«The horror of that countenance» from *Frankenstein* to *Duckenstein*

Marina Guglielmi

> I had worked hard for nearly two years, for the sole purpose of infusing life into an inanimate body. […] I had desired it with an ardour that far exceeded moderation; but now that I had finished, the beauty of the dream vanished, and breathless horror and disgust filled my heart.
>
> Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*

Continuing the life of classic literature of the Western tradition in contemporary production is increasingly seen as a challenge: today, rewriting, translating, adapting, and manipulating literary texts in extra-literary terrain, within the widest panorama possible of arts and media, is a phenomenon that calls for close attention. In just a few decades, the ideas of intertextuality, translation, and migration of these works have slanted in a great many surprising directions as a testimony to the complexity of the processes of intersection, reuse, and dissemination. This has occurred via more or less participatory means as far as the readers and the general public are concerned (Hutcheon 2011).

Here, I direct my attention to the literary discourse present in the production of narrative via images. Comics and graphic novels draw from the well of universal literature in different ways, according to their own objectives and predetermined targets. The affinity between word and image is mediated by the various resonances in the text that are already explicated in other media. In this way, the adaptation follows autonomous routes that both subvert and affirm textual fidelity. The

new product is determined as much by the desire for continuity within the tradition as it is by a practice of innovation and transgression.

In the case of the most widely read and popular novels, such as *Frankenstein* (1818) by Mary Shelley, the text is subjected to a centrifugal effect. As the work is disseminated among the various media, from paper to television to cinema to the Internet, there is an increase in both the opportunities for its own longevity, but also in the number of possible deviations.

The Disney Italia parody *Duckenstein* (2016) is an example of exactly this expansive impulse of the text. My objective is to describe how this comic strip narrative fits into the textual and artistic dissemination of Shelley's work, beginning with the graphic use of a scopic dispositif from the novel: the monster's face.

Frankenstein: when the character surpasses the author

In 1818 the novel *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus* was published anonymously. Neither the author, Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, nor her mentors and friends, Lord Byron, William Godwin, and husband P. B. Shelley could have predicted the longevity her work would enjoy. Inspired by the scientism of the era and by Luigi Galvani's theories on the relationship between electricity and animal bodies, the young author imagined that a human body could be assembled from corpses and reanimated mechanically. The narration of ways and means, of causes and consequences of the reanimation of a human being, should thus constitute the fulcrum on which the work pivots. It is centered on the question of the "principle of life", according to the basic conviction that in order to investigate the causes «we must first have recourse to death» (Shelley 2016: 55). The author dedicates only a few pages to the first diegetic pivot of the novel – instilling «a spark of being» in a «lifeless thing» (Shelley 1971: 57) – and gives no description of the procedure, experiment, or instruments involved. She only mentions the human materials that are used, harvested from crypts, dissecting rooms, and charnel-houses**.**

The history of the reception of Mary Shelley's novel and the successive visual imaginary is distinguished by at least two essential and complementary traits: the autonomous affirmation of the monster's character and the elaboration of an iterative visual paradigm, starting from the *terminus post quem* of 1913, when James Whale's hugely successful cinematographic adaptation came out.

Frankenstein's monster, created as a "generic" human being and thus believable as a nameless entity, has enjoyed great fame due to the empathic following of readers and spectators. Over time, the name "Frankenstein" shifted from the character of the inventor to the fruit of his experiment, as the creation was first superimposed on and then definitively substituted his creator in the imaginary and collective memory. Thus the first question to be asked is: who or what is Frankenstein today?

Frankenstein, like Don Juan, is a myth of modernity: both are founded on death and on their "active" presence. The former is mediated by the recomposed, revitalized cadaver, a harbinger of successive automatons, living mannequins, and replicants; the latter is mediated by the animated statue of Death (Rousset 1980). For today's public, Frankenstein remains a monster, a shapeless being assembled from cadavers. But, over and above all, Frankenstein is a face.

The face of Frankenstein

Portrayed by Boris Karloff in the film adaptation of 1931 directed by James Whale, the face of the monster is an ahistoric one. Makeup artist Jack Pierce created the unforgettable mask with its scars, its wide, flat, square forehead, with bolts protruding from his bulllike neck, which endowed Mary Shelley's sketchy physiognomy with iconic exactitude and inaugurated a surprising visual resonance. No future mask of Frankenstein – not even with the advent of color and more sophisticated special effects – would ever manage to supplant Karloff's portrayal in the visual and media imaginary (Giovannini – Zatterin 1994; Levine – Knoepfmacher 1979).

The cinematographic translation of the face of the monster is a work in itself, with only rare references to Mary Shelley's text. In the novel Frankenstein the scientist first describes the monster moment after he has succeeded in «infus[ing] a spark of being into the lifeless thing», before he flees in horror and disgust:

> How can I describe my emotions at this catastrophe, or how delineate the wretch whom with infinite pains and care I had endeavoured to form? His limbs were in proportion, and I had selected his features as beautiful. Beautiful! – Great God! His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath; his hair was of lustrous black, and flowing; his teeth of a pearly whiteness; but these luxuriances only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes, that seemed almost of the same colour as the dune white sockets in which they were set, his shrivelled complexion and straight black lips. (Shelley 1971: 57)

The physiognomic clues provided by the author do not go beyond a generic indication of monstrosity. For Doctor Frankenstein the monster is a failed experiment, while the reader – who partakes in his horrified reaction and flight – is witness to the first visual misunderstanding of a creator whose perception of his own work is found lacking, even as he chooses the very parts to make his creation: «His limbs were in proportion, and I had selected his features as beautiful. Beautiful! Great God!» (Shelley 2016: 62).

In his introduction to the Einaudi volume *Creature dell'orrore*, which includes the novels about Frankenstein, Dracula, and Jekyll and Hyde, Stephen King, master of the horror genre, emphasizes the continued relevance of the physiognomy of the monster as transmitted throughout the Frankenstein tradition. He notes how the eponymous titles of the three horror novels have assumed a common-use linguistic function, crystallizing each character in a connotation of ugliness, wickedness, and characteristic doubling (and, over time, even replacing the name of the author in collective memory), and cites and compares—not by chance—the first descriptions of their faces in each work (King 2009: V).

Unlike Dracula and Mr. Jekyll, the Frankenstein monster underwent a double crystallization in the process of dissemination, which was both horizontal (within literature) and vertical (among various types of media). The name of the monster, derived from its creator, is flanked by a face, whose origin is indirect and mediated by the cinematographic adaptation. Two constants, therefore, name and face, have marked the story of the variations on Mary Shelley's novel.

A second thematic fulcrum is inseparable from the visual resonance of the *collage*-face and from the narrative function that it serves: the reader remains ignorant of the monster's physiognomy but, as the narrative develops, gradually gains access to its effects and consequences. Horror and disgust will be the constant reactions of all who meet him. Loneliness, anger, depression, desire for redress, aggression, and death are the key words that determine the *fabula* of the novel and they are all motifs derived from the visual impact of the monster's face, and all a denunciation of his creator:

> I am malicious because I am miserable. Am I not shunned and hated by all mankind? […] Shall I respect man, when he contemns me? Let him live with me in the interchange of kindness; and, instead of injury, I would bestow every benefit upon him with tears of gratitude at his acceptance. But that cannot be; the human senses are insurmountable barriers to our union. (Shelley 1971: 145)

In his first verbal confrontation with the scientist, after years of solitary education as an autodidact watching the world from the shadows, the monster complains about being visually misunderstood. Like Pirandellian characters who often visit the narrator to protest about the inadequacy of their own roles, like the provocative Jessica Rabbit in *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?* (1988), who denounces the incongruity between sign and signified («I'm not bad. I'm just drawn that way»), the character laments that the scientist's scarce attention to his aesthetic aspect had created irreparable consequences for him. The reproof includes the recrimination of "paternal" abandonment on the part of the scientist, the first step along a path of social marginalization. The

monster declares that the *senses*, and sight in particular, are the barrier preventing his coexistence with human beings, since no one is able to read his face and decipher his innate, substantial (albeit hypothetical) benevolence towards mankind.

This leads us to a second question: how does one read a face? Hans Belting, in his anthropological studies of images, reminds us that the face does not just belong to each and every person, but is part of the community. In order to be recognized it has to come into contact with others and look and be looked at (Belting 2013; 2014). It must include exactly the kind of visual correspondence that is denied in the Frankenstein novel. In fact, the birth of every individual represents the insertion of a new face into the world; identified by Belting as «an elementary and rough form of life», it «is nature within a social praxis» (Belting 2014: 16). The face of the monster contravenes this universal norm, carrying within itself a distorted image of nature and of life. It is rather more reminiscent of the uncertain passage between life and death.

The horrendous face imagined by Mary Shelley cannot be a visual object because it is also a cadaverous effigy. It reminds us of the death-mask which, in the prehistoric cult of the dead, restored physiognomy to corpses, thereby reaffirming the function of the image of the face as a medium between life and death. The face of the monster is, instead, given by subtraction: it is not a (theatrical) mask of death because its hideous features lack that inseparable link between sight and face, between seeing and being seen that distinguishes the theatrical mask (Belting 2014: 68 and following), but, since it is living, neither is it the funeral mask of an «empty face left behind by the defunct» (*ibid*.: 101). Therefore, the face of Mary Shelley's character incorporates and demonstrates two irreconcilable instances: it is living, mobile, and speaking, but at the same time, an effigy and the presence of death. It is this coexistence that inspires terror in whosoever meets him, with the marked exception of the poor blind man. Because of this, if the face is a medium of expression, self-presentation, and communication (Wiegel 2012), the narrative of such self-presentation is conveyed via external visual impact and produces an effect wherein the creature is a monster only insofar as he appears to be one. The only possibility for the

redemption of this incorrect reception and reading of his face presents itself too late. Doctor Frankenstein is already dead. The monster finally succeeds in declaring his situation and his desolate awareness of the world to his last lone spectator, Captain Walton:

> Yet I seek not a fellow-feeling in my misery. No sympathy may I ever find. (Shelley 1971: 221)

The fear aroused in the reader no longer corresponds to the unknown, the supernatural, or the magical – typical of the early Gothic narrative – and necessitates other interpretations. It might reflect the fear of the incomprehensible and ungovernable relating to science, discovery, and machines (Runcini 1985; Giovannini 1994), it might be an object of Marxist and psychoanalytical interpretation (Moretti 1987), of an anti-mythic reading (Tortonese 2003), or of a feminist one (Spivak 1985).

But if we consider how the strategy of narrative insertion of such a frightful face interrupts the flow of communication, with all the aforementioned effects, an analysis of the important function served by the visual dispositifs present in the narrative texts could also prove worthwhile.

In Mary Shelley's novel, the face of Frankenstein's monster is a *denied image* that allows the reader almost complete imaginative freedom (which perhaps taps into personal fears in a way that no detailed description could ever equal). Within the broad panorama of research on scopic regimes in literature, this case should be considered in the light of the ambiguity represented in the relationship between object and gaze (for an overview, see Cometa 2012; 2016). While the three typical "actors" in the scopic regime identified by Michele Cometa are image, optical device, and gaze, this interchange is anomalous due to the fearful aversion of the gaze towards the monster's body and face. This denied image is a central narrative tool (without departing from the effects of the canonical relationship between the three elements) and contains a diegetic and decisive centralizing, as Alain Montandon observes:

>   The scopic element is both the center and the diegetic node that
>   condenses, focuses, and totalizes the whole of the story -- a *mise en*
>   *abîme*. (Montandon 2104: 143)

Like the paintings and photographs described by Hoffmann,
Balzac, and Maupassant, this face – unique in the history of literature
and the first among the visual, visualized objects of the enormous body
– is an anomalous scopic element with the role of totalizing the whole of
the story. Its narrative function is thus relevant to the hypothesis that
Frankenstein is the story of a face.

Or, rather, *Frankenstein* is the story of *a* face that, from the uncertain
physiognomy of Mary Shelley, is crystallized in Boris Karloff's mask,
becoming the story of *that* face for ever more in the cultural and artistic
imaginary.

Once the effigy with its bolts and scars has become a media image,
it is then reproduced *ad infinitum*, according to the principle that «media
society […] infinitely consumes the faces that it itself produces» (Belting
2014: 217). This is even truer now that the history of cinema has
contributed, from silent films onward, to transforming the faces of its
actors into icons, imposing a cinematographic mask upon their physical
faces (*ibid.*: 263).

And once Frankenstein's face had assumed a defined physiognomy
thanks to Whale's film, it then becomes as much of an image of the
character as it is a cinematographic mask, determining via its own
success a multitudinous, indelible typification of the monster.
This super-historical, super-spatial face abstracts itself from spatial-
temporal coordinates and becomes «a condensed image of the *humanus*
(Weigel 2012), understood as a web of passions and sentiments.

The image of Karloff-Frankenstein is now a modern icon which
constitutes the visual subtext of the works inspired by Mary Shelley's
novel and is dispersed through various media. Comics and graphic
novels welcome and transmit the dissemination to which the novel gave
life, translating it into just as many serious genres as parodies or
caricatures, including the line of erotic renditions of a super-endowed

Frankenstein monster, or that of superheroes. In fact, the first rendering of the good but misunderstood Incredible Hulk as drawn by Jack Kirby in the 1960s reproduces Boris Karloff's face (Gaspa-Giorello 2007: 209).

In the graphic context, the link between Mary Shelley's novel and the successive visual representation also comes from an adherence to general concepts drawn from the science of physiognomy. Presupposing that «the face offered a faithful image of the human being», the study of physiognomy was replaced over time by methodologies of visualization that set aside any relation between face and mind: «in the past, one started at the face in order to ask the questions that today are informed by the study of the brain» (Belting 2014: 84). Nevertheless, according to exponents of physiognomy, such as Johann Caspar Lavater at the end of the eighteenth century, it was possible to understand a man's interiority via the study of his exterior aspect, especially his physiognomy (*ibid.*: 87).

Prior to the definitive disproval and ousting of the idea that the face could reveal internal characteristics, there was a proliferation of iconographic or essayistic texts -- alongside narrative ones like Mary Shelley's – that claimed affinities between more or less "deformed" faces and psychic or criminal pathologies, similar to the affinities between human and animal physiognomies that had already been established. In line with such a physiognomic reading in some cinematographic adaptations of *Frankenstein* – Whale's *in primis* –, the monster is thought to have a poorly-functioning brain or one taken from the corpse of a criminal, thanks to Cesare Lombroso's theories on morphology, madness, and criminal deviation. Let us quickly present an overview of where the science of the body intersects with the study of its representation in art, caricature, and comics.

The face of caricatures in comics

In works on the history of comics (McCloud 2010; Eisner 1995; Barbieri 1991; Brancato 1994; Fresnault-Deruelle 1972), the birth of the medium is reconstructed as a derivative form. It is recognized as a modern form of hieroglyphs, illuminated manuscripts, frescoes,

historical tapestries, heraldic banners, phylacteries, and all of those expressive forms where word and image are integrated and which today have been revisited as possible exemplars of proto- or pre-comic strips (Tosti 2016; Barbieri 2010). The narrative mode of the comic strip dates back to nineteenth century Europe and, among its precursors, the Swiss Rodolph Töpffer is today considered the first author of image-based stories, which he called «a sort of novel» in which «the drawings without text would have an obscure meaning, the texts without drawings would have none whatsoever» (Tosti 2016: 442; Groensteen – Peeters 1994; Kunzle 2007). His graphic inspiration was drawn from the great English authors, beginning with William Hogart, who in caricature or satirical drawings practice the art of imitation while exalting the characteristics or defects which provoke laughter. The art of caricature was first seen in Renaissance Italy and later enjoyed great acclaim in the Gothic and Romantic eras. Its subversiveness with respect to the harmonious Renaissance tradition produces two principle effects: on the one hand, it begins to «undermine the proud terrain of the anthropocentric rhetoric of the world» and on the other, it «introduces a narrative tension into the work of art» (Tosti 2016: 96, 98). Thus, the very caricature tradition was the starting point for the recognition of Hogart's and then Töpffer's contributions for their development and affirmation of «sequential narration via images» (*ibid*.: 179)

But who are the targets of these caricatures? They can be historical and political figures – Napoleon, Luigi Filippo, and the dictators of the twentieth century – but also characters from bourgeois society or the variegated crowds of humanity. The signatures of Daumier, Grosz, Le Brun, Macaire, and Gavarni create a popular aesthetic model for human deformities which recall the grotesque heads drawn by Leonardo da Vinci, which had served as models since the seventeenth century in central Europe.

The head and the face are the principal target of caricature drawing. They are emphasized by their form and by superior dimensions of the top part of the body, the head, with respect to the lower part. This purposefully disharmonic effect in human representation is certainly linked to the fact that facial characteristics are the most likely to provoke

laughter or a smile, but does not exclude the idea – present in the history of Western civilization – that the face is the seat of the manifestation of the ego (Violi 2007: 2670). Art and science have constantly tried to interpret the face, considered as the seat of signs left by the stars, as a theatrical mask or a death mask, as a sacred icon or as a fearful deformation. Physiognomy perceives a parallel between image and interior, searching for links, establishing relations and zoomorphic comparisons with animals.

A defining moment occurred at the end of the sixteenth century when the Neapolitan essayist Giovan Battista Della Porta compared human and animal faces on the basis of common temperament in his *Della fisonomia dell'huomo:* with him «zoomorphism becomes the fundamental principal for investigating the relationship between physical aspect and character» (Caroli 2002: 71). Della Porta anticipates Le Brun and supports the eighteenth-century revival of physiognomy driven by Johan Kaspar Lavater's tracts, which reawakened novelists' attention to the theme of the face as the bearer of the narration (Violi 2007: 2672). The great diffusion of caricatures and zoomorphic drawings that appeared throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries included works such as *Scènes de la vie privée et publique des animaux* (1853) by Grandville. In his drawings, the author represents familiar or sentimental scenes in which the actors are animals, dressed according to the fashion of the time, whose expressions suggest human emotions. They were quite often depicted as birds and enshrine the idea of continuity between humans and animals which Claude Lévi-Strauss so favored in the 1960s. In fact, the anthropologist used Grandville's drawings and contemporaneous caricatures of anthropomorphic animal societies in his *La pensée sauvage* (1962). Furthermore, along with the graphic works of Le Brun and Métivet (*La Physionomie humaine comparée à la physionomie des animaux*, 1917) of faces of men derived from birds or foxes, they also served as visual support for his hypothesis of the overturning of totemism and of naturalized man (Lévi-Strauss 1979).

In the meantime, the imaginary of the face in nineteenth-century novels had been enriched by typologies that either depicted the character's traits based on their behavior or inner nature, or – after the

birth of Lombroso's criminal anthropology – were "talking portraits" in which the facial features betrayed suspicion or even suggested guilt. The graphic and caricature production that developed alongside the first recognized forms of the proto-comic strip was thus flanked by a graphic tradition centered around the relationship between man and animal. Caricature, in these cases, did not serve to deform the human aspect, but rather to construct original faces that started from the connection between animal physiognomy and the human face.

From Frankenstein to Duckenstein

Within the panorama that Thierry Groensteen, paraphrasing Gérard Genette, calls the *Bande Dessinée au second degré* (Groensteen 2010), the parodies of Mickey Mouse and his mouse and duck relatives represent an example of convergence between anthropomorphic drawing, caricature, and comic strip narrative.

The trilogy made up of *Dracula di Bram Topker* (Enna – Celoni 2012), *Lo strano caso del Dottor Ratkyll e di Mister Hyde. Storia di una porta* (Enna – Celoni 2014), and *Duckenstein di Mary Shelduck* (Enna – Celoni 2016) came from an idea by Bruno Enna. Fabio Celoni did the drawings and the authors described it as «a series of Disneyfied horror/Gothic revisitations of the great films or novels of the past» (Enna – Celoni 2014). Two episodes of the three parodies were first published each week in the *Topolino* comic books and then later republished in the "Disney d'Autore" (Celoni 2014) series and in "Grandi Parodie Disney", as well as in single volumes of the "Topolino Limited De Luxe Editions" for Panini Comics. The latter was a series of single stories published in large-format books, which were sold in bookstores. These books had a stylistically different graphic style and were sold as adapted graphic novels, a hybrid form between comic and graphic novel (Guglielmi 2013; 2016).

The most recent of the three, *Duckenstein di Mary Shelduck*, is freely adapted from the novel and generally considered to be one of the over 100 parodies of canonical literature drawn by Italian Disney artists from the 1940s onwards (Tosti 2011; Becattini *et. al.* 2012; Argiolas *et. al.*2013).

Despite this classification, certain elements suggest that both the trilogy and this particular parody actually fall outside the Disney canon produced up until the end of the Nineties and should be classified in an eclectic manner. In fact, certain thematic and stylistic constants can be traced that are more common to the most recent phase of Disney parodies from the 2000s to today, which is becoming ever more explicitly an editorial and stylistic trend.

Duckenstein preserves the principal thematic fulcrum of Mary Shelley's novel by giving the spark of life to something which is no longer (or not yet) alive. The dilemmas of consciousness and of solipsistic experiments are still central for the scientist Victor von Duckenstein, portrayed by Paperino (Donald Duck) with his thick head of human hair. The addition of some new characters, including his nephews Wilm, Wolf, and Waldo (alter egos of Qui, Quo, Qua; in English Huey, Dewey, and Louie) and the amorous rival Gaston Clerval, inspired by Gladstone Glanderudi, once again responds to the need to produce a Disneyfied adaptation of the original work, which has to support narrative exigencies and presences unique to the world of ducks and mice (Distefano 2013). This typical mode of Disney parodies is, however, augmented in Duckenstein by means of some innovative and decisive elements, namely, the seriality of the Enna-Celoni trilogy; the comic's adherence to the original narrative mode of the novel; the shift of the thematic crux from the "spark of life" to the "flame of creativity"; and, finally, the typification of the monster's character.

The serial coherence of the trilogy stems from both the choice of works from Gothic literature with themes that are normally taboo for Disney - blood, suffering, unconscious desires, death –, but also by the original graphic choices that render such themes in cartoon form, via dark or red tones, unusual frames and angles, sometimes even using a fish-eye effect (Celoni 2014: 439). The scenographic and textual references to the numerous cinematographic adaptations of all three novels are decisive. *Duckenstein*, in particular, is constantly indebted to the filmography inspired by the Frankenstein myth, from Whale's film (1931) to those of today, not to mention parodies like Mel Brooks' *Young Frankenstein* (1974), also inspired by Whale's film.

As far the narrative strategies are concerned, *Duckenstein* re-proposes the epistolary, concentric style of Mary Shelley. As he sails towards the North Pole, Captain Walton (portrayed by Ciccio – in English, Gus Goose) collects Doctor Duckenstein's tale and transmits it in a letter to his grandmother (Papera – Grandma Duck); the doctor adds his own story to the narration, along with the first-person story of the monster (called Growl after the first sound he makes), and also an "objective" narrative of the "crude and naked" facts. The diverse perspectives and the emphasis with which they are pointed out to the reader are certainly the most innovative element with respect to the traditional omniscient, objective narrative of previous parodies.

Another original element is the way in which the overarching theme of the "still of life" is handled, translated from a re-assembled, re-animated corpse to a similarly composed construct of various defective pieces, but made of cardboard rather than human flesh. The sequences that show Paperino/Victor von Duckenstein during his furtive nocturnal gathering of the defective scraps of that ductile, malleable material are in line with Doctor Frankenstein's harvest of corpses in the cemeteries: in the comic strip, too, a casket is exhumed, but its contents are markedly different. Once the cardboard creature has been composed, colored, and brought to life by an electric shock, cannot but give life to an Animated Cartoon. The parodic reuse of the theme of giving life allows the two authors to manage the shift from the motif of scientific creation in the novel to that of (artistic) creativity. In this sense, *Duckenstein* is also in line with a critical interpretation that saw *Frankenstein* as the metaphor of literary creation as much as the metaphor of film production, pure examples of «Frankensteinian exercise» (Picart 2002:187).

By making the reanimated corpse an anthropomorphic Animated Cartoon, the authors anticipate the happy ending of the comic, not just as the survival of the monster, whose gentleness is revealed, but also as social interaction not just with humans and but also with all the similar beings that make up the cartoon universe. Victor von Duckenstein re-proposes Mary Shelley's warning to Captain Walton, reaffirming the need to keep one's distance from the folly of knowledge and to learn the right lesson, but he will be contradicted by the optimistic finale and the

surprising potential of his invention. The fear and risk of the arbitrary and antisocial use of scientific discoveries on which Mary Shelley had focused her tale is denied once and for all in the world of Disney comics. (Spandri 2014: 251).

The character of the monster is the textual element that best represents the process of parodic inclusion in the world of Disney and at the same time the dissemination of the novel. Growl who will later become the prototype of the Cartoon is an assembly of the parts that are put together just like the monster's body. The drawings of the cardboard giant incorporate well-known features of Boris Karloff's face along with the basic element of Disney physiognomy, a beak.

Duckenstein's face, Enna – Celoni 2016.

Another character from the Enna-Celoni trilogy is also allusively evoked. In this case, the dimensions and shape of the monster's wide forehead echo Dracula's suggestive and overlarge trapezoidal headgear.

In *Goofy Frankenstein* (Crosby 2012), a Swedish parody from the 1980s which was the only previous Disney parody, the monster resembles Pippo (in English, Goofy), who plays both the creature and Doctor Frankenstein (referred to by his real name). Here, too, the face is designed in the Karloffian style and the scientist admits to Topolino (Mickey Mouse) that he had copied the idea of using lightning for the vital electric shock "from an old film" (Gaspa-Giorello 2007: 247-253).

There is an even clearer reference to Karloff's face in the latest parody and the effect of the cinematographic stardom of the Disney characters is realized in a decisively efficacious manner (Distefano 2013). There has only been one other occasion in the recent past when a character not belonging to the Disney universe has been inserted into the parodies. Although the comic-strip collage Commissario Topalbano was certainly inspired by Camilleri's novels, the main character has the physiognomy and the posture of the actor who interprets Montalbano, Luca Zingaretti, with Topolino's ears added to his face. In the non-anthropomorphic field, there is the case of a realistic animal-character in the 2013 parody of *Moby Dick* (Artibani – Mottura 2013) in which, a fearful, enormous cetacean (echoing the horror films on that topic), definitively recalls the curved and familiar emblem of the white whale in the first parody of the novel, made by Gottfredson in 1938.

Although Growl, the new Disney monster, has the same angular or even squarer head than Karloff, he is endowed with an enchanting smile, a sort of "lightness" that allows him not only to immediately get on good terms with the three nephews, but also to fly away on a kite. In the Disney version, the Karloffian bolts can be unscrewed and removed, since they are only earplugs meant to protect the newborn monster from fearful sounds.

Enna and Celoni propose a re-reading of Mary Shelley's novel that is grafted onto the poignant face of the monster, subverting the message: in *Frankenstein* the impossibility of reading his image produces rejection, asociality, misunderstanding, and death. In *Duckenstein,* the monster, a new Narcissus who thinks of himself as "a hunk", is what allows it to be read and received. In order to dismantle the original text, the authors of the parody first defused the automatic reaction contained therein by modifying the monster's physiognomy and material. Because of this, the migration of Karloff's face within the media that for various reasons had reactivated the story of Frankenstein represents an example of a visual dispositif that has totalized the tale on the whole: it is the element that most facilitated – and dominated – the novel's transit from the literary imagