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Monstrosity in a Ballet Adaptation of Mary Shelley’s

*Frankenstein**

Introduction

Upon its publication in 1818, Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein; or the Modern Prometheus* instantly became a literary phenomenon which has defied time with numerous adaptations and appropriations. The eponymous character and his Creature have appeared in novels, comics, graphic novels, children’s books, advertisements, video and role-playing games as well as scores of movies and stage productions. There is no doubt that more than two hundred years of popular culture representations and references have ensured that even a person who has not read the novel, knows the story, at least to some extent. Everyone has heard of Frankenstein, even if they confuse the name with the Creature.

The adaptive process certainly helps to “ensure a story’s on-going rebirth within other communication platforms, other political and cultural contexts” (Griggs: 5). For *Frankenstein* these contexts have usually been the fears and desires of contemporary times, especially in respect to what it means to be a human being and as George Haggerty notes, “to be a breathing, desiring,

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needing, feeling creature [...] can only be measured in levels of monstrosity” (Haggerty: 119).

Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* and the issues of monstrosity raised in the novel more than two hundred years ago continue to inspire creators in the twenty-first century as they find contemporary relevance in elements of the narrative. Among other media, the story is still adapted to the stage, including the 2016 collaboration between the San Francisco Ballet and Royal Opera House ballet production choreographed by Liam Scarlett, with the commissioned score composed by Lowell Liebermann, the sets as well as costumes designed by John Macfarlane, and lighting by Finn Ross.

Liam Scarlett interprets the socially relevant motif of monstrosity as queer desire of the Creature as well as the prevailing societal norms which lead to Victor’s rejection of his creation. With help from designers and dancers, Scarlett conveys his ideas through choreography, costumes, characterisation, stage design, and theatrical properties. Therefore, his ballet adaptation of Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* presents monstrosity by implementing medium-specific elements.

The success of this production proves that Shelley’s story endures and still appeals to the public more than two hundred years later. The purpose of this paper is to establish how Scarlett’s adaptation allows the modern audiences to interpret the novel in ways which make the story socially relevant in the twenty-first century in regard to monstrosity and what can be considered monstrous in our times.

Approaching *Frankenstein* through queer studies

While reading *Frankenstein*, the basis for a queer interpretation becomes obvious from the very beginning of the novel. In his second letter, Walton writes: “I desire the company of a man who could sympathise with me; whose eyes would reply to mine. [...] I greatly need a friend who would have sense enough not to despise me as romantic, and affection enough for me to endeavour to regulate my mind” (Shelley: 18). He finds such a friend in Victor Frankenstein, who is immediately proclaimed “the brother of [his] [...] heart” (Shelley: 24). Moreover, another of Walton’s letters recounts Victor’s fondness for his childhood friend, Henry Clerval, who is described as “the most noble of human creatures”

(Shelley: 25), “so divinely wrought, and beaming with beauty” (Shelley: 124), with a “soul overflowed with ardent affections” (Shelley: 123) and as a person whose “friendship was of that devoted and wondrous nature that the worldly minded teach us to look for only in the imagination” (Shelley: 123). No wonder that Victor is more devastated by the loss of his friend Henry than of his bride Elizabeth. Moreover, this loss “unmans him” (Haggerty: 124) as he is “carried out of the room in strong convulsions” (Shelley: 140). As Friedman and Kavey claim, “this authorial focus on powerful male connections, particularly as seen in Henry’s and Walton’s preference for spending time with other men, does lend support to seeing *Frankenstein* as having a homoerotic subtext” (Friedman, Kavey: 8).

