your hatred on my devoted head. [...] Remember, thou hast made me more powerful than thyself; my height is superior to thine, my joints more supple. But I will not be tempted to set myself in opposition to thee (p.95).

Here, we can notice the creature’s total disinterest in fighting against his creator; the creature is presented as a docile being. Unlike the creature, Frankenstein shows sheer aggressiveness: “Begone! I will not hear you. There can be no community between you and me; we are enemies. Begone, or let us try out strength in a fight, in which one must fall” (p. 96).

From this point on, the creature becomes the central figure in the novel. His history is narrated between the exciting chapters 11 and 16, in which Mary Shelley gives him great eloquence to tell his creator everything he had experienced. At this moment, the reader, together with Frankenstein, realizes the difficulties and torments lived by the creature. He was initially just a blank slate[7] and his knowledge was formed from his first impressions of the world.

Repugnance is the first human reaction he discovers, a natural reflex to Victor’s escape and negation. However, the creature overcomes these traumatic memories and, because of his constant observations of a family of cottagers, he becomes an articulate, intelligent and reflective character. Thus, the roles are inverted. The creature seems more

[7] Epistemological theory proposed by John Locke in his Essay Concerning Human Understanding, first published in 1690. Locke affirms that the human mind is initially a “blank slate” – therefore, individuals are born without built-in mental content, being their knowledge a direct result of their experiences and perceptions. While Mary Shelley was writing Frankenstein, according to her diary, she was also reading this essay and used some of Locke’s principles to create the psychology of her abandoned creature.
human even than Frankenstein. The monster’s attitude is counterpoised to that of his irresponsible and egoistic creator.

The creature wins the reader’s sympathy and compassion, because he is as unhappy as he is kind and gentle, as we can observe in the next excerpts:

The gentle manners and beauty of the cottagers greatly endeared them to me; when they were unhappy, I felt depresed; when they rejoiced, I sympathized in their joys (p. 108)

I heard of the discovery of the American hemisphere and wept [...] over the hapless fate of its original inhabitants (p. 115)

When I looked around I saw and heard of none like me. Was I, then, a monster, a blot upon earth, from which all men fled and whom all men disowned? (p. 116)

wherein the monster seems more empathic than many human beings.

Although Frankenstein had heard about the crimes committed by the creature, he has compassion on that horrible being and agrees, at least temporarily, to create a female companion for him, which could relieve his revolt. Nevertheless, at the completion of his work, Victor realizes the horror he had been doing and destroys the female body into small pieces. Noticing what had happened, the monster becomes full of hatred and declares his terrible revenge: “I will be with you on your wedding-night” (p.163).

At this point, the monster begins to follow each step of Victor and Elizabeth, his new-wife, until they reach Evian, their wedding-night retreat. Frankenstein blindly believes he is the next target of the monster, and waits him with loaded pistols in his hand, leaving his wife alone in the bedroom. It was the moment that the monster anxiously waited for. Suddenly, a scream echoes from the room where Elizabeth was sleeping, which makes Frankenstein realize the whole truth. The scream echoes again, he runs to find his wife’s body, and then, for the last time, he faces the monstrous assassin.

While I still hang over her [Elizabeth’s body] in the agony of despair, I happened to look up. The windows of the room had before been darkened, and I felt a kind of panic on seeing the pale yellow light of the moon illuminate the chamber. The shutters had been thrown back, and with a sensation of horror not to be described, I saw at the open window a figure the most hideous and abhorred. A grin was on the face of the monster; he seemed to jeer, as with his fiendish finger he pointed towards the corps of my wife. I rushed towards the window, and drawing a pistol from my bosom, fired; but he eluded me, leaped from his station, and running with the swiftness of lightning, plunged into the lake (pp. 189-90).
This is a decisive moment in the novel, a symbolic image, incessantly retold throughout the following years: a beautiful woman dead in her lover’s arms, victim of the monstrosity created by himself.

After then, one by one, the monster kills the members of his family and friends. This moment represents the last appearance of Frankenstein in society, as he solemnly promises to pursue the demon that caused his misery until one of them dies in a mortal conflict. The long pursuit goes through the wildest regions of Europe, the creator in search of his creature, always towards the north, which brings the reader back to the initial point of the novel, the moment in which Victor Frankenstein is found by Robert Walton, at the North Pole. Afraid of the constant risks of the expedition, Walton’s crew demand their immediate return home.

