

TESI DOCTORAL

Sara Martín Alegre

'More Human than Human':
Aspects of Monstrosity
in the Films and Novels in English
of the 1980s and 1990s

Dirigida per: Dr. Andrew Monnickendam



Departament de Filologia Anglesa i de Germanística,
Facultat de Lletres,
UNIVERSITAT AUTONOMA DE BARCELONA,
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1.1.6. The Monster in the Twentieth Century: Between Language and Image

1.1.6.1. The Expansion of the Iconography of the Monster

With the beginning of the twentieth century, the monster enters a new phase of its cultural existence, shaped mainly by the emergence of many more vehicles to transmit its image than previously. Factors such as the rise of new forms of popular entertainment based on the image rather than the word (film, TV, video-games), the increasing availability of art through museums, exhibitions and cheaper art books, the popularisation of children's illustrated literature and of genre fiction are some of the factors that conditioned and still condition the cultural market, together with the entrance of psychology - especially of Freudianism - in the world of art, both in the literary and the visual arts. In painting, the avantgardes - Dadaism, Cubism and later Surrealism - experiment in the early decades of the century with new strategies of visualization: the Cubist fragmentation of the human body, the surrealist representation of the fantastic plastic body retrieved by the artist from his subconscious, the exploration of the aesthetic values of ugliness in Expressionism. The work of Picasso, Miró, Dalí, Ernst, Bacon has many points in common with those of the iconographers of monstrosity working in popular media like films or comics, being frequently cited as a major inspiration, whereas German expressionism is at the root of the creative use of photography in the American monster films of the 1930s, especially in the work of Karl Freund in Hollywood films such as *Frankenstein*. On the other hand, the entrance of other mythologies and religions into the cultural atmosphere of the twentieth century thanks to the avid interest awakened not only by the booming vogue for the supernatural in the first decades of the century but also by the findings of archaeologists, should be regarded as one of the most important factors shaping the new monsters of the century, together with the popularisation of science as rationalistic response to myth and the supernatural, in a century split between the need to reconcile the existence of God with science and the need to expose the horror uncovered (or created) by rationalism.

In general terms, it can be said that the dominating artistic paradigm of the twentieth century is still Romanticism, so that the images of monstrosity produced can be assumed to be, above all, extremely original in aesthetic terms and profoundly personal creations in which the artists of the post-Freudian age express their inner world with a high degree of self-consciousness about the processes of the unconscious. On the other hand, this Romanticism is inextricably bound to the stark commercial nature of the world-wide cultural market built initially by American capitalism, to the point that it is almost impossible to persist in separating the 'true' artist from the 'commercial' artists as many still do. In this phase the centre of the cultural construction of the monster and its iconography has been displaced from Europe to the USA, where the commercial exploitation of film and other forms of popular culture such as comics and the pulps became a booming business that laid the foundations for the cultural market in which the monster still thrives now. The 1980s and the 1990s, part of the postmodernist cultural climate engendered in the 1960s, use the monster to express an attitude that I would define as postmodernist Gothic romanticism, characterized by an ironic pessimism, a dystopia that yearns to be utopian and, in general, an impossibility to break away from a certainly apocalyptic vision of life.

The monster lives in the twentieth century between the word and the image, high art and popular fiction, myth and submyth, banality and transcendence and is by nature profane, protean, and genuinely a product of the collective unconscious harassed by a sense of an ending caused by historical factors such as the two world wars. It is almost impossible to separate its literary representations from its presence in the visual arts, for there is a ceaseless interaction between both domains that includes, in addition, the artistic highs and lows of each field.¹ As regards literature, the oral tradition of myth, the folk tale, the fairy tale, the legend and the fable have reached the last two decades of the twentieth century through written versions, frequently illustrated, and through the immense legacy of their influence on literary genres from epic to the

¹Section 2.1.1. of Chapter 2 is devoted to surveying the interaction between film and the novel in the twentieth century. This chapter contains, therefore, only information on aspects of film directly related to the creation of the image of the monster.

short story, obviously including poetry and the novel, themselves the sources of countless interpretations in painting, illustration and newer narrative media such as film and TV. The theatre is another form of interaction between the word and the image bringing to the twentieth-century new images of monstrosity, not only through new productions of classics such as *The Tempest*, but also through new plays and through stage adaptations of well-known classics such as *Frankenstein* and *Dracula*, not to forget alternatives to the mainstream such as the French horror theatre of the Grand Guignol (1888-1962), of crucial influence on the rise of graphic forms of depicting horror in the twentieth century.

The importance of literature - both mainstream and popular - is capital in the development of the new iconography of the monster in the twentieth century. The relationship between the printed page monster and the screen monster is as constant and important now as it was at the beginning of film history. What has changed is the direction of the exchange of images between both narrative media: while in the first half of the century film depends to a large extent on the novel, which keeps its own pace or even rejects film (as the Modernists did), in the second half of the century novels are written by a generation brought up on films and TV. They bring to the novel cinematographic techniques and a new treatment of the figure of the monster. This derives from the literary tradition which has frequently reached them through education, from the reading of extra-canonical genre fiction and from the TV and film images recalled from their childhood and teenage years, together with other images coming from children's fiction, comics, photography or painting. It is important to notice that books also make their contribution to the iconography of the monster through their covers; not only illustrations accompanying the text in children's books but also the covers of adult fiction engross the current iconography of the monster.¹

The field of the literary has expanded enormously as a producer of monstrous images with

¹Quite another matter is how book covers are used to distinguish genre fiction from the mainstream: the writer Ramsey Campbell, one of Britain's best-selling horror writers, agreed in conversation with me (June 1995) that the more lurid covers of genre fiction conditioned the way the book was sold and, most important, the way the book was regarded by the critics. The iconography of book cover was, according to Campbell, a more definitive label for the writer than any the reviewer could append, but it is also an important iconographical source.

the rise of genre fiction, especially science fiction, horror, and fantasy, inexhaustible sources of adaptations to the printed and the screen image. It is essential to understand that the contemporary monster derives from the academically visible tradition of high art as much as from the commercial culture of the early twentieth century. Both traditions were totally separated until the 1960s, but are now part of the same cultural atmosphere of postmodernism. The interaction of word and image generated new hybrid narrative media in the first decades of the century such as the dime novels, the pulps and comics, all appeared in the USA to cater to the tastes of mass consumers. The dime novels were cheap publications of sensationalistic subject matter addressed to a public that was literate but not educated. The pulps were cheap periodical publications containing short stories and novellas (usually dealing with fantasy, horror and mystery) assembled for quick consumption and disposal, sold under lurid covers that inspired many comics draughtsmen. By the 1920s many of the pulps had become specialised in a single genre so that by the 1930s, when they reached their golden age, the interaction between the flourishing new fashion for horror films and the content and covers of the new pulps was remarkable¹.

Most pulps ceased publication in the 1940s not before they had become the source of inspiration for another narrative media, comics. The birth of the most popular American comics centring on the figure of a superhero took place in the 1930s, following the vogue for pulp fiction and also the popular literature of adventures for boys. Adventure is indeed the key word in the early comics featuring Tarzan (1929), Buck Rogers (1929), Dick Tracy (1931) and Flash Gordon (1934). In 1938, Superman, created by Siegel and Shuster for Action Comics, inaugurated the tradition of the American superhero, which mixes motifs coming from the ancient myths of monster slaying heroes with the self-confident American ideal of individualism and the underlying new myth of the Nietzschean superman. The messianic Superman and the more Gothic Batman (1940), both split heroes in a Jekyll and Hyde fashion combining a super masculine heroic façade with a more subdued (perhaps effeminate) public persona, have endured the passage of time and are still in

¹More information about the contribution of the pulps to the rise of genre fiction can be found in section 2.1.1.

the 1990s very popular characters, though Batman seems to be attracting greater numbers of followers in these pessimistic times.

The American superheroes fought in their adventures monsters of all descriptions, many of them based on the mock Gothic of the 1930s horror film, that fuelled the imagination of their young adepts, especially through the very popular Marvel comics in which the superheroes often also assumed a political role in their defence of democratic values on behalf of America. However, after World War II a tide of gothicism reached the shores of the American comics business. EC, the main publishing house of comics in the 1950s, issued successful titles such as *Tales from the Crypt* (1950-55), *The Vault of Horror* (1950-54) and *The Haunt of Fear* (1950-54) that offered to their readers - the generation that later created the horror fiction of the 1980s - a strong diet of gory horror. The horrific monster of comic met a similar success in Europe, crossing the Atlantic apparently thanks to the American soldiers stationed in Europe (Sabin, 1993: 29). However, the solid commercial career of these comics in the USA was brought to a halt in 1954 with the publication of American psychiatrist Fredric Wertham's book *The Seduction of the Innocent*, which claimed that the horrific content of the comics was exerting a very negative influence on the minds of children¹. The campaign spread from the USA to the UK and resulted in the end of this type of publication, although the impulse to represent extreme bodily destruction resurfaced in the late 1970s and 1980s cycle of horror films when the young readers of the 1950s became themselves the new producers of images of monstrosity.

1.1.6.2. *The Art of the Monster -Maker: Special Effects and the Monster of Film*

The contribution of films to the visualization of the monster in the twentieth century is incommensurable, though not much attention has been paid to how the evolution of special effects techniques has affected the representation of the monster on the screen. There have been

¹For a detailed account of this campaign in the UK see Barker (1984d). Sabin (op. cit.) gives a detailed account of the campaign for both UK and the USA and includes the Code drawn in 1954 by the main American comic publishing houses that imposed a harsh self-censorship on their products. Interestingly enough, all the points made unacceptable by the code have resurfaced with a vengeance in the horror fiction of the 1970s onwards.

detailed analyses of the content of monster films in relation to the historical background of each period but, in general, little has been made of the fact that the image of the monster is conditioned by the limitations of its visualization on the screen in terms of pure technique. Despite the appearance of typewriters at the beginning of the century and of personal computers and word processors in the 1980s, writers still work now essentially in the same way as Shakespeare did, struggling to shape language for their particular needs. In film, there is no equivalent situation, for each film represents a step forward in technical aspects. In fact, it can be said that the monster is a sign of the state of the art in film and that in the 1980s and 1990s the monster is, more than ever, a sign that technology has colonised the world of show business. The spectacular monsters of contemporary film - the Alien, the Predator, the Terminator and many others - have been produced with techniques that are entirely new or that represent immense advances on already well-known special effects techniques. Technology conditions the monster of film, yet technology is also shaped by new ideas about the iconography of the monster and by the constant search for commercial success.

Writing about the increasing realism of gruesome and grotesque scenes of monstrous violence in film, Will Rockett (1988:38) asserts that "the difficulty the filmmaker faces is that each new, astonishing effect is picked up and repeated in other such films." This constant search for novelty in the iconography of monstrosity is also essential in the novel, and should be blamed partly on the capitalist marketing of culture: the image of the monster is, like fashion, an expression of an endless search for originality that only occasionally produces lasting products - like the works of *haute couture* the monster must be bold, striking and always new so that its relationship with the imagery of monstrosity of the past can only be nostalgic in an ironic, postmodernist way. Following my analogy with the world of fashion, film also relies on a select number of highly valued designers to produce these always new images of monstrosity. These men - for this is a field from which women are conspicuously absent - are the interface between the artist and Hollywood's business system but are treated with little artistic respect by both the art critics and Hollywood: for the former

they are not proper artists, for the latter they are just craftsmen employed to give shape to the studios' products. However, without these artists, whose work can perhaps be best defined as mobile sculpture to be filmed, the 1980s and 1990s would lack many of the images that inform contemporary culture. This section focuses on how currently available special effects techniques developed by a tightly knit group of artists are contributing to the shaping of new images for the monster on screen. It is also my aim to refer to the way in which these artists have influenced each other and to point out the often ignored difficulties facing the independent artist in the Romantic tradition when entering the domain of film business, as in the case of H.R. Giger's work for *Alien* (1979).

Special effects are not the invention of film. In fact, they played an important role in the theatre (including the opera) until the end of the nineteenth century when they passed onto film. Unfortunately, the importance of special effects on the stage or of scenography in general, has been greatly underrated in the study of the theatre, which has focused almost exclusively on the text. Within the field of horror, as Jeffrey N. Cox (1992: 16) observes in relation to the period 1789 - 1825, "as in the current horror or Gothic film, special effects could make or break a new Gothic drama." The French theatre of the Grand Guignol inherited at the turn of the century the Gothic stage tradition, keeping its extreme visualization of horror well into the 1960s (Sullivan, op. cit.: 184 - 85). Although the story of special effects in fantasy films began with George Mèlies' (1861 - 1938) inspired transformation of theatrical special effects techniques into new, cinematic tools to visualize the impossible, the image of the monster on the screen was initially constructed thanks to make-up. No other actor exemplifies better than Lon Chaney (1883 - 1930) the enigma posed by the actor in constant transformation, a passion for change and for disguising one's true persona that he took to inconceivable extremes of self-inflicted pain and masochism. Chaney's most memorable roles were the hunchback Quasimodo in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1923), an adaptation of Victor Hugo's novel *Notre Dame de Paris, 1482* (1832) and the secretive Erik of

Phantom of the Opera (1925) from the novel by Gaston Leroux (1911). Both films were in their time the most expensive films ever made at a cost of \$1 million each, in contrast to the rather cheap 1930s horror films such as *Dracula* and *Frankenstein*. Chaney's creative monster make-up pioneered not only the screen exploitation of the monstrous body as spectacle but also the art of film make-up, now so relevant in contemporary filmmaking.

The three main screen adaptations of the 1930s based on the classics of British nineteenth-century Gothic, Tod Browning's *Dracula* (1931), James Whale's *Frankenstein* (1931) and Robert Mamoulian's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1932), relied on the use of make-up and of expressionistic photography to shape the image of the human monster on screen. Other 1930s horror film such as the very popular *King Kong* (1933) perfected a new way of visualizing the non-human monster on the screen: stop-motion animation. This technique was first developed by the very same creator of *King Kong*, Willis O'Brien, for the silent film *The Lost World* (1925), based on Arthur Conan Doyle's 1910 novel. This film showed for the first time dinosaurs and other fantastic prehistoric creatures moving on the screen thanks to stop-motion animation techniques applied to scale models of the monsters. This time consuming technique, in which the illusion of animated movement is achieved by photographing the scale models shot by shot following very slight changes in their positions, came to perfection in the work of Ray Harryhausen in the 1950s and 1960s in films such as *Jason and the Argonauts* (1963). Although stop-motion animation techniques have animated countless creatures in TV series for children and in advertising, their high cost made them unsuitable for film. Nevertheless, a recent film, the popular and bizarre *Nightmare before Christmas* (1993), has been produced exclusively with stop-motion animation techniques thanks to the zeal put by its producer, Tim Burton, and its director, Henry Selik, in the renewal of a special effects technique that seemed outmoded. Nevertheless, the use of scale models to represent the monsters on the screen started moving in a new direction with the work of Bob Mattey for *Jaws* (1975) in which the monster, a giant shark, was conceived as a real size mechanical sculpture

moved thanks to a mixture of hydraulic and electronic mechanisms operated by a large crew of special effects technicians. This inaugurated an era in special effects in which realism became the key word.

The iconography of monstrosity today is conformed by three main branches within film special effects: make-up, model making (including animatronics, that is to say, realistic sculptures made of soft materials such as latex foam, moved by electronic mechanisms) and infographics (computer animation)¹. As horror film director John Carpenter remarks "special make-up effects have become one of the world's newest art forms since Linda Blair's head rotated and spat green vomit in *The Exorcist*" (Salisbury and Hedgecock, 1994: 6), a film released in 1973. Undoubtedly, the current phase of the iconography of the monster on film begins with the work of make-up artist Dick Smith for this film, not only because of Smith's creative, influential innovations but also because he also became the teacher of a number of young disciples who are now the main artists in special effects: Tom Savini, Rick Baker, Stan Winston, Rob Bottin, Greg Cannom, Chris Walas and Steve Johnson. It is important to notice that not all the special effects artists are accomplished in all the areas of this artistic field. People like Stan Winston who can design an image and realize it by using make-up, model-making or animatronics are not the rule. Nevertheless, it is easy to see that the talent of the special effects artist is visual in all senses: they are draughtsmen, sculptors, engineers and photographers all in one.

Before 1973, Dick Smith already had a reputation in the field based on his long career and also on his book, *Monster Make-up Handbook* (1965) published through Forrest J. Ackerman's very popular magazine *Famous Monsters of Filmland* (1958). While the magazine was avidly read by many of today's film directors - Spielberg among them acknowledges its influence on his work - reading Smith's work became a turning point in the lives of many of the future special effects artists. A singular feature of the field of special effects is that because of the initial lack of training facilities to form them, many of its most successful artists learned their craft from Smith on an

¹I am following in this section mainly Salisbury and Hedgecock (1994) and Marton (1995).

individual basis, in a way not very different to the training received by medieval artists apprenticed to a master. The story of most special effects artists of outstanding repute follows very similar patterns: they were all interested in their jobs vocationally and from their early teenage years and were formed by working with more experienced artists¹. Baker was 'apprenticed' to Smith at 14 and he in his turn took Rob Bottin and Steve Johnson under his wing when Bottin was 14 and Johnson 16. The reasons why such young boys could be interested in learning Smith's craft are varied but Baker recalls with a certain irony that "when I was a little kid I didn't go out and play army with the other kids or play with little cars, I made and drew monsters. I grew up in a lower middle-class neighbourhood where guys I knew were committing major crimes. Making rubber monsters kept me out of trouble." (ibid: 26) Once started in their professional careers the collaborations between the members of this closely knit community have been frequent, which means that progress in the field has often moved in an homogeneous direction.

The iconography of the metamorphic monster, or shape-shifter, is specially relevant in the development of film special effects techniques. To a certain extent, it can be said that the shape-shifter exists on the screen because of the new special techniques that have made its creation possible, or, conversely, that the effort made to make the shape-shifter visible on the screen is crucial to an understanding of how special effects have evolved. The plasticity of the protean latex foam, which can be adapted both to make-up and to model-making purposes, enabled Smith to produce two landmarks in the story of make-up in film with his work for *The Exorcist*: the realistic, accelerated ageing of the priest played by Max von Sydow and the fantastic transformation of the childish teenager played by Linda Blair into the monstrous girl possessed by the Devil. Dick's work for both characters summarises well what special effects are about - either producing an illusion of total naturalness or visualizing the impossible.

The next landmark in the visualization of the monster's transformation on screen was Rick

¹The exception being Stan Winston, who originally planned a career as an actor and has in his background a degree in Fine Arts from the University of Virginia.

Baker's impressive work for John Landis's *An American Werewolf in London* (1981) which won the first Oscar ever for make-up effects, a category that was included in the awards and has been maintained since then (see "Appendix 1") thanks to the important contribution to new forms of visualizing monstrosity invented by Baker. His work for Landis benefited from Dick's previous work for Ken Russell in *Altered States* (1980) in which the first attempt at gradual metamorphosis using latex foam can be seen. Landis wanted to show the body of actor David Naughton being transformed into a monstrous creature - rather different from a real wolf - in full light and in a sequence that showed the minimum number of discontinuities thanks to an excellent editing. Baker came up with a stop-motion technique, shooting frame by frame the actor in different stages of make-up. The result was the most perfect representation of metamorphosis seen on the screen before the infinite possibilities opened by infographics or computer animation in the late 1980s.

But if showing a single transformation had been a challenge, producing a shape-shifter that would undertake several seemed almost a dream. Producer Howard Hawks and director Christian Nyby were tempted into filming John W. Campbell Jr.'s novella *Who Goes There?* as *The Thing from Another World* in 1951 because the text featured an interesting shape-shifting extraterrestrial. However, they soon decided to use a man in a rubber suit because the shape-shifter of the text could not be reproduced with the then available special effects. In 1979, for all its sophistication, the final shot of the extraterrestrial monster sucked into space in *Alien* clearly shows that the monster is nothing but a man in a much more sophisticated rubber suit, which somehow deflates the audiences' suspension of disbelief. When the 1982 version of *The Thing*, also directed by John Carpenter, was released, a whole revolution in the world of special effects had taken place. One of Rick Baker's disciple, Rob Bottin was the man who designed the monster for Carpenter's film.

Necessarily a film like *The Thing* must emerge from a tight collaboration between the film director, the screen writer and the special effects artist. Even though many horror films look

deceptively easy to make, in fact they must strike a delicate balance: a good screenplay runs the risk of becoming a ludicrous film if the special effects are not good enough. *The Thing* is, in this regard, a rare, accomplished film, though initially the impact of Rob Bottin's monster quite obscured the quality of the film, hailed now as a masterpiece of horror. The creature of *The Thing*, possibly the most horrific monster ever seen on the screen, consumed \$1.5 million of a budget unusually high for a horror film and also a whole year of Rob Bottin's work. Collaboration played an essential role in the creation of the monster, since Bottin worked for the designs with illustrators Mike Ploog and Mentor Huebner, and with Stan Winston and mechanical effects supervisor Roy Arbogast in the construction of the animatronic skinless dog, the first shape taken by the monster. The novelty of *The Thing* was not only the high quality of the transformation scenes but the sheer horror they provoked due mainly to the impossibility of determining the final result of the metamorphosis. In fact, the horror of the film is based on two main motifs: the monster, an extraterrestrial stranded in the Arctic which consumes bodies and then replicates their exact form, cannot be easily detected, which means that the members of the scientific expedition trapped in the Arctic become increasingly paranoid as the plot unfolds - any man could be the thing and so all suspect each other. Yet, once the fake body is detected, the monster reacts by transforming itself into wild horrific shapes that distort and then destroy the body it had assumed. Paranoia is thus increased by the fear of not knowing what horror will emerge from the replicas of those the thing has killed. Paradoxically, although *The Thing* is now acknowledged as a classic of horror fiction the film failed at the box-office at the time of its release. This might have been due to the extremity of its visualization - the main metamorphosis is indeed almost unwatchable - or as Mark Salisbury and Alan Hedgecock (ibid: 59) suggest because of the coincidence with the release of *ET*. Both the iconography of the extraterrestrial monster in *ET* and the message sent by the film were in total contradiction with the horrific monster of *The Thing* and its pessimistic message. *ET* preaches intergalactical understanding and invites humankind to abandon its paranoid fear of a possible

meeting with an alien species. In contrast, *The Thing* exploits the paranoiac fears awakened by the 1950s monster films. The final scene shows the only two survivors surrendering to the grim awareness that one of them is actually a clone formed by the shape-shifter alien: he will bring death to the whole human species.

After *The Thing*, the main next step in the shaping of the monster was the introduction of computer animation or infographics. This technique was pioneered by another 1982 film, Disney's *Tron*, which is, basically, a computer game performed by live actors. However, Disney could not see then the immense potential of infographics and *Tron* did not exert an immediate influence on animation films. Actually, John Landis had tried to use computers for the werewolf metamorphosis in *An American Werewolf in London*, convinced that only computers could solve the problem that had worried Howard Hawks thirty years before when trying to visualize the shape-shifting monster for his version of *The Thing*. What Landis actually had in mind in the early 1970s was using mainframe computers to produce a virtual image of metamorphosis, that is to say, an image wholly generated by a computer that was not based on anything filmed live. By 1981 the possibility of creating virtual images already existed but the cost was beyond the possibilities of any studio and so Landis turned to Rick Baker's brilliant work¹. In 1988, another step forward was taken with the introduction of morphing, a technique designed to create a virtual visualization of the transformation of an image into another image. *Willow* was the first film in which morphing was used: the image of the actor was scanned, introduced in a computer and there modified without the need of make-up or model-making. In 1989, infographics was used to generate the first virtual monster seen on screen, that is to say, the first monster wholly created with a computer: the water monster of *The Abyss*, a shape-shifter capable of copying the faces of those who look at it². The first film totally

¹The collaboration between Landis and Baker also resulted in one of the most popular transformations seen outside the film screen, that of pop singer Michael Jackson into a monstrous zombie in his video-clip "Thriller" (1983). It is certainly ironic that Jackson was initially reluctant to letting himself be transformed into a monster when his own transformation of his body by means of plastic surgery and skin decoloration has turned him into an icon of the postmodernist plasticity of the body. See Mercer (1991) and Skal (ibid:315-321) for an interesting discussion of Jackson's place in the iconography of monstrosity.

generated with infographics is *Toy Story*, an animation film released in 1995 by Disney and Pixar and directed by John Lasseter, who had previously collaborated with Disney in the making of *Trox*.

The film in which infographics, and especially morphing, was finally established as the special effects technique with a most promising future is James Cameron's *The Terminator 2* (1991). In this film, shape-shifting is visualized by a combination of animatronics created by Stan Winston and infographic effects produced by the Industrial Light and Magic, the special effects company owned by George Lucas that pioneered the development of infographics². *The Terminator 2* is not only a film about two monsters but also about two forms of understanding the iconography of monstrosity: the film pitches the older T-1, formed by Arnold Schwarzenegger's spectacular and sculptured body and by the metal skeleton designed by Stan Winston that surfaces when the T-1's body is burned, against the chamaleonic quicksilver T-1000 which has no real image except those he imitates. Actor Robert Patrick lent his body and his face to the figure of the T-1000, which he himself plays in the incarnation it assumes throughout most of the film, that of a Los Angeles policeman. Yet there are a number of impacting scenes in which the T-1000 is seen to assume the physical appearance of other people and also to sprout spiky metal protuberances, shatter in pieces or melt.

Most special effect artists seem to agree that with the rise of infographics a whole phase in the iconography of monstrosity in film is over and that the 'never-seen-before' is to take new directions. Winston, however, relativises the question by observing that in *The Terminator 2* there are

¹The circle seems to have been completed with the introduction of the first virtual actors ('vactors' or 'synthespians'). See Wavell (1994). The new actors are called "synthespians" and "vactors" by Rod Cousen of Acclaim Entertainment who thinks that their first application could be dangerous stunts and even stopping the ageing in the actors' images on screen. Some actors are unhappy at the prospect of becoming franchisers of their own image, yet others are rumoured to be storing the image of their young, healthy bodies on disk to be used in future films. Morphing is now available to budding filmmakers in a \$100 PC programme and is used increasingly in advertising, as in the Chanel No.5 add in which model Carol Bouquet becomes Marilyn Monroe herself.

²According to Andrew Marton (1995), 'Siliwood', that is to say the union of Silicon Valley computer companies with Hollywood is run by ILM (63% of all special effects generated for film worldwide), Digital Domain, Pacific Data Images, Boss Film Studios, RGA/LA, Rhythm & Hues, VIFX, Cinesite, Dream Quest Images and Post Group among others. In February 1995 a new branch of the Hollywood Academy was established for the visual arts, a fact that acknowledges the growing importance of special effects.

more than 300 make-up and animatronic gags, considerably many more than infographics effects simply because the cost of these is still too high (ibid: 116). Winston has won his most recent Oscar for another project combining his animatronics and the ILM's infographics, Steven Spielberg's *Jurassic Park* (1993). He remains sceptical as to the end of traditional special effects, insisting on the importance of the "one common artistic eye" (ibid: 118) above changing special effects techniques. Yet the steady decrease in the cost of infographic effects will possibly redefine in the near future the survival of traditional special effects techniques and of the monster itself.

The art of the special effects artist is subjected not only to the limitations of the available materials and techniques to shape them but also to the demands of the film director and producer. The collaborative nature of film often involves a struggle for the control of the final product in which the relatively low hierarchical position of the special effects artist usually hinders the protection of his interests. Even when the results of these tensions are successful, the truth that emerges is one of incessant struggle for one's own parcel of control, an issue often ignored by audiences or film critics who only have access to the final product. The effects of the struggle for power in the process of visualization of the monster in film were manifest in the work of H.R. Giger for *Alien*. The original designs for the monster were published in a book (Giger, 1979) that contains also excerpts from the diary Giger kept as the shooting of the film progressed in Shepperton. This book is a wonderful document about the chaotic reality of filmmaking and about the absolute disregard with which Hollywood treats artists.

From Giger's observations the impression arises that the high quality of *Alien* and the successful use of Giger's designs for the monster are due to an uncanny combination of factors that have very little to do with tight artistic control. Giger, a Swiss painter best described as neo-Gothic and neo-Romantic, was recruited by the producers only accidentally when a catalogue of Giger's work reached producer Dan O'Bannon (then working on the script for *Alien*) thanks to Salvador Dalí. Dalí, himself the author of the designs for the famous dream scene in Hitchcock's

Spellbound (1945) epitomizes together with his disciple Giger the kind of contemporary artist interested in the fantastic likely to attract large segments of the general public apart from art collectors and critics. Ridley Scott, himself an admirer of Giger's book *Necronomicon* (1977) - a title inspired by Lovecraft's work - enthusiastically welcomed Giger's collaboration in the film he was to direct. Scott, himself with a background as a graphic artist, used Giger's book as a production design bible throughout the shooting of the film. What Hollywood did not expect from Giger, an accidental newcomer to its gates, was that he would react with such protectiveness towards his work. To the surprise of his business-minded employers, Giger kept close track of the dealings involved in his contract as he understood that its terms would jeopardise his creativity and the control on his work, which in fact occurred. His diary records his increasing frustration first at the limitations imposed by the tight budget on his work (*Alien* was not to be an expensive film) and second at the demands of the producers which forced Giger to involve himself progressively in the actual model-making, when he had only been hired to draw the designs for the monster and some of the sets. Yet, Giger's main worry was, above all, that the solutions taken to lower the total cost of the film would make his own work look cheap and artistically less valuable than his paintings.

A turning point in Giger's progressive loss of control over his work happened when the Italian specialist in animatronics Carlo Rambaldi - who would later animate *ET* - was called in to mechanise the monster's head; his arrival increased the patronising interventions of the team of producers and their disregard for Giger's authority on the set. When one after the other sculptures carefully prepared by Giger and his crew were expunged from the film without the producers consulting with him, he bitterly concluded that "I suppose I shall never master the secret of how such decisions are taken. It is getting clear to me that my creative capacity is slowly but surely being numbed. I'm still convinced that the best critic of an artist's work is the artist himself ..." (ibid.: 74). Ironically, Giger was eventually awarded an Oscar for his work together with Carlo Rambaldi, Brian Johnson, Nick Alder and Denys Ayling and has since then collaborated in the design of

monsters for a number of recent films, among them *Species* (1995). As the box-office and critical failure of this film shows, a good design for the monster is not enough to sustain by itself the fabric of a monster film. Ironically Giger was accused by many unsatisfied reviewers of overexploiting for profit the success of his designs for *Alien* in the much inferior *Species*, which probably attracted many more spectators than its unconvincing plot deserved thanks precisely to the use of Giger's name in the film's advertising material. Nonetheless, Hollywood has tended not to properly reward the men who have designed the productions - and the creatures - that have attracted most spectators and that have often resulted in successful films in terms not only of business but also of artistic achievement. So far only Stan Winston and Rick Baker have managed to insert their names in the initial rather than the final credits of the films in which they collaborate, a situation that will be probably common once Hollywood realizes that the names of special effects artists also have the capacity of increasing box-office returns.

1.1.6.3. *Monstrous Images in the 1980s and 1990s: The Universal Monster*

Apart from books, periodical publications such as comics, films and visual arts such as painting, sculpture, photography and video, TV, the press and the music industry are an important source of images of monstrosity: TV series such as *Star Trek* or *The X-Files*, children's TV cartoons, reality shows and crime reports on the news, together with the treatment of crime in the press focus routinely on varieties of contemporary monstrosity. Video-games also rely on images of fantasy, frequently connected to the figure of the horrific monster, while some branches of youth culture - especially that associated with heavy-metal music - also exploit the iconography of monstrosity. Not even advertising is immune to monster fever.

The 1980s and 1990s creator of new iconographies of monstrosity cannot but help being postmodernist, given the wealth of images of the past and the present from which s/he can draw inspiration. It follows that this intense recycling of the monsters of the past together with the multiplication of the media offering images of monstrosity (artistic or otherwise) has conditioned the

postmodernist monster so that it can only be a protean creature, impossible to define on the basis of a single point of view, whether it is aesthetic, ethic, anthropological, or sociological. The postmodernist monster is mythical (archaic or classical), Biblical, medieval, Gothic, Romantic and even futuristic simultaneously, deriving from a genealogy that despite being visible enough in its body may have ceased making sense because of the monster's constant trespass of different cultural domains.

What is kept, for instance, of the European medieval gargoyles in Disney's new cartoon TV series, *Gargoyles* (1994), in which a group of monstrous men petrified by an evil sorcerer in early medieval Scotland awaken in contemporary New York to play the role of superheroes? Even though a cultural critic can see in the gargoyle Goliath's physical appearance echoes of the medieval representation of the Devil as a beast with bat wings, of Milton's Satan and of Blake's Red Dragon in the illustration of St. John's book of *Revelation*, the children who are the target audience of the series are more likely to link this postmodernist gargoyle with Batman or some of the heroes of Japanese 'manga'. The monster of the 1980s and 1990s sinks its roots deep into the past, as I have shown, but it is also a monster created anew each time, for audiences and readers who often lack the memory of the most immediate tradition not to mention the memory of the very remote past, despite the current high levels of education and the availability of information. This ignorance of the historical roots of the monster on the side of the monster makers and on that of the consumers of their products, results paradoxically in a constant renewal of images that often leaves many critics and audiences with an unexplainable feeling of *déjà vu*. This has been misread as an exhaustion of the same old story about heroes and monsters, when in fact it is thanks to the monster that the links of our culture with myths as ancient as that of the Earth goddess are still kept.

This does not mean that the iconography of monstrosity has reached a phase in which, as Jean Baudrillard could put it, there are more signs than signifiers. Just as the image of the goddess was lost to the new iconography of monstrosity imposed on her by the new patriarchal

religions, a new iconographical revolution is taking place now ultimately related to that primordial takeover of the goddess' power. The current iconography of monstrosity is dramatising the beginning of the decadence of the patriarchy that overturned the goddess: more and more male monsters of all descriptions are to be seen redrawing the boundaries of power between the sexes; heroism is acquiring female traits, monstrosity is losing them while the body of the male hero denotes the increasing difficulties of patriarchy to find a model of masculinity that inspires respect rather than reluctant submission. The domain of monstrous iconography is, as always, a masculine domain but it is now part of a world in which the impact of feminism cannot be easily dismissed. As I will argue in the following sections, the voyeuristic postmodernist cult of the spectacular body, human or non-human, female and male, is an essential element in the construction of contemporary monstrosity.

1.2. *The Cult of the Monster: The Meaning of the Monstrous Body*

1.2.1 *The Spectacular Body of the Monster: Images of Fascinated Desire*

Why the images of monstrosity appear to be so attractive and ubiquitous today is a question that can be answered only by acknowledging that the monster reverses the values of the traditional aesthetic and ideological discourse in decadence in the Western world. Lenard Davis writes in *Resisting Novels* (1987: 124) that "the very valence of beauty or ugliness in novels ... is not neutral but is predicated on ideological considerations." A basic ideological use of beauty or ugliness lies in their respective associations to good and evil from which the traditional view of the monster as a being of extreme ugliness and extreme evil follows. Attractive characters in novels also fulfil another role, not so different from that of models in advertising - they sell the cultural product to the consumer by eliciting desire. According to Davis, when we read a novel we are expected not so much to identify with a character as to desire it "in some non-specific but erotic way" (ibid: 127). However, cultural changes may result in the reader's shifting of sympathy (and also desire) towards characters that were not initially designed in principle to be attractive. Thus,

extremely unattractive characters like Milton's Satan and Shakespeare's Caliban have colonised for the monster a territory reserved for Richardson's Clarissa or for Austen's Darcy, successfully competing with images purposefully built to elicit desire and to enhance the reader's pleasure in the text. We have learned to look at the monster rather than to look away from it and have found when doing so that the monster is as fascinating as the hero. In the 1980s and 1990s it can be said that the monster's body sells the cultural product in which it appears with as much success as the beautiful heroes or heroines of the novel do. This leads to the conclusion that either Davis's supposition that characters are desired in an unspecific, erotic way is wrong or that the meaning of desire extends much further than expected, embracing the monster and denying the traditional association of beauty with the highest aesthetic pleasure. Attraction and fascination appear to have been understood so far on the narrow basis of the aesthetic pleasure caused by beauty, when in fact, the aesthetic pleasure of the ugly, the grotesque and the spectacular embodied by the monster coexist with it.

Monsters often possess extraordinary bodies and/or minds. However monsters may also possess an ordinary body housing an extraordinary mind. Any body, any mind that alters the sense of the onlooker's normality either because of its extreme beauty (or goodness) or because of its extreme ugliness (or evil) is equally fascinating, which explains why the word monster can also be used in the sense of prodigy and the extraordinary as an epithet applied to idols of culture such as film stars or rock stars, or simply great artists. The word idol is particularly appropriate in this context: an idol is a figure that inspires a sublime sense of transcending normality, a figure that fascinates because it is literally extra-ordinary. In a sense, the monsters of postmodernism are idols, grotesque or not, that belong to the same pantheon as sex symbols, since their bodies (sometimes their minds) produce a fascinating effect on those who sustain their cult.

The culture of the 1980s and 1990s cannot be properly understood without the booming cult of the healthy body, a cult that actually reflects the public expansion of desire. The perfect body is not so much a reflection of the wish to live long, healthy lives but of the wish to remain

young and, therefore, sexually attractive. According to Jean Baudrillard (1990:33), "our entire body culture, with its concern for the 'expression' of the body's 'desires,' for the stereophonics of desire, is a culture of irredeemable monstrosity and obscenity". The veritable monster is not the horrific bug-eyed creature but desire, of which the omnipresent perfect human body used in advertising, pornography and film is but a sign. For Baudrillard (ibid: 34), ours is a culture in which:

Everything is to be produced, everything is to be legible, everything is to become real, visible, accountable; everything is to be transcribed in relations of force, systems of concepts or measurable energy; everything is to be said, accumulated, indexed and recorded. This is sex as it exists in pornography, but more generally, this is the enterprise of our whole culture of monstration, of demonstration, of productive monstrosity.

The role of the extremely disturbing body of the monster in this totalling voyeuristic culture of the 1980s and 1990s centred on desire and the exploration of all its possibilities is twofold: on the one hand, the monster appears as another category of the fascinating body that is used to sell the cultural products of late capitalism. On the other hand, the monster's enigmatic body is the site where the limits of the human body and the anxieties about the imperfect control of it are discussed by a culture that fears, above all, the monster as a symbol of arbitrary destruction. A strange phenomenon related to the place of the monster in the culture of the saleable body is the success of the monster as a children's toy. Presumably, any toy that represents an extreme, attractive version of the body - from Barbie to a model of the Alien monster - satisfies the buyer's wish to possess and manipulate spectacular bodies existing in an inaccessible domain, whether this is that of the little girl's fantasies of herself as a successful adult woman (as a consumer in Barbie's version) or that of the little boy's view of himself as a successful adult man (as a hero in most war toys). These toys are images that signify the power to dominate others - as the marketing of the toy does with the buyer - with the sole force of the body's appearance. Who holds the power in this relationship between the subject and the object of the gaze mediated by the consumption of the cultural product in which the monster is sold, is the issue that explains the attractiveness of the monster.

Laura Mulvey has examined in her influential essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" the patriarchal construction of the image of woman in classical Hollywood film. She has labelled man's pleasurable gaze at woman's fascinating body on the screen narcissistic scopophilia. According to her (1992: 28), films narrate a basically Oedipal conflict and invite the male spectator to identify with the male protagonist of the film; through his screen surrogate the male spectator's gaze controls the presence of woman on the screen, who is exposed as an erotic object. The male spectator obtains, thus, a narcissistic pleasure in feeling his affinity with the powerful male star, who is not an erotic object like woman but an ideal alter ego for the narcissistic male spectator. Mulvey's conclusion is that film is a patriarchal tool that furthers man's control over woman and that women should welcome the beginning of new traditions to represent them on the screen that gave new directions for the expression of desire.

This way of considering the exploitation of woman's body on the screen overlooks an important point: not all film stars - male or female - are or have been victims of a ruthless, exploitative exhibition of their bodies for the narcissistic voyeurism of audiences. On the contrary, many have exploited the system for their benefit, using their exhibitionism to attract the spectator's gaze and to force the system to submit to the star's own needs. This is why David Thomas (1993:102) refers to one of the most exhibitionistic film stars to have played heroic roles, Arnold Schwarzenegger, as a "new phenomenon, the superstar as bully." Narcissistic scopophilia has become in the exhibitionistic realm of the 1980s and 1990s, dominated by very aggressive marketing techniques applied to all kinds of cultural products, rather a masochistic subservience to what the system will make us see, whether this is the body of the star or that of the monster. In this context, the most extreme bullying is imposed on the film-goer or reader who chooses to see the body of the monster, or to get to know the mind of the evil human monster. Literature is not outside the game of browbeating the buyer of culture into submission: the appeal of *American Psycho* (1991) and *The Wasp Factory* (1984) are the same kind as that of *Alien* and *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991) - they take the gaze (mental or physical) away from the reader or viewer's control and force

it to take new, unexpected directions, following the path marked by the monster. Narcissism is replaced in this pleasurable masochism by the challenge of the test proposed by the artists, namely, how much one is prepared to 'see' before pleasure becomes the displeasure of either boredom or the intolerable.

The actor in general inspires fascinated desire because his or her body has the capacity to seduce the audience in many disguises. The star, who should be distinguished from the actor, is, simultaneously, a multiple shape-shifter and a fixed image of desire - frequently a fabrication imposed by the studio on the real (unknown) personality of the actor. This multiplicity of images superimposed on a body that conceals an enigmatic personality is characteristic of the shape-shifting monster of recent films and novels, and suggests that the old attribution to Satan of a diabolic capacity to seduce by using deceptive images has become an integral part of the spectacular body and has ceased to connote evil to signify instead, simply, fascinated desire. The power of the film star, the porn star and the fashion star is akin to that of the monster: s/he controls the gaze and, hence, the desire to buy (or find sexual gratification, or feel powerful enough to control the Other) by a controlled exposure of the body, which in the novel is often paralleled by an exposure of the mind. More similarities can even be observed between the commercial use the stripper makes of his or her body and the way in which audiences are sold the body of the monster: film trailers suggest half-glimpsed images of the monster's body, whereas the use of suspense in the horror film ensures that the spectator will stay on his or her seat until the slow unveiling - the striptease - of the monster's body is completed at the end of the film.

Desire has become inextricably bound to capitalism and to consumerism. Buying is satisfying the desire elicited by advertising which uses the beauty of female models to join in the consumer's mind images of sex and capitalist consumption: while women wish to be like these (role)models of advertising, for men possessing an object becomes the equivalent of possessing the body that advertises it. Desire has become a public matter: the private erotic pleasure derived from reading a novel and feeling that desire identified by Davis has been extrapolated to the public

sphere in a process that shows no sign of ceasing. The place of woman's body in this culture of 'monstration' is, despite the feminist resistance to women's exploitation, more according with the new image that women want to give of themselves than it might seem. Many women's ideal in the 1990s is a woman who is attractive, ambitious, economically independent and in control of her body and its image: this ideal is in many cases personified by fashion models and actresses, the bearer of woman's public image. What is man's place in this realm of the pure image and the perfect body? The public voyeurism centred on woman is slowly beginning to conquer man's body - especially that of male fashion models - on behalf of capitalism and to treat it as an object, valuing it for its capacity to sell. The dynamic (masculine) image of the muscular hero shares the public gaze with the static (feminine) image of the muscular fashion model: yet neither can offer an adequate image or model for the man of the 1990s. The ideal of man's beauty has been lost in the construction of consumerism around woman's body and now it is not even clear whence the new image can come - from women or from men - nor whether heterosexual or homosexual men will lead the way.

While a new consensus arises as to what a desirable image of masculinity is, what is happening is that man's attempts at renewing the figure of the patriarchal hero or at dramatising the loss of his popularity is resulting in the masculinisation of the monster, or, alternatively, in man's transformation into a monster. In a man's world, as ours still is, the image of woman as beauty - which women themselves may regard as an undesirable stereotype - remains stable as female monstrosity decreases due to the feminist attack against the still rampant misogyny of Hollywood and the world of advertising. In contrast, because of the pressure of feminism, the representation of man's body has been problematised in cultural products aiming at a very large number of consumers, among which women are to be counted. The hero as macho man and the beast of old myth have given way to a spectacular display of different forms of masculine monstrosity so contiguous as to make the identification of the monster and of the hero very doubtful in many cases: their images are often interchangeable. The still existing misogyny is not the central

concern in the iconography of monstrosity; on the contrary, the central concern is the definition of an image of masculinity that can be powerful without being monstrous and that can vindicate for man the territory lost to the advances of feminism. Why men have failed to produce a new acceptable hero and have produced instead countless beasts, demons, psychopaths, killing machines and the grotesque muscular heroes of comics is, therefore, a matter for profound reflection.

In her insightful study of the representation of masculinity in film, Susan Jeffords (1993:245) writes that "US masculinity in Hollywood films of the 1980s was largely transcribed through spectacle and bodies, with the male body itself becoming often the most fulfilling form of spectacle... That externality itself confirmed that the outer parameters of the male body were to be the focus of audience attention, desire, and politics". This means that the spectacular body became a shield used by man to deflect his preoccupations about how his mind should change in order to keep pace with the decadence of patriarchal values. The 'hard body', in Jeffords' words, of the heroes played by Sylvester Stallone, Bruce Willis, Arnold Schwarzenegger or Jean-Claude Van Damme does not indicate man's confidence in his own image but man's fear of letting his feminine, 'soft' side surface. Interestingly, in her otherwise perceptive survey of heroic figures such as Rambo, Robocop, Batman, the Terminator (in the heroic version of *The Terminator 2*) Jeffords fails to mention a significant fact: the barrier between the hero and the monster has been erased - these heroes, far from being acceptable role models for men, are nothing but monsters split into two by their failure to function as normal men within society.

As I have noted, the ideal of masculine beauty is currently extremely vague. In a sense, this can be attributed to the idea that genuine masculinity entails muscularity, in itself an excessive - even monstrous - growth of man's body and not its natural shape. The hero-worship granted now to the figure of the athlete is related to the positive association of man's reshaping of his own body in an unnatural way. However, the athlete of real life and the athletic superhero of fiction are not average man but a hypertrophied version of masculinity, as monstrous as the super slim female

fashion model. As Umberto Eco (op. cit.: 61) notes, "the athlete is a monster, he is the Man Who Laughs, the geisha with the compressed and atrophied foot, dedicated to total instrumentation." The confusion about where the limits are between the monstrous athlete and the ideal male body has allowed men like Arnold Schwarzenegger, an athlete who found fame first thanks to the titles won in the equivalent of beauty contests for men - body-building contests - to play epic heroes like Conan the Barbarian and monsters, such as the Terminator.

The current cult of the healthy body has no doubt one of its maximum expressions in body-building, yet since body-building is a way of cultivating or reshaping the body that is not restricted to men, muscularity has partly ceased to mean masculinity. Yvonne Tasker (1993: 3) has coined a new term to define the status of woman's body redefined by body-building: 'musculinity.' The 'musculine' woman and her screen counterpart, the 'musculine' heroine who can be found especially in action films, proves that culture and not biology have conditioned the distribution of gender roles and the way in which men and women have seen themselves. The weak feminine body created by patriarchy and also perhaps by feminine sentimentalism is disappearing, though the many cases of anorexia indicate that women seem to feel a morbid attachment to the figure of the fragile-looking, extremely thin woman. In contrast, the women who have opted for 'musculinity' have created a new model of a more athletic woman. The paradox is that the 'musculine' woman can be found in a new territory which is different from that of the monstrous, derided virago of the Victorian Decadence: far from being a sign of monstrosity, the muscles of the 'musculine' heroine seem to be attractive for many men, who no longer cherish the ideal of the physically weak woman. But if woman also conquers the realm of musculinity, what is left for men except to exaggerate their own muscularity to the point of monstrosity? As Yvonne Tasker notes, the figure of the male bodybuilder (or that of the muscular male star playing heroic roles on the screen) may "signal an assertion of male dominance, an eroticising of the powerful male body" for its defenders, but it also likely to seem "an hysterical and unstable image of manhood" (Tasker, *ibid.*: 80).

Muscles appear to be ultimately a dead end in the construction of a new, desirable image of masculinity because they cannot guarantee the imprint of sanctioned masculinity on their owner; what is more, since they are always 'excessive' they immediately suggest that man's anatomy cannot find a balanced ideal and is always prone to being monstrous. In contrast, the 'musculine' woman does not appear to be less feminine nor more monstrous, possibly because woman's body is expected (or allowed) to be more protean in our culture than man's. As woman has conquered more territory for her body, so that she can choose as an ideal the slim top-model, the 'musculine' woman or an androgynous image without appearing to be masculine, therefore, without appearing to be more monstrous, this is not the case with men. Despite the timid opening since the 1960s of new, alternative ways for men to redefine their own images, men are still trapped by an enormous conservatism in the way they dress or, simply, in the way they express the attraction of their bodies. In comparison to the body of woman, the body of men is practically absent, invisible in our culture, despite the alleged overwhelming presence of the Lacanian phallus, which means that man only becomes really visible in extreme, monstrous representations. There is thus not much difference between the muscular superhero and the drag queen, as both are extreme images that differ as much as possible from the blurred image of the average man. Male monsters and heroes are the site of discussion for the redefinition of man, this is why they may encompass images as varied as the muscular hostile alien of *Predator* or the effeminate serial killer of *The Silence of the Lambs* and also why the many horrific metamorphoses portrayed in recent fiction affect principally the bodies of men. The monsters can be said, therefore, to embody all of man's ambivalence towards the quite rigid images of masculinity together with man's wish to rebuild a stable image of masculinity.

Other alternatives in the representation of the male monster try to break away from stereotypical ideas of masculinity and femininity, with ambiguous results. In Tim Burton's *Edward Scissorhands* (1990) the eponymous monster Edward is a harmless, androgynous Goth boy, an

image popularised by the Gothic rock bands that emerged in the early 1980s such as The Cure, whose components used to wear dark clothes, make-up and flowing, spiky hair styles. Edward's lovely pale face and his lean, boyish body are in jarring contrast to the two bunches of shears he has for hands. This peculiar monster is a mixed image of masculine aggression and feminine softness: his hands are a symbol of his inability to touch but also a formidable barrier between him and the others that he uses to preserve his isolation. The same can be said in fact of Batman's outfit or of Robocop's titanium armour, elements used to signify a typically masculine toughness which is more appearance than reality. Lacking like Batman an alter ego that can help him blend in better, Edward can only happily enjoy his androgyny on his own extra-social domain, far from the aggressive femininity and the bullying masculinity of the inhabitants of the American suburb crowned by his Gothic castle. Thus, Burton implicitly acknowledges that all the alternatives to the rigid gender roles of Anglo-saxon society are bound to be seen as dangerous disruptions of the current order and that the only available space for the freakish man who rejects masculinity and femininity is the seclusion Edward secures for himself in his fantastic domain.

Bret Easton Ellis' psychopathic yuppie Pat Bateman in *American Psycho* and Martin Amis's Nazi, Tod Friendly, in his novel *Time's Arrow* (1991) are as beautiful as monstrous. Bateman's and Friendly's handsomeness is very masculine by comparison to Edward's androgynous beauty; in fact, their acceptable masculine façade protects both men from the suspicions of those around them, who never guess that they are evil men. Yet Bateman's and Friendly's beauty also forces the reader to consider why beauty is typically associated with monstrosity in women but not in men. The monstrous 'femme fatale' arises precisely from men's ambivalent view of the deadly nature of female beauty; logically, heterosexual men would not deem the beauty of the handsome male monster deadly because of his eroticism. It can be argued that male beauty is thus used to enhance the discord between what the reader/viewer thinks is normal on the basis of the representations of the monstrous in fiction and what chaotic reality has to offer - if anything can be expected from human beings, why not expect as well that

handsome monsters may exist? The good looks of Bateman and Friendly, who are exterminators rather than deadly seducers, show that the monsters traditionally engendered by female chaos have finally become a sign of the chaos inside contemporary man's psyche. It is an irony that while the very human Bateman and Friendly are narcissistic lovers of their own bodies who inflict terrible destruction on the bodies of others, another kind of male monsters - the handsome artificial lovers of *The Robots of Dawn* (1984), *Hyperion* (1989), *The Silver Metal Lover* (1986) and *Body of Glass* (1991) - are presented as generous givers of pleasure or, as in *Blade Runner* (1982) as lovers of life. The suggestion that the perfect man is the manufactured man that must be finally destroyed is in itself a significant comment on the difficult position of masculinity in the 1980s and 1990s.

1.2.2. *The Monsters in Transformation: Metamorphosis and the Deceptive Body*

As I have argued in the section I have devoted to special effects, metamorphosis has played and still plays a very important role in the visualization of the monster today. The idea of metamorphosis or shape-shifting derives from myth and from fairy tales though, as I have shown, only from the 1980s onwards has it been possible to see the representation of a complete process of transformation on the screen rather than simply imagine it on the basis of an oral or a written narrative. According to Marina Warner (1994b: xv), "shape-shifting is one of fairy tale's dominant and characteristic wonders". Warner adds that, "more so than the presence of fairies, the moral function, the imaged antiquity and oral anonymity of the ultimate source, and the happy ending (though all these factors help towards a definition of the genre), metamorphosis defines the fairy tale." The metamorphosis of the enchanted prince into a frog or of the fairy into a hag is an event brought about by magic that can be used to make a moral point in the fairy tale but it is not usually presented as a horrific event. Fairy-tale characters are the victims of the magical designs of others on them in a way similar to the characters of myth. Nevertheless, in Greek myth, the gods exert their powers to metamorphose human beings into monsters, animals, plants, trees or even minerals for

varied reasons, including punishment for disobedience but also perpetuating the life of dying mortals or saving them from other dangers, such as impending rape.

R. L. Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) is a Gothic inheritor of the metamorphosis of fairy tale. Stevenson's text is crucial in the construction of the contemporary image of the monster as it suggests more straightforwardly than any previous story about monsters that the true monster lies in us and, more concretely, in the repressed shadow or subconscious represented by Hyde. Yet, the transformation of the civilized Dr. Jekyll into the hideous - hitherto hidden - Mr. Hyde differs from the idea of metamorphosis in the fairy tale, which is usually 'solved' once the spell is broken, and from the metamorphosis of classical myth, in the emphasis that Stevenson puts on the horror it elicits from the onlooker and the victim. This horror is doubled by the realization that Jekyll's ordeal is brought upon himself by his own hand and not by the external intervention of a god or a fairy.

Instead of the painless metamorphoses of fairy tale and myth, Jekyll's metamorphosis is presented as a painful process of rebirth repeated cyclically (as often as the magic potion acts), resulting in the monstrous Hyde and in an unstable, uncontrollable change of identity only stopped by death. Those who witness a metamorphosis in fairy tales or myth feel, above all, wonder or awe, for the transformation is, in any case, magical but not ontologically disruptive. In contrast, Jekyll's metamorphosis into Hyde is a breach of the rationalistic, scientific background of Jekyll's Victorian universe so intolerable for its only witness, Dr. Lanyon, that it causes his death. Jekyll's mental and bodily suffering, the fact that he has himself caused his own tragedy because of his perverse search for gratification and the visualization of the metamorphosis from the point of view of the witness are elements frequently repeated in the many horrific transformations of contemporary narratives.

Kafka's *Metamorphosis* (1915) is, in contrast to Stevenson's text, very limited visually: Grigor Samsa is not seen to change - he has simply changed into a man-sized cockroach when his narrative begins. In a sense, this is the same pattern used by Milton in *Paradise Lost*: Satan

awakens in Hell after a horrific metamorphosis which he cannot remember, though, unlike Grigor Samsa, Satan knows why he has been transformed and by whom. Kafka writes about the horror of knowing that one's own mind can be arbitrarily cut off from the world and encased in a horrific body, as if he had turned to what happens in the mind of the spellbound prince of fairy tale when he realizes that he is nothing but a frog. Yet Kafka's narrative about the ordeal of his insect hybrid picks up the tale of the metamorphoses at the point where Greek myths left it rather than where Stevenson did. In stories of metamorphoses like Stevenson's the physical change implies a psychological change, while in Kafka's the horror is derived from the fact that the psychological change has not taken place: Grigor Samsa's mind is still alive inside the monstrous body of the man-sized cockroach and, what is even worse, there is no fairy tale princess endowed with the power of kissing this man back to life. In fact, Grigor Samsa's sister, the only woman who comes close to him, ends up sweeping away his, or the cockroach's, mortal remains.

The metamorphic monster appears quite frequently in the novels and films of the 1980s and 1990s, no doubt not only because of the direct influence of Stevenson or Kafka but also because of the enormous appeal that the idea of transformation itself has for the contemporary culture. However, the meaning of the metamorphosis cannot be said to be constant for all cases. In Robert McCammon's novel *Swan Song* (1987), which deals with the survivors of the nuclear holocaust that wipes out USA in the late 1980s, human beings are subject to a double metamorphosis. In a first - Kafkaesque - phase, horrific skin diseases resulting from nuclear radiation deform the bodies of the survivors; in a second stage, a supernatural metamorphosis similar to that of fairy tales, frees the good survivors from the burden of their monstrous bodies rewarding them with beauty for their patient suffering. The 'evil' survivors who lapsed into barbarism are condemned to become even more horrific monsters in a transformation that recalls Jekyll's final metamorphosis into Hyde.

While transformation means in *Swan Song* simultaneously the arbitrariness of unjust destruction caused by humans and a fair supernatural system of moral reward and punishment, in

other films and novels the monster is characterized by an obsessive, morbid desire for absolute transformation. The two serial killers of Thomas Harris' novels, *Red Dragon* (1981) - filmed by Michael Mann as *Manhunter* (1986) - and *The Silence of the Innocent* (1988), filmed by Jonathan Demme as *The Silence of the Lambs*, fall into this category. In the former, serial killer Francis Dolarhyde craves to become the dragon in William Blake's engraving "The Great Red Dragon and the Woman Clothed with the Sun" which illustrates a scene of St. John's book of *Revelation*. Dolarhyde tattoos his muscular body with a gigantic dragon as he develops a schizophrenic split personality in a process which culminates in his eating Blake's original engraving in order to shortcut his illusory transformation into the Beast of the Apocalypse. Dolarhyde's failed metamorphosis culminates and reverses the story of the successive transformations of the goddess Tiamat, the original image of the dragon, into diverse monsters including the Beast of *Revelation*: the contemporary misogynistic male psychopath tries to assume an image of powerful masculinity, but his failed attempt discloses not only his own sickness but also that of the patriarchy that creates such monstrous images. In *Silence of the Lambs*, the serial killer Jame Gumb is a frustrated would-be-transsexual who victimizes women because he cannot become a woman himself. Gumb believes that his transformation into a woman, something he desires apparently because of his morbid Oedipal love for her mother, will take place when he can finally wear the suit he is making out of his victims' skins. To signify his desire for this magic metamorphosis, Gumb chooses as a fitting symbol of his own view of his metamorphic self a rare species of nocturnal butterfly that he places in his victims' mouths. Yet, the shadow of Mr. Hyde is also present in *The Silence of the Lambs* in Gumb's distasteful choice of name for the leather goods company he briefly owns: 'Mr. Hide'.

Not only men are obsessed to the point of madness by a desire for radical transformation. Barbet Schroeder's suspense film *Single White Female* (1992), based on John Lutz's novel, narrates how Heddie, Ally's new flatmate, becomes her monstrous doppelgänger in her constant search for

a new sister to replace her twin, drowned when both were only nine. Unlike Gumb, Heddie requires just some shopping for clothes and a new haircut to feel that she has become the woman she wishes to be. However, the extremest form of female transformation in the sense of appropriation of the other woman's body is the one undertaken by the giantess Ruth in Fay Weldon's novel *The Life & Loves of a She-Devil* (1983). She becomes a perfect replica of the petite Mary Fisher, her husband's mistress, thanks to plastic surgery. As can be seen, these two women understand metamorphosis as a process that will allow them to become literally another woman whom they have accepted as a desirable model. In the case of Dolarhyde and Gumb, there is no such equivalent desirable model of masculinity: Dolarhyde wants to become a mythical beast, Gumb a woman.