James McGavran states that even though there is no overt homosexuality in Victor’s homosocial closeness to Clerval and Walton, the unconscious homoerotic desire between Victor and the Creature, and consequent homosexual panic combined with several delayed, interrupted, or marginalised heterosexual relations in the novel, make Victor’s “pursuit of his creature [...] a secret yet scarcely disguised gay adventure” (McGavran: 60). Judith Halberstam also notes that giving life to the Creature, but then preventing him from mating, strongly suggests a homoerotic tension between Victor and his creation (Halberstam: 42). McGavran contends the novel warns that “the intimate relations between (and within) men, if not acknowledged and understood, can lead to the destruction not just of heterosexual relationships but of both men’s and women’s lives” (McGavran: 62).

George Haggerty in his essay “What Is Queer about *Frankenstein*?” enumerates even more elements that make the novel queer and the relationship between Victor and the Creature beyond the normative: “masculine birth, lurid devotion between males, sexual aggression, and finally a completely obsessive relation between a scientist and the violent other he has created” (Haggerty: 116). Haggerty also notes that this proto-Freudian configuration between Frankenstein and his creation shows that the “masculine figures, obsessed only with each other, destroy the female in their quest for masculinised mutuality” (Haggerty: 117). In the course of the novel men’s devotion toward each other highlights what Sedgwick named the homosocial (Sedgwick: 83).

Queer reading can also be implemented to *Frankenstein's* adaptations. There is no doubt that two of the most famous cinematic renditions of the novel are James Whale's *Frankenstein* (Universal Pictures, 1931) and *Bride of Frankenstein* (Universal Pictures, 1935). Harry Benshoff named the 1931 production one of the prominent queer horror films of the classical Hollywood (Benshoff: 40) as it includes "the queer villain's desire for one or both members of the couple" (Benshoff: 37) and "the mad scientist, who, with the frequent aid of a male assistant, sets out to create life homosexually – without the benefit of heterosexual intercourse" (Benshoff: 48). He also takes into consideration *Bride of Frankenstein*, and particularly the character of Doctor Septimus Pretorius (Ernest Thesiger) who is described as "one of the most visibly gay characters in American film of the period" that "oozes a gay camp aura" (Benshoff: 50) throughout the entire movie. Not only is his queerness explicitly stated in the film (the maid calls him a "very queer looking old gentleman"), but also his actions are unambiguous. He is the one to interrupt and make Henry Frankenstein (Colin Clive) leave Elizabeth's (Valerie Hobson) bridal chamber in order to create a mate for the Creature (Boris Karloff) together. Taking this narrative into consideration, Noël Carroll comments that the 1935 production is a "thinly disguised tale of homosexual seduction" (qtd. in Picart, Smoot, Blodgett: ix).

Another adaptation that can be read via queer theory is Kenneth Branagh's *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* (TriStar Pictures, 1994). For instance, the creation scene suggests a homoerotic tension between Frankenstein (Kenneth Branagh) and his creation (Robert De Niro). Bouriana Zakhariyeva writes that in this scene "[half-naked] creator and [fully naked] creation embrace in an ambivalent scene of struggle and affection; their hug is an expression of a desire to separate from each other and at the same time to help each other stand erect" (Zakhariyeva: 745). Moreover, Victor not only holds his creation, but he also carries out a heart massage and "ultimately engages in what looks like an enticing parody of sexual intercourse, which reflects the homosexual side of his character in the film, as well as in the novel" (Laplace-Sinatra: 193). The homosexual connotations that can be distinguished in *Frankenstein* as well as its cinematic adaptations over the years undoubtedly provide an abundance of material for a queer reading as well as attest to the novel's continuing relevance and prominence.

Royal Ballet and San Francisco Ballet's *Frankenstein* (2016)

Classical ballet is a highly stylised and conventional art form that conveys narrative through “its formal vocabulary of movement, embodied arrangements [...], [and] expression” (Garland-Thomson, 2018b: 18), all set to orchestral music. Its long-established structure includes solos, *pas de deux*¹ and *corps de ballet*² formations, which are all used by Liam Scarlett in his adaptation of *Frankenstein* to highlight the differences between the familiar, normative values represented by the Frankenstein family and community units, and the intrusive, unfamiliar ones represented by the solitary Creature. In *Frankenstein*, those conventional balletic structures “shift in membership, form, and meaning throughout the ballet, expressing the entangled relations of recognition, belonging, rejection, repudiation, tenderness, and violence” (Garland-Thomson, 2018b: 18) that bind the family, Victor, and the Creature. Thus, the ballet, through its choreography, explores the complexity of interpersonal relations, conventional social norms, and the precariousness of rejection and alienation based on one's sexuality.

Scarlett begins to establish those norms from the very beginning of the ballet, that is, in the prologue, as he introduces the members of the Frankenstein household and provides a backstory for Victor through conventional balletic figures and synchronised formations. What transpires from this strict conventionality of the choreography in the opening scenes is a “theme of proper, stable family membership and relationships” (Garland-Thomson, 2018a: 470), a meaning which is carried through the rest of the ballet.

In the prologue, the audience can see numerous servants, Elizabeth and Victor as well as Mr. Frankenstein and his wife, dance in a synchronised manner. The characters' placement in relation to one another is particularly important. The centre of the stage is taken by the mother and father as well as Victor and Elizabeth as the most important figures representing family values and order. All characters are paired in a male and female dyad, which as a standard for classical ballet, demonstrates normative gender and sexuality differentiations. The fact

¹ One of the main formations in ballet, *pas de deux* refers to a dance of a pair.

² *Corps de ballet* is an ensemble of a ballet company, usually comprised of the youngest, least experienced dancers.

that there are no solos in any of the opening scenes suggests that a character's individuality is unsought as it deviates from the established norms. The rest of the characters remain in sync within their own group and with the Frankenstein family, which positions them as a community that values and conforms to the conventions. Thus, the characters' *pas de deux* and group dances convey the meaning of integration, understanding and familial belonging.

Similar ensemble dances appear in the remaining acts of the ballet with characters signifying various groups of society. In act I, male university students dance in a highly synchronised piece which first involves nurses in the laboratory, and then prostitutes in the tavern. Acts II and III present dancing pairs of birthday and wedding guests, respectively. Therefore, hetero-normative standards are repeatedly brought out in the ballet. This creates a basis which emphasises the Creature's alterity and solitude. All of the Creature's solo variations differ significantly from the strict classical ballet forms of *pas de deux* and *corps de ballet* dances. It should be noted that one of the main aims of the classical choreography is to "create an illusion of weightlessness and effortlessness" (Au: 45), especially by means of leaps or lifts in *pas de deux*. Yet, the Creature's choreography emphasises "gravity more than grace" (Garland-Thomson, 2018a: 475) as he often positions his whole body horizontally on stage. These movements are not part of classical vocabulary and rather bring to mind modern dance. Thus, the Creature breaks with traditions and conventions of the classical ballet, which points out his otherness as well as his intrusion on common social values.

The characters' costumes in the opening scenes also help establishing the norms. The mother and the father are most lavishly dressed in satin brocade gowns and wigs, which mark their social status. As aristocrats, Victor and Elizabeth are coiffed and dressed in elegant costumes, yet theirs are more modest, which signifies their young age as well as a proper family order. Female servants are dressed in pinafores with caps and male ones in liveries, which provide a conventional gender differentiation. Similar differentiation continues in the first act with elite male students and anatomy professor dressed in white shirts, velvet waistcoats and long coats in sombre colours as well as nurses and prostitutes dressed in neat and seductive dresses, respectively.

This orderliness is contrasted with the Creature's entrance at the end of the first act. He appears naked as the dancer's bodysuit is skin-tight and

almost transparent, “intricately streaked with vividly sutured red wounds” (Garland-Thomson, 2018a: 474). He is also bald, and his head is covered in scars. Similarly to the Creature’s choreographic steps, his costume also brings to mind modern dance with its minimalistic attires. His austere costume visibly stands out against the richly dressed characters, which highlights the Creature’s otherness.

Even in comparison to Victor who is dressed in fully black clothes, the Creature looks raw. He does not protect or hide anything as nakedness symbolises his true nature, while Victor’s remains hidden until the dramatic finale. Despite these differences, their shape and size are very much alike, which suggests that the creator and the creation are in fact equal (Garland-Thomson, 2018b: 19). Moreover, when dressed, the Creature is unnoticed by other characters on stage. This shows that unless he displays his true self, he is indistinguishable as he does not differ from the others. Thus, it is not his “hideous appearance” that can be considered monstrous, but desires that defy the rules. Both the costumes and the characterisation contrast belongingness with alienation. The naked Creature is clearly cast as the Other among those who are recognised as part of the community.

The setting of the ballet is also meaningful in this production. The ballet opens with a fragment of a colossal neoclassical manor in the background. The following scene shows the audience one of the rooms inside the mansion. It is spacious and richly decorated with marble on the walls and an enormous window. The grandeur of the mansion is also highlighted in the final act in which the scenery constitutes of a grand curving staircase and shapes of floor-to-ceiling lattice windows projected on the stage floor with gobos.

The magnificence and splendour of the mansion are contrasted with the stark and barren landscape of the forest in act II (Stewart: n.p.). The mansion, which constitutes the family’s and community’s dwelling, is far more superior than the forest, which is the Creature’s habitat. Moreover, the “desolate landscape [...] studied with bare trees” (Watts: n.p.) is a clear metaphor which represents the Creature’s loneliness. Thus, the disparity between those two elements of the set strengthens the differences between the characters, which are put forth with the choreography and costumes. Such stage design highlights that the

well-established values and norms connoted with the family prevail over the ones associated with the Creature.

The Creature's non-normative desires can be presumed from his first appearance on stage during the creation scene at the end of act I. After an attempt to revive a corpse with scientific measures, Victor uncovers the Creature's unmoving body and straddles him to check if his creation is breathing. Not only the Creature's strictly scientific, masculine nascency, but also Victor's movement already suggest a queer relationship between the creator and his creation. Moreover, Victor is by no means repelled by the Creature's appearance as he can see his whole naked body lying on the autopsy table. Thinking he has failed to reanimate the body, Victor slides down and sinks down next to the table. Yet, the Creature begins to move and Victor leans towards him and begins to embrace him, which sets apart this adaptation from many other where abhorred Victor abandons the Creature at the first sight of him. It is only when the Creature rises from the table and catches his creator in an intimate, homoerotic embrace that a terrified Victor "escapes from this urgent grip" (Garland-Thomson, 2018a: 473) and repels his creation. The Creature faces rejection for the first time, which urges him to flee from the laboratory. The emotionally complex embrace between the Creature and Victor is the first indicator of the queer desire felt by the Creature. Garland-Thomson notices that "[s]ome choreographic version of this embrace between the Creature and Victor continues throughout all of their *pas de deux*" (Garland-Thomson, 2018a: 472).

The creation scene visibly "transforms the content, mood, and form of the entire ballet" (Garland-Thomson, 2018a: 471), for the first act finishes with the scene of a tormented Victor in a delirium-like state as he refuses to be comforted by his fiancée and closest friends. Thus, the Creature's entry violates the family's stability and coherence which were presented in the prologue. Moreover, his actions are inconsistent with the normative standards established in the ballet by the relationship between males and females. The Creature tries to enter the "homogenous, established family" (Garland-Thomson, 2018a: 466), but as he is different and unfamiliar, the queer Other, he is rejected by Victor. The Creature's yearning does not, however, leave Victor indifferent. He becomes distracted, does not reciprocate Elizabeth's tenderness, and is often replaced by his friend Henry Clerval to keep her company. Thus, the normative family values are

upset by the Creature's queer desire and as a result, a triangulated relationship transpires between Elizabeth, Victor, and his creation, which "casts Victor and his Creature in a secret, monstrous, and homosexual relationship [which] [...] shadows and threatens Victor's heterosexual bond and marital engagement" (Davison: 117).