Frankenstein, however, intends to be left there to continue his mission but, because of his weak health, he cannot persist in the effort and feels death is approaching. Then, he makes his last request to the captain: if the creature appears, not to let him escape alive. “He is eloquent and persuasive [...] but trust him not” (p. 202), Victor alerts. After some days, he finally takes his last breath.

The fantastic history related by the adventurer Robert Walton would not be complete without the final catastrophe. The monster appears for the last time, as the captain writes in the final letter:

I entered the cabin where lay the remains of my ill-fated and admirable friend. Over him hung a form which I cannot find words to describe – gigantic in the stature, yet uncouth and distorted in its proportions. As he hung over the coffin, his face was concealed by long locks of ragged hair; but one vast hand was extended, in colour and apparent texture like that of a mummy. When he heard the sound of my approach, he ceased to utter exclamations of grief and horror and sprung towards the window. Never did I behold a vision so horrible as his face, of such loathsome yet appalling hideousness (pp. 210-11).

This is the last description of the monster in the novel.

Now, it is finally possible to draw the profile of Mary Shelley’s creature: a being with horrible appearance and gigantic stature, “eight feet in height and proportionally large,” with huge matching limbs. He was set up by using parts of human bodies collected from “damp graves” and from a “slaughter-house,” which are brought to life by the “the working of some powerful engine.” His shriveled skin “scarcely covers the muscles and arteries beneath”,

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and has the “colour and apparent texture like that of a mummy”. His “long locks of ragged hair” are “lustrous black, and flowing”, in contrast with his “teeth of pearly whiteness.” His dull yellow watery eyes seem “almost of the same colour as the dun-white sockets in which they are set”, and his lips are black and straight. He also has superhuman strength and velocity.

At first, he just murmurs some inarticulate sounds, but he soon becomes eloquent, persuasive, intelligent and reflective. He was, at the beginning, a virtuous and kind creature, sensitive to the various human feelings. However, after receiving only contempt and aggression from everyone he finds, he is dominated by hatred and jealousy, becomes vindictive and commits many malign murders. This is the miserable inhuman creature recreated, countless times, throughout the years. This is the wonderful monster of Frankenstein.

The author offers us, in the last pages, an exciting monologue of the creature, in which he reflects about his own existence. He remembers the virtuous creature he was, recalls the torments and miseries he lived and, affirms that society transformed him into a monster. “I shall die”, he says, “I shall no longer feel the agonies which now consume me or be the prey of feelings unsatisfied, yet unquenched” (p. 214). Next, Walton finally concludes his letter: “He sprang from the cabin window as he said this, upon the ice raft which lay close to the vessel. He was soon borne away by the waves and lost in darkness and distance” (p.215).

With these words, Mary Shelley concludes her novel. Victor Frankenstein dies, as well as all of his friends and relatives. His monster, however, disappears forever into the darkness. Did he really find his death at the top of a funeral pyre, as he had promised? The question remains unanswered. One thing is certain: he has never left the collective unconscious, from where he has been emerging again and again to take on many different forms, for almost two centuries.
5. THE MONSTER REACHES THE SCREEN

In this chapter we analyze the confrontation between *Frankenstein* and some film adaptations of the novel, proposing an illustration of the types of procedures described by Brito (2006). In order to cover different periods of the cinema, we have selected three famous adaptations: *Bride of Frankenstein* (Universal Studios, 1935), *The Evil of Frankenstein* (Hammer Films, 1964), and *Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein* (Columbia Pictures, 1994). When necessary, we will also mention and provide short summaries of other films, as sometimes they are intrinsically connected in a sequence.

In the passage from the 19th to 20th century, the myth of Frankenstein was still alive and strong in the imagination of British and American audiences. Mary Shelley had given a scant description of the appearance of her monster, who remained visually unknown. Yet, everything changed soon after he completed his hundredth anniversary.

In 1931, something irreversible happens to *Frankenstein*. Universal Studious released its first version of the story, directed by James Whale and presenting an unnamed monster played by Boris Karloff, then an almost unknown actor. This film established a new and indelible image for the creature. It was also very influential, so, since then, the representations of the story came to depend on, reflect, or be associated with it. Karloff’s performance fixed the classical physical features of the monster – flat head, high forehead, screws on his neck, exaggerated limbs, clothes disproportionally small, heavy walking and groans instead of speech – creating a stereotype which is instantly recognized (See ANNEX A).

Differently from the novel, this film explains the nature of the creature as the result of a mistake made by Fritz, the assistant of Frankenstein that Whale added to the plot. When he was collecting materials for the horrid experiment, Fritz accidentally changed a “normal” brain for the brain of a criminal, which justifies the monster behavior. Thus, horror exceeded the psychological debate in this production. The monster commits some murders and is pursued by a crowd of people till the final scene, when he is cornered in a windmill, which is burned to the ground.

Whale thought he had put an end to the monster. Even so, many scriptwriters, due to the resounding success of the 1931 *Frankenstein*, started to plan a sequel to the film. First
they needed a creative idea to bring the monster back to life from the flaming windmill. So, they imagined a pool of standing water under the windmill whereby the monster survived.

Also in contrast with the novel, in which the monster appears only after four long chapters, in *Bride of Frankenstein* (1935), he is presented in the first scenes. Whale was forced to make use of this process of *dislocation*, once the creation of the monster had already been narrated in his previous film. This way, this new version is filled with a horrific atmosphere and impressive photography from the beginning to its end, and the audience is presented with Karloff’s brilliant performance during the whole film.

Although Shelley’s novel presents few physical details about the monster, enabling the freer interpretations of those who later adapted it, the text does not mention anything about pins or screws in his neck. However, since the first film, Jack Pierce, the makeup artist who helped to compose the monster’s first image, simply *added* these screws as an ‘electricity entrance’. For *Bride of Frankenstein*, the monster is presented almost like he was in 1931, however with the necessary addition of an element. The plot required highlights in Karloff’s makeup, as the monster had been burned in the previous film. So, Pierce created burn scars on his cheeks and pushed back his hairline to reveal sutures and clamps on the top of his head (See ANNEX B).

Another adaptation procedure used by Whale was the process of *simplification*. In this version the creature reappears as a living being with feelings. Following the sound of a violin, he encounters the cottage of a blind solitary old man who shares a meal with him. In these scenes, the creature is humanized: he smiles, cries, dances, and speaks. The old man teaches him words like ‘friend’, ‘bread’ and ‘good’. Then ‘bad’ is added to his list, and the last words spoken by the creature in the film represent the total extension of his verbal development. He speaks a primitive sentence: ‘We belong dead’.

While the monster of Mary Shelley speaks with eloquence through monologues and precise arguments, and moves the readers by reporting the injustices he suffered, Whale and Karloff questioned if it were sensible to give speech to him in the film. Karloff thought that if his creature spoke, people would consider him too human and it would be the death of the character (HITCHCOCK, 2010). Even so, the director decided to give him such ability, nevertheless in a more simplistic way, providing him with a rudimentary vocabulary, which maybe would fit better in cinematographic features.
The plot of *The Bride of Frankenstein* (1935) is rooted in a subplot of the original novel: the creation of a mate for the creature. Encouraged by Frankenstein’s old mentor, Dr. Pretorius, the monster convinces him to construct a female being. The final scenes – the constructed wife rejects the monster, who, disappointed, pulls a lever exploding the laboratory – are undoubtedly the highest moments of the film.

The subsequent films released by Universal Studios show the portrait of monster changing between extremes in few years. *Son of Frankenstein* (1939), the last performance of Karloff as the being created by Frankenstein, brings a monster with little conscience and a beastly longing to attack. Then, Universal producers still resorted to *The Ghost of Frankenstein* (1942), *Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man* (1943), and finally, they killed their creature in *House of Frankenstein* (1944); the studio also portrayed a meeting of monsters in *House of Dracula* (1945) and in the comedy *Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein* (1948).

The monster remained asleep for almost a decade until a British company started to tell the story in its special grotesque style, exploring the new opportunities offered by the effects of color in cinema. Dealing with serious restrictions of budget, time, and having to move away from the Universal model, the Hammer Studios released seven films between 1957 and 1973.

Definitely, Phil Leakey, the artist who created the makeup for the monster of the series received orders to avoid the appearance of Universal’s creature. As the copyright prevented him from imitating the similarity to a robot, popularized by Karloff, it was necessary to create something totally different. Leakey also needed a scheme which was cheaper and faster to prepare, and would produce more impact in the color film. In the first film, the result was a rigid appearance, with dark rings under the eyes and red scars on the face – something like a traffic injury (See ANNEX C).

The Hammer monster turned stranger from film to film, while different actors performed the role. *The Evil of Frankenstein* (1964), directed by Freddie Francis, is the third and the most expensive Frankenstein film produced by Hammer Studios – for many people, the best of the series. In this version, Baron Frankenstein (Peter Cushing) runs away from a crowd of villagers and takes refuge on the mountains. There, he finds his creature frozen in a block of ice and, of course, has to revive him – exactly the same scenario of one of Universal sequels. While the early Hammer films went against conventions, this version seemed to show
a poor copy of the famous Universal style. Kiwi Kingston performed a creature which looked like Karloff’s, although using unbelievably cheap makeup, with the top of the head made of cardboard and paper (See ANNEX D). He also acted like Karloff, although in a silly and, maybe, talentless way.

Back to the intersemiotic operations listed by Brito, we notice a clear process of reduction in relation to the monster’s speech ability. As we mentioned before, Shelley’s creature speaks with eloquence, due to a long period in which he observes the cottage of a poor family. If James Whale, in Bride of Frankenstein, simplified this aspect of his character, Freddie Francis, in The Evil of Frankenstein, simply destroyed this ability. The creature, performed by Kingston, does not speak at all. He only produces primitive sounds, grunts, roars and screams. The intelligent creature from the novel becomes – is reduced to – an undeveloped, inarticulate and inactive being, who remains most of the time waiting for some orders of Zoltan, the hypnotist.

By the way, the monster’s motivation generally passes through a process of transformation in the film versions. It has also been discussed that in the novel, the creature becomes able to reflect about his own situation, and the injustices suffered by him feed his desire for revenge. With the exception of The Bride of Frankenstein, which tries to follow the subplot of the novel, the Universal films justify his wickedness as a consequence of the accidental insertion of a criminal brain during his creation experiment. In The Evil of Frankenstein, on the other hand, the brain of the creature is restored by Zoltan, an eccentric hypnotist, who controls and uses him to practice robberies and murders. Such transformations alter the character as well as the plot of the film completely, according to the intention of the authors, who play in leading the creature from victim to villain, from a reflective being to one market by sheer beastly aggressiveness.

In its exploitation of bloodshed, Hammer Films influenced the new generation of the 1960s, which promptly followed its gory trend in moves about Frankenstein. All over the world, great and small studios were anxious to exploit the theme. In Mexico at least two adaptations: El Infierno del Frankenstein (1963) and El Testamento del Frankenstein (1964) were produced. In Japan, Toho Studios released the cheap production Frankenstein Conquers the World (1965), in which a three story high monster fights against a gigantic reptile that spits fire. Finally, a French-Italian production entitled Flesh for Frankenstein (1974) has been pointed out as one of the worst versions of all times.
The story of the monster remained alive, and was reinterpreted for the growing crowd of comic strip consumers, as well as for the millions of families who owned and delighted in their living room TV sets. In cinema, the creature often hopped from horror to comedy: Mel Brooks’ *Young Frankenstein* (1974), for example, shows a monster with zippers instead of scars; and Jim Sharman’s *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (1975) satirizes all bad Frankenstein films.

Up till now, among the great many different adaptations, two versions carried in their titles the commitment to faithfully retelling the original story. In 1973, Jack Smight directed *Frankenstein: the True Story*, with a very “literary” plot. Nevertheless, he created a new and unexpected dimension for the story, which brought interest and surprise for this version. Leonard Whiting, as Dr. Frankenstein, creates a beautiful and literate creature, performed by Michael Sarazin (See ANNEX E), whom he teaches how to speak, read and write. At this moment, the plot moves away from the original since the “monster” is initially a sociable being, introduced at ballrooms as a visiting count. Even so, assisted by a terrific cast, this adaptation received excellent critics and is considered by some specialists as one of the best and more creative versions of the original story.

Soon after the resounding success of *Bram Stoker’s Dracula*, Hollywood announced the production of a big budget film about *Frankenstein*, which would be faithful to the original novel. It was what the fans of the monster were expecting. Francis Ford Cappola and James V. Kenneth Branagh, the same pair who had just made the excellent adaptation of Dracula, were called to produce this film. Following the legacy of *Bram Stoker’s Dracula*, this version was called *Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein*.

An excellent cast was assembled and the excessive publicity created for the film, imposed on it a negative burden when it was released. Kenneth Branagh directed the and also played a preponderant Victor Frankenstein, leaving for the respectable Robert de Niro very little to do in short scenes as the creature. Even with makeup from top to toe and few possibilities of speaking and expressing emotion, de Niro shows great talent in his performance. Branagh took immense care supervising the monster’s makeup, whose incisions were healing during the film, looking very realistic. In fact, a positive aspect of this version is the innovative appearance created for the creature: an almost one-eyed being, with semi-bald head – in contrast to Shelley’s description –, scars covering his face and using Irish boots and
a dark overcoat stolen from his creator (See ANNEX F). Unfortunately, if the same dedication had been applied to the script, the film might have been better.

With regard to the categories of adaptation, we can point out significant differences between the creatures presented by Shelley and Branagh. Although *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* is the closest version of the novel, there were certain *additions*. For example, in the film, differently from the novel, the monster received the brain of Dr. Waldman, a remarkable Professor of Ingolstadt University, which justifies his initial great learning capacity.

Then, we observe a clear process of *transformation*, or simply *reduction*. In Shelley’s narrative, the creature escapes directly through the forest, without been seen by anyone. On the other hand, in Branagh’s adaptations, the creature uses Frankenstein’s overcoat and walks among the people of Ingolstadt without being recognized at first. It’s obvious that the original eight-feet-high creature could not pass unnoticed anywhere. The creature performed by Robert de Niro is reduced to the height of a very tall man, therefore, being able to walk normally among the population for some minutes.

Finally, we point out a relevant process of *enlargement*. Probably because of Dr. Waldman’s brain, the creature presents great ability soon after his creation. When noticed and pursued by the people of Ingolstadt, he shows a cinematographic capacity of planning and puts into practice a strategy to run away from the city. These moments add more action to the film, something typical of the Hollywood style.

It is curious that Branagh opted for scenes with action and blood, instead of gothic horror. There is nothing frightening in the film, not even emotional impact. This version becomes a disappointment both for the critics and the box office. There is nothing in the film which might rival the first appearance of Boris Karloff, seventy years ago. In fact, Mary Shelley deserved more.
6. CONCLUSION

If on the one hand the study of filmic adaptation is an area relatively despised in cinematographic analysis; on the other hand, it can be seen as a central and important area, once we consider that the adaptations of novels constitute a great percentage of the films realized, especially among the prestigious productions and those which win Oscars. In these films, to sum up what we have argued, the source novel is transformed by a series of operations: reduction, addition, dislocation, transformation, simplification and enlargement.

The conventional critical terms employed to talk about adaptations – faithfulness, betrayal, and so on – express our disappointment with the fact that a filmic version of a given novel did not achieve the aesthetic or moral impact of the story. In ignoring these traditional approaches, we do not have to abandon our rights to make evaluations about the values of certain film adaptations. Of course, we can still speak about good or bad adaptations. However, our judgments can no longer be moralistic, but must be based on contextual aspects and dialogical responses – readings, interpretations, rewritings etc.

Will Frankenstein be presented in the screen exactly as it was conceived in literature? Probably not. The fact is that the novel – or any novel for that matter – cannot be faithfully transported to the cinema, nor is such “fidelity” desirable. Mary Shelley leaves many elements untold and her story requires and engages the imagination of the reader. The most important is to grasp the essence of the story, the tone of the narrative, and the moral lesson conveyed by Frankenstein. In this sense, The Bride of Frankenstein, as well as the Universal’s Studios original Frankenstein, have remained worthwhile. In these films, James Whale was successful in perfectly combining all these elements, and in making the monster’s conflict clear and simple. It is no wonder than that, up till now, people who think about the monster of Frankenstein always associate him to Boris Karloff’s classical performance.
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Long shot of the creature (Boris Karloff) and Elizabeth (Mae Clarke) at the climax of the film. Available at: http://picturespoilers.wordpress.com/2012/01/16/afi-top-100-frankenstein/ Accessed in: 02 dec. 2012.
ANEXO B – The creature in *Bride of Frankenstein* (1935)

Boris Karloff as the monster in James Whale’s *Bride of Frankenstein* (Universal Pictures - 1935), a closeup which highlights his burn scars makeup. Available at: http://www.freewebs.com/roho911/universalmonsters.htm

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ANEXO C – The creature in *The Curse of Frankenstein* (1957)


ANEXO D – The creature in *The Evil of Frankenstein* (1964)


Baron Frankenstein (Peter Cushing) and his inert creature (Kiwi Kingston). Available at:
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ANEXO E – The creature in *Frankenstein: The True Story* (1973)

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