One of the motifs most frequently invoked to justify metamorphosis in recent fiction is the release of pent-up rage. This is a motif especially common in Japanese 'manga' where rage is usually represented as a powerful flow of supernatural energy. Yet, the instances I have come across in my survey of the Anglo-Saxon monster refer to two women. In the witty, tongue-in-cheek 1994 remake of the 1950s film *Attack of the 50 Ft Woman* a magic beam sent from an extraterrestrial spaceship transforms the submissive Nancy, played by Daryl Hannah, into a gigantic, strong woman who can finally free herself from her oppression at the hands of her bullying father and her unfaithful husband. A similar situation is faced by Salman Rushdie's Sufiya Zinobia in his novel *Shame* (1983). Sufiya, a retarded woman whose body has accumulated the shame her family feels for her and the shame she feels for the world is metamorphosed by this very shame into a legendary man-eating white panther that alters the course of life in her land. Her father and her husband are also among her victims.

The monstrous transformation is often the result of the transgression of a taboo. This is usually related to the prohibition of acquiring forbidden knowledge about the mechanisms of sex or the artificial creation of life and death. The metamorphosis may be the punishment for transgressions of which the subject is well aware, which would follow Stevenson's model, or,

alternatively, can transform an innocent subject into a monster in imitation of Kafka's. In general terms, women are punished with horrific transformations for having sex against the injunctions put by others on them, while men usually break taboos referred to the creation of artificial life. The motif of woman's transformation into a lethal predator brought about by her loss of virginity was the basis of Jacques Tourneur's elegant horror film *Cat People* (1942). In the 1982 remake, the virginal Irina suffers the same fate, yet hers is a transformation that can be reversed by love; interestingly, in this film Irina has a brother who is also subject to the same taboo, a point that undermines the original misogynistic view of female sexuality of the 1940s film. This man uses his metamorphosis to his own advantage, become a bloodthirsty predator; his cruelty suggests that man's and not woman's sexuality is the real monster. *The Company of Wolves* (1984) deals with a similar taboo, though in Rosalee's case the final transgression of the prohibition to have sex with the werewolf that haunts her grandmother's house results in her joyous liberation and in her becoming a werewolf herself. Rosalee's transformation, which unlike those of the other werewolves in the film is not seen, signifies her acceptance of sexuality rather than her punishment, but also suggests that sexuality may be potentially monstrous depending on whether the subject may enjoy it or not.

The transgression of the taboo on the acquisition of forbidden knowledge about how to manipulate life is a very frequent leitmotiv in contemporary narratives about monstrosity. This motif is no doubt derived from *Frankenstein*, but while Mary Shelley's doctor hero was punished with death, many of his descendants in contemporary films and novels are punished with horrific changes for their transgressions, like Dr. Jekyll. This is the case of Seth Brundle who becomes a creature part fly, part man in *The Fly* (1986), a film that also considers the metamorphosis as the horrific effect of disease (especially of cancer), and of Dr. Jessup, who is turned into an ape and later a monstrous shapeless mass in *Altered States*. Another form of transgression occurs when the subject wishes to learn about death: in Clive Barker's short story "The Forbidden" (filmed as *Candyman* in 1992) Helen, a PhD student writing on a modern urban legend about a mythical killer

is herself transformed into an undead monster after the burning of her body. This is also the fate of journalist Karen in *The Howling*, in which her interest in a psychopath ultimately leads to her transformation into a werewolf before the TV cameras when she is trying to denounce the existence of the creatures, or of Frank in *Hellraiser* (1987), whose search for sado-masochistic pleasure transforms him into a particularly gruesome skinless undead. Louis's transformation into a mournful vampire in *Interview with the Vampire* is also a form of penance brought about by his wish to die.

However, most transformations occur in contexts that emphasize the haphazard nature of life and that are closer to Kafka's scenario than to Stevenson's. The victims do not deserve their fate but accept it, and in some cases their own death, with resignation, convinced of the arbitrariness of life and death. David in *An American Werewolf in London* and Daniel in *Heart-Beast* (1986) are transformed into werewolves because they unwittingly transgress norms they ignore during their stay in foreign lands. An accident turns Nick Holloway into an invisible man in *Memoirs of an Invisible Man* (1992), and a mask is the reason why Stanley Ipkiss becomes an impossibly cartoonish character in *The Mask* (1994). Other transformations are caused by vicious attacks such as the one scientist Peyton suffers in *Darkman* (1990), which turns his face into the masque of death very similar to Lon Chaney's characterisation as Eric, the Phantom of the Opera. Two victims of a horrific attack by a gang literally come back from death transformed into monsters, though of a heroic type: policeman Alex Murphy is reborn in *Robocop* (1986) as a cyborg in a titanium armour employed as a new model policeman by the corporation OCP; the undead rock singer Eric adopts in *The Crow* (1994) a new image, a cross between Batman's archenemy the Joker and the androgynous Goth boy Edward Scissorhands, which signifies his assumption of a new personality, that of the avenger of his dead fiancée.

While most of the metamorphic changes I have detailed respond to a preoccupation with the transgression of taboos and to the fear of losing control on one's own body by accident or

through violence, some of the metamorphic rebirths of recent films and novels express the wish to enter into a communion with other beings and to transcend individuality. In novels such as Greg Bear's *Blood Music* (1985), Charles Sheffield's *The Nimrod Hunt* (1986), and Dan Simmons' *The Fall of Hyperion* (1990) the protagonists (themselves abnormal people who have been modified by a disease or who have been created as laboratory experiments) go through the harrowing process of being integrated into a new level of collective consciousness in metamorphosis that are symbolic representations of death and rebirth and that give a new interpretation to the old idea of the composite monster. The monster in, for instance, *The Nimrod Hunt*, is the sum total of a human and three non-human bodies merging mentally and physically. In Orson Scott Card's novelization of *The Abyss* the protagonist Bud is rescued from death in the underwater abyss of the title by aliens who re-create him as a new type of human being capable of feeling his individuality as one of the components of a larger collective mind. In these texts, metamorphosis clearly implies that the human body and mind can only transcend their limitations by having magical access to a new phase of evolution, which is always brought about by aliens or by man-made artificial intelligences: the visualization of the monstrous metamorphosis is, thus, the expression of a New Age wish-fulfilment fantasy of transcendence and communion.

The importance of change in the current iconography of monstrosity is exemplified not only by the metamorphic monster that reaches a final, stable phase in the transformation but also by the multiple shape-shifter. This type of shape-shifting monster cannot be explained simply as a multiple metamorphic monster. The shape-shifter adopts many forms in succession, which means that it is hard to spot, so that its threat is reinforced with each transformation, a characterisation that derives from the iconography of the Devil. Some of these shape-shifters are technically body snatchers, that is to say, instead of being protean bodies that can metamorphose at will, body snatchers are disembodied spirits that take different bodies whose possessors they kill. Although most shape-shifters like the alien of *The Thing*, the Devil in *Swan Song*, the T-1000 in *The Terminator 2*

or the body-snatching demon of *Spanky* (1994) are evil, not all monsters of this kind are presented in negative terms suggesting a satanic nature. Olivia Butler's novel *Wild Seed* (1980) narrates the love story between the multiple shape-shifter Anyanwu and the body snatcher Doro; the novel deals with the efforts of Anyanwu, who is a caring matriarch and a reputed healer, to convince Doro that his immense power can find a better use than killing. Likewise, in the film *The Hidden* (1987) an alien, best defined as an angelic body snatcher, stalks and kills another body-snatching alien who is evil. The shape-shifter in both varieties is a monster rich in significance: on the one hand, it is clearly associated with the Devil, and also with paranoid fears and the mistrust of superficial appearances; on the other hand, as seen in Anyanwu, the shape-shifter is a wish-fulfilment figure typical of a culture that at a superficial level invites individuals to endlessly transform their physical appearance through fashion, cosmetics, sport and even plastic surgery and that also values the personal transformation of the individual striving for success.

In this culture of the chameleon body the monsters sporting a fixed image are often figures of extremity, spectacular bodies that are often more grotesque than horrifying. In some cases, the monsters are presented in groups including individuals with many variations so that no single image can stand for all. This is the case of the monsters of the *Alien* trilogy, which appear in different phases of growth and also in different varieties as adults, and also those of *The Abyss*. Monsters like the Gremlins of the eponymous film (1984) appear divided into a disgustingly evil and a cuddly good subspecies, within which a high number of idiosyncratic individuals can be distinguished. Whenever an individual, unique monster appears in a film or in a novel of the 1980s and 1990s it is given, in all likelihood, an original image that breaks away from anything seen or imagined before, though there may be still thematic points of connection with other monsters. Freddy Krueger, with his hobo clothes, razor gloves, black hat and scarred face is one of those grotesque, unique figures together with the leather-clad Cenobites of *Hellraiser*, or the winged woman Fevers in *Nights at the Circus* (1984). Other monsters such as Edward in *Edward*

Scissorhands, E.T., the imposing metallic god of *Hyperion* and the luminous aliens of *Cocoon* (1985) suggest that the territory of monstrosity encompasses much more than the grotesque and the horrific: this is a domain actually informed by variety and difference, and by the onlooker's curiosity and fascination before always surprising otherness.

Monsters resist a neat classification in the three categories of fixed images, metamorphosers and multiple shape-shifters: too many instances escape the grid. Classifications of any kind abolish the richness and diversity of the monstrous without explaining it, as the essence of the monster is to be "chaotic, conforming to no existing class" (Buxton, op. cit.: 205). Noel Carroll (op. cit.: 52), who identifies the monster exclusively with the horrific creature, argues that "fusion, fission, magnification, massification and horrific metonymy are the major tropes for presenting the monsters of art-horror". Actually, this classification is too narrow, for it ignores human evil monsters of normal physical appearance and also non-human angelic figures; furthermore, it fails to explain metamorphic and shape-shifting monsters. What defines the monster is the capacity of its image to disrupt our ontological frame of mind by surprising us with an unexpected set of physical and psychological features, either because they are all abnormal or because the monster displays an uncanny combination of the normal and the abnormal. Supposing that the physical appearance of all creatures, including the imaginary ones, and of human beings could be divided into three main categories - hideous, average, beautiful - and that an equivalent triad could be found in a moral division into categories of evil, average and good, the monster would be a creature characterized by any of the following combinations: hideous body/evil behaviour, hideous body/average behaviour, hideous body/good behaviour, beautiful body/evil behaviour, beautiful body/good behaviour. A creature average in looks and behaviour could not be monstrous while the category of the extraordinarily beautiful but average in behaviour seems not to have a place within the current cultural phase of the construction of monstrosity, except as prodigy, in the sense that can be applied to film and pop music stars and fashion models.

A hideous monster that is good or behaves in an average, normal way disrupts many

notions about the ideological identification of good looks with good morals, while a hideous, evil monster confirms them. The power to threaten its victims defines the monster only partially, for, often the monster is a victim of those who threaten it because of its abnormal physical appearance. A number of contemporary films and novels try to educate the reader or the viewer into an acceptance of difference, no matter how abnormal this may seem at first sight. Thus, in *Enemy Mine* (1985) a lizard-like extraterrestrial - curiously played by black actor Lou Gosset Jr. - and a white human male must come to terms with their initial mutual repulsion in order to survive in the hostile environment where both are left stranded. So complete is their final blindness to their widely diverging anatomies that the human male ends up taking care of the baby engendered by the alien, who also happens to be a parthenogenetic hermaphrodite.

Intimacy dispels or relativises monstrosity, a point also emphasised by *The Man without a Face* (1993) and by *The Elephant Man* (1980). Ugliness that seems monstrous to strangers is accepted without fear or mistrust when it corresponds to a beloved person - somebody in the family or a new friend - but the beholder may find that social acceptance of the so-called monster is not so easy, or in other words, that social barriers are by no means as easy to break down as personal barriers. Often, the monster's physical appearance prevents all kind of contact with its personality if the beholders cannot overcome their prejudices or if they overcome them only partly. Fear, or even contempt, cannot be replaced by trust when the beholder remains always prejudiced, which shows that the beholder is often the true monster. The treatment John Merrick receives in the film *The Elephant Man* when he is in the hands of his barbaric exploiters exemplifies this. A sadly ironic instance of wishful thinking (rather hypocritical) occurs in narratives in which the acceptance of ugliness by the beholder turns the monster magically into a beautiful being; the replacement of fear by trust in the beholder is thus rewarded but there is not a real acceptance of difference. "Beauty and the Beast" is the classic instance of this, though in none of its recent transpositions to new plots, except for Disney's adaptation of the fairy tale (1993), is the monster

transformed into a handsome man as a reward for Bella's loyalty.

Monsters most often combine ugliness and instinctual hostility against humans. No possibility of turning fear into trust can be considered then because the behaviour of the monster prevents all communication and, furthermore, because it is destructive of the beholder as in the relations between predator and prey. The monster is then a proper object of fear for its victims, though readers or viewers may be engaged simultaneously in an exercise of empathy with the victims and the hero and of aesthetic appreciation, or fascination for the monster. The extraterrestrial monster in the film *Predator* (1987) is a clear instance of this kind. However, the originally abnormal human monster can be sometimes magically transformed into a normal, even attractive human being, in plots that question whether monstrosity lies in the psyche or in the body. The misshapen criminal in the film *Johnny Handsome* (1989), played by Mickey Rourke, is helped to achieve normality by a plastic surgeon who believes that Johnny has been doomed to be evil by the social rejection of his abnormal physical appearance. As it turns out, Johnny becomes a handsome man, but he is still a criminal at heart (a moral monster), seeking revenge on those who abused him under his previous identity. *Johnny Handsome* denies thus the premise of *Frankenstein*, namely, that the social rejection of ugliness is responsible for turning a benevolent man into an evil monster. Johnny is always evil, though his social marginalization is responsible for making him irredeemably evil.

Monsters may accept their own images or seek to change them, to disguise what they are. The Beast of "Beauty and the Beast" is pitiful because he cannot come to terms with his own image, but monsters like Freddy Krueger are horrifying because they positively enjoy their ugliness and their evil ways. Likewise, some monsters like the Seal Boy Arturo in Katherine Dunn's *Geek Love* (1983), can even be narcissistic to the point of being megalomaniac: Arturo even starts a cult whose adepts mutilate their bodies to resemble those of their limbless master. Another narcissistic monster is the villain Max Cady in the film *Cape Fear* (1991). His muscular body, tattooed with the

scales representing justice and with many passages from the Old Testament, is displayed in the film's initial scene; this spectacular body signifies Cady's transformation in prison into an even more dangerous monster than he originally was.

A more complex form of monstrosity is that of the evil human being of average looks; this is the classic boy-next-door who turns out to be a psychopath, introduced by Hitchcock with his Norman Bates in *Psycho* (1960). Since we think in terms of stereotyped clichés derived from fiction it often comes as a shock to realize that in real life, the worst monster most often looks harmless. Philip Roth stresses the point in his description of the real-life Nazi John Demjanjuk in the novel *Operation Shylock* (1993), which deals partly with his trial in Israel as the alleged Ivan the Terrible. The looks of the grandfatherly Demjanjuk fascinate Roth and prove to him "that to be both a loving grandfather and a mass murderer is not all that difficult. It's because you could do both so well that I can't stop staring at you" (p. 63). When no external sign betrays the monster his or her bizarre normality becomes the more horrifying. Other normal people revealing themselves as monstrous abnormalities are the killer housewife Beverly Sutphin in the comedy film *Serial Mom* (1994), the villainous Peyton in the film *The Hand that Rocks the Cradle* (1992) and the family man Jack Torrance in the novel and film *The Shining* (1977). All of them are figures related to a family context which is the site of tension from which abnormality most often emerges. The normality of conventional family life seems to conceal a potential for monstrosity that has only recently been tapped.

Normality, of course, is relative. In a context in which the cult of the body dominates social perceptions of the individuals, all lack of beauty is seen as abnormal, while a perfect body may easily conceal the most monstrous being, as I have noted in the cases of Pat Bateman, the anti-hero of *American Psycho* and Tod Friendly, the anti-hero of *Time's Arrow*. The yuppie image covers up men with monstrous ideas of fun, like Ian Wharton in William Self's *My Idea of Fun* (1993) or the dandy demon of *Spanky*. Interestingly, the trim image of the yuppie Bateman is in contrast to two other businessmen: Bob Glandier in the novel *The Businessman* (1984) and the

Fat Controller in Self's *My Idea of Fun*. Glandier belongs to the late 1970s and early 1980s and his fall is marked not only by his killing of his wife but also by the rise of intolerance against the cigar-smoking, fat, unhealthy businessman, replaced by the likes of Bateman, an example of the healthy-looking executive fashionable in the 1980s. In contrast, the Fat Controller, apparently the Devil himself, is a rather more transhistorical, Falstaffian figure of unbounded obesity.

At the end of the spectrum of monstrosity lies the beautiful monster. As I have already noted the 'femme fatale' is the prototype of the beautiful, evil monster, but there is also a type of beautiful, benevolent monster of which angels are the prototype. The monstrosity of angels may seem paradoxical, yet the fact that they are imaginary non-human creatures puts them in the same category as devils, a type of monsters to which they are, nevertheless closely related in Christian myths. Although the angel is not a figure that has been particularly exploited in the twentieth century, the fact is that angels often appear in films and novels as normal human beings (usually men as in *Jacob's Ladder* (1990) or *Wings of Desire* (1987), just to name two instances) and hardly ever, if at all, as the winged, robed, androgynous creatures of medieval iconography. When they appear as luminous beings, they are inevitably alien messiahs (see Chapter 4) as in *Starman* (1984), *Cocoon* or *The Abyss*. The latter contains possibly the only instance of a moment of terror provoked by a sublime beautiful monster: when a member of the crew working in the underwater oil rig placed on the edge of the abyss comes across one of the lovely aliens (a cross between a jellyfish and a butterfly), the shock of believing this to be the angel of death that comes for him makes him enter into a coma. This scene suggests that our rationalistic outlook on the world is as much threatened by the horrific monster as by the angelic monster and that were we to see an angel our reaction would be as extreme as if we saw a devil. The conclusion to be derived from this survey of the images of monstrosity is, accordingly, that the immensely varied iconography of monstrosity encompasses whatever is extraordinary, and not only the grotesque, the horrific and the fantastic. Fascination rather than disgust is the key word to understand the contemporary

iconography of monstrosity.

1.2.3. *The Limits of the Visualization of Monstrous Violence in the Age of Special Effects: The Monster and the Imagery of the Broken Body*

The iconography of monstrosity cannot be understood without the imagery of violence and death. The monsters of the 1980s and 1990s are defined rather by an unbound capacity to do physical or psychological harm than by an average horrific, grotesque or fantastic image that can summarise their main morphological traits - even though, as I have noted, by no means can all monsters be said to be threatening or horrific. There is no correlation between the degree of horror caused by the physical appearance of the monstrous body and the amount of violence caused by the monster; on the contrary, apparently normal human beings - even beautiful human beings - are seen committing unspeakable acts of violence on the pages of novels and on the screen, while morphologically extreme monsters inhabit the fantasies of children's cartoons and books as harmless, friendly monsters. Since the possession of claws, fangs, and slimy skins is totally insufficient to describe the monster of contemporary fiction, I should like to turn now to the discussion of the depiction of the violence caused by the monster, as this serves better to characterize monstrosity. An interesting point, as I will show, is that the very graphic portrait of violence is very similar in film and in the novel, against what might be expected. The perfected special effects of film have been blamed for the explosion of realistic violence in fiction, but the contemporary novel does not lag behind film as far as the representation of the broken body is concerned.

The imagery of Hell in Christianity is the meeting point of the monster and the broken body. The demons of Hell are monsters who torture, so that all the representations of Hell are also representations of the violent destruction of the human body. One of the paradoxes of Christianity is that the separation of the sinner's soul from God was imaged as the ceaseless torment inflicted on the body of the sinner in Hell rather than as a spiritual lack of contact with God. This may have

been the result of mixing Hebrew ideas about Hell as a place to atone for one's sin with other mythologies, such as the Greek, in which those who disobey the gods are sentenced to the eternal repetition of their punishment. Why the torture of the body in Hell symbolized the separation of the soul from God and, whether the pain of Hell was inflicted on the actual body or was simply a metaphor, were questions that occupied many theologians in the Middle Ages and that ultimately undermined the theological basis of Hell, that is to say, its credibility.

Horific death was also the subject of many paintings describing the martyrdom of a particular saint, produced throughout the Middle Ages. The legends of the martyrdom of saints are one of the most frequently overlooked sources for the imagery of death inherited by the contemporary monster, possibly because the horror endured by the saint had to be distinguished from that of Hell: the sinner's pain put God beyond his or her reach, while the saint's suffering approximated him to God. The saint appeared, thus, as a heroic figure whose apparent defeat by the monster (the non-Christian torturers) was actually a victory of the soul. Although images of torture are often related to the infamous task of the Inquisition, it is necessary to recall that torture had been part of the iconography of the Christian church and of sainthood, long before torture came to be associated by Protestantism with the worst horrors of Catholicism, and long before the Protestant martyr victimized by the Catholic inquisition replaced in the Anglo-Saxon world the image of the early Christian saint tortured by the infidels.

The visceral horror of death was also the subject depicted in the fourteenth century iconographical tradition of the "Danse Macabre"; the frail human body was represented in a carnivalesque dance with omnipresent, raging death, a motif entrenched in European culture following the ravages caused by the Black Death epidemic started in 1348. The iconography of death returns to the foreground with Gothic fiction and Romanticism and begets later through the work of Francisco de Goya (1746-1828), especially in his series of engravings *Disasters of War*, a pioneering use of the unbearable sight of the broken body to denounce the horror of death caused not by the ravages of diseases but by war. Goya's work prefigures an iconographical tradition that

expresses anxieties about the meaning of heroism and the actual effects of the violence caused by the hero. This serves to represent the horrific effects of war in the twentieth century, whose mass scale warfare techniques turn each potential hero into an actual monster of destruction. This association of the monster with the indiscriminate, arbitrary death of the "Danse Macabre" medieval tradition and its use to support the humanist hatred of war and violence first expressed artistically by Goya are behind much contemporary horror fiction and its iconography of extreme violence. Stephen King's choice of title for his essay on horror fiction, *Danse Macabre*, appears therefore to acknowledge the fact that twentieth-century creators of art-horror like him occupy a place within an ancient tradition but that, at the same time, the medieval iconography of death and the monster occupies a preeminent position in the imagination of the contemporary artist.

Yet, for all its clearly discernible sources, the frequent destruction of the body by the monster in contemporary fiction lacks the religious connotations of the medieval past or of the more recent wave of anti-Catholic feeling in Protestant countries. It could be said that the images have been preserved but they have been dissociated from their meaning, to become, simply, sensationalist, morbid images. The process started with the Gothic novel itself, especially with *The Monk*, though violence was left dormant during the nineteenth century, which showed a greater preference for static images of death. The Romantic/Gothic cult of the dead bride, as in Edgar Allan Poe's short stories or in the paintings of the Decadent artists, is part of this morbid attraction for death.

According to David Skal (op. cit.: 66) the iconography of violent destruction of the body by the monster must be understood within the context of the extremely violent destruction caused by war in the twentieth century. Skal argues that audiences familiarised with the horrors brought about by World War I - not only the dead, but the many veterans mutilated in war and their horrific tales of death in the trenches - may have found in Lon Chaney's creatures a fictional, Gothic version of the broken faces and bodies of reality. The Gothic monster was endowed in the first half of the twentieth century with the task of symbolically airing the horror of the violence that had

destroyed the bodies of so many men in real life. From Hiroshima onwards, and especially since Vietnam, the broken body has filled an important public space in the media - maybe relying on the space already occupied by sensationalism in fiction and in the tabloid press - that partly politicises violence but that also deprives the dead body of a deeper meaning at a personal level. The dead body of the martyred saint is a venerated body, but the destroyed body of the victims of war and terrorist or criminal violence suggest the emptiness of a meaningless loss of life rather than elicit the respect due to the victims. This indifference in the face of the work of the monster of reality has partly passed to the world of fiction. As Peter Boss (1986: 16) writes, death is in modern film "often casual to the point of randomness; devoid of metaphysical import, ... frequently squalid, incidental to the main action, mechanically routine in its execution and lonely but for the unwavering scrutiny of the lens as it seeks out details of broken bodies." The same can be said about the images of bodily destruction shown on TV and the press.

Philip Brophy (1986: 8) links the frequent destruction of the body in film to the ascendancy in horror fiction of a mode of showing as opposed to telling. This is a mode that is, in addition, alike in film and in the novel regardless of the actual moral intention of the author (a point I discuss in Chapter 4). It is also strongly connected to the media's morally passive showing of atrocity in the belief that images speak louder than words. The generation of contemporary artists who were prevented in their childhood from gazing freely at the broken bodies shown in the 1950s horror comics, were the same ones later sent to Vietnam, if they were American; if they were European they could not ignore, either, the TV and press images showing the tragic effects of that war on the bodies of the victims. Ironically, the children of the 1950s protected against the comics' images of horror inherited from Gothic, went back to those very same images to frame the reality of what they saw in war. Tom Savini, the man who created the gory special effects that have popularised Gothic horror films such as *Friday the 13th* (1980), based his ultra-realistic designs for the representation of violence inflicted on the human body by the monster precisely on his own experience as a photographer in the Vietnam war. The profound impact of the destruction he

witnessed led Savini to fuse realism with the older tradition mainly transmitted through Gothic. His work inaugurated the increasing stylisation of the destruction of the body on the screen, a process that has produced a remarkable paradox: the unglamorous broken bodies of the news now appear to be the work of second rate special effects artists by comparison to the elaborated effects employed in contemporary film to portray the destruction of the body.

The search for the "ideal of absolute atrocity" that Leslie Fiedler (1973:134) perceived in Matthew Lewis' *The Monk*, has not been abandoned yet. Images of bodily destruction are ubiquitous not only in horror novels or films, but also, as I have noted, in the media. Yet, because of the attention usually attracted by horror films, especially of sub-genres such as the slasher and the splatter - films centred on the exploits of a psychopathic serial killer which rely on sensationalistic special effects to pad out the flimsy plots - the general impression is that the sadistic destruction of the body does not have an equivalent in written fiction, except in that of lowest quality. This is, simply, wrong. The following passages, extracted from novels published between 1979 and 1995, prove that the monster and the violent depiction of monstrous violence are not confined to the horror film. They prove, furthermore, that monstrous violence permeates the work of mainstream and genre writers across gender barriers. I invite my reader to consider whether there are clear style markers that may help determine what gender the author is and whether the passages correspond to mainstream or genre novels:

It's not easy to wield a hammer in a motor car. When I struck her the first time I expected to feel the sharp, clean smack of steel on bone, but it was more like hitting clay, or hard putty. The word fontanel sprang into my mind. I thought one good bash would do it, but, as the autopsy would show, she had a remarkably strong skull - even in that, you see, she was unlucky. The first blow fell just at the hairline, above her left eye. There was not much blood, only a dark-red glistening dent with hair matted in it. She shuddered, but remained sitting upright, swaying a little, looking at me with eyes that would not focus properly. Perhaps I would have stopped then, if she had not suddenly launched herself at me across the back of the seat, flailing and screaming. I was dismayed. How could this be happening to me - it was all so unfair.

The axe came whistling down and buried itself in Paul Sheldon's left leg just above the ankle. Pain exploded up his body in a gigantic bolt. Dark-red blood splattered her face like Indian war paint. It splattered the wall. He heard the blade squeal against bone as she wrenched it free. He looked unbelievably down at himself. The sheet was

turning red. He saw his toes wriggling. Then he saw her raising the dripping axe again. Her hair had fallen free of its pins and hung around her blank face.

I had only a little way to walk home, and hardly expected to find such an early opportunity to exercise my calling. Hearing a horse behind me I moved to one side, but not soon enough to escape the touch of a whip. I turned in a fury and saw it to be a pock-marked, leather-faced, drab-witted ancient, got up in grey with a flat lace collar too big for modesty. I pulled him from his horse and popped his eyeballs with my thumbs, and then, forcing open his jaw as I would to get a chicken bone out of a dog, I loosened his teeth with my heel and soon had them mostly out and wrapped up in his own handkerchief.

The second card-player lifted his head and saw, over the bowed head of his fellow, the face of Satan standing on the moonlight. The man could not speak. His mouth came open, and in that instant the black claws of the Devil raked through the body of the other man. There was a snap and gush of blood, and head and body were separated. Out of the deluge came a long paw and, as the living card-player started his scream, hooked out his throat.

The first of these four passages belongs to John Banville's *The Book of Evidence* (1989: 113), a mainstream novel, whereas the second can be found in Stephen King's *Misery* (1987: 242), a horror novel which has been adapted for the cinema. The authors of the third and fourth passages are women: Jeanette Winterson's heroine, the Dog Woman, in *Sexing the Cherry* (1989: 92) is the monster narrating her exploits in the third passage, while the monster seen as Satan by his victim is actually a werewolf, Daniel, the protagonist of Tannith Lee's *Heart-Beast* (1992: 64). What the four passages have in common among themselves and with many others is the conciseness and the attention to detail, no matter how disgusting that may be for the reader. The passages by Banville and Winterson are, in addition, written in the first person, which makes them even more disturbing for the reader, though they manage to be horrific in different ways: Banville's Freddy is mentally and bodily involved in his unspeakable act, Winterson's Dog Woman keeps herself mentally detached from the horror she is creating - paradoxically, proximity and detachment to violence are valid to mark the monster and cause a disquieting effect in the reader, above all, because their reader is not a seeker of horror as King's and Lee's are.

Can the passages by Lee and King be said to be more or less cinematic than those by Banville and Winterson, as the use of the third person narrative voice by the former might

suggest? The answer is no. The four passages are intensely visual in a cinematic way - Lee's specially recalls strongly the strategies used in werewolf films such as Neil Jordan's *The Company of Wolves*. Yet, in Rob Reiner's excellent adaptation of Stephen King's *Misery*, the crucial scene in which the madwoman Annie Wilkes symbolically castrates her prisoner, the writer Paul Sheldon, by cutting off his left foot has been replaced by a bloodless horrific scene in which Annie is seen to break Paul's feet with a sledge hammer. In this otherwise faithful adaptation, the extreme violence of King's book is missing perhaps because of the director's preoccupation with producing a mainstream film that did not recall the sub-genre of the slashers and splatters. This is the more surprising in view of the extreme images of violence in mainstream films and in view of the strategies available to Reiner to have adapted King's bloody scene without showing - just suggesting - all the extent of Annie's brutality.

What has been seemingly lost in the novel is the possibility of handling violence and the monster in a literary way. Monstrous violence seems to require a stark, threadbare language that is literary in the sense that it is used to impress the reader of a work of fiction with emotional effects controlled by the writer. Yet, it is a language of the visible that shows rather than tells, and that aims at forcing images into the reader's mind, images that must prompt a reflection on the reader's side on the meaning of monstrosity, usually without the author's help. For a contemporary reader, the use of poetic language to describe the effects of monstrous language, as in the following passage from William Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* (1593), seems a cynical and improper use of the beauty of language. Here is Marcus lamenting the fate of his niece Lavinia, the survivor of a brutal rape and of the ensuing attack in which she has lost her hands and her tongue:

Speak, gentle niece, what stern ungentle hands
Hath lopp'd and hew'd and made thy body bare
Of her two branches, those sweet ornaments,
Whose circling shadows kings have sought to sleep in,
And might not gain so great a happiness
As half thy love? Why dost not speak to me?
Alas, a crimson river of warm blood,
Like to a bubbling fountain stir'd with wind,
Doth rise and fall between thy rosed lips,

Coming and going with thy honey breath. (II, iv, 15-25)

In contrast to Shakespeare's poetic treatment of the effects of monstrous violence, contemporary writers produce scenes in which language is primarily used as an aid to the visualization: what must remain after having read the text is the image visualized and not the language which recedes into the background. This effect is akin to the one produced by special effects in film: the tools of the artist (the writer's language, the filmmaker's photography and special effects) try to be as unobtrusive as possible so as to centre on achieving an intensely visual moment. Only after that moment can the surprised reader or viewer consider how it has been created. While for the novel, part of the enjoyment of reading about monstrosity is derived from the interplay between the author who force-feeds his or her reader with striking images and the reader who indulges in this intrusion of the disturbing imagery of monstrosity, in film the pleasure of seeing the monster and monstrous violence relies on enjoyment of a paradox: special effects create an illusion that the viewer cannot dispel even when s/he knows that it is faked. Although she refers to science fiction, Vivian Sobchack's (1993:41) observation about the pleasures of seeing the impossible also apply to the horror film: "the satisfaction comes from seeing the visual interaction of actual and impossible in the same frame, from the filmmaker's ability to make us suspend our disbelief at the very moment we are also wondering 'How did they do it?'" When reading a novel like *American Psycho*, which seems as close as possible to Fiedler's ideal of absolute atrocity, what the reader wonders is also how the writer did it. For both film and the novel the questions regarding the representation of monstrosity and the effects of monstrous violence are the same: why the images of the intolerable have reached such visual concreteness - the perfect realism of the unreal - and how the Platonic conception of art as a means to create beauty fits in this artistic panorama inspired by monstrosity.

Conclusions

In this chapter I have reviewed major aspects that condition the image of the monster in

the 1980s and 1990s. The new iconography of monstrosity in these decades is ultimately grounded on the patriarchal overturning of the prehistoric Earth goddess and on the use of the monster to represent fallen matriarchy. Despite the fact that the memory of the oldest myths representing that defeat, such as the Babylonian *Enuma Elish*, has been lost, the fact is that the image of the monster is essential to an understanding of the beginning of the decadence of patriarchal values in the late twentieth century. Even though misogyny seems to be a very important element in the construction of the image of the monster throughout the centuries, in the 1980s and 1990s the proliferation of male monsters suggests that men are currently reacting against the evident rise of values associated to woman and against the rise of the stronger post-feminist woman - still in a confused way so that the monster represents abject masculinity but also male power. The images of male monsters show, to a certain extent, that we have reached the end of the phase inaugurated with the deposition of the goddess.

The current iconography for the monster derives motifs from the past - myth, religion, the arts - and the present. The multiplication of cultural channels or media to transmit the image of the monster has resulted in a multiplicity of monstrous icons, though it can be said that contemporary films and novels share to a remarkable extent similar strategies to visualize the monster. Since the monster is also defined by its capacity to inflict bodily harm, I have considered the iconography of bodily destruction and the raising of the threshold of tolerance in the graphic representation of violence as extensions of the iconography of monstrosity. In film, the evolution of the images of monstrosity is closely linked to the frequently underrated work of special effects artists, which reflects the ceaseless search for new images to fascinate film-goers in the interests of capitalism.

In this chapter I have also argued that the traditional view of the monster as a horrific, disgusting creature is too limited. Instead, I have proposed an alternative definition of the monster as a being (human or not, imaginary or real) of extraordinary physical appearance and/or behaviour capable of upsetting our sense of normality and even of eliciting fascinated desire from the reader or viewer. One particularity of the iconography of monstrosity in the films and novels of

the 1980s and 1990s is the important role played by metamorphosis. The monstrous shape-shifter of multiple bodies is the counterpart of the spectacular body of fixed image; both belong to iconographical traditions started in archaic myth but have found in the context of the 1980s and 1990s - a time in which constant change and the quest for novelty are paramount - a fertile ground on which to proliferate.

CHAPTER 2

Old Monsters, New Monsters: Vision and Revision From Screen Adaptation to Novelization

Introduction

The monster of film frequently derives from the printed word. The omnivorous appetite of the film industry has consumed all types of successful published narratives in its endless search for safe business. Mainstream literature, genre fiction, and hybrids between word and image such as comics, have become the sources for countless film adaptations since the beginning of the twentieth century. The popularity of film and the huge amounts of money invested in the making and advertising of Hollywood's products - especially of those known as blockbusters in which the monster is frequently the star - have paradoxically resulted in new forms of circulating the images of the monster on the printed page. Novelisations of screenplays, new novels, comics, video-games, cartoon TV series and toys have sprung from films which are, in many cases, adaptations of written texts of diverse popularity. The first section of this chapter reviews very briefly the evolution of the monster of film since its beginnings in contrast to the creation of new monsters for the printed page, focusing next on the two texts that define the limits of monstrosity in the period under study: the film *Alien* (1979) and the novel *American Psycho* (1991).

No doubt, the three most popular monsters of the screen adapted from literary sources are the vampire Dracula, Victor Frankenstein's creature and Dr. Jekyll. The second section of this chapter discusses their endurance into the 1980s and 1990s despite the changing cultural and commercial background of film. This section also deals with the difficulties faced by the

mainstream film directors responsible for the most recent adaptations of the original texts by Bram Stoker, Mary Shelley and R.L. Stevenson: Francis Ford Coppola, Kenneth Branagh and Stephen Frears, respectively. My argumentation proves that the new revisions are conditioned not only by the actual degree of faithfulness to the literary sources but also by the many previous screen adaptations and by the new interest of reputed filmmakers in the horror film. These screen adaptations arrive, in addition, at a moment when the new monsters inspired by the original Gothic triad but that cannot be considered direct adaptations or imitations, seem to have forestalled the need for further revisions of the classics.

The last section of this chapter deals with a number of screen adaptations of contemporary novels and with the tensions among filmmakers, novelists and the reading public for the final control of the film. The difference cases review, among other aspects, the limits of the folklorisation of the motifs springing from novels and films about monsters (centring my analysis on the particular case of the *Hellraiser* (1987 - 1993) series), the resistance of readers against the screen adaptation of cult novels (focusing on the cases of *Dune* (1984), *Interview with the Vampire* (1994) and *The Naked Lunch* (1991)), the interesting differences in the adaptation of the same novel about monstrosity - Fay Weldon's *The Life and Loves of a She-Devil* (1983) - for British TV and American film and, finally, the position of the novelist commissioned to write a novelization. As shall be seen, this constant transfer of images of monstrosity from the novel to film and from the screen to the printed page is limited by a conservative mixture of artistic and commercial interests: the easy adaptability of the literary text and the limitations imposed by available special effects techniques, together with the budget they require, mark the divergence in the paths of contemporary films and novels about monstrosity.

2.1. Recycling and Renewing the Monster in the 1980s and 1990s

2.1.1. The Monster in the Twentieth-Century Film and Novel

Only nine novels from the list of the best hundred modern fantasy novels published between 1946 and 1987 elaborated by David Pringle (1987) have been adapted for the cinema screen, with remarkable little success except for Roman Polanski's adaptation of Ira Levin's *Rosemary's Baby* (1967). A similar situation can be inferred from Jones and Newman's (1988) list of the hundred best horror books published between 1592 and 1987. Classics of monstrosity such as Matthew Lewis' *The Monk* (1796), William Godwin's *Caleb Williams* (1794), James Hogg's *The Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824) or Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's *Uncle Silas* (1864), have not been adapted for the screen or have only inspired failed films. Even though since the beginning of its history film has relied - and still relies - on the adaptation of popular texts about monstrosity, the fact is that Hollywood's relationships with the world of the genre or the mainstream novelist interested in the monster are certainly erratic. Some authors such as Stephen King are systematically adapted regardless of the quality of his novels, while excellent novels written in the 1980s and 1990s are ignored, despite their critical and commercial success, what is more, regardless of the fact that many of the authors that have written them use strategies of visualization that can be defined as cinematic. On the other hand, the writers whose novels on monstrosity have been adapted for the screen have not benefited greatly from the success of the film. Most people are, for instance, familiar with *Blade Runner* (1982) but few know that it was based on a novel by Philip K. Dick, and even fewer have read either this novel or any of Dick's other books. What seems to be even worse, when the adaptations have not been especially remarkable, as has been the case of most films based on King's novels, this has created great confusion as to the actual quality of the original novels: many people consider King to be a bad writer solely on the basis of the bad films based on his novels.

The situation can be summarised as follows: film exerts a great influence on writers who are producing visually stunning novels about monstrosity in the 1980s and 1990s but seems

unable to adapt these novels for the screen or to adapt them in high quality products. Instead, even though the aspects of monstrosity dealt with by contemporary novelists and filmmakers are remarkably homogeneous, Hollywood prefers using original screenplays - often imitations of stories written in the period between the 1930s and the 1950s for comics and the pulps - or adapted screenplays based on very popular best-sellers, regardless of their literary quality, with preference for a limited list of very familiar names, comics, TV series and even video-games. Presumably, the situation will change when Hollywood realizes that there is a still untapped immense potential for business in the adaptation of old and new genre fiction, which can be certainly attractive for a large audience already familiar with the written texts, and who expects them to be visualized with all the impacting images the technology of film special effects can produce now.

In the first decade of the twentieth century, when film was still regarded as a carnival attraction, genre fiction began to emerge with the consolidation of authors such as H.G. Wells, Arthur Conan Doyle and Bram Stoker, whose work has been later adapted for the screen on countless occasions. This was the golden decade of the ghost story in Britain, with the work of writers such as Lafcadio Hearn, M.R. James, William Hope Hodgson, Algernon Blackwood, Oliver Onions and Lord Dunsany. Yet their work has only occasionally inspired screen adaptations, such as Jacques Tournier's *The Curse of the Demon* (1957), remotely based on one of James's short stories, "Casting of the Runes" (1911). While in Britain the bases for the separation between literary or mainstream fiction and genre fiction were being laid with the emergence of Modernism and literary criticism attached to the university, in the USA the construction of monstrosity was dominated by popular publications such as the dime novels and the fiction weeklies which appeared at the turn of the century. Later, from the 1920s onwards, dime novels and fiction weeklies faced the tough competition of the pulps - cheap periodical publications containing mainly short stories whose name refers to the pulpwood paper on which they were printed - and from the 1930s onwards of the comics. The role of cheap periodical publications together with the rise of

the short story as a genre is essential to an understanding of the development of genre fiction, especially horror and science fiction: without the meeting ground provided by these magazines for writers and the young readers who later became writers themselves, and without the need to master the short story as the most suitable genre for that type of publication, many of the later successful novelists who started their careers outside the conventional literary circles would have been unable to find a responsive audience.

The 1910s were marked by the rise of film, with the first adaptations of *Frankenstein* and *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* both in Europe and in the USA. Film traversed an exciting period of consolidation as an art form, which culminated in the field of the monstrous with the release of Robert Wiener's classic *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1919), a film which applied the artistic findings of German expressionism to the visualization of the human monster and his background. The field of popular literature was also beginning a rapid expansion in the 1910s with a type of low or middlebrow escapist fiction to which in some cases film seemed specially receptive: Gaston Leroux's best-seller *The Phantom of the Opera* (1911), first adapted in 1925, has since then been the object of four other screen versions (released in 1930, 1942, 1962 and 1989) and has also inspired Brian de Palma's satiric *The Phantom of Paradise* (1974). The 1910s saw the publication of other popular classics about monstrosity: Sax Rohmer's *Dr. Fu Manchu* (1911) did much to popularise the figure of the villainous mad doctor; years later, Gustav Meyerinck's *The Golem* and Franz Kafka's "The Metamorphosis" (both 1915) added new layers of meaning to the construction of monstrosity, the former by reviving the late medieval legend of the Golem, the latter by introducing the absurd in the field of monstrosity. This was also the period in which Edgar Rice Burroughs started publishing his series of Martian novels, which followed the wake of the popularisation of the scientific romances of Wells and Verne. The cheap publications such as dime novels and the magazines were dominated by adventure fiction written for boys (and often by boys) and given a pseudoscientific gloss, which established the foundations on which an alternative to the canon was to flourish a few decades later.

The reign of the monster was consolidated in film and in the pulps in the 1920s, though it suffered important changes with the 1929 crash. The 1920s was the decade in which the great silent horror films were produced, films that were already in many cases new versions of productions filmed in the previous decade: John S. Robertson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* - the first Hollywood adaptation but the sixth to be produced world-wide - and *The Golem* (a German film unrelated to the novel by Meyerinck), both released in 1920, were revisions of that type, which took the technical possibilities of film a step further, encouraging the audience to expect a gradual rising of the quality of the horror film as spectacle. The German film director F.W. Murnau released a spurious version of Stoker's *Dracula*, *Nosferatu* (1922) the first vampire to be seen on the screen and, four years later, an adaptation of the myth of Faust. As I have noted in Chapter 1, Lon Chaney reached stardom in the 1920s thanks to his interpretations of the monsters Quasimodo in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1923) and Erik in *The Phantom of the Opera* (1925), both lavish productions that can be said the first blockbusters centring on the figure of the human monster. Meanwhile, Fritz Lang filmed in Germany *Metropolis* (1926), a film that joined Gothic with futurism in a way imitated decades later by Gothic postmodernist films such as *Blade Runner*. The rise of Nazism forced many of the German artists who had founded the booming German film industry rooted in the strong tradition of the German literature of the fantastic to migrate to the USA, where they contributed to a great extent towards the consolidation of the Hollywood horror film. People such as the photography director Karl Freund introduced expressionistic photography, which raised considerably the artistic level of the American horror film.

As Ron Goulart notes (Sullivan, op. cit.: 337) the pulps reached their golden age in roughly the two decades between the wars¹. The first pulps of the 1900s and 1910s - *Argosy*, *Adventure*, *All-Story* - published stories of different genres, and allowed writers such as Edgar Rice Burroughs their entrance into the literary market. From the 1910s onwards the pulps became specialised in

¹Most information in this section derives from Goulart himself and also from Sadoul (1975), who offers a detailed review of the evolution of science fiction magazines up until the 1970s.

different genres, detective fiction being the first to have its own magazine. In 1919 Street & Smith started publishing the short-lived *The Thrill Book*, which can be regarded as the first horror pulp. *Weird Tales* (first published in 1923), edited shortly by Edwin Baird and later by Fansworth Wright, became the home for all kinds of old and new monsters: it reprinted - and popularised among young readers - classics such as the short stories by Edgar Allan Poe and also gave entrance to new contributors who later became first rate figures in the field of extra-canonical literature: Ashton Clark Smith, Robert Bloch, Ray Bradbury and, the most important of them, H.P. Lovecraft (1890-1937). Lovecraft, who refused to see himself as merely a pulp fiction writer, insisted instead on the links between his work and that of Edgar Allan Poe, from whom he learned the Gothic manners that impregnate his short stories. Lovecraft's pseudomythical tales about the grotesque alien gods who haunt the Earth that they once fashioned derive from long forgotten pagan sources recuperated with the interest in occultism at the turn of the century, but are also part of the Darwinian fears of miscegenation and devolution that shaped the monster at the beginning of the century. Lovecraft himself confessed that he saw himself intellectually as a sceptic incapable of believing in fairy tales, myths - or science - but aesthetically as a lover of the grotesque and the monstrous, a definition that suits many of the creators and readers of horror and science fiction.

The new pulps of the 1920s became the vehicle to articulate the field of science fiction especially with the work of Hugo Gernsback (1884-1967), who edited the popular *Amazing Stories* (1926), and who has been credited with the coinage of the term science fiction, and with that of J.W. Campbell Jr. (1910-1917), who in 1924 took over the edition of *Astounding Stories* from the hands of its founder, F. Orlin Tremaine. Due to the influence of Campbell's editorship the contributors to the popular magazines started abandoning the adventure stories populated by so-called BEMs - bug-eyed monsters - and by heroes rescuing damsels in distress from the claws of lusty space monsters. These were the belated descendants of the threatening monsters of archaic and classical myth but also the predecessors of those space monsters that invaded the film screens in the 1950s. Instead of pure fantasy Gernsback popularised a new type of short

story, based on more rigorous scientific tenets, which led to the golden age of 1930s prophetic, optimistic science fiction.

In the 1930s the field of the horror film expanded with the new 'talkies' adapted from stage plays. This was the case of *Dracula* (1931), *Frankenstein* (1932) and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1932), all of them adapted from Broadway hits rather than from the original texts that were the source for the plays. Other horror films were adaptations from original primary sources: *Island of Lost Souls* (1932) was the first screen version of H.G. Wells' *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1896). These monsters of the screen were joined by monsters without literary sources, such as *King Kong* (1933), and *The Mummy* (1932), which found a receptive audience interested in the mystery of foreign lands as seen through the adventure novels and the stories published in dime novels, cheap weeklies and the pulps. This was also an audience that sought in the fantasy film an evasion from the everyday problems caused by the Depression ensuing from the 1929 crash. They crowded the cinemas to escape as far as possible from drab reality not only into the realm of terror, mystery and adventure but also into that of musical and comedies. *Werewolf of London* (1935) and *White Zombie* (1932) introduced to the screen two monsters that have proved to be extremely popular but that derive from folklore rather than literature and that have, so far, failed to inspire major novels in the field of fantasy. Interestingly, the horror film and the horror novel had not established by the 1930s the proximity to be found in later decades: significantly, Guy Endore's novel *The Werewolf of Paris* (1933), which can be said to belong to the cycle of 1930s monstrosity reflected by the American screens, was not adapted for the screen until the 1960s by Hammer studios.

Horror also dominated the 1930s pulps, which moved according to Goulat's (*ibid.*: 339) "from old dark houses and closer to old dark perversions". The pulps entered a period marked by a misogynistic eroticism bordering on pure sado-masochistic pornography, which made visible for the general public - especially on the lurid covers - what the strict Hays code was censoring in film. This vogue for sensationalist horror lasted until the end of the 1940s when the pressure exerted by

civic groups against the horror pulps and the horror comics terminated their reign. The importance of the iconography of monstrosity produced by those who illustrated the horror pulps (and also the covers of science-fiction magazines or, in general, cheap genre fiction paperbacks) cannot be minimised. The draughtsmen who created the superheroes and the monsters of the 1930s and 1940s comics and who made them the stars on their own right of independent magazines no longer attached to newspapers and other periodicals have no doubt inspired subsequent generations (Sabin, op. cit.: 144- 146). Yet illustrators such as Frank R. Paul, Virgil Finlay, Harry Clarke, Hugh Rankin, Margaret Brundage, Lee Brown Coye and many others inspired with their work for the pulps and for book editions of well-known classics such as Poe many budding writers, illustrators and filmmakers. On the other hand, the mainstream novel contributed to the construction of monstrosity in the 1930s with Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932). This dystopian novel disrupted the rosy panorama painted by the 1930s optimistic belief in science propounded by popular science fiction with the introduction of a type of Gothic horror inspired not by the monster but by a monstrous system of power, a motif later taken up by George Orwell in 1984.

The 1940s were a decade in which the appeal of the monster of the horror film waned to be replaced by a type of more subtle Gothic horror (represented by Hitchcock's first American film, *Rebecca* (1940) or Jacques Tourneur's *Cat People* (1942)), and by a considerable number of remakes or new versions of horror classics already filmed in the 1920s and the 1930s. Lewis Allen's horror film *The Uninvited* (1944) based on the 1942 novel by Dorothy McCardle was the first major horror film released by a studio since the 1930s and also one of the few cases in which a contemporary horror novel had been adapted for the screen soon after its publication. Yet, if the survival of the monster of film seemed jeopardised by its exhaustion and by the release of spoofs such as *Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein* (1948), the activity in the field of genre fiction published by magazines showed no signs of diminishing, quite the contrary. The list of authors who started publishing their

work in the 1940s and whose work was to shape the cultural construction of monstrosity, especially as far as science fiction is concerned, includes Jack Williamson, Clifford D. Simak, A.E. van Vogt, Isaac Asimov, Robert Heinlein, Theodore Sturgeon, Fredrick Pohl, Lester del Rey and Fritz Leiber - authors who often published work halfway between horror and science fiction. In the field of the mainstream novel the 1940s saw the publication of George Orwell's *1984* (1948), a novel which resorts to the British tradition of Gothic horror to denounce the horrors of monstrous totalitarian regimes, specifically of Stalin's communism. The first volume of Mervyn Peake's Gormenghast trilogy, *Titus Groan* (1946), an idiosyncratic blend of Gothic horror and the world of children's fantasies, was apparently also inspired by the horrors of the monsters of reality of the decade, more concretely, by Peake's visit to the infamous Nazi concentration camp at Belsen.

The period 1939 to 1945, during which World War II was fought, altered the direction taken by the monster of film and written fiction during the previous decades. The 1950s are marked, above all, firstly, by the wave of American monster films which take the harmful effects of science rather than the supernatural as an excuse to account for the birth of the monsters (usually gigantic animals or hostile aliens) and, secondly, by the British cycle of neo-Gothic films produced by Hammer studios, spanning from 1957 with Terence Fisher's *The Curse of Frankenstein* to 1972 with *Frankenstein and the Monster from Hell*, also by Terence Fisher. Hammer's films are, in fact, inspired by the 1930s black and white American horror film, which they update by using colour and also by introducing a greater dose of eroticism and violence. The American monster films of the 1950s are mainly a response to the fears unleashed by nuclear power and by the climate of paranoia and fear of invasion by the U.S.S.R, yet they have much in common with the stories about bug-eyed monsters of the first decades of the century. In fact, while the writers working for the magazines had already abandoned the stereotyped hostile extraterrestrials and robots for more humanist representations of the Other by the 1940s, films lagged behind in this sense, insisting on the horror of the monster in the shape of a horrific creature or beast. The blend of science and

horror in films such as *It Came from Outer Space* (1953), *The Creature from the Black Lagoon* (1953), *Them!* (1954), the film that marks the entrance of the 'BEM' on the screen), *Forbidden Planet* (1956), *The Fly* (1958), *It: the Terror from Outer Space* (1958), and many others is a main inspiration for the American monster films of the 1980s, which are in many cases very expensive remakes of the cheap 1950s films. Why this is the case is a question too complex to be answered in brief, yet a generational factor could furnish an important clue: those who saw these films as children have paid homage as adult filmmakers to the terrors of childhood, renewing them for a younger generation more used to lavish special effects for whom the original 1950s products appear to be cheap and trite.

In the field of publishing, the eruption of the cheap paperback in the world of genre fiction considerably altered the panorama, as authors who had been unable to find a publisher for novels serialised in magazines could now have access to a larger readership, not needing to pass first through the step of the hardback edition. The new writers who started then their careers with contributions to the surviving magazines soon passed to the world of the paperback in which their predecessors were also finding their place. The 1950s saw the beginning of the careers of science-fiction authors as important as Arthur Bester, Arthur C. Clarke, James Blish, Brian Aldiss, Philip K. Dick, Poul Anderson, Jack Vance, Marion Zimmer Bradley, Philip José Farmer, and Robert Heinlein. Their names became popular in the 1960s at a time when science fiction and horror received the first signs of attention from scholars. However, the 1950s were also a prolific decade as far as the publication of fundamental titles shaping the construction of monstrosity is concerned. Robert E. Howard published in 1950 *Conan the Barbarian*, the first 'sword and sorcery' novel (in Fritz Leiber's felicitous coinage) and the origin of all the ensuing heroic fantasy so popular today and so closely linked with the folk tale and the prehistoric myth of the hunter. Davis Grubb's *The Night of the Hunter* appeared in 1953, becoming a year later the source of an excellent film, which has become a classic of psychological horror and which is one of the first instances of the encounter of the monster and the child in a work of fiction for adults. In 1954, two very different

novels referring to the difference between monstrous barbarism and the isolated individual were published: William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* and Richard Matheson's *I am Legend* (adapted in the 1970s as *The Omega Man*). The paranoid, pessimistic message of Matheson's novel, which narrates the ordeal of the only survivor of a plague that turns all the inhabitants of the Earth into vampires, found an echo in Jack Finney's *The Body Snatchers* (1955) - famously adapted by Don Siegel as *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956) - and in John Wyndham's successful *The Day of the Triffids* (1957), both classical accounts of alien invasion resulting in the total wipe-out of the human species. However, possibly the most popular text dealing with monstrosity published in the 1950s is J.R.R. Tolkien's trilogy, *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-55), a text that, as Anne Swinfen claims, made fantasy respectable (op. cit.: 1).

The monster of the 1960s is actually born in 1959 with the publication of Robert Bloch's *Psycho*, the inspiration for Hitchcock's 1960 film. The psychopathic Norman Bates is the screen reflection of a new type of human, moral monster inspired by gruesome real life events not unlike those committed by the infamous Charles Manson and his 'family' in the late 1960s. The monster of the 1960s is the first to break the barriers between normality and abnormality, reality and fiction, genre and the mainstream, the first to be genuinely postmodern. The decade is marked by a series of novelties in the cultural domain of monstrosity and by a growth of the monster into a figure of cult that reflects the condition of humanity split between evil and good rather than the hostile other of 1950s monster films. A number of factors define the eclectic atmosphere which surrounds the monster in the 1960s. The gothicism of the Hammer films, especially those directed by Terence Fisher, inspires European directors such as Roger Vadim, Roman Polanski and Mario Bava to produce idiosyncratic horror films, aimed at a new type of audience, the horror *connoisseur* who enjoys monstrosity but dislikes the conventions of the film genres in which the monster is confined. The intellectual varnish of some of these films does not prevent Roman Polanski, though, from directing a parody of the vampire film, *The Fearless Vampire Killers* (1965), which

seems to be in the line of 1960s TV series such as *The Addams Family* or its competitor, *The Munsters*. The Hammer films were probably the main inspiration also for Roger Corman, who in the 1960s directed a series of rather free adaptations of Poe's short stories, beginning with *House of Usher* (1960). Corman was also responsible for the first screen adaptation of a text by Lovecraft, *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward*, released in 1963 as *The Haunted Palace* in the same year when one of the few successful films dealing with Greek myths, *Jason and the Argonauts* - with impressive special effects by Ray Harryhausen - was also released. Also in the 1960s Jack Clayton directed a memorable adaptation of Henry James' *The Turn of the Screw*, *The Innocents* (1961), which recalls strongly the elegant atmosphere of Charles Laughton's idiosyncratic *The Night of the Hunter*. However, the most important screen adaptation of the decade in the field of fiction about monstrosity is Roman Polanski's 1968 version of Ira Levin's novel *Rosemary's Baby* (1967), which dealt also with the topic of the monstrous child, introduced in 1960 with *Village of the Damned*, an adaptation of John Wyndham's novel.

The interest of young film directors in exploring new territories in 'underground' culture led to the emergence of a new type of low-budget, independent monster film which breaks away from the idea of film as either big business or art. George Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), interpreted as a virulent attack on the consumer society established in the 1950s and 1960s, inspired in the 1970s a wave of horror films based on the destruction of the body and on a type of monster that inspires disgust rather than fear. This review of the evolution of the images of monstrosity on the 1960s screen cannot be complete without a brief mention of the two most influential TV series in the field of fantasy: *Star Trek* (first series, 1966-1969) and *The Twilight Zone* (1959-1964), both series in which monstrosity has played an important role. Apart from constant re-screenings on TV, the latter was the inspiration for *The Twilight Zone: The Movie* (1983), directed by John Landis, Joe Dante, Steven Spielberg and George Miller, while the former has inspired two new TV series in the 1990s and, so far, seven films spanning the whole period covered in this

dissertation, 1979 to 1995.¹

As I have already remarked, the paperback simplified the entrance of genre fiction writers into the publishing market. The field of the novel and the short story grew immensely as regards the monster in the 1960s not only because the number of new genre fiction writers increased spectacularly as the reading public grew (both in the sense of increasing in numbers and of being formed by the children who enjoyed the 1950s monsters films and the 1950s comics) but also because of a number of new factors. Among the new writers - Roger Zelazny, Harlan Ellison, Frank Herbert, Robert Silverberg, Larry Niven, Thomas Disch, Kurt Vonnegut, Samuel Delaney - some were women, such as Ursula K. Leguin, Anne McCaffrey and James Tiptree Jr. (the penname of Alice Sheldon). They entered science fiction and heroic fantasy providing new perspectives on monstrosity and questioning the predominance of men in those genres. These women paved thus the path for the evolution of science fiction, horror and fantasy written by women in the 1970s and 1980s, though they did not always write from feminist positions.

The breaking down of barriers between the literary and the popular brought about by postmodernism resulted in a split between the readership that enjoyed the conventional science fiction and horror inherited from the pulps and those who were more demanding in terms of literary quality. These often favoured authors who far from adjusting to the marginalization of genre fiction in the world of the academy were often persons with university degrees in English literature who sought to renew what they considered to be the stale world of genre fiction with an infusion of literary experimentalism. In Britain this was the task undertaken by the collaborators of Michael Moorcock's magazine *New Worlds* (1968 - 1971), among them Moorcock himself and J.G. Ballard. In the USA, perhaps Philip K. Dick represents the trend best. Despite the cult built around the figure of the late Dick and his depiction of the monster as a perfect replica of humanity who happens not to be human - in the paranoiac tradition of Finney's body snatchers - the

¹I regard the cultural and social phenomenon built around *Star Trek* as something too complex to be included in this dissertation that requires a separate academic study that takes into account the social phenomenon built around the series with the emergence of the popular 'trekkies'. Hence my exclusion of the films based on the series from the filmography.

postmodernist monster is, in my view, best defined by Thomas Pynchon's *V.* (1963), a mainstream novel which anticipates the view of the monster as a fascinating rather than threatening human shape-shifter of deceiving appearance.

The 1970s were the years in which the monster abandoned the 'underground' of B-series horror films and genre fiction for specialists or fans in order to establish itself as the staple of best-sellers and blockbusters. This current began with William Peter Blatty's best-selling novel *The Exorcist* (1971), adapted for the screen by William Friedkin in 1973 in a film that became the first horror film to be nominated for the Hollywood Oscar for best picture. Blatty's novel and the other main horror best-seller of 1971, Tom Tryon's *The Other* (adapted for the screen in 1972 by Robert Mulligan) secured a place for the child in horror fiction after Wyndham and Levin's pioneering 1960s novels, in a trend that was to culminate with *The Omen* (1976). Following the immense commercial success of *The Exorcist* the 1970s witnessed the publication of a succession of important best-selling novels about monsters of different descriptions soon transferred onto the screen: Michael Crichton's first novel *The Andromeda Strain* (1971), Ira Levin's *The Stepford Wives* (1972), Robert Marasco's *Burnt Offerings* (1973), Stephen King's first novel *Carrie* (1974), Peter Benchley's *Jaws* (1975), Ira Levin's *The Boys from Brazil* (1978). Other had to wait a few more years but finally reached the screen in the 1980s and 1990s: Jeffrey Konvitz's *The Sentinel* (1974), Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire* (1976), Colin Wilson's *The Space Vampires* (1976), William Hjortberg's *Falling Angel* (1978) and Whitley Strieber's *The Wolfen* (1978), just to name but a few. New writers such as James Herbert, Ramsey Campbell, Brian Lumley, Peter Straub, Gene Wolfe, T.E.D. Klein and many others came to join the lists of authors contributing to the construction of monstrosity in fiction in the then expanding field of horror, which seemed to have come to the foreground relegating science fiction to a secondary position. As Noel Carroll (op. cit.: 2) observes:

... what seems to have happened in the first half of the seventies is that horror, so to speak, entered the mainstream. Its audience was no longer specialized, but widened,

and horror novels became increasingly easy to come by. This, in turn, augmented the audience looking for horror entertainments and, by the late seventies and eighties, a phalanx of authors arose to satisfy that demand ...

Film benefited from the new interest in horror in two senses: firstly, the number of adaptations grew steadily throughout the decade, even though Hollywood could not keep pace with the flow of new novels about monstrosity whose market had been widening in part precisely thanks to the adaptations. Secondly, the popularity of fantasy - especially horror, since science fiction was passing through a less stimulating phase - allowed the rise of a new generation of filmmakers whose most important work has shaped the image of the monster in the 1980s and 1990s: Steven Spielberg, Tobe Hooper, David Cronenberg, Brian de Palma, John Carpenter, John Landis, Joe Dante and David Lynch among others. In the 1970s the new wave of gruesome B-series horror films, such as Tobe Hooper's *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974), shared the ground with parodies of horror that have become cult films, such as Jim Sharman's *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (1975), experimental horror as in David Lynch's *Eraserhead* (1977), the blockbuster such as *Jaws* (1975) and the remakes of the 1950s monster films, such as Philip Kaufman's *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1978). The monsters of science fiction, which had played a more marginal role in the early 1970s, found new territories in the work of George Lucas with the beginning of the *Star Wars* trilogy (1977) and in the work of Steven Spielberg with *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977), which anticipates *E.T.* (1982).

To summarise, by the beginning of the 1980s the atmosphere was ripe for the extraordinary expansion of the field of monstrosity in Western culture. The growth of the field of horror in the 1970s was continued in the 1980s, so that it could be said that in the 1980s and still now there are more living authors writing about the monster than ever; they are, besides, keeping a booming publishing business alive which is, together with science fiction, that which attracts most young readers, a fact that will certainly be of capital importance to determine the future of the novel in general. The growth of horror has been paralleled by that of science fiction and by what is badly

defined under the wide label of fantasy. Science fiction has benefited from the rise of cyberpunk, especially in the work of William Gibson, though cyberpunk is proving to be particularly difficult to adapt for the screen. Horror, science fiction and fantasy are genres still dominated by men, yet the list of new women writers in these fields is now impressive: Octavia Butler, Gwyneth Jones, Vonda McIntyre, C.J. Cherryh, Suzy McKee Charnas, Tannith Lee, Marge Piercy, Pamela Sargent, Pat Cadigan, are but a few of the women who have consolidated a literary career in these fields¹. The 1980s are also characterized by the breaking down of the distinctions between the mainstream and genre fiction: as can be seen from the list of primary sources (both films and novels) that I have compiled many mainstream writers are, in fact, writing fantasy while many mainstream film directors often work in horror and science-fiction films. Genre fiction about monstrosity is occupying more and more shelf space in both book-shops and video-clubs as the best of it improves in artistic quality, so that it can be said that the artistic differences between a good so-called genre fiction novel and good so-called mainstream fiction are quickly diminishing. This does not mean, though, that products of not so demanding standards are being produced to satisfy all types of consumers of culture - however, an omnivorous consumer of culture might well choose to read Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus* and Orson Scott Card's *Ender's Game* in the same week in which s/he enjoys *The Evil Dead* and *Dead Ringers*. The barriers of genre are becoming more and more meaningless, whereas the common interest in cultural aspects, of which monstrosity is one of the most important, are offering new perspectives to understand the transfer of narratives from one medium to another and also the eclectic tastes of the consumers of culture.

¹See Wolmark (1994) Interestingly, the field of crime and detective fiction seems to be dominated by women novelists such as P.D. James, Ruth Rendell, Sue Grafton, Patricia Cornwell. It could be said that feminist issues are indeed important in genre fiction but that, in general, many women novelists have opted for a type of feminism that could be called 'implicit feminism' and that is not unpopular with male writers and readers: many galactic empires are run by women in novels written by both men and women, possibly because total equality between the sexes is easier to pass as a normal state of affairs in novels dealing with an imaginary future society than in those located in the present.

2.1.2. *Between the Popular Cult Film and the Mainstream Cult Novel*

In order to clarify the limits of monstrosity in the Anglo-Saxon culture of the 1980s and 1990s I would like to consider first the case of the *Alien* series, which comprises the original 1979 film and the sequels, *Aliens* (1986) and *Alien³* (1992). The series is important not only because *Alien* marks the passage of the monster from the 1970s to the 1980s, but also because this series is a most significant instance firstly, of the successful commercial exploitation of monstrosity in the multimedia narratives typical of the 1980s and 1990s, and, secondly, of the canonisation of the contemporary monster film. Arguably, Ridley Scott's *Alien* is one of the three capital texts about the monster produced in the last fifteen years together with *Blade Runner* (also directed by Scott, 1982) and Brett Easton Ellis' novel *American Psycho* (1991). They form, besides, a triangle that demarcates the territory occupied by monstrosity in the 1980s and 1990s: *Alien* pitches humanity (championed for the first time by a woman) against a new version of the non-human mythical beast deriving both from the hunter myths and the deposition of the Earth goddess; *Blade Runner* invites audiences to consider the possibility that science might lead us to produce artificial human beings which could be more human than us and, so, pre-empt the need for our survival as a species, whereas *American Psycho* propounds the idea that the most extreme form of human monstrosity is the product of refined civilization. The return to myth of *Alien*, the futuristic dystopian world of *Blade Runner* and the moral pessimism of *American Psycho* are the three main ideological landscapes inhabited by the monster today.

As far as the interaction between the written word and the screen is concerned these three texts are also relevant to account for the state of the relationship between the novel and film in the 1980s and 1990s: *Alien* was not based on literary sources, but has generated a series of novelizations and novels; *Blade Runner* is an extremely free adaptation of a novel by Philip K. Dick who has become a cult writer because of the influence of the film; despite David Cronenberg's recent announcement (1994) that he was preparing an adaptation of *American Psycho* for the

screen, so far the project has not been materialised because of the obvious problems presented by the screen visualization of the extremely gory scenes depicted by Ellis in his novel. Cronenberg finally abandoned the adaptation of *American Psycho* to adapt instead J.G. Ballard's 1973 novel *Crash*, another instance of the extremely violent, pornographic mainstream literary text challenging the limits of permissibility allowed to screen adapters. Cronenberg's new film (1996) may thus be intended to pave the ground for the future release of a screen version of *American Psycho*, or may instead signify the impossibility of breaking down the barriers limiting what can be shown on the cinema screen.

No doubt, *Blade Runner* is, in terms of cultural relevance, the most important of these three texts, not only because of the enormous influence that its dystopian visualization of the near future has had on subsequent films (especially as regards the aesthetics of the film) but also because it upsets the basic tenets of all myths of monstrosity: in this mythical story the non-human monster becomes the humane hero and the human hero is exposed as a monster. *Blade Runner* is, besides, a postmodernist revision of *Frankenstein*, working on the interesting premise that eventually Frankenstein's monster will have to be destroyed not because he is horrific but because he is superior to humankind, hence a threat not so much to its survival but to its self-esteem as a species. Despite the fact that *Alien* preceded *Blade Runner* in director Ridley Scott's career and despite the popular and critical success of both films, they seemingly occupy different positions in the recent history of film. Arguably, *Blade Runner* is itself the heir of the change of direction in the construction of monstrosity started by *Alien* especially because of the effort made in both films in terms of production design, which is, ultimately, what marks the main difference between these films and the 1950s monster films. Yet *Alien* has inspired a number of sequels and an ever increasing merchandising phenomenon whereas *Blade Runner* has acquired the status of cult film especially because of its academic canonisation (Kerman, 1991). This does not mean that *Alien* has not attracted the interest of scholars but simply that there is a much greater consensus among

scholars and among the admirers of *Blade Runner* as to its high artistic quality.

The success of *Alien* is based on the multiplicity of readings to which it lends itself despite being, at first sight, a conventional monster film. As many commentators have remarked, Scott's film is the indisputable heir of the paranoiac 1950s American films about hostile outer space monsters like other films that preceded it, such as Philip Kaufmann's *The Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1978), a remake of Don Siegel's 1956 version, or others that followed it, such as John Carpenter's *The Thing* (1982), a remake of Christian Nyby's 1951 film. *Alien* is not a direct remake, even though *The Terror from outer Space* (1958) has been mentioned as its most immediate source, but clearly aims at remaking the whole tradition of the 1950s monster film for new audiences. This was indeed the initial purpose of producers Gordon Carroll, David Giler and Walter Hill who actually intended to release a relatively cheap film (the budget was only \$9 million) capable of recouping their investment on the basis of a mixture of genuinely postmodernist nostalgia for the old 1950s film and of sheer visual innovation for the more demanding new audiences. Nevertheless, other commentators have also found direct links between Scott's film and the 1970s sub-genre of the slasher film, a horror film centred on the survival of a woman who narrowly escapes the threat posed by a human monster that exterminates all around her. The freedom with which motifs derived from different film sub-genres were mixed in *Alien* by the producers and by Scott, a mainstream director with no previous experience in the field of the fantasy film, are what define this film as a postmodernist product.

The key to enliven the predictability of Dan O'Bannon's script - seemingly plagiarised from A.E. van Vogt's "Black Destroyer", published in the pulp *Astounding Science-Fiction* in 1939¹ - was Scott's tight direction of the work of cameraman Derek Vanlint, and a production design that abandoned the clean look of other 1970s science-fiction films made in the style of *2001* (1968) -

¹Apparently, van Vogt later received a share of the profits as a compensation (Platt, op. cit.: 279). However, Joseph Conrad's story "The Shadow Line" has also been cited as a major influence introduced by Scott during the shooting of the film. Scott paid a personal homage to Conrad by calling the spaceship invaded by the alien 'Nostromo'; a spaceship in a similar situation is called 'Sulaco' in *Aliens*.

from *The Andromeda Strain* (1971) to *Star Wars* (1977) - to embrace instead a murky, gloomy Gothic atmosphere later copied by countless films. The spaceship crew - presented as a group of workers involved in routine tasks rather than in adventure - offered seemingly little to interest audiences in their fate. Nonetheless, the shifting of the heroic role from a man to a woman (Ellen Ripley, played by Sigourney Weaver), which was apparently a decision made on the spur of the moment during the shooting of the film, surprised the film's audience and ensured its success and that of the series to a great extent. To this also contributed the extraordinary quality of the designs for the monster by Swiss artist H.R. Giger, to whose work I have already referred in Chapter 1.

The threatening extraterrestrial simply called 'alien' is a creature aimed at horrifying as much as at fascinating that was generated to be visually stunning and morphologically original - elegant, as Sigourney Weaver once put it. The monster was different from previous monsters seen on the screen because it was born of the marriage of high art and cinematic special effects. Giger himself has emphasized his artistic links with Dalí's surrealism and Füssli's personal Gothic-Romantic style, though he has mentioned Francis Bacon's *Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion* triptych (1944) as the most direct inspiration behind the alien. His designs for the monster pioneered the representation of the postmodernist monster as a shape-shifter: the alien is shown in as many as four different forms in the film, each representing a phase of its growth. Thus, part of the suspense of the film is based on this multiplicity of images: each time a new phase begins, the characters in the film and the audience actually feel a double kind of fear: fear of the last horrific shape taken by the monster and fear of the unknown shape it is taking then.

The ambiguous image of this protean creature has many different possible meanings. Apparently, the main inspiration for the 'modus operandi' of the alien was the Newton wasp, a species that uses the bodies of its prey as cocoons for their larvae. The aliens reproduce themselves by raping orally their male or female victims in order to insert a larva that grows in the stomach of the victim, who is kept alive while s/he is used as a cocoon and then killed by the birth of the phallic baby alien, which gnaws its way out of its host's body. Seemingly, the aliens do not

kill humans for food, but either because they feel threatened or to collect more cocoons for their offspring. The weapons they use to kill are their powerful claws and a kind of lethal vagina dentata that springs from a clearly phallic head to stab the victim. The alien's obsession for reproducing itself can be said to symbolize the fear of sex and reproduction: this is a monster originating in collective unconscious anxieties that suggest an increasing dissociation from in the minds of contemporary men and women between sex and reproduction, the latter seen as something animal, even monstrous.

Yet, the fact that the aliens do not discriminate between male and female victims and the fact that they all originate seemingly from a parthenogenetic egg-laying queen, ultimately derived from the representation of the goddess Tiamat as a monster, implies that the creatures are sexually more ambivalent than the images of oral rape might suggest. The similarities of the alien with social insects such as wasps, bees and ants connote fear and unease in the face of alternative social structures in which there is no place for the individual. On the other hand, the alien may also connote disease: interestingly, deadly viruses such as the one that causes malaria are also mutant shape-shifters with different phases of growth. Despite its futuristic 'biomechanical' anatomy, a fusion of organic and inorganic elements, the claws and the reptilian tail of the alien also recall the image of the Devil as the apocalyptic Beast. The image of the monster has been further multiplied in the sequels: *Aliens* introduced the fierce and enigmatic alien queen, *Alien*³ introduced an alien capable of crawling on walls and ceilings. In short, speaking of the monster of the *Alien* series means speaking of a succession of different monsters: the most popular monster of the last fifteen years is thus a monster whose image far from being fixed is still expanding and changing. Presumably the fourth film in the series, currently in pre-production stage, will add new images to this multiplicity of representations.

The confrontation between the alien monster and the new, reluctant female warrior-hunter of this new version of archaic myth is orchestrated by the economic system that envelops both: patriarchal late capitalism. The true source of evil is not the monster, basically a survivor that

cannot help preying on other species but the monstrous multiplanetary corporation, the Company which preys on its expendable workers in the pursuit of its goal: the exploitation of the monster as the ultimate biological weapon. The heroine Ripley, who behaves at first in her strict adherence to the Company's rules as an employee bound to her employer by what can only be described as feudal allegiance, is awakened to a new consciousness of her position when she realizes that the lives of the crew have been jeopardised by the Company's interest in capturing the alien. It is not clear whether Ripley reacts to this situation as an angered worker, an angered woman or, simply, a very scared person, but her status as an officer forces her to assume a heroic role which has been variously interpreted as feminist (see Chapter 7 for a more detailed discussion of this point) or anti-capitalist. Unlike the other female character in *Alien* (officer Lambert, played by Veronica Cartwright) who reacts to the monster with screams and a paralysing fear that make her an easy prey for the alien, the more androgynous heroine played by Weaver learns to control her fear and to use her cunning to defeat the monster and thus survive. Ripley paved the way for a type of intelligent, courageous woman - most notably Sarah Connor in *The Terminator* (1984) and Clarice Starling in *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991) - who proved a success with both men and women, though it is unclear whether this is a figure that will survive in contemporary film. Interestingly enough, it was actress Sigourney Weaver's choice to let Ripley die in the third film in the series, *Alien 3*, which she co-produced, so as to avoid the danger of typecasting herself in the role. Nevertheless, a forthcoming fourth episode of the series is being currently scripted in which Weaver is to play Ripley's role once more. The producers initially considered making a fourth film without Ripley but they were soon discouraged by the series' fans who wish to see Ripley championing humankind against the monster again.

In the words of Gail Anne Hurd, the producer of *Aliens*, the genre of the series can be defined as "pop-corn epic" (Clover, 1989: 131), a statement which invites us to consider to what extent the appeal of the monster film is based on the nostalgia for the lost literary genre of epic

poetry. Regardless of the different narrative media and the changing cultural background, can we recognise in the *Alien* trilogy the same impulse that led to the writing of the Babylonian *Enuma Elish* or of the much closer *Beowulf*? In fact, despite Hurd's tongue-in-cheek labelling of the series, the trilogy has a number of surprising coincidences with *Beowulf*, so that it can be concluded that even though as a literary genre epic poetry itself has not survived, its plots have survived in popular culture. In *Beowulf* the monster Grendel that haunts king Hrothgar's hall to kill his sleeping warriors is killed by the eponymous hero Beowulf, who has volunteered for the task. In the first episode of the series Ripley kills, like Beowulf, the male monster that has been harassing her crew, though far from achieving any kind of glory, she simply survives. After the killing of the first male monster, a second episode follows in which Beowulf track the monster's horrific mother to her lair with the help of his thanes; *Aliens* narrates how Ripley, accompanied by a platoon of tough marines also locates and confronts the mother of the monster she had previously killed. Grendel's mother and the alien queen are both gigantic, clawed predators that cannot die by the sword (the alien's blood is a highly corrosive acid, that of Grendel's mother melts Beowulf's sword) and that must be killed in single combat.

Both heroes kill the female monster with their bare hands and are saved at a critical junction by the protection afforded by their armour. Beowulf faces a last encounter with the monster after being a king for fifty years, at a point in his life when dejection and the proximity of death are undermining his strength; Ripley is said to have spent fifty-seven years asleep in space before her second meeting with the monster, though the third encounter takes place when her strength is already spent in the long fight and when she only expects death. Neither Ripley nor Beowulf ever have a family or a permanent lover and with their altruistic killing of the third monster both accept their own death: Beowulf is poisoned by a bite in the neck from the dragon he slays, Ripley dies when her parasitical baby alien bursts out of her stomach. Beowulf's body is incinerated, Ripley throws herself into the fire together with her monstrous offspring. Whether the

producers bore this analogy in mind throughout the *Alien* trilogy can only be a matter for speculation, yet the coincidences are so remarkable as to point, at least, to the undeniable roots of the trilogy in the Anglo-Saxon worldview that produced *Beowulf*. J.R.R. Tolkien (1983a: 25) writes that the northern mythological imagination gave the heroes "victory but no honour, and found a potent but terrible solution in naked will and courage.... But we may remember that the poet of *Beowulf* saw clearly: the wages of heroism is death." This can fit perfectly into the elegiac mood that closes the trilogy with Ripley's sacrifice.

The *Alien* trilogy is of exceptional interest for an understanding of the evolution of the monster film in the 1980s and 1990s for several reasons which include the exploitation of characters and themes in narrative media other than film and the differences between the USA and the UK film industry. *Alien*, *Aliens* and *Alien³*, have all been financed by 20th C Fox, yet the trilogy has moved twice across the Atlantic. The first film was a medium-budget production made in Britain at Shepperton Studios - currently owned by Ridley Scott and his brother Tony - directed by a mainstream British film director but financed by American money. This 'sleeper' (a film of unexpected box-office success) was followed by a big-budget sequel, made in Hollywood by the American director James Cameron, himself a specialist in very expensive monster films, including *The Terminator* (1984), its sequel *The Terminator 2* (1991) and *The Abyss* (1989). For the third part, which was a medium-budget film, the producers returned again to Britain where the cost of making the film was lower and hired a newcomer, British director David Fincher, who is now working in the USA.

Because of these changes, Ripley's personality has been pulled in different directions, with a certain disregard for coherence, though she has been certainly growing in protagonism. The accidental hero of the first film, a rather unsympathetic character, who is little more than a narrative function generated by the presence of the monster becomes in *Aliens* a reluctant female Rambo possibly inspired by Cameron's collaboration in the writing of the first Rambo film, *First Blood*, (1982).

The plot reads as a confrontation between female and male ideas of heroism rather than as a confrontation between the human and the monster. Despite fitting the militaristic parameters of most American action films, *Aliens* deals with the fight between this new woman warrior incarnated in Ripley and the parthenogenetic archaic monstrous mother of old myth for the life of a little girl - Newt - who has managed to survive alone the onslaughts of the creatures in the decimated colony. In this all-female epic men play no role except making wrong decisions and dying. In *Alien³*, set in a planet used as a penal colony for a reduced number of highly dangerous male psychopaths, who the alien really is - the woman, or the monster - and who the monsters really are - the men, the alien or perhaps the woman - are the issues that underline the apocalyptic confrontation between Ripley, the monster and the Company. As regards the quality of the three films, most critics and spectators agree that Scott's is the best in artistic terms, while Cameron's lacks artistic depth despite its lavishness and the greater role assigned to Ripley. In general, *Alien³* was regarded as a failed attempt at recreating the Gothic atmosphere of the first episode, and was especially disliked by American audiences, though the revalorisation of David Fincher's work after the success of *Seven* (1995) will probably lead to a positive re-evaluation of his first film. To a great extent, the failure of *Alien³* could be attributed to its fatalism rather than to its alleged lack of quality. Few films with an unhappy end succeed in America, though Fincher's typically British insistence on the final victory of the monster in his first film and the popularity achieved by his second film thanks precisely to a similar pessimistic end may alter this reluctance to accept the tragedy of defeat.

The volume of business generated by the *Alien* trilogy is, simply, amazing, though, in fact, the intensive bombardment of the market with Alien products was originated by *Aliens*. As far as the adaptation of the films to the printed page is concerned, this is not less surprising. The novelization of the trilogy by science-fiction writer Allan Dean Foster preceded a series of novels about the monsters that are independent from any of the three screenplays. So far, the Aliens series, started in 1992, includes *Earth Hive*, *Nightmare Asylum* and *Genocide* by Steve Perry and a fourth novel

The Female War by Perry and his daughter Stephanie Perry. A second series of novels in which the Alien's adversary is the Predator monster of the eponymous film - produced also by 20th C Fox in 1987 following the success of *Aliens* in 1986 - extends so far to three titles: *Prey*, *Hunter's Planet* and *Concrete Jungle*. Both series, published by Millennium for the comics publishing house Dark Horse, are based, according to the credits printed on the first page, not only on the films but also on the graphic novels by Mark Verheiden and Mark A. Nelson, themselves a spin-off of the very successful Dark Horse comics. *Aliens*, the comic, was first published in 1988, while *Predator*, the comic, appeared in 1989. 20th C Fox's interest in circulating new stories about the alien or the predator monster in print - which is known as licensing in reverse - responds to its search for new stories that could be successfully adapted:

A notable example of licensing in reverse occurred when Dark Horse Comics struck several deals with Hollywood movie companies (notably 20th Century Fox) to turn top films, such as *The Terminator*, *Predator* and *Aliens*, into ongoing comics, 'We wanted characters people don't get enough of', Dark Horse founder Mike Richardson told *Premiere* magazine [in June 1992], adding: 'we write our movie comics as if they're sequels - we don't live off what's already there' What is so clever about this arrangement is that it allows for the possibility that plots generated in the comics might then be used in future films. (Sabin, op. cit.: 288)

This is how the image of the monster is kept alive while audiences eagerly wait for a new sequel.

While the new comics and new novels await their transfer to the screen the circulation of the Alien monster in the multimedia narrative material has extended to video-games and even to neo-narrative products: London boasts among its attractions an 'Alien Experience' to be enjoyed at the Trocadero, in which the fans of the trilogy are treated to the very experience Ripley acts in the three films, that is to say, to meeting the monster and being chased in truly Gothic fashion through dimly-lit corridors - but in safety. More surprising and paradoxical is the merchandising of the horrific alien as a toy, especially when the three films of the series are rated 18. The Boots Christmas 1994 catalogue featured an 'Alien Bubble Bath' (a reproduction of the monster) in its section of toiletries for children while the Argos Catalogue for the same period included an assortment of alien toys, all of them suitable for six-year-olds. Curiously enough, in Spain exactly

the same toys are available for four-year-olds. It cannot be said that this is a new phenomenon, as sales of models of popular monsters started as early as the 1960s; the difference is marked now by the sheer scale of the advertising budgets and by the astonishing range of products the monster helps to sell.

In summary, all the features typical of the postmodernist commercialization of monstrosity in multimedia entertainment based on the blockbuster converge in the *Alien* trilogy. They are complemented by the globalisation of the monster film, so that the monster is made to belong to as many cultures as have access to the films (often dubbed) and to their merchandising. The monster becomes a myth because it has become a commodity and, conversely, it is turned into a commodity because its badly understood universal appeal guarantees the profit derived from the merchandising. Nonetheless, the commercial success of the *Alien* series has not affected its canonisation in film studies. The rise of the alien monster to cultural 'respectability' is proved not only by the three Oscars and seven nominations gathered by the series, but also by the many academic papers devoted to the trilogy, especially to the figure of Ripley (see for instance, Cobbs, 1990, and also Kavanagh (1990), Newton (1990) and Sobchack (1990)). Fans who regard the films as cult films, critics who discuss the feminist basis of Ripley's role as monster slayer, the children who play with the models and those who enjoy the thrill of being chased by the Trocadero Alien are all part of the same phenomenon: the encroachment of the monster in contemporary culture.

The perfect counterpart to *Alien* is Bret Easton Ellis' novel *American Psycho*. The whole spectrum of postmodernist monstrosity oscillates between the bestial predator of Scott's film and the psychopathic yuppie of Ellis' novel: the former is a representation of extreme non-human otherness, the latter of unbounded human monstrosity. Ellis' villain and hero, Pat Bateman, is a late 1980s New York yuppie who details in his diary the acts of unspeakable violence he commits (or maybe just imagines he commits) against all those weaker than him - women, homeless

people, homosexual men - and who, against all odds, remains undetected at the end of the novel. Unlike the *Alien* trilogy, *American Psycho* had an extraordinarily hostile reception even before its publication. James Twitchell (op. cit.: 128-129) reports the strange case of the publication of this extraordinary mainstream novel which had to be finally published as a paperback, in the manner of most genre fiction. Simon & Schuster initially paid Ellis \$300,000 for the novel. Yet when people working on the manuscript complained because of the explicitness of its violent scenes, *Time* and *Sky* published excerpts suggesting that the novel was an unacceptable text that should not be published. Simon & Schuster is owned by Paramount Communications, a multimedia company whose movie subsidiary, Paramount Pictures, was responsible for the making and exploitation of the *Friday 13th* series (1980 - 1989), which had popularised in its eight films the gruesome killings of the infamous psycho Jason. However, despite this connection, Simon & Schuster immediately announced the decision to withdraw Ellis' book on the basis of 'bad taste' following the indications of the head of Paramount Communications, Martin Davis, who seemingly found no links between Jason and Pat Bateman. Binky Urban - Ellis' agent - then sold the novel for only \$75,000 to Sonny Mehta of Knopf and Vintage who finally published as a paperback. Publication was, however, the beginning of a nightmare for Ellis: threats against Ellis' life prevented his publisher Viking to invite the author to London for the advertising campaign of the novel. Leslie White (1994: 20) reports that "comparisons with Salman Rushdie were made, but faded with the barrage of angry reaction", coming especially from feminists such as A.S. Byatt, Doris Lessing and Gloria Steinem. Asked by White how the eye of the storm felt at the time, Ellis declared:

"It felt like a joke, a huge postmodernist irony - the book was so badly misread." For Ellis, *American Psycho* was a clear attack on misogynist, heterosexist, white, racist men, but to have the protagonist, Bateman, get his come-uppance - as the moral lobby insisted he should have done - would have been unrealistic. "In America, people like Bateman end up writing books, being on talk shows, having movies made of their lives. They don't always get punished." (ibid.: 20)

The rejection of Ellis' novel by the a culture that allows the proliferation of the image of the alien monster even in children's toys furthers the postmodernist irony of the situation. As could be

expected in these times in which scandal means little or nothing, the angry reaction against the book only managed to draw attention towards it, so that in October 1994, the book was still selling a steady 2,000 copies a month in Britain alone. While nobody seems to have questioned why the *Alien* trilogy had been produced at all, *American Psycho* has elicited that kind of question from its detractors. Even though the alien monster destroys his victims in violent attacks which are the peak scenes in each of the films, these have been tolerated and certainly enjoyed by many spectators eagerly awaiting a fourth episode in the saga. In contrast, imagining a world in which Bateman dolls were sold as children's toys is an obscenity, which suggests that the limits of the visualization of the monster and of monstrous violence are defined by bizarre patterns we take for granted too easily.

There are many questions that should be asked in reference to the different criteria used to measure what is tolerable for film and for the novel regarding the representation of monstrosity. Possibly the differences between the treatment given to the *Alien* series and that given to *American Psycho* have little to do with the actual threshold of violence tolerated in each media and more with a set of expectations surrounding the figure of the monster. A basic expectation shattered by *American Psycho* but respected by *Alien* is that the monster appears to be an enigmatic Other, radically different from us. Both Ellis' novel and the *Alien* series criticize late capitalism by suggesting that it breeds evil monsters - a human one in the case of the novel, a non-human one in the case of the film. Yet the combat between Ripley and the monster - and by extension the Company that employs her but protects the creature - is a form of wish-fulfilment fantasy that ultimately advocates the triumph of the qualities that characterize the heroine: courage, intelligence, determination. *American Psycho*, in contrast, offers no comfort at all: it claims that the lair of the monster is not a desolate planet in outer space but the very hub of civilization, the Manhattan where Bateman lives and kills. It also maintains that the monster is not at the margins of society as slasher films such as *Friday the 13th* suggest, nor at the margins of the known universe

as in *Alien*, but at its very centre. This and not the explicitness of the book is what made it intolerable for those who rejected it; they were possibly too afraid of the monster's exposure of the decadence of civilization.

2.2. *New Readings of Dracula, Frankenstein, and The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde for the Screen*

2.2.1. *Recycling the Gothic Monsters*

The popularity of the monstrous triad formed by Frankenstein's creature, the vampire Dracula and the dual scientist Dr. Jekyll in film has obscured an important fact: the three 1930s American films that secured a place for the monster in the cinema - Tod Browning's *Dracula* (1931), James Whale's *Frankenstein* (1931) and Robert Mamoulian's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1932) - were not inspired directly by the nineteenth-century British texts but by stage adaptations written in the first quarter of the century. These Broadway stage adaptations were actually the last in a long line that had begun with the early adaptation of *Frankenstein* for the stage just a few years after its publication; many of the most popular motifs in the 1930s films, differing from the literary originals and inherited by subsequent screen adaptations, originated in fact from the less well-known plays.¹ The widening gulf between the literary texts and their adaptations - even their folklorisation - has been questioned only recently, with a new wave of big-budget films made by mainstream directors, which is characterized by an ambiguous return to the original source mixed with an evident anxiety of influences about all the previous screen adaptations. This wave includes Francis Ford Coppola's *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1992), Kenneth Branagh's *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* (1994) and Stephen Frears' *Mary Reilly* (1995) actually based on a best-selling novel by Valerie Martin, itself a retelling of Stevenson's novella. The commercial success of the first and the failure of the second plus the difficulties to find a satisfactory end for the third bespeak of the challenges that the

¹For a detailed account of the cycle of adaptations of *Frankenstein* from the stage to the screen see Forry (1990); Skal (1990) narrates the story of the adaptation of *Dracula*.

revision of these paradigmatic stories about monstrosity present. Analysing how the appeal of the three most classic screen monsters has been reawakened in the 1990s after the point of inflection represented by the beginning of a new cycle of monstrosity in the horror films of the 1970s, a period during which the appeal of the triad seemed utterly exhausted, will furnish important clues to understand the mechanism through which monstrosity is redefined for each cultural period.

Why does this interest to adapt and revise these classics of monstrosity arise? An obvious answer would be that given the limits of the visualization of the monster in the novel, stage and screen adapters exploit the dissatisfaction or the curiosity on the readers' side as to what the 'real' image of the monster described by the writer should be like. The number of screen adaptations and their repetition from decade to decade may depend on technical factors, business interests or artistic interests. Thus, many cycles include a silent film, a black and white 'talkie', a colour film and a new colour film with quality special effects. On the side of business, popular monsters always attract a steady number of fans, for which they are arguably a safe investment in any period in which originality and creativity ebb. Among the artistic interests that can account for the flow of new adaptations and remakes of monster films is the wish to provide the definitive iconography that will cancel out all the previous representations from the collective cultural memory or that will provide an iconography adapted for the times. The obsession with monsters like Frankenstein's creature and Dracula is, in any case, a cultural phenomenon much more significant than it might seem: 110 versions of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* have been filmed so far (Driscoll, 1994), Branagh's being the newest and also the most expensive one ever at a cost of \$35 million. Silver and Ursini (1993) list 355 items including films from many nations, TV series and documentaries about Dracula in *The Vampire Film: From Nosferatu to Bram Stoker's Dracula*. Few mainstream novels, if any, can boast of having inspired so many adaptations and imitations in film.

The different strategies of visualization in film and the novel are the key concept in this process of constant adaptation of the monster for the screen. Yet, as George Bluestone (1957: 1) argues, the common intention of novelist and filmmaker is more relevant than the differences

between the two narrative media:

... the phrase "to make you see" assumes an effective relationship between creative artist and receptive audience. Novelist and director meet here in a common intention. One may, on the other hand, see visually through the eye or imaginatively through the mind. And between the percept of the visual image and the concept of the mental image lies the root difference between the two media.

Indirectly, this distinction also explains why the classic Gothic horror canon is in need of constant revision in film while the original literary texts enjoy a more lasting cultural and commercial life. The monstrous imagery suggested by the literary texts can accommodate the mental images supplied by each different reader so that, for instance, despite Stoker's description of Dracula, he is different for each new reader. In contrast, a film fixes a particular image of the monster that is inextricably bound to the technical means, acting conventions and ideas about the visually tolerable valid for a particular period. Monster films age because their visualization is rigid compared to that of the novel; in the best cases, they gain a charming aura that endears them to subsequent generations, as is the case of *King Kong*. This does not mean, however, that any new adaptation may jeopardise the survival of an older film and consign it to oblivion for good. In fact, the opposite case is more frequent because the expectations are usually higher in the case of a new version: what may be the point, indeed, of producing a new *Dracula* if not to produce a 'better' film than any of the previous versions? Nevertheless, even when the new film version achieves a certain distinction because of its original re-creation of the old film, this does not guarantee success: John Guillermin's 1976 *King Kong* may have won an honorary Oscar for best visual effects and discovered the talented Jessica Lange, but few remember it now.

There is another phenomenon at work in these series of adaptations of *Dracula*, *Frankenstein* and *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* that can be generalized to comprehend most adaptations and serialisations. John Ellis (1982: 4) maintains that since a constant re-reading or re-viewing of a text one has relished ends in the inevitable shattering of the illusion that nourishes the reader or viewer's pleasure, "adaptation into another medium becomes

a means of prolonging the pleasure of the original representation." From this point of view, "there is no difference between the filming of a pre-existent novel or the novelization of a pre-existent film" (ibid.: 4) Following Ellis, the frequent revisions of the paradigmatic triad of nineteenth-century Gothic texts is a proof of their permanent appeal rather than of their nearing oblivion every few years. The many adaptations are justified because rather than demand the exact retelling of favourite stories as children do, adults obtain pleasure from being told the same well-liked stories about monstrosity from different angles. "Desire," as Stephen Neale writes to explain the pleasures obtained from enjoying a particular genre "is a function of both repetition and difference" (1987: 48). Accordingly, it can be said that the preference for a particular classic Gothic monster in a certain cultural period may not be correctly asserted from the success and popularity of its adaptations. The failure of an adaptation may be conditioned by its failure to live up to the expectations of audiences rather than by the exhaustion of the monster or the myth that narrates its story. The adapters may have wrongly supposed, for instance, that audiences would not reject an unorthodox reading of the literary original or they may have missed new connotations of the classical monster attached to it in an intertextual process recognised by the audience.

To complement Ellis' theory about the prolonged pleasure found in adaptations, it is worth looking at Harriet Hawkins' suggestion (1995) that the directions taken by adaptations may seem random and chaotic but actually behave in ways similar to the fractals described by chaos theory¹. Certain complex texts may originate subsequent adaptations that succeed because they appeal to something infused by the original text in the culture generating the adaptations; the links between originals and adaptations may not be perceptible at first sight because of the proximity of the adaptation and the distance of the original, but the pattern can be appreciated if seen from the adequate vantage point. The host of imitations, some of them very simple, others more complex

¹Chaos theory is the response to loss of belief in the capacity of science to make accurate predictions based on repeated observations: it studies those physical phenomena that escape the limits of regularity, such as turbulence. The point of chaos theory is to delimit patterns of behaviour that take into account a degree of unpredictability - the popular metaphor of the butterfly effect. Fractal geometry shows how images that seem random and chaotic are in fact mathematical sequences, repetitions at a different scale of a fractal original shaped by algorithms. The chaotic or strange attractors are the mathematical representations of those apparently random phenomena.

but always below the level of complexity of the original, are what Hawkins calls 'fractal forgeries'. They aspire to replicating and even usurping the universally appealing nature of the original. However, while the 'forgeries' may seem to be parasitical growths on the original texts, in fact, many times they contribute to their canonisation or to their recuperation for a culture that was in the process of forgetting them.

Even though it is impossible to predict with accuracy the direction that will be taken by future adaptations of the classics of monstrosity - countless butterfly effects may disrupt the sequence - it is certainly possible to recognise basic patterns in two directions: missing links can be reconstructed and future patterns can be predicted for short-term periods. Hawkins cites John Milton's *Paradise Lost* and Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, both texts about monstrosity, as instances of literary strange attractors capable of generating a host of more or less remote imitations and adaptations. Obviously, one thing is dealing with the genealogy of a work in which what Harold Bloom defined as the anxiety of influences is at work and quite another is accounting for the fact that texts apparently as remote as Michael Crichton's *Jurassic Park* and Milton's *Paradise Lost* actually belong to the same cultural paradigm, or, as Hawkins puts it, that a pattern that makes the former a fractal forgery of the latter is visible. To sum up, as Hawkins argues, future scholars will have to take into account not only direct lines of cultural transmission - traditions - but also the apparently random, chaotic transfer of motifs from one work to another. That this is not totally random is proven in the case of the example discussed by Hawkins by the fact that even though direct references to Milton are missing in Crichton's novel, the sequel bears the significant title of *Lost Eden*.

As I see it, Hawkins misses an important point, namely, that canonical works such as *Paradise Lost*, or *The Tempest* are worthy of academic consideration not only because they originate a spate of imitations and adaptations, as she argues, but also because they are actually resonators that vibrate with motifs coming from popular sources - they are fractal forgeries of larger, still unseen fractal originals, one of which is, possibly, the whole cultural construct of

monstrosity. On the other hand, she fails to explain on what basis only some aspects are transferred from the original to the imitation or adaptation. My own suggestion is that texts such as *Dracula*, *Frankenstein* and *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* are adapted so frequently because their success is due to an inbuilt lack of cohesion rather than to their complexity. That is to say, they are adapted not because they are admired as they are but because what makes them attractive are the questions they beg. Inevitably gaps and irregularities are observed by each successive generations, depending on their own main cultural preoccupations. Thus, each generation creates their own versions in a process that acts simultaneously as a homage and as an original creation (a paradoxically original re-creation): the adaptations may 'correct' Milton or Shakespeare, Stevenson or Stoker - for instance by purging sexist elements from the texts in new versions - or they may prolong the life of their respected source by underlining what makes it relevant for a new historical circumstance. Rather than let the monster die of old age, as it will inevitably do if its myth is not updated, the monster is recycled - replicated to be the same and yet different, resurrected in a new world. Necessarily, aspects that could never have been considered by the original author become in time the central point of the adaptation - as correction, homage or renewal - to the extent that a totally faithful adaptation is not only impossible but also undesirable. What is indeed desirable is considering whether an homogeneous pattern is currently conditioning the last wave of adaptations of the classic Gothic horror canon. This is indeed the case. Four main aspects delimit nowadays the revision of *Dracula*, *Frankenstein* and *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*: the vindication of the adaptation as an original re-creation, the raising of the threshold of the tolerable in art-horror thanks to the development of special effects and the relaxation of censorship, the problematics of parody (specifically whether parody can act as homage), and the ambiguous role of women in the original texts.

The appeal of the classic Gothic monsters seemed to have peaked out in the 1970s. Dr. Jekyll, Frankenstein's monster and Dracula became the stars of parodies such as Roy Ward Baker's *Dr. Jekyll and Sister Hyde* (1971), Mel Brook's *Young Frankenstein* (1974), Jim Sharman's

Rocky Horror Picture Show (1975) and Stan Dragoti's *Love at First Bite* (1979), enjoyable spoofs of the 1930s films. Nonetheless, the introduction of parodic elements somehow gave a new lease of life to the monsters, for these three films were not out of tune with a new trend in horror fully established at the beginning of the 1980s. *Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984) or *The Evil Dead* (1983) showed that the new monsters could be horrific and comic at the same time by virtue of the sheer excess of the plots: the monster became more horrific but also more grotesque than ever, a creature of carnival rather than of serious Gothic horror. The monster of the 1980s B-series reigned in a new, unstable domain where it parodied, above all, its own importance and the seriousness of the anxieties behind it. A point often overlooked is that a very high percentage of so-called horror films are actually black comedies or satires, combining moments of heightened terror with comic relief; they are often appreciated because of their tongue-in-cheek sense of humour and because of their deft use of special effects more than for their capacity to scare. Very few contemporary novels or films about monsters are truly scary: they may elicit anger, anguish, contempt, disgust, or even sympathy from the reader or viewer rather than fear. Even a reputed horror novelist like Stephen King actually produces a type of novel that cannot be so easily classified: *The Dead Zone*, *Dolores Claiborne*, *Misery* or even *The Shining* are novels about pain and anguish more than about horror, which is inferred from the situations of the characters rather than forced by King on his reader. Even though horror fiction is expanding as never before this expansion corresponds paradoxically to its failure: comparatively, it was easier for Browning, Whale and Mamoulian to scare their audiences in the 1930s than it is now for Carpenter, Cronenberg or Landis, who must often resort to either humour or the macabre to draw the attention of horror fans. Audiences are now much more familiar with the themes and conventions of the genre and each new film or novel struggles to achieve that ever receding ideal of the genuinely horrifying story.

The low-cost horror films of the 1930s, created by the young producer Carl Laemmle Jr. for Universal Studios in order to guarantee the survival of the company throughout the difficult

years of the Depression, targeted audiences in search of an escape from a drab reality. The recent wave of big-budget horror films targets instead audiences dissatisfied with the alleged shallow treatment of the classics of Gothic horror in the 1930s low-budget genre film and in more recent adaptations, such as those produced by Hammer in the 1950s and 1960s. The wave of expensive New Gothic cinema, in Lizzie Francke's phrase (1994: 66), directed between 1992 and 1995 by "auterish" (in Francke's word) directors such as Francis Ford Coppola, Kenneth Branagh, Mike Nichols, Stephen Frears or Neil Jordan who thought they could make the horror film respectable, is, as Francke remarks, "set on achieving the kind of cultural credibility associated with literature" (ibid.: 66). The following sections, which reviews recent adaptations of *Dracula*, *Frankenstein* and *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* discuss why all these films have finally failed to achieve that desired credibility.

2.2.2. New Versions of *Dracula*

The first screen adaptation of Bram Stoker's novel *Dracula* (1897) was F. W. Murnau's *Nosferatu* (1922), a film made without the consent of Stoker's legal heir, his widow Florence. Her threats to take Murnau to court forced him to introduce a number of changes in the plot and the roles of the main characters. In Murnau's version the Count, renamed Orlock and played by Max Schreck, is represented as a freakish man whose physical appearance strongly recalls that of a rat. His association with this animal is furthered by the introduction of the motif of the plague that decimates the German town chosen by Orlock as his new residence. Yet, instead of succumbing to Van Helsing's stake, the vampire is destroyed by daylight when he fails to break the spell that his contemplation of his beloved Mina, asleep and defenceless before him, casts on him. Tod Browning's *Dracula* (1931), was the first screen version authorized by Stoker's heirs despite the fact that it was not based on the original novel but on the 1927 play by Hamilton Dean and John Balderstone, the first dramatization of the novel staged in the USA¹. Despite the extent to which

¹See Skal (op. cit.: 81-111) for a detailed account of the stage productions of *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* that originated

Bela Lugosi's performance as the Count has been aggrandised by his admirers - among them the producer Ed Wood portrayed in Tim Burton's eponymous film (1995), who rescued Lugosi from total oblivion at the end of his life - Browning's *Dracula* can only be seen now with a certain ironic distance, possibly best defined in the term 'camp'.

Although most horror critics avoid the discussion of how horror films age, often preferring homage to objectivity, or justifying their fast ageing on the low budgets spent on them (Ellis, 1992: 53), the fact is that the success of the 1931 *Dracula* is an enigma by 1990s standards: the production design is poor, the special effects ludicrous - how is disbelief to be suspended when Lugosi transforms into a plain rubber bat? - even the three brides of Dracula are unappetising, when in the novel they remain as seductive now as in 1897. Lugosi's Dracula is insufferably passionless and stilted in contrast to the two main Draculas after Christopher Lee's interpretation of the Count in the cycle of Hammer films: Frank Langella in John Badham's *Dracula* (1979) and Gary Oldman in Francis Ford Coppola's *Bram Stoker's Dracula*. Different acting conventions, progressing further and further away from the theatrical model, the raising of the threshold in the representation of violence and sex, the use of expensive special effects, all these factors have contributed to ageing Browning's *Dracula* badly, though, naturally, it still has the merit of having been the pioneer.

Two versions of *Dracula* were released in 1979: Dragoti's spoof, *Love at First Bite*, and Badham's version. Both revise Browning's film rather than Stoker's novel and appear at the end of a cycle of adaptations that also includes the many vampire films produced by Hammer. Although Terence Fisher's 1958 *Dracula* may have seemed a more immediate reference, in fact George Hamilton's Dracula in Dragoti's film is closely related to Lugosi's down to the fact that make-up artist William Tuttle, the original creator of Lugosi's look as the Count, also designed Hamilton's make-up for the same role. Dragoti's spoof and Badham's film are not as different as might seem as far as the image of the Count and the role of Mina are concerned: both films present the Count

the 1930s films.

as a successful seducer and reverse Browning's happy end by making Mina willingly embrace vampirism.

The running joke in *Love at First Bite* is that the world of the late 1970s is more terrifying for Dracula than he can be for anybody else. Exiled from his native Transylvania because he has been evicted by the communist government from his castle, the Count meets his lost love Mina in New York incarnated in the promiscuous fashion model Cindy. The far from perfect Cindy is a caricature of the independent woman of feminism: she does everything in excess, from drinking to having sex, but cannot understand why, for which she seeks the advice of yet another boyfriend, a psychiatrist descended from Van Helsing. The comic confrontation between this man and Dracula for the possession of Cindy's body also exposes the shortcomings of two models of masculinity: the attractive seducer does not understand woman's sexuality any better than the psychiatrist understands her mind. Their mutual sexual jealousy and Cindy's choice of vampirism on the grounds that Dracula is a better lover throw light on Bram Stoker's *Dracula* from a different perspective: far from being representatives of a solid, dominant patriarchy, Van Helsing and his descendants are failed men, afraid of not meeting the sexual requirements of the New Woman - either the new woman born at the same time when Stoker created the meek Mina of his novel or the new woman born of the 1960s and 1970s feminist movement. As he is represented in Dragotti's and Badham's versions, the vampire is the Byronic Don Juan reborn, the 'homme fatale' who threatens the self-confidence of the average man.

Nonetheless, Badham's underrated *Dracula* offers a grimmer alternative to the happy union of Dracula and his new bride Cindy in *Love at First Bite*. The setting of the film is the Edwardian Age, which presupposes that the New Woman has climbed the first rungs of the ladder leading to the carefree Cindy of the pre-AIDS 1970s. This is dramatized in the film not without a number of important contradictions. A significant change from the original novel is the reversal of roles of the two main female characters: in this version the weak, sweet Mina - Dr. Van Helsing's daughter - is

the first to succumb to Dracula's charms and to pay the price of being staked by her own father for it. Despite the example of Mina's fate, her best friend Lucy - Dr. Seward's daughter and Harker's fiancée - chooses to let herself be seduced by the Count, played by Frank Langella in the spirit of Christopher Lee's Count rather than in Lugosi's. Once she is determined to accept Dracula's attentions, Lucy dares all the men around her to stop her, which they fail to do.

As played by Kate Nelligan, this fusion of the original Mina and Lucy is no longer a twenty-year-old Victorian virgin, but a twentieth-century woman choosing vampirism rather than a life as Harker's wife and Seward's daughter. Yet, this is the point at which the contradictions of the plot surface: since Lucy is portrayed with sympathy and since it is obvious that Harker is no match for her strong personality, her frantic physical struggle to escape him and join the vampire appear to be a symbol for woman's liberation from patriarchy. Dracula's killing of the old, tired vampire fighter played by Laurence Olivier also seems to stress the death of an old model of patriarchy: the father who has impaled the vampire daughter is in his turn impaled by the vampire with the very stake chosen to kill him. The final image of the Count, crucified by Harker on the mast of the ship taking him home, is almost a blasphemy, as it recalls that of Christ as redeemer. Dracula flies away transformed into a bat just before the sunrise may kill him, leaving Lucy behind, but her bloodshot eyes and her long fangs suggest that a new life as a vampire has begun for her in which there may be a future with Dracula. The ambiguous end of the film may suggest to many that the New Woman of the Edwardian Age, or the feminist of the late 1970s when the film was made, are nothing but monsters empowered by monstrous, false men like Dracula who betray their own gender. Yet the average man in the audience can hardly sympathize with his screen surrogates: Cindy's psychiatrist, Van Helsing, Harker and Seward are such ineffective figures, such unappealing representations of patriarchy that their humiliation cannot be seen as something totally undesirable. This leads to the final contradiction: the role model proposed to the average man is the monster, the Byronic hero as Dracula, the vampiric seducer. This man and the women he 'frees' from patriarchal constraints are no doubt monsters united by a common search for

sexual freedom, but, precisely because they have managed to break free they have become monsters that elicit a certain sympathy rather than absolute horror. Secretly, all the men in the audience want to be Dracula; secretly all the women want to exert the power to choose and be, like Milton's Satan, queens in Hell rather than servants in Heaven.

Mina's choice is of a very different nature in *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, since in this version Dracula and not herself is in need of redeeming liberation. While Stoker vaguely suggests that the vampire's double human and beastly nature originates in a mating of a woman of his tribe - the Draculs - with their totemic animal, the dragon, screen writer Jim V. Hart supplies a new origin for the vampire. Dracula, a Christian warrior fighting the Turks in the fourteenth century, is deprived of his humanity when he abjures God, following the Catholic Church's refusal to bury his bride Elisabetta in consecrated ground, after her committing suicide wrongly believing that he had died in the battlefield. This Dracula is, thus, another version of the Byronic hero, damned into a personal Hell that can only end when he finds Elisabetta again, reborn in the nineteenth century as Mina Murray¹.

Mina's seduction ultimately leads to the turning point in which she must choose between becoming herself a vampire and damning herself and her lover for ever, or redeeming him by killing him, which none of the four men protecting her can do. The Count's willingness to die only if his death is Mina's own choice is a motif borrowed from "Beauty and the Beast"; however, the happy end of the fairy tale is superseded in Coppola's film by an ambiguous end: the petite Mina is seen to wield a large sword, pierce Dracula's heart and then behead him, which secures the salvation of his soul and of her own, as well. Neither what this violent act of love supposes for her nor what turn her life will take from that moment onwards are issues clarified by Hart or Coppola, as the film ends at this point. All in all, the ambiguities of this end are even more dramatic than

¹Apparently Richard Matheson introduced the concept that a current victim of the vampire resembles a past love in his screenplay for an episode of the TV series *Dark Shadows* produced by Dan Curtis for ABC in the USA between 1968 and 1971. In Matheson's version Lucy and not Mina was the Count's lost love (Silver and Ursini, op. cit.: 155) As I have noted, *Love at First Bite* also uses the same theme.

those of Badham's film: the patriarchal men have failed in the task of destroying the monster, leaving Mina literally alone to fulfil their task, yet the alternative model, the Don Juan, has also failed. Far from being a subversive liberator of repressed female desire, Dracula is a doomed romantic who can offer man no other solution but death to the problem of what a desirable image of masculinity is. Ironically, the film seems to celebrate the memory of the lost romantic hero - the hero of women's romance - rather than point forward towards the rejection of monstrosity on men's side and towards the acceptance of women's freedom of choice. Mina's life, we are made to believe, will be a long mourning for the lost monstrous lover rather than a joyous embrace of her husband and domesticity.

No such love story can be found in Stoker's novel, which contradicts the alleged faithfulness to the novel proclaimed by the film's title. However, interesting as this aspect of the revision of Stoker's *Dracula* is in this film, Coppola's adaptation is perhaps more concerned with avoiding the weight of all the previous *Draculas* in film than with respecting the original novel. This manifest anxiety of influences is reflected in the search for a new, striking visualization conceived as a homage to Murnau's *Nosferatu*. Gary Oldman plays a multiple Dracula constantly metamorphosing from feral wolf to handsome dandy, from the bloodthirsty young warrior in red armour to the eccentric old vampire wrapped in his majestic red robe, always carefully eschewing the Dracula in Victorian evening dress and black satin cape, imitating instead the more romantic but more horrific Count Orlock. *Bram Stoker's Dracula* can be said to be, actually, a double adaptation. On the one hand, it fills a gap in the fabric of the novel: the love story adds a new perspective stressing the similarities between the game of sexual seduction that the Count carries out in the film and the hunting strategies of the predator, which is what he is in Stoker's novel. On the other hand, Coppola's homage to expressionistic shadows, to the artificiality of the make-believe strategies of film and his rejection of state-of-the-art special effects also turn the film into a mainstream artistic statement against the contemporary cinema of fantasy and its reliance on special effects.

A multi-layered adaptation like this one takes risks that more conventional versions avoid, since it targets different segments in the audience already familiar with many adaptations of the same subject or perhaps with the original novel. *Bram Stoker's Dracula* was conceived as a quality blockbuster with the expectation that Coppola's direction would make the best artistic use of the high budget and the cast of film stars so as to attract diverse layers of the audience: film buffs fond of his previous films, spectators who favour commercial films but would rarely see a horror film, spectators of omnivorous tastes and also those who enjoy horror films above any other genre. Film-goers little familiar with the films that Coppola pays homage to were enticed to see the film by the promise of its original visualization as could be glimpsed in the advertising trailer (a promise later prolonged in the video-game and the comic), while fans of the cycle of adaptations of *Dracula* were invited to play the game of intertextuality and to recognize the quotations from *Nosferatu* or spot the differences with other *Draculas*¹.

James Brown (1993) notes that as with most blockbusters, "the ideal, implied spectator [of Coppola's *Dracula*] is a sophisticated simpleton: experienced enough not to be fobbed off with any but the latest wizardry, but dumb enough not to want anything else". Paradoxically, the film failed to convince admirers of Stoker's novel, mainly because they resented the transformation of Stoker's brutal predator into a romantic hero, as much as lovers of horror films who resented Coppola's willed ignorance of the conventions of modern horror films especially as far as the use of special effects is concerned. Coppola's film managed nonetheless to attract a large enough heterogeneous audience, surely not of all it composed by sophisticated simpletons, who were satisfied above all by the quality of the film's *mise-en-scène* in comparison to that of previous *Draculas*. This benefited from the many millions invested in the film by Coppola's own studio, American Zoetrope, and also from the progressive freedom in the representation of eroticism and

¹This approach has its setbacks, though, as it risks dissatisfying everybody and pleasing nobody. A TV reviewer criticized what seemed to him an absurd shot showing Dracula springing with the rigidity of a doll out of a box in the ship that brings him to England; he failed to see this particular shot duplicates a famous one of *Nosferatu*, thus missing Coppola's quotation of Murnau's film.

violence slowly gained by the cinema. Adapting Stoker exactly as he envisioned his novel has not been possible until recently because censorship or the prevalent moral code had always limited the representation of the implicit eroticism of Stoker's original novel on the screen. Coppola's film was released in a wholly different cultural atmosphere. Not only could the film be more explicit than previous adaptations due to the rise of the threshold of tolerance in the representation of violence and eroticism: it had to be necessarily so or risk losing an audience used to the voyeuristic strategies of the horror film.

Coppola's *Dracula* is not Bram Stoker's but it strikes a successful balance between Stoker's subtle visualization of the monster bound by Victorianism and the unbounded explicitness of the 1980s and 1990s horror film. A proof of this compromise is the adaptation of the following scene of the novel, in which one night Mina follows a sleepwalking Lucy to a churchyard where she is first attacked by the Count: "There was undoubtedly something, long and black", Mina writes, "bending over the half-reclining white figure. I called in fright, 'Lucy! Lucy!' and something raised a head, and from where I was I could see a white face and red, gleaming eyes" (p. 90). This appears in the film as a shocking scene in which Dracula in the form of a horrific werewolf is seen raping Lucy before Mina's very own eyes. The nightmarish scene respects the essence of the dreamlike quality of Mina's perception of the attack according to Stoker's novel, simultaneously enhancing it by dispelling the doubts about the vague 'something' the Victorian Mina saw with the precision that only contemporary special effects techniques can afford.

In scenes like this one, the problematics of adapting *Dracula* is fully revealed: part of the audience may object that Stoker's novel is never visually so explicit, another that most 1990s horror films are much more extreme in this sense and a third that so much excess is almost parodic. In a sense, Coppola's *Dracula* solves the problem of how to prevent audiences from falling into the temptation of laughing - nervously or openly - at the vampire by splitting his physical appearance into a number of chamaleonic, even contradictory images. Gary Oldman's Dracula is also emotionally chamaleonic and exhibits a sinister sense of humour that nonetheless combines

well with his tearful romanticism and his capacity to horrify in his incarnation as a beast.

His magnified Dracula fits within a context likewise excessive in which Mina and Lucy discuss the attractions of the pornographic engravings of Richard Burton's *Thousand and One Nights*, the rational scientist Van Helsing uses his sixth sense to detect the liaison between Mina and the Count and in which the drug-addict Dr. Seward behaves like one of his mad patients. The ceaseless flow of baroque imagery, the many more signifiers than signifieds, keep the audience too busy to consider the differences with the novel until, once the film is over, the memory of the many divergent details from the original finally discloses an obvious truth underlying all adaptations of *Dracula*: the only Bram Stoker's *Dracula* is the 1897 novel. It is hence, pointless, to demand from the film absolute faithfulness when one can simply read the novel. It cannot be said, then, that Coppola remains faithful to the spirit of Stoker's novel in the presentation of the vampire. Furthermore, it seems obvious that the title is ironic, a joke cracked at the expense of those who might think that seeing the film is the exact equivalent of reading the novel. *Bram Stoker's Dracula* is actually a homage to Stoker's novel as the originator of a rich legacy of capital importance for the collective and the personal imagination of the twentieth century, but it is also a parody of the shallowest aspects of those legacy including the cult of the novel, coming from a mainstream director seeing horror fiction from a certain distance, from a different cultural vantage point. Whether his own version will eventually become a cult film like Browning's still remains to be seen.

2.2.3. *New Versions of Frankenstein*

By the time Frankenstein's monster found his most popular incarnation in the person of British actor Boris Karloff, the creature had already undergone a century of adaptations and revisions. The first of these was Richard Brinsley Peake's play *Presumption; or, The Fate of Frankenstein* (1823)¹ which, despite public protests against its sensational content, attracted a

¹For information about Peake's play see Cox (op. cit.: 1 - 78) and Lyons (1992). Peake's play opened in 1823 and remained in the repertoire until 1850. It was followed soon by Henry Milner's *Frankenstein; or, The Demons of Switzerland*, and several burlesques. Apparently, the earliest screen adaptation of *Frankenstein* was a 1910 silent film

considerable number of spectators, including Mary Shelley herself. Even though the stage adaptations of works such as *Frankenstein* and *Dracula* have been now forgotten except by a few specialised scholars and by a few fans, in fact many of the most popular motifs in the respective myths are actually derived from the plays which inspired the films and not from the original novels. What is more, not even Mary Shelley herself was immune to the reception of Peake's stage adaptation of her novel. Peake's moralistic reading of Victor Frankenstein as a transgressor punished by his attempt at usurping God's power to create life, a topic introduced according to Chris Baldick (1987: 58) to placate the demonstrations against the alleged immorality of the play, was taken into account by her for the second edition of the novel:

When Mary Shelley came to revise her novel for the third edition of 1831, on which virtually all modern editions have been based, she incorporated several of the more conservative readings implied in the dramatic and rhetorical uses to which the story had been put since 1818. Now distancing herself from her radical past, the author strengthened the cautionary element of the novel to the point where it could be read as an 'improving' work. (ibid.: 62)

Despite her apprehensions about Peake's work, Baldick adds, Mary Shelley put the word 'presumption' in Frankenstein's mouth, in a new speech addressed to Walton in which he regrets his having created the monster. Instead of a fellow romantic explorer of the unknown, Walton appears in the 1831 version as a victim of blind passion for transgressive knowledge who is saved from a terrible fate by Frankenstein's confession of guilt. The 1818 Victor Frankenstein portrayed as a new Prometheus has become by 1831 the teller of a cautionary tale from which the countless moralistic stage and film versions derive. "The excesses of the story's multiple significance", Baldick (ibid.: 62) observes, were curbed down by "exhibiting the monster as an awful warning". Therefore Mary Shelley's original description of the monster as a human soul suffering from the effects of the inadequacy of his sentient mind to his monstrous body gave way to the popular view derived from Peake's play of the creature as the speechless huge automaton in human form.

Peake's *Presumption* is actually a melodrama very different from the original novel or the

made by Thomas Alva Edison.

screen adaptations¹. The play introduced, among other themes, the comic figure of Frankenstein's servant Fritz which was still kept in James Whale's 1931 film, based in its turn on the play by Peggy Webling, *Frankenstein: An Adventure in the Macabre* (1927). Far from being anecdotal, Fritz's clumsiness is used by Webling to explain why Victor Frankenstein accidentally grafts the brain of a criminal onto his monster, a point which serves to introduce a new topic that utterly subverts Mary Shelley's view of the monster as a born innocent. In addition, Peake's version also introduced notions about the nature of the monster that have little to do with the creature of the novel but that have been routinely kept in the films derived from Whale's successful adaptation. In Peake's play the monster is described by Frankenstein as a huge automaton, a portrait seemingly inspired by the legend of the Golem rather than by the original novel. Frankenstein's monster and the Golem were connected once again in the 1930s through an early draft of the screenplay for Whale's film which was inspired by Paul Weggener's 1920 film *The Golem*. Whale finally worked on a different screenplay but he employed the services of German photographer Karl Freund, who had worked with Weggener in *The Golem*.

In Peake's version, the monster possesses a childish mind that jars with his monstrous body. He remains an inarticulate menace throughout the play, as in Whale's film, which precludes the need for including in the film the essential explanatory interview between creator and creature of the novel. The 1931 film adds to the tale of the monster's creation a particularly kitsch vision of Europe created by a team of European artists working primarily for American audiences. Victor Frankenstein (renamed Henry) is portrayed as the proverbial amoral 'mad doctor' of pulp fiction, a character derived from Mary Shelley's own Frankenstein: "Frankenstein is only interested in

¹Peake's play is not a horror story, but rather a morality play. It includes thirteen songs and constant banter between Victor's servant Fritz and his wife Ninon, both aspects enough to dispel the gloom of Mary Shelley's original plot. Of this, not much is left: Victor is engaged to Agatha de Lacey and has turned to scientific research after the banishment of her family. Elizabeth is Victor's sister and Clerval's fiancée, hence, Agatha and not her is the woman killed by the monster. The monster himself dies in an avalanche together with his creator at the end of a chase. Many elements are missing: the monster cannot speak and so, there is no interview between him and Frankenstein; there is no episode in the Arctic, nor any mention of a bride for the monster... one wonders what Mary Shelly exactly felt when she saw Peake's play.

human life," a character says with irony, "first to destroy it, then to create it. This is his mad dream." This presumptuous scientist is very similar to the power hungry scientist of another 1930s film, *The Invisible Man* adapted from H.G. Wells' novel, though, unlike Jack Griffin, the 1930s Henry Frankenstein miraculously preserves intact his belief in his own innocence and never acknowledges his guilt in the creation of the monster. Interestingly, although one of the motifs introduced by Whale that has best survived the passage of time is the monster's persecution by a mob of honest citizens intent on lynching him - the same motif appears, for instance, in Tim Burton's peculiar updating of Mary Shelley's novel, *Edward Scissorhands* (1990) - this motif did not originate in the original novel nor in Whale's film. The murderous mob of good citizens belongs to a bigoted America that does not tolerate difference; it seems to have appeared first on the screen in David Griffith's reactionary *Intolerance* (1916) in the guise of the Ku Klux Klan though it also raised its ugly head as the Parisian mob that drowns Lon Chaney as Erik, the Phantom of the Opera in the eponymous film. Unlike its predecessors, the angry mob that chases the charming Edward Scissorhands away from American suburbia and back to his Gothic castle is made to pass through a moment of embarrassed self-consciousness. Convinced by a lie told by the monster's beloved Kim that he is dead, the mob disbands, and never attempts to accomplish the task of killing him despite the many signs that he has survived the chase: rather than tolerate the monster - the different Other - as a neighbour, the most that suburban American can do is to persuade itself that his liberating influence can be counteracted by constraining him to a fantastic domain outside the daily normality of America.

A peculiar issue that has attracted the interest of many readers and potential adapters is the aborted creation of the female monster in Mary Shelley's novel. The main enigma of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* is why Victor could not please his monster and fashion a female that could not bear children, which he could have easily done. The horror that the potential birth of a new breed of monsters awakens in Victor justifies his destruction of the creature's mate yet this horror

has also been interpreted as a sign of ambiguity on Mary Shelley's side towards the female body. Victor's aborted creation of the monstrous woman has been variously read as a transposition of Mary Shelley's mistrust towards her own body, due to her inability to prevent the deaths of her children. Her fear of not being able to beget healthy, normal children has been adduced as one of the main causes behind the creation of Victor and his monstrous progeny and also as one of the causes why she saw the female body as an uncontrollable hazard. Already in 1935, James Whale's spin-off to his own *Frankenstein, The Bride of Frankenstein*, proposed an ironic solution to fill the gap in the novel: when Frankenstein finally creates a female mate for his monster, she is no less horrified by the male monster than any ordinary woman would be.

The topic of the female monster that Frankenstein refuses to create recurs in all the adaptations produced in the 1980s, including *Blade Runner* and its monstrous heroine Rachael. Yet, all coincide in opposing Whale's solution: the new women seek in the male monster a natural partner, rejecting the patriarchal creator and accepting the neglected creature as a companion¹. This is a solution similar to Lucy's choice in Badham's *Dracula* which seemingly stresses the links between the monstrous man and woman. Interestingly, the film and the novel that are most directly linked to Whale's *Bride of Frankenstein* - Frank Roddam's film *The Bride* (1985) and Hillary Bailey's novel *Frankenstein's Bride* (1995)² - coincide in degrading Frankenstein to the unsympathetic role of a lascivious Pygmalion who attempts and fails to rob his monster of his loving bride. Because of the attraction that Frankenstein feels for the beauty of the new Eve she is kept unaware of the existence of her true mate; the ugliness of the male monster results in his rejection, but the beauty of the new woman leads Frankenstein not only to feel desire for her but also to try to integrate her in society as a respectable, refined lady. The progressive disclosure of Frankenstein's true intentions towards her prompt the woman to seek out the protection of the rejected male monster, whom she identifies as her genuine partner. Thus, Roddam's film ends

¹In *Blade Runner* the replicant Rachael accepts a human companion but another replicant, Pris, manufactured to be a prostitute in the outer space colonies, forms a tragic couple with the hero replicant Roy.

²Information on the novel is based on its review by Durant (1995).

with the timely entrance of the male monster into his beloved's bedroom just when the threat of impending rape posed by Frankenstein himself is to materialise, whereas Bailey's novel ends with Eve's destruction of Frankenstein's other women, his wife and daughter in revenge for her own victimization. In Roddam's film the sympathy of the audience is channelled towards the couple of monstrous lovers plainly on the grounds of the female monster's beauty: they become yet another version of "Beauty and the Beast". Nonetheless, as Brian Aldiss' *Frankenstein Unbound* (1973) suggests, sympathy is strongly related to the tolerable physical appearance of the monstrous bride. The horrific woman that Frankenstein creates in Aldiss' novel is destroyed by the protagonist Joseph Bodenland because he cannot tolerate her gruesome physical appearance. Interestingly, the supposition that woman is man's masterpiece, present in the new versions of *Bride of Frankenstein* but also in *Blade Runner* reverses the myth of creation of *Genesis*: the new Eve's creation culminates the work started with the new Adam who is, in fact, a failure compared with her.

The screen adaptation of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* became virtually pointless after the release of *Blade Runner* in 1982. Unlike *Dracula*, which is a story rooted in the supernatural, *Frankenstein* is primarily a science-fiction novel - according to Brian Aldiss, the novel that indeed originated science fiction (1973: 7 -44). Thus, it depends to a much greater extent on a certain view of science to elicit from its readers a suspension of disbelief. With *Blade Runner* the myth of *Frankenstein* abandons the almost magical use of science in the original novel to enter a different scientific paradigm in which the construction of the replicants seems to audiences feasible rather than fantastic. When, as happens in *Blade Runner*, genetic engineering replaces galvanism as the scientific 'excuse' on which the plot of the creation of an artificial person is grounded many paths to adapt the original story are closed: Frankenstein's pseudoscientific methods are completely emptied of their already fuzzy credibility while the ugliness of the monster risks being seen as part of Frankenstein's scientific inexperience rather than as a warning against his sinful ways. Being a creature born of superstition, the vampire does not face the same problem of scientific credibility,

which means that, despite the many recent variations on the subject, one representation of the vampire is unlikely to supersede all others.

It was precisely the commercial success of *Bram Stoker's Dracula* what prompted Coppola and screen writer Jim V. Hart to commission Kenneth Branagh to direct *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*, a product paid by Sony in a last desperate attempt to salvage what has proved to be a ruinous business: the purchase of the Hollywood Columbia studios (Alexander, 1994). Branagh, a director specialised in adapting Shakespeare for the screen with critical and commercial success seemed a good choice to head the project of adapting a classic of British literature. Actually, the film had much worse critical and commercial results that could be expected from the reputation of its director, producers and actors, something that must be blamed on Branagh's double failure to take *Blade Runner* into account and to strike a balance between the homage and the parody of the original novel as Coppola did in the case of Stoker's novel.

As I have noted, *Dracula* is sentimentalised in Coppola's version and portrayed as a romantic hero in a way that does not correspond to the original novel but that is not so dissimilar to previous adaptations. In contrast, throughout the cycle of imitations and adaptations the original Victor Frankenstein had progressively lost his romantic personality to become the prototype for the unemotional scientist of many dystopian films and novels (see Chapter 6). Branagh's film endeavours to recreate the romantic genius portrayed by Mary Shelley at the expense of the monster, who is robbed in this version of part of the protagonism he has in the novel. David Wickes' more modest *Frankenstein* (1992) - made for Ted Turner's cable TV empire and only released on video, hence much less publicised - anticipated Branagh's in this return to the romantic roots of the myth by emphasizing two important issues reintroduced by *Blade Runner*: firstly, the pride felt by the romantic genius in his nonetheless partly failed creation and secondly, the acknowledgement of the limitations of this newly-found power to create.

Wickes' and not Branagh's is the first film version to begin, like the novel, with the episode

in the Arctic and to include the illuminating interview between the monster and his creator. Victor Frankenstein, played by Patrick Bergin, is presented as a young, popular and brilliant university professor unjustly denied a position he deserves for his innovative research. He is not, then, an isolated man working on his own, but a man making a political statement with his research in favour of science and rationalism and seeking the benefit of as many people as possible with his discoveries. The showpiece in his workshop is a womb-like tank full of foetal liquid in which a man, being formed in Frankenstein's own image, awaits birth. The accidental malfunction in the mechanism prevents the man from being completed; his premature birth, staged in a scene very similar to the one in Branagh's version, is the actual cause of his deformities, but, since he has been made in his creator's image, the creature and Frankenstein are in a sense twins, sharing the same capacity to feel physical and mental pain. The motif of the doppelganger, first introduced in Peggy Webling's play, is thus coupled with folkloristic beliefs about the psychic links between twins and also connotes the telepathic association between Dracula and Mina that allows Van Helsing to track the vampire to his lair.

Frankenstein's misshapen double contrasts pitifully with the perfect replicant Roy Batty of *Blade Runner*, though Wickes follows Ridley Scott's film rather than Mary Shelley's novel in the presentation of the relationship between the creature and the creator. There is even a direct quotation from *Blade Runner* in the scene in which the monster, determined to kill his maker after a long chase, which ends with Frankenstein hanging from the brink of a precipice, saves him instead from death just as Roy saves Deckard in a similar situation. The influence of Scott's portrait of the romantic monster who is pitiable because of the awareness of his tragic situation has therefore paradoxically led Wickes to represent the monster from a romantic point of view closer to Mary Shelley's novel.

Since Wickes' Frankenstein is not a creator but a re-creator who copies bodies from nature, when his monster demands a female companion he is forced to turn to his fiancée Elizabeth for a model of the new Eve. She volunteers for the task out of love for Victor and

compassion for the lonely monster, yet the pain that the process of replication entails is so unbearable for her that Victor aborts the female monster for fear of killing Elizabeth. This results in the subsequent revenge of the angered monster on his creator, as happens in the novel, yet a new twist is introduced in the plot by which Victor becomes the main suspect of the deaths in his family. Both monster and scientist then become runaway outcasts and embark on a mutual chase leading them to the North Pole. When the creature begs for a mercy killing from Frankenstein, he embraces his own monstrous image and dives with him into the cold water of the Arctic, drowning in a journey back to primal womb, this time together as if they were, at last, twins in a common maternal womb.

Compared to the mutual understanding between monster and creator reached in Wickes' *Frankenstein*, a theme that derives from the understanding between the dying Roy and his persecutor Deckard at the end of *Blade Runner*, the solution reached by Branagh's version, still presenting an unsympathetic monster, appears a step backwards. The screenplay of *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*, written by two men who had collaborated in the *Nightmare on Elm Street* series which is notorious for its tongue-in-cheek black sense of humour, seems at odds with Branagh's failed attempt at making a would-be canonical film. There is a fundamental misunderstanding between the subversive, even irreverent, reading of Mary Shelley's novel by the screenplay writers, Darabont and Lady - which emphasizes the ugliness of both the monster and of his creation - and Branagh's playing up of the love story between Victor and Elizabeth. While Coppola and Hart seem to share the same vision in *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, so that the horror story and the love story can fuse smoothly into a single thread, Branagh adopts a more individualistic stance, preferring to focus on Frankenstein's personality at the expense of the relationship between the monster and his creator. Instead of presenting monster and creator as soul mates as Wickes or Ridley Scott did, in Branagh's version the creator within the novel is duplicated by the creator of the film, a situation emphasized by Branagh's narcissistic performance in the role of Frankenstein.

One of the aspects in which the dissociation between the romantic creator and the horrific monster is clearest in Branagh's film is the physical appearance of both. There has never been a more handsome Frankenstein on the screen than the one played by Branagh himself, nor has there been a more repulsive creature than the one played by Robert de Niro. The creation of a new iconography for the creature was hampered by two problems: firstly, since de Niro was regarded as one of the main attractions in the film, a characterisation that made him unrecognisable was discarded. The result is that the image of the star interferes with that of the monster. Secondly, make-up artist Daniel Parker could not imitate Jack Pierce's make-up for Boris Karloff in James Whale's 1931 *Frankenstein* nor allude to it, for it is protected by copyright owned by Universal studios (Kermode and Kirkham, 1994). Instead, he used as his main inspiration Phil Leaky's make-up for Christopher Lee in Hammer's *The Curse of Frankenstein* (1957), which also differed from Pierce's for the same reason. Parker's monstrous icon displays, instead of Pierce's bolts, a collection of scars that are seen to heal as the film goes on. Painstakingly created as it is with its detailed fragmented anatomy, the new image of the monster sadly fails to provide any new insight into the nature of the creature. Pierce's work suggested the extreme otherness of the monster, its almost mechanical nature, close to the description of the monster as an automaton in its earliest stage adaptation. Parker's adds nothing significant to the personality of the monster, though it makes his image fit in within the current cult of the representation of the broken body in horror films. Far from achieving the desired end, the pretentiousness of the *mise-en-scène* often makes the ghastly monster simply ludicrous and many of the scenes in which he intervenes are either gruesome and meaningless or unwittingly parodic, underdirected in contrast to the overdirected love plot.

A certainly remarkable subtext underlying the superficial romanticism of Branagh's *Frankenstein* is the progressive exposure of an ambiguous bitterness manifested in the brutal profanation of the bodies of his mentor and his bride. In both cases, Victor Frankenstein humiliates those he loves with the excuse of prolonging their lives with a zest that is, to say the least, suspect.

Professor Waldman, Victor's mentor, has actually managed to decipher the secrets that will allow his disciple to create the monster but refuses to help Victor, afraid of the monsters he might create. The story of the lonely creator is thus turned into the story of the ambitious disciple who cannot outdo his mentor. Waldman's grisly death (he is stabbed by a beggar who refuses to be vaccinated by him against the plague) allows Frankenstein access to his master's notes and, hence, paves the way for the creation of the monster. Even though Victor justifies his work as a homage to his dead mentor, only conscious or subconscious hatred of him can explain why his success must involve degrading the powerful father figure that overshadowed his own mediocre work: the monster results from the grafting of Waldman's brain onto the body of the man who killed him. Far from returning Waldman from death, which would have exploited the Kafkaesque topic of the soul caged in an alien body, the operation erases Waldman's memories and personality, so that the new creature is no longer him, nor the killer but an odd composite monster. Victor's awareness that the monster's mind is his former master's transforms the pleasure of creation into the pleasure of sadistic degradation.

Something similar happens in Elizabeth's case. Initially, Victor's efforts as a young student are devoted to finding a way of giving birth that would free women from the risk of dying in childbirth as happened to his mother. This new topic may have been a concession on the screen writers' side to please women in the audience so that, far from being a misogynist man bent on usurping women's role as givers of life, Frankenstein would appear as an altruistic saviour of women. However, the treatment that Victor gives to Elizabeth's body destroys this image and confirms his misogyny. In a harrowing scene that takes place after Victor and Elizabeth's long postponed wedding, the monster rips Elizabeth's heart from her body on her wedding night, a form of brutal rape that Victor helplessly witnesses; yet the viciousness of the attack is followed by a gratuitous accident in which Elizabeth's hair and face are burned. Victor creates then another composite monster, a parody of woman, and a rather sadistic one for that matter, by putting together Justine's body - she is executed in one of the most horrific scenes of the film because of

its sadism - and Elizabeth's head and hands. So horrified is this new Elizabeth by her new nature that when creator and creature threaten to tear her in two in the struggle to possess her, she burns herself to death.

The film does not speak of a love for life so great that it leads Victor Frankenstein to bring dead flesh back to life, but of a hatred of the body, dead or alive, especially if it is the female body, which is in line with the visualizing strategies of monstrous violence in contemporary horror film. In comparison to Tyrell's secret genetic engineering methods to create the replicants in *Blade Runner*, Victor's crude surgical methods in Branagh's film make no sense: Victor appears hacking bodies frantically with machetes and can only produce monsters suffering from acute physical and mental agonies. Obviously, the weakest point in Mary Shelley's novel is why Victor should build new bodies out of pieces of cadavers instead of reanimating a whole body and compared to which the question of how he does it is not really relevant. *Blade Runner* offers an elegant solution by which the replicants' bodies are built as an organic whole out of separate organs individually grown by genetic engineers. While the replicants may take a further step in the direction of humanity by putting together the fragments of their piecemeal personalities, Branagh's monster cannot progress further than a skin-deep understanding of who he is. What we see on the screen is a living mass of scarred tissue slowly healing, but never a human soul becoming aware of his superiority over his maker.

The conclusion to be derived from this peculiar adaptation, especially if it is compared to *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, is that the screenplay was written by two men who profoundly disliked Victor Frankenstein (perhaps even the novel itself) and directed by one who missed the terrible dissection of Frankenstein's monstrous personality ingrained in the script because he was too attracted by the romantic side of the character. Unlike previous adaptations and imitations Branagh's simply refuses to acknowledge Frankenstein's monstrosity or to consider how it can be compatible with his romantic striving for knowledge. Instead he proposes a portrait of Frankenstein as a man who deserves sympathy for no other reason than he is a sensitive man very much in

love with Elizabeth - despite the fact that this sensitivity is actually pure selfishness. Coppola and Hart needn't make such distinction between the monster and the romantic because in their version Dracula is his own creator and the creature in one. In addition, they kept a certain ironic distance - greater on Coppola's side - which gives the adaptation a greater stability, also aided by Gary Oldman's flexible performance and his credibility as both predatory monster and Byronic hero. Branagh, more used to a type of adaptation grounded on the respect for the literary text, could not master the code used by Darabont and Lady to parody Mary Shelley's novel, and tried unsuccessfully to stick to the spirit of the text with his own performance, which became thus unwittingly part of the parody.

The motif of the making of the bride out of Elizabeth's body links Branagh's version to Roger Corman's *Frankenstein Unbound* (1990), based on Brian Aldiss' 1973 novel of the same title. This is a bizarre - certainly unbound - fantasy narrating the adventures of Joseph Bodenland, a scientist led by a time warp from the USA in 2031 to Switzerland in 1817, where he meets not only Frankenstein and his creature but also Mary Godwin, Shelley and Byron. The whole point of the plot is a rather unembarrassed sexual fantasy on Aldiss' side that allows his alter ego Bodenland, Mary's future admirer, not only to make love to her but also to intervene in the writing of her own novel: Bodenland draws her attention to the strange events in the lives of the Frankenstein family and also gives Mary a copy of the novel she still has to write. In Corman's version the monster kills Elizabeth in the same violent, gory style of Branagh's monster though, following Aldiss' novel, instead of reanimating her out of love Frankenstein recycles her body to give his monster a bride. Both Helena Bonham-Carter in Branagh's film and Catherine Rabbet in Corman's, play the new female monster as a living doll in deep pain, but Rabbet's pseudo-Elizabeth antedates Bonham-Carter's in her realization that her sympathies have gone to the monster with her new monstrous state. Instead of suicide, Corman's new Elizabeth chooses to protect the male monster from Frankenstein's murderous intentions and the couple become runaways after killing Victor. Chased by Bodenland, they reach a bleak landscape in the future from which all traces of human

life have been erased, partly thanks to Bodenland's own experiments; finally sympathising with Frankenstein, Bodenland exterminates the couple and thus a possible future new mankind born from them, despite their protestations that he should not kill what he does not understand.

Aldiss' novel differs from the film precisely in his representation of the monster's bride. In Aldiss' version, Frankenstein fashions the female monster with pieces of Justine's body, yet this new Eve looks masculine, with her thick legs and her towering height. In contrast, the male monster looks much more appealing and is described as a sublime creature:

In his anger, he was beautiful. I use the word beautiful knowing it to be inaccurate, yet not knowing how else to counteract the myth that has circulated for two centuries that Frankenstein's monster's face was a hideous conglomeration of second-hand features.

It was not so. Perhaps the lie drew its life from a human longing for those chills of horror which are depraved forms of religious awe. And I must admit that Mary Shelley began the rumour; but she had to make her impression on an untutored audience. I can only declare that the face before me had a terrible beauty (p. 167).

Voyeurism reaches a peak in the novel and in the Frankenstein myth when, after this vindication of the male body to correct Mary Shelley's allegedly malicious slandering against it, Bodenland finally sees the monstrous couple making love, possibly the moment of true horror the first novel circumvented, the gap in the fabric that has attracted most adapters. The disgusting sight of the sublime male monster engaged in sex with the ogress created by Frankenstein is, in fact, what spurs the misogynistic Bodenland to kill both monsters.

As *Frankenstein Unbound* shows, a consequence of the popularity of *Frankenstein* is the representation of Mary Shelley as a fictional character in several stories dealing with the creation of the monster. Ken Russell's film *Gothic* (1986) and Gonzalo Suárez's *Rowing in the Wind* (1988) revisit Villa Diodatti in 1816¹ to narrate from different perspectives why Mary Shelley created her monster and conclude that Mary Shelley expressed through her creature her fear that she herself was a monster. The disparate accounts of the relationships among the members of the Romantic circle

¹A less well-known film, *Haunted Summer* (1988) deals with the same subject and so does Liz Lochhead's play *Blood and Ice* (1982).

formed by Mary Godwin, Shelley, Byron, Claire Clairmont and John Polidori in both films, coincide nonetheless in the representation of Mary Shelley as a catalyst of forces of destruction unleashed by the romantic probing of the dark side of the human mind. In this background of unbound passion she is portrayed by both Russell and Suárez, despite the enormous differences between their films, as the only member of the romantic circle capable of channelling towards civilization the energy unleashed by the romantic strife to break away from the conventional and the rational. However, given the ambiguity of Mary Shelley's own portrait of the romantic genius in her novel - the question of whether the real monster is Victor Frankenstein or his creature underlies the whole novel - she is regarded in both films simultaneously as an outsider (a privileged observer) in the relationship between the poets Byron and Keats and as a woman who deserves homage for having transmitted to us a lasting view of the romantic spirit.

The recurrence of untimely deaths in the circle of Mary Shelley's family and friends is an essential point in Russell's and Suárez's characterisation of her. The monster and Mary are presented as twin angels of death, innocent agents of destruction that cannot help bringing death to those they love. Russell's film deals with the idea that the nightmare Mary Shelley had on the night of the 16th June 1816 in which she saw the monster for the first time was produced in fact by the psychological pressure put on her by her companions. In the film a bizarre ceremony allows the subconscious energies of Byron, Shelley, Polidori, Mary Godwin and Claire Clairmont to raise from the depths of their personal fears the creatures of nightmare that pursue them throughout the film and that are related to particular events in their lives. As Will Rockett (op. cit.: 12) notes, "the film suggests not only demonic dread's presence in human perceptions and imagination, but also the possibility that it might lead to the perception of the divine, albeit in its most frightening aspect." The nightmarish night - for all the events in the film turn out to be events in Mary's nightmare - allows her to foresee not only her own creation of the monster but the future deaths of all around her and serves also to give vent to repressed energies in her own self. Without the liberating effect of the fear felt in her nightmare by this civilized, sensible woman, the film suggests that she could

not have coped with her worst personal fears when the deaths of those around her took place. The novel and the monster may have been the result of her wish to please her husband and her friends with a horror story, but as the film suggests, subconscious preoccupations forced Mary Shelley to assume a sibylline role grounded on personal anxieties about her role as a woman - as a giver of life - that led her to deal with anxieties universally felt about birth and death.

In Suárez's film Mary is also presented as an angel of death. She attributes the wake of deaths she is leaving behind herself - beginning with her mother's death in her own birth - to her having unleashed a monster from her deepest fears even before she is born. Mary is identified with Victor in the final scene which shows her waiting to face her monster in the North Pole where she is writing her story and expecting death - her monster - to come. The monster is always present in Mary's life as her shadow, announcing the deaths of Mary's friends and relatives, and even causing that of her own child William, making her assume the burden of the guilt for all the deaths. Her transgression, the creation of the monster, is seen in this film as a fatalistic condition in Mary's life that will never leave her.

While Russell's film includes in the nightmarish events a cathartic force that enables Mary to handle fear fictionally, Suárez's offers an opposite view: her fiction invades Mary's life to the point of making the monster indistinguishable from herself. *Gothic* is, as its title indicates, truly Gothic with its unbounded visual excess and its supernatural events but is, in comparison to *Rowing in the Wind*, a more optimistic film. The latter is a more truly romantic film, not only because of its use of natural landscape and the events it narrates, but also because of its portrait of the romantic despair that invades Mary's life. The paradox is, then, that although Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* deals with the creation of life, the novel is read by Russell and Suárez as a story about how life leads inevitably to death - the monster flourishes briefly (the four-year lifespan of the replicants of *Blade Runner* shows this inevitable mortality) only to return to death, from which he was withdrawn by his creator for reasons not even Frankenstein knows well. In any case, a point

missed by both Russell and Suárez in their paradoxically misogynistic homage to the figure of Mary Shelley, is the cautionary nature of her novel: the critique of the romantic man who inevitably creates monsters is ignored by both in favour of an identification of the monster not with his male creator - the scientist - but with his female creator, the novelist.

The inclusion of Mary Shelley as a fictional character within the myth of monstrosity she herself created is part of a typically postmodernist game, by which the portrait of the romantic writer created by academic research is subverted in fantasies fusing biographical elements, the texts written by the romantic artists themselves and aspects of monstrosity. The view of the romantic poet as a monster - in the sense of prodigy - has led to the writing of novels as idiosyncratic as Dan Simmons' *Hyperion* (1989) and *The Fall of Hyperion* (1990) and Tim Powers' *The Anubis Gates* (1983) and *The Stress of her Regard* (1989), in which Keats, Byron and Shelley are represented as monsters. The circle is thus closed: Mary Shelley's view of the manufactured human monster as a Romantic finally leads to the view of the Romantic as a monster created like Frankenstein's creature by a monstrous mind.

Dan Simmons' two volume novel generically entitled *Hyperion Cantos* is a science-fiction novel centring on the wish of the Artificial Intelligences, who have re-created a replicant John Keats out of the original John Keats' DNA, to create their own God. The new Johnny Keats finds himself playing the role of the prophet heralding the arrival of a messiah (his yet unborn daughter) that will bring reconciliation between men and their intelligent machines, as he ponders why he cannot be the same John Keats who wrote *Hyperion*. John Keats also appears as a character in Tim Powers' *The Stress of her Regard* (1989), a fantasy novel that again presents the Romantic poets - Keats, Shelley and Byron - in league with non-human vampiric intelligences (the Nephilim or fallen angels of the *Apocrypha*) who have granted them extraordinary powers of creation that ultimately lead to their own deaths. In a previous novel by Powers, *The Anubis Gates* (1983), Coleridge is also present in a secondary role while a replica of Byron, quite similar to Keats' cybrid in *Hyperion Cantos*, can also be found there. This novel, which begins when an American

Literature professor is invited to travel backwards in time to meet Coleridge, explains this interest in the Romantic poets as nostalgia for the extraordinary: a longing for the Romantics in a time such as ours in which there seems to be no equivalent figures is metaphorically expressed in these novels by the production of copies or clones.

The cloning of the poet, however, is bound to be a failure for the reproduction of the DNA does not ensure the reproduction of the mysterious qualities that fashion the personality. While in *The Anubis Gates*, Byron's 'K'a dies a sad death when he realizes that he is not the poet himself, despite the eerie knowledge he has of texts Byron still has to write, in *Hyperion*, Keats' replica is aware that at the most he can expect is becoming a specialist in Keats' life but not Keats himself. The poet's twin - Byron's ka, Keats' cybrid - is always the monster but he shares enough with his twin so as to be something more than a mere copy but something less than the original. Nostalgia for the myth-making poet is also accompanied by personal homage on the author's side, who vindicates the right to offer a personal version of the myth the poet has become. Indeed, to stress the fact that each time a student approaches one of the Romantic poets a new version is born, Simmons presents in *The Fall of Hyperion* a second cybrid of Keats that is, also like all the imitations of an original in a cycle of adaptations, different yet the same.

The plots of these novels, so rich in fantastic incident, partly depend on a familiarisation of the reader with the figures of the Romantics to be fully meaningful. However, it is not true that most readers of these novels by Simmons and Powers, marketed as genre fiction and not as mainstream, are familiar with the lives and works of the Romantic poets. Indeed, they may miss the point altogether and just stay tuned to the gripping plot-driven narratives without much significant loss of pleasure. In discussion with a friend of scientific training who counts Simmons among his favourite writers, I was even told that it is completely irrelevant to know who Keats was to understand *Hyperion Cantos* and that, in any case, the literary references were a defect rather than an asset for the novel¹. A few readers might well be expected to graduate from reading

¹This is especially so in the case of those who do not read them in English and who are not familiar with English

Simmons' *Hyperion* to reading Keats' own but it is more sensible to think that all the information they will receive about the Romantic poets will reach them through this channel, no matter how odd this might seem to those of us who are familiar with their work through the study of Literature.

To a certain extent, films like *Gothic* and the novels by Simmons and Powers are parodic, though the parody is not so much against the Romantics but against a serious, scholarly view of them, which, in contrast, *Rowing in the Wind* respects. The cybrid Keats who finds a home in the computer of a spaceship that suddenly starts reciting poetry in *The Fall of Hyperion*, the Coleridge that cannot tell his own chimeras apart from the monsters that surround him in a dungeon in *The Anubis Gates* or the Mary Shelley that is scared by everything and nothing in *Gothic*, are, so to speak, affectionate parodies built with a playful sense of literary homage. They subvert the image built by scholarship to claim that the Romantics were on the side of high culture as much as on the side of carnivalesque popular culture, while trying all the same to unravel the enigma of what made them different. Simmons faithfully follows the idea of the divine essence of the poet to explain the profound humanity of the cybrid Johnny Keats, which enables him to destroy the powerful Shrike, a god nicknamed the Lord of Pain, while Powers imagines in *The Stress of her Regard* a demonic Faustian pact as the source of the poets' super-humanity. Tim Powers deals, besides, with the making of the monstrous poet in *The Anubis Gates* with an interesting paradox: Brendan Doyle, an American professor of Literature specialised in the work of the mysterious American Romantic poet William Ashbless, travels to 1810 to meet him, only to discover that he is Ashbless himself:

Suddenly a thought struck him. My God, he thought, then if I stay and live out my life as Ashbless - which the universe pretty clearly means me to do - then *nobody wrote Ashbless' poems*. I'll copy out his poems from memory, having read them in the 1932 *Collected Poems*, and my copies will be set in type for the magazines, and they'll use tear sheets from the magazines to assemble the *Collected Poems*! They're a closed loop, uncreated! I'm just the ... messenger and caretaker. (p. 331)

literature at all. To my surprise, my comments on the real poets in contrast to their versions in the novels, were rejected by other Spanish readers as superfluous highbrow references.

The motif of the time loop provides an interesting plot for this novel but also stresses the point that the Romantics are an invention of the present, a fiction, partial in the case of the real poets, total in the case of Ashbless. He is, in addition, a dream figure for the American admirer of the Romantic poets - the American Romantic poet - and though Powers concludes *The Stress of her Regard*, his other novel on the Romantic poets, with his protagonist wishing his own son is not born an extraordinary being like the Romantics, this fictional resurrection of the poets and of Mary Shelley is clearly nostalgic. This nostalgia explicitly refers to the myth-making ability of the Romantic poets and of Mary Shelley as we see it now and denotes, no doubt, an underlying confusion about who the real myth makers are now (for, although there are many, none seem to be the pure artists the Romantics are in the popular imagination) or, alternatively, a growing anxiety of influences in Harold Bloom's terms (1973: 29): "To be enslaved by any precursor's system, Blake says, is to be inhibited by an obsessive reasoning and comparing, presumably of one's own works to the precursor's. Poetic Influence is thus a disease of self-consciousness." It could be said, following Bloom, that the 1980s and 1990s, as far as the weight imposed by the Romantic construction of monstrosity on the present is concerned, are years in which the disease of self-consciousness has been subverted by those working at the margins of high art and turned into a rich source for new films and novels.

2.2.4. *The Strange Case of Mary Reilly and Mr. Hyde*

R.L. Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) was adapted for the stage soon after its publication by T. R. Sullivan, whose 1887 play gave actor Richard Mansfield an enormously popular role that he played until 1907¹. Eleven screen versions were produced between 1908 and 1920, both in the USA and in Europe, although the first quality version was the 1920 film by John S. Robertson, with John Barrymore in the dual role of Jekyll and Hyde. This version, written by Clara S. Berenger, links Jekyll with Dorian Gray and introduces a female

¹See Skal (op. cit.: 139 - 145.)

character whose function is to justify Jekyll's attraction for sex and his transformation into Hyde. The 'bad' girl was a dance-hall artist in the 1920 film, a prostitute in Mamoulian's 1932 version and in Fleming's 1941, but became in Roy Ward Baker's *Dr. Jekyll and Sister Hyde* (1971) Jekyll's own twin personality. The glamorous sister Hyde, made responsible for the crimes of Jack the Ripper has recently reappeared in *Dr. Jekyll and Ms. Hyde* (1995), a comedy whose main asset is based on the use of computer animation (morphing) to visualize the gradual transformation of Jekyll into the exuberant Ms. Hyde played by Sean Young. The absence of women in Stevenson's original text and the monstrous, ape-like Mr. Hyde who symbolizes Jekyll's repressed sexuality have been finally replaced by a new idea more in tune with the rise of the figure of the drag queen in the 1990s: the monster hiding inside every Jekyll is the almost parodic version of the ultra-feminine sexual woman idolised by the transvestites and the transsexuals.

The adaptation of Stevenson's novella that corresponds to the cycle of new Gothic films together with *Bram Stoker's Dracula* and *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* is Stephen Frears' *Mary Reilly* (1995), a film that received rather unenthusiastic reviews. The new film version, which remained for more than a year and a half on the editing table while a decision was made about an appropriate ending, does not return to Stevenson's original but to the novel by Valerie Martin which reinterprets the story of Dr. Jekyll from the point of view of his maid Mary Reilly in a plot recalling "Beauty and the Beast". Six different ends were written by screen writer Christopher Hampton, none of which was found satisfactory by the studio, Columbia Tri-Star, for the type of widely appealing film they have in mind (Fowler, 1995). This is not surprising, considering the objections that the end of Valerie Martin's novel may rise on all fronts. The problem is that the novel is based on a romanticized idea of the relationship between masters and servants that clashes badly with Mary's own harsh life. How Mary's devotion for her workaholic master remains untouched despite the drudgery of the work she does in his household is never justified by Valerie Martin, except, perhaps, with the idea that Mary has become a masochist as a consequence of the ill-treatment she suffered at her father's hands. Jekyll and Mary's relationship is exploitative in more than just

one sense, for he does not hesitate to use her loyalty to his own advantage, sending Mary on errands to cover up the crimes Hyde has committed. If something about Mary attracts Jekyll at all, this is her ability to unwittingly shed a new light thanks to her common sense on the cryptic thoughts about the nature of evil and the fear of oneself that he expresses to her. Yet since they always talk at cross purposes and since Jekyll never sees in her anything but a specially loyal servant, Mary's love for him seems groundless and, what is even worse, a masochistic fantasy. Only masochistic sentimentalism explains that when she finally realizes that the hideous Hyde is also her beloved Jekyll, she still goes on loving her master, despite the fact that he has never returned her love; when his dead body is found she sacrifices her reputation by letting herself be found clinging to him as a symbolic form of establishing her undying devotion for him and of vindicating his innocence - even though he has not asked her to do so.

Frears' film is an excellent adaptation of the novel though not an outstanding film. Julia Roberts, who plays the role of Mary Reilly, gives credibility to Mary's passion for her master; the actress strikes a very adequate balance towards Mary's natural shyness and meekness and her gradual accommodation to the dark impulses she discovers in her own soul. Frears chose to emphasize Mary's attraction for Mr. Hyde rather than faithfully respect Mary's protectiveness towards the fallen Dr. Jekyll as portrayed in the original story. This was particularly emphasized by a scene missing in the novel in which Mary has an erotic dream in which Hyde rapes her. The film becomes thus a study of woman's dual nature and ends, fittingly, with Mary's witnessing the final transformation of Dr. Jekyll into Mr. Hyde and deciding to remain with him, and not with Jekyll as happens in the novel, until his dead body is found. The twin role of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde is played by John Malkovich, who had previously worked with Frears in *Dangerous Liaisons* (1988), a film in which he played the role of the seducer Valmont. Malkovich plays Hyde as a more vicious Valmont so that there is an obvious sexual tension between him and Mary lacking in the novel; in contrast, his Dr. Jekyll is a rather more unsympathetic character than in previous screen adaptations or in Martin's novel, which contributes little to an understanding of Mary's original

attraction for him. All in all, Frears' film can be said to be artistically honest but disappointing. *Mary Reilly* makes the best of a novel which it itself a failed attempt at adding a new angle to Stevenson's classic but because its original source is not convincing, the film itself fails. Martin's novel and Frears' adaptation seemingly indicate that the cycle of adaptations of *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* cannot progress further. Even the special effects used to visualize Jekyll's metamorphosis are a dead end, not because they are of poor quality but, paradoxically, because they are excellent: for the time being, it seems impossible to produce a better representation of the transformation.

Further screen adaptations of Stevenson's own story are unlikely to appear in the next decade, but this does not mean that the theme of the man in constant struggle with an irrepressible alter ego who threatens to take over has lost its appeal. Many other twentieth-century narratives recall the story of Jekyll and Hyde: many heroes of comic such as Superman and Batman possess a dual personality which is by no means conflict-free despite not being as problematic as that of Stevenson's hero. Most serial killers of fiction respond to the stereotype of the perfectly respectable next-door neighbour whose darker side only surfaces with his criminal misdeeds. I would like to turn now to two recent films that are indirectly inspired by Stevenson's story and that might furnish some clues as to the directions that the topic of man's split personality might take in the future.

Jerry Lewis' parody of Jekyll and Hyde *The Nutty Professor* (1963) is the precedent of one of the most inspired comedies based on this classic of Gothic horror, Charles Russell's *The Mask* (1994), whose star role was interpreted by the comedian hailed as Lewis' successor, Jim Carrey. In this film Jekyll's Victorian earnestness, which is still romanticised in *Mary Reilly*, becomes the object of an affectionate, carnivalesque parody: Stanley Ipkiss, a not too bright bank clerk who represents the American Everyman, is transformed into his unruly alter ego, a living green-faced cartoon of contagious energy, when he comes across an ancient mask belonging to the lost cult of

a minor god of mischief. Rather than spread corruption around him as Hyde does, Ipkiss' rowdy new persona acts like a boisterous Batman, punishing the villains with bizarre tactics and finally winning the girl. In *The Mask* she is still the 'bad' girl of previous screen versions of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, though she is simply a gangster's moll rather than a prostitute; yet she assumes in the end an active role that helps save Ipkiss' life and her own. The vindication of Everyman is finally ratified precisely by her choosing to stay with the dull Ipkiss rather than with his farcical alter ego, who is, like Hyde, a monster. In this version, therefore, woman no longer connotes the repressed sexuality from which Hyde emerges; on the contrary, her love liberates Ipkiss/Jekyll from the need to wear a mask and helps him achieve a new harmony.

A similar vindication of Everyman takes place in another postmodernist adaptation of the paradigmatic book by H.G. Wells, *The Invisible Man* (1897), which is no doubt also derived from Stevenson's *Jekyll and Hyde*. Like *The Mask*, which is based on a comic, John Carpenter's *Memoirs of an Invisible Man* (1992) is not directly based on the original literary source but on an intermediate text, in this case, the 1987 novel by H.F. Saint of the same title; however, the popular 1933 film by James Whale is also a fundamental intertext of Carpenter's film. In Whale's film, Jack Griffin is an ambitious scientist, not unlike Jekyll, who aspires to dominate the world thanks to a drug that makes him invisible; Griffin is not monstrous by virtue of his invisibility but because he is a portrait of the scientist as the fascist dictator on the rise, a figure of horrific overtones given the historical background contemporary to the making of the film in the 1930s. This monster of power, portrayed as an unsympathetic character unlike other monsters such as Jekyll or Frankenstein in the 1930s films, is nonetheless pardoned for his sins when he confesses to his girlfriend Flora - a figure descended from Mary Shelley's Elizabeth - his failure and his mistake in meddling with nature.

In contrast to the angry scientist who hungers for power in Whale's film, Carpenter's protagonist, Nick Holloway, is, as his name indicates, a hollow non-entity. Like Ipkiss, he chances upon his misfortune by accident, though in his case the accident is caused by his own clumsiness.

Unlike his 1930s predecessor, the invisible man of the 1990s finds no positive use for his invisibility; on the contrary, his isolation and the relentless persecution of a mad government agent, David Jenkins, who wants to turn the invisible Holloway into the ultimate spy are the negative consequences of his transformation. Jenkins a monstrous torturer and killer, tries to involve Nick in a Faustian pact, having realized that since dull Nick was already invisible in a social sense his invisibility as a spy is doubly guaranteed by his new condition. In the end, Holloway frustrates Jenkins' plans and avoids the threat of becoming a freak exploited by the media, choosing the ideal, anonymous, happy life with his supportive girlfriend Alice.

Memoirs of an Invisible Man offers like *The Mask* a parodic revision of the original text, transposed from the mock Gothic Europe of the 1930s films to America in the 1990s, with protagonists that reject the uniqueness of the European romantic monster to enjoy a new existence as the all-American Everyman. Monstrosity is for them an accident brought about by the chaotic nature of life whose only real benefit is that it allows them to meet the woman of their dreams, a woman who responds with love for the man rather than love for the monster. They certainly parody the seriousness of the original European Gothic text, but their carnivalesque, irreverent attitude cannot conceal the fear these comedies express. While Jekyll condemns himself to die in his struggle to control his body, paying thus a price for having transgressed the limits of forbidden knowledge like Frankenstein, Ipkiss and Holloway are anti-romantic heroes born from a very different, typically American context defined by the fear that a fortuitous accident may deprive the individual of the control over his or her own body and turn him into a monstrous Other, a freak rejected by society.

As the different American films based on *Frankenstein*, *Dracula* and *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* show, Britain and America understand the monster differently. The British romantic monster is simultaneously admired and mocked by American film, which tends to trivialise him. There seems to be a basic incompatibility between the British romantic spirit that gave birth to Frankenstein, Dracula and Mr. Hyde and the American obsession for attaining a stable sense of normality which excludes all deviant monstrosity. For America, the monster is, basically, the freak,

the outsider, while for Britain the monster is the dark other (maybe the dark brother) always close to us. This discrepancy between America and Britain - or perhaps Europe in general - is best dramatized in Tim Burton's *Edward Scissorhands*; a film in which one of Frankenstein's monster's descendant, Edward, finally renounces the possibility of becoming a suburban American citizen, choosing instead a life of happy isolation in the realm of the imaginary.

The wave of mainstream adaptations of the British classics of horror produced in recent years is now over. Since these films have not succeeded as was expected, and since their shortcomings have stressed the limits of the cycle of adaptations of *Dracula*, *Frankenstein* and *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, it is unlikely that other similar high-budget adaptations are to be undertaken by Hollywood in the following decade. The next logical step is the adaptation of other works inspired more or less directly by the original British classics, though the ambiguous critical status of Neil Jordan's adaptation of Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire*, a novel linked to *Dracula*, seemingly suggests that the best or the most innovative adaptations will be based on remote imitations, as was the case in *The Mask*. On the other hand, these adaptations have also disclosed that, unlike what was previously thought, making a good horror film is not an easy task: the more or less relative failure of reputed mainstream directors such as Francis Ford Coppola, Kenneth Branagh, Stephen Frears and Neil Jordan to deal with horror and the monster proves that, in any case, neither parody nor homage to the literary sources are the right ingredients to enliven the new Gothic films. New subjects are needed and also a much closer look at the so far underrated work of genre film directors.

2.3. New Paradigms of Monströ'sity: The Problematic of Mythmaking in the Era of Commercial Culture.

2.3.1. Serialisation and the limits of Foklorisation

Creating a new monster that can join the select circle of those who have gained universal fame as myths is by no means easy. In general, the monsters of the contemporary novel live in the

shadow of contemporary film and the cases in which a writer is acknowledged as, at least, the co-creator of the new myth are rare: the name of Michael Crichton is familiar to many as the author of *Jurassic Park*, but fewer people could name Thomas Harris as the creator of Hannibal Lecter. Novels about monstrosity which have not been adapted exist for film-goers in a limbo also ignored by the media and advertising, inhabited by those who enjoy reading (fewer and fewer in relative if not in absolute numbers) and who often hope to see their favourite novels some time on the screen.

The domain of the monstrous in the novel is visited with frequency by Hollywood executives looking for classics or for new profitable properties on the evidence of sales figures. Nevertheless, despite the generalised impression that the new Hollywood blockbusters - big-budget spectacular films sold to most countries in the world and often centering on a monster - are made according to a formula that guarantees success, the fact is that there is no such formula, as *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* has proved. The main Hollywood studios rely on the adaptations of novels, comics, video-games, and TV series on a trial by error basis in their constant search for the monster to be the star of films that will generate with its concomitant media exposure "a cultural commodity that might be regenerated in any number of media forms" (Schatz, 1993: 29). As Thomas Schatz adds, the forms can be certainly varied, and may include pop music, theme park rides, comic book, novelizations, and even arcade games: "*Hook* and *Terminator 2*", he notes, "... were released simultaneously as movies and video games" (ibid.: 29). Another form of exploiting the monster as commodity is the sequel and even the serialisation, in two senses: independent companies who have produced an unexpected box-office hit - such as New Line and the original *Nightmare on Elm Street* - may grow by producing new sequels which attract costumers for the new films and the attached merchandising but also, retrospectively, for the first films of the series through video-rental outlets. In other cases, major Hollywood studios may consolidate the success of independent monster films either by distributing or producing the sequels. As James Twitchell

(op. cit.: 56) observes, rather caustically "films are made to imitate films that made money"; in this sense, as he adds, "a clone is as good as a sequel."

Obviously, not only films and novels dealing with monsters have inspired sequels or series, yet it can be said that most films and novels about monstrosity have been the source of further films and novels. Popularity - hence potential profits - is clearly to be considered a major factor in accounting for the repetition of well-known plots with well-known characters in film, though there seem to be other factors at work, especially as far as literature is concerned. One of these is that while mainstream novels tend to be in the 1980s and 1990s rather short and are hardly ever developed in a sequel and much less throughout several volumes, genre fiction - fantasy above all in its widest sense - is often published in trilogies or series, narrating a story of confrontations between a hero/ine and a monster in hundreds of pages. To name but a few Orson Scott Card's *Ender's Game* is completed by *Speaker for the Dead* and *Xenocide*, Olivia Butler's *Dawn by Wild Seed* and *Adulthood Rites*, Robert Holdstock's *Mythago Wood* by *Lavondyss* and *The Bone Forest*. Series are less common, though Terry Pratchett's *Discworld* series, running now to nineteen volumes, proves that there are exceptions. In general, these second and third volumes cannot be called sequels, as they are in most cases simply parts in which very long novels are divided. They repeat, somehow, the format of the three-volume Victorian novel and are clearly aimed at consolidating the potential readership of a given writer, as readers will buy the next instalment in the series as soon as it is published and not on account of the reviews.

The situation in the monster film is different. Only exceptionally are films planned in sets of two or three: George Lucas's trilogy *Star Wars*, *The Empire Strikes Back* and *The Return of the Jedi* is one such exception. The most current formula is producing a sequel only if the original film is successful. Thus, even though there are properly speaking no trilogies in film, many monster films generate one or two sequels - *Alien* (*Aliens*, *Alien³*), *Hellraiser* (*Hellbound*, *Hellraiser III*), *Batman* (*Batman Returns*, *Batman Forever*) - but find it very difficult to keep the interest of the public alive from the third

sequel onwards, which is usually released only through home video or transformed into a TV series - or both. This last case corresponds, for instance, to *Robocop*. *Robocop 4* and *Robocop 5*, which have been released for video rental but are, in fact, episodes of the Canadian television series first screened in 1994, only two years after the release of *Robocop 3*.

How can the success of the *Friday the 13th* (nine films) and the *Nightmare on Elm Street* series (seven films) be explained against this background of endless repetition of the same plot and why are the clones in these series as good - or better - for the public than the original film? No doubt sequels and serialisations as well as cycles of adaptations are typical of the view of culture as a commodity in Western societies, but the only way to explain why low-budget films may originate long series, while important Hollywood studios fail to produce successful new adaptations is the high degree of openness and tolerance the audience has towards the former in comparison to the latter. Low-budget horror films in which the film director as 'author' recedes to the background but in which a number of features recognisable from other monster films are foregrounded are closer to the world of the folk tale rather than to the world of art and function according to a different code:

Students of folklore or early literature recognize in horror the hallmarks of oral narrative: the free exchange of themes and motifs, the archetypal characters and situations, the accumulation of sequels, remakes, imitations. This is a field in which there is in some sense no original, no real or right text, but only variants; a world in which, therefore, the meaning of the individual example lies outside itself. The "art" of the horror film, like the "art" of pornography, is to a very large extent the art of rendition or performance, and it is understood as such by the competent audience. (Clover, 1993: 10)

This means that there is necessarily a difference between the way in which artistic authorship is understood in sequels or new adaptations of very well-known stories about monstrosity. Novels - both mainstream and genre fiction - are read as the products of a single artist and are, therefore, closed to the process of folklorisation (or appropriation) that only begins with an adaptation to another medium, typically film. Despite novels such as Valerie Martin's *Mary Reilly*, nobody claims that s/he could write *Frankenstein*, *Dracula* or, for that matter, *Jurassic Park* or *The Silence of the*

Lambs, better than the original authors - hence, the sequels, if there are any, are also written by the same authors (the case of Crichton's *Lost Eden*) as their names are essential to sell the books. In contrast, the collaborative nature of film (the fact that the supposed 'author' is in fact surrounded by a crew of relatively anonymous people), the distance from the original text through the many adaptations, the respect (or lack of respect) for the expectations of the public and the claims made a priori about the quality of the film condition the reception of the sequels.

Before, for instance, *Freddy's Dead: The Final Nightmare*, the sixth episode of *Nightmare on Elm Street*, the attitude of the spectator is less critical because, first, a film of this type makes no particular claims about being art, the creation of a quality film director, or an innovating film, nor does it try to distort the motifs introduced in the original. A displeased spectator can just wait for sequel number seven or eight or see again his or her favourite episode, while a vague 'they' are blamed for their inability to produce a better film - though this particular film can be regarded as a remarkable contribution to the series. In contrast, a big-budget film like *Batman Forever*, which has been extensively publicised, has a cast of big stars, a reputed director and producer but fails to accomplish the expectations of its spectators because it is out of tune with the comics and the first two films may put many viewers off the next sequel. Furthermore, it may produce the impression that Hollywood is purposefully disregarding what people want to be told and, what is more important, what people could tell had they the means. Since the audience for the sequel is guaranteed by the advertising, less effort goes into the writing of the screenplay beginning by considering who is the best choice of screen writer. Rather than relying on a valid formula for a whole genre, screen writers rely on motifs borrowed from other successful films, so that, ultimately, all the screenplays give a strong impression of *déjà vu*, not because they have a common source but because they mirror each other.

The spectator attracted by the promise of original visualization shown in the trailer and by the presence of famed actors in the main roles may certainly feel frustrated and even angry at the

film not for what it is, but for it could have been had more attention been paid to the story; this considering not only the spectacular technological means available to make the film but also the fact that many of those sitting in the dark of the cinema could have written better screenplays because many of them are more familiar with the motifs of the original texts, films or novels. As

John Ellis (1992: 86) observes:

Dislike of a film is usually very aggressive ... A film which fails for a spectator usually fails because it does not provide the necessary play with phantasies, and the final closing accomplishment of a position of mastery and knowledge. The anxiety produced in the expectation of its satisfaction is not dissipated; it returns as a kind of aggression.

There is an illusion of accessibility - of complicity - in the case of successful series of low-budget horror films based on the closeness between audience and filmmakers (the sharing of the folk motifs, so to speak, informed by the phenomenon of fandom) that cannot be kept with expensive sequels or new adaptations which fail to make the most of the motifs already integrated in the contemporary 'folklore' about monstrosity circulating in the novel, comics and other narrative media, such as television.

One of the few artists generating new monsters for the new times in novels and films is the British writer and film director Clive Barker, whose main contribution to the new mythology of monstrosity are the demoniac Cenobites. They first appeared in Barker's novella *The Hellbound Heart* (1986) whose screen version, *Hellraiser* (1987), was directed by Barker himself. With *Hellraiser*, Barker gave himself the chance to visualize his own literary work on the screen and to modify it in significant ways. This film has been followed, so far, by two sequels, *Hellraiser II: Hellbound* (1988) and *Hellraiser III: Hell on Earth* (1992), in which Barker has been the executive producer, and by the Marvel-Epic comic (1991). In addition, one of Barker's short stories, "The Forbidden", has been adapted for the screen by Bernard Rose as *Candyman* (1992), a remarkable horror film that has originated a sequel, *Candyman 2* (1995), aimed at consolidating the popularity of the eponymous monster who has been even regarded as a possible replacement for Freddy Krueger as the

bogeyman of the 1990s. The paradox of Barker's case is that even though the films in which the Cenobites appear are far inferior to his novels (especially *Imajica*) and short stories, his fame among horror fans is based on these very popular yet shallow monsters that he chose to transfer onto the screen rather than on the more complex monsters of his literary work.

The motifs that bind the *Hellraiser* series - the search for transcendence through pain and woman's ability to restore the monstrous Cenobite to his or her lost human form through compassion - appear mixed with motifs that come from *Frankenstein* (the fragmented body), *Dracula* (the vampirising of the victims in order to rebuild the fragmented body), *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (the demonic Pinhead's split persona) and even from *Faustus* (the pact with the demons that is not honoured). However, the potential of the rich mixture of themes to generate new directions in the construction of monstrosity in the 1980s and 1990s has been eclipsed by the series' main asset, namely, the original iconography of the neo-Gothic Cenobites with their leather clothes, grotesque faces, and open wounds, especially of their leader Pinhead. The third episode, for instance, fails to exploit the idea that Pinhead is actually a fallen human being, a British military officer named Spencer, who prefers to enter the realm of supernatural suffering as a demon rather than to endure life after the experience of only too human suffering in the trenches during World War I. Instead of exploiting this topic, much is made of the special effects showing how Pinhead fragments his victims' bodies as his own was fragmented.

The case of the *Hellraiser* series is, thus, typical. In short, sequels are produced until the iconographical appeal of the screen monster wears out, on the wrong assumption that the spectacular body of the monster suffices to sustain the interest of the spectator. This is obviously not the case, as the progressive loss of quality of most sequels show. The paradox is that there are sufficient innovating angles in most sequels to invigorate the budding mythical monster but since the talent of contemporary film-making seems to lie on the side of visualization rather than narration these motifs remain underexploited. On the other hand, while people like Barker himself, insist on making safe bets by reproducing the success of films in which the audience saw if not a

great quality at least a potential for new paradigms of monstrosity, many of the most exceptional novels about monstrosity written in the 1980s and 1990s remain unadapted, including those written by people like Barker who could find the means to adapt them.

The conclusion is that the restricted ownership of the means to produce and distribute this type of 'folk tale' films is resulting in a progressive stagnation of the narratives about monstrosity in film. This decline is resented by audiences who are, unlike what is usually thought, used to reading long, complex printed texts (novels but also comics) which are visually *and* thematically appealing and who expect at least the same from films. The mechanism of film adaptation and serialisation actually restricts the participation of the best potential storytellers, those who in the past made their anonymous contributions to fairy tales, folk tales and legends told in the dark around the fire, who are now turned into apparently passive, more often dissatisfied, consumers. What explains the difference between the dynamic construction of the monster in the field of the literary - either mainstream or genre fiction - and the slow response of film to that diversity is, therefore, a series of factors: firstly, the great investment needed to make a film - even a low-budget one - in comparison to the cost of writing and publishing a book limits the number of filmmakers or screen writers who could offer new angles on monstrosity; secondly, the foregrounding of the visualization of the monster at the expense of the narrative which quickly exhausts the appeal of the monster in sequels and series is the cause and the effect of a growing disregard in Hollywood for (screen) writing, and thirdly, filmmakers seem to base their approach to the monster in film on the basis of other films but are, in general, bad readers of printed fiction, whereas writers have in general assimilated well what the best films can offer in terms of visualization as far as the construction of the monster is concerned. Perhaps with the expansion of Internet and with the immediate access of film producers to part of the potential audience, a new, more closer collaboration between those who make films and those who consume them will take place.