Following the embrace and Victor's consequent reaction, the second act begins with two hetero-normative *pas de deux*: the first one between Justine and William and the second one between Elizabeth and Victor. Thus, the act begins "with conformity to the traditional dance vocabulary of classical ballet but, as the story shifts from the happy proper family that opens Act II to increasing disruption and degeneration, the form of dance itself shifts accordingly" (Garland-Thomson, 2018a: 481). After Victor and Elizabeth's *pas de deux*, the Creature, who was lurking in the background, "emerges from the woods to occupy centre stage alone" (Garland-Thomson, 2018a: 480). He is clearly full of anguish over his creator's rejection. The choreography of his variation shows both longing for Victor's love as well as sexual desire toward his creator. He wraps himself up in Victor's coat, recreates some of the steps of Elizabeth and Victor's duet as if he was taking the woman's place, imitates their first embrace as he seductively touches his head, and "revels in his body and physicality throughout this sequence, his hand reaching downwards to clasp his groin whilst clutching Victor's notebook" (Davison: 117). Therefore, Scarlett, through this overt homoerotic choreography, "renders explicit the idea of a homosexual union" (Davison: 117).

This idea is further considered in Victor and the Creature's first *pas de deux* at the end of act II. It begins with the Creature emerging from the forest in the background to the centre stage and grasping Victor "in a slow embrace reminiscent of the creation scene's terrible encirclement that is by turns tender, erotic, and threatening" (Garland-Thomson, 2018a: 482). He then slowly bites Victor's neck and takes off his coat. As he is naked under it, his behaviour is seductive but also vulnerable as he shows his true nature to his creator. Yet, Victor, after short acknowledgement of his creation, turns away in horror. This scene brings to mind "the struggles of a young gay man, monstrous to himself in so many ways, confronting the man who has perhaps first seduced him but now refuses to support or even acknowledge him" (Haggerty: 118).

The Creature's tender and seductive gestures present his longing for Victor's love and acceptance. He is "all pleading, reptilian need, winding himself [around his creator] [...] with quasi-erotic suggestiveness" (Jennings: n.p.) as he begs Victor, with pitiful desperation, "to recognise their affinity" (Jennings: n.p.). As his gestures are unrequited, he grabs Elizabeth's shawl and turns with it in his outstretched arms towards Victor as if he could not understand why Victor loves Elizabeth but cannot love him. Terrified Victor recoils from the Creature, then pulls out the shawl from his hands and turns his back to the Creature. His creation once again traps him in a full-body embrace, "laying his cheek tenderly against Victor's back" (Garland-Thomson, 2018a: 482).

The Creature's presence again breaks the conventions of classical ballet. Traditionally, *pas de deux* is danced by a female dancer who is supported by her male romantic partner. However, in *Frankenstein* the final *pas de deux* of the second act is danced by two male dancers. Moreover, the choreography of this duet, similarly to the Creature's previous solo variations, include modern dance movements with horizontal positions of the characters' bodies on stage, as well as "closer, more intimate physical touching involving heads, hands, mouths, torsos, and backs" (Garland-Thomson, 2018a: 481).

What also renders the Creature queer in this production is that he does not ask Victor for a female partner, he only asks for his love and acceptance. In the novel it is his request for a companion and his despair when he is deprived of her, which allow the reader to sympathise with him and recognise his needs and desires as human. Simultaneously, Victor's act of breaking his promise and destroying the female can be perceived as monstrous, as he "socially isolates" (Erle, Hendry: 3) the Creature. In this production Victor also condemns his creation to loneliness as he spurns the Creature due to his non-normative, unfamiliar to Victor, desires. However, as the ballet disposes of both the Creature's plea for a female and the scene of her creation and destruction, it allows the audience to retain their sympathy to Victor and to realise that it is the denial of his love that pushes the Creature to revenge. As the Creature decides to vindicate Victor's rejection, the ballet renders his queer desire monstrous.

The Creature's unreciprocated gestures and his creator's discernible refusals induce him in act III to kill Victor's father, best friend, and wife in vengeance. During the time in which Victor cradles his dead wife, "the Creature staggers

in shock and regret at what he has done, foreshadowing Victor's own humble, final terrible recognition of what he has wrought" (Garland-Thomson, 2018a: 486). Upon inspecting Henry's corpse, Victor realises that there is no one left on stage who would represent the values and norms established at the beginning of the ballet and cherished throughout it. Furious, Victor reaches for the gun, intending to shoot his creation. However, the Creature knocks the gun out of Victor's hands and what transpires instead is their final *pas de deux*.

In comparison to their previous dance at the end of act II, in which Victor tried to escape the Creature's grasps and did not reciprocate any gestures, this time he takes an active part in their duet. The Creature once again replicates their first embrace as he takes his creator's hands and places them on his head and face, caressing it. As he has nothing more to lose, Victor belatedly acknowledges his creation and "returns the Creature's desperate embraces in tenderly violent mirrored postures of mutual holding and rough stroking" (Garland-Thomson, 2018b: 19). Their homoerotic gestures are clearly filled with both desire, and antagonism. As Rosemarie Garland-Thomson describes the scene: "Creator and Creature perform together a vivid juxtaposition of radical sameness and difference as they move toward and away from one another, touching and releasing, embracing and struggling through the gestures of the *pas de deux* that tells us their mutually tortured and torturing story of entangled estrangement" (Garland-Thomson, 2018a: 474–475). During the final *pas de deux*, Victor and the Creature at first mirror each other's steps, which emphasises their primary opposition, but then they are parallel to each other, which suggests that in the end they are equal. What ties them together at the finale of the ballet is their shared misery and isolation as "Victor's rejection of his unwanted and unexpected [creation] [...] has led to his own inevitable aloneness" (Garland-Thomson, 2018a: 486).

As Victor cannot cope with those feelings and the destruction of values which were established by his beloved family, he begins to push the Creature away and then he commits suicide on stage as his final rejection of his creation. The devastated Creature begins to cradle his creator, sits atop his dead body, just like Victor did in the creation scene, and tries to shake him alive. He then takes Victor's unresponsive hands and manipulates them to stroke his face in queer fondness (Davison: 118) in a final version of their embrace. He then

grabs Victor's journal as if planning to bring his maker back to life the same way he was created. Realising his inability, he rises and holding Victor's lifeless hand, he walks toward the fiery backdrop. As it is the Frankensteins' mansion that is burning, it becomes clear that the part of society that imposes its values and hetero-normative conventions is to blame for the tragic ending of the story.

The finale brings to mind Lee Edelman's view in which he "posits the queer as an isolated figure, what he calls the sinthomosexual in the Lacanian terms of his study" (qtd. in Haggerty: 122). The sinthomosexual openly performs everything that the culture would like to stay hidden. Therefore, "this figure is the very mark of culture's undoing, and as such he is labelled as anti-life or as indeed death-obsessed" (qtd. in Haggerty: 122). In fact, the Creature is consumed by death as he revenges Victor's rejection by killing everyone who personifies hetero-normative family values. He is, "like the queer subject, [...] driven to destroy because he is not allowed the solace" (Haggerty: 126) of love, acceptance, and inclusion. It is his solitude, and consequently his misery that "create a queer uncanny out of which the queer construction of the malevolent creature assumes all the contours of the abject and isolated queer subject" (Haggerty: 126). Therefore, the ballet, by juxtaposing the isolation of a queer character and the affectionate closeness of the family presents societal "fears of homosexuality and masculine degeneration" (Hadlock: 269) and exposes the gravity of being ostracised and excluded from the society based on one's sexuality.

Scarlett's adaptation proves to be a complex "tale of love, loss, obsession, and alienation" (Watts: n.p.) which focuses on the unravelling of Victor's domestic happiness, and thus, emphasises the ethics of acceptance and recognition (Davison: 116). At the same time, the production renders the Creature queer and consequently, marginalises, objectifies, and alienates him. By setting the Creature in juxtaposition with stability of the Frankensteins, it becomes clear that his queerness debilitates and destructs normative bonds and family relations. As recognition and acceptance go awry (Garland-Thomson, 2018a: 465), Scarlett's ballet shows how the conventions of the society exclude those who are distinctly Other. Therefore, 2016 *Frankenstein* forces the public to "confront the fact that what our society considers monstrous, [such as queer desire], [...] is but a defamiliarized and demonised form of that which is natural and quintessentially human" (Davison: 112).

Conclusions

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* has travelled across time, place, form, and media due to its innumerable adaptations, appropriations, and references that testify to the novel's hyperadaptability, universality, and popularity. As various creators and scholars have been able to reinvent the masterpiece narrative "to fit new times and circumstances" (Perkowitz, Von Mueller: 217), the story evolves with the times which ensures its constant social relevance. Creators and academics often reposition the ur-story within various critical frames (Erle, Hendry: 5) and use monstrosity "as a metaphor or a tool to tackle individual or social problems with" (Erle, Hendry: 6). Usually, it is the character of the Creature that is used to highlight societal issues and to present the fears and desires of the current society.

Liam Scarlett continues this practice as he uses ballet-specific elements, such as, choreography, costumes, characterisation, stage design, and theatrical properties to present what is considered monstrous today. In general, monstrosity is associated with the non-human Creature and this adaptation shows that he is not an innate monster, but rather a victim of an intolerant, homophobic society that is ready to marginalise, objectify, ostracise, and alienate anyone who is queer. The lack of acceptance and recognition as well as the prevailing conventions clearly exclude the queer Other from the community. Thus, something that should be perceived as natural and human is made monstrous by the current society.

As Kavey and Friedman assert, various "readings of 'the Other' encourage [the public] [...] to approach the narrative from a different point of view, adding to the richness and complexity of the text and to our understanding of how it has influenced our thinking about difference" (Kavey, Friedman: 265). For this reason, it seems that *Frankenstein* will continue to stay relevant in the twenty-first century. The public's constant interest in Frankenstein and his creation "tells us not how far we have come in the last 200 years, but how little distance we have covered in reconciling ourselves to complicated, competing demands" (Kavey, Friedman: 268) of the current world.

The dramatic story of the eponymous scientist and his "hideous progeny" certainly "[went] [...] forth and prosper[ed]" (Shelley: 12) as "the extraordinary

proliferation of texts, contexts, and adaptations has surpassed the capacity of any single person to encompass them all” (Crook: ix). As the novel continues to inspire various “adept, culturally aware, thought-provoking, and boundary pushing” (Davison: 112) artists and scholars in the twenty-first century, the dust has clearly not yet settled on the 1818 novel.

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Monstrosity in a Ballet Adaptation of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*

Summary

The article focuses on the analysis of the 2016 ballet adaptation of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* created by Liam Scarlett for the Royal Opera House and the San Francisco Ballet. The purpose of the article is to show that this production presents the novel's motif of monstrosity as queer desire and the prevailing societal conventions. The paper is divided into theoretical and analysis sections. The first one provides a brief overview of approaching the novel and its chosen cinematic adaptations through queer studies. The second section focuses on the narrative developed over the course of the 2016 ballet adaptation. It also discusses the formal devices, such as: choreography, costumes, characterisation, stage design, and theatrical properties, which together reinforce the narrative and allow the proposed interpretation of monstrosity.

Keywords: *Frankenstein*, adaptation, ballet, monstrosity

Słowa kluczowe: *Frankenstein*, adaptacja, balet, potworność

Cytowanie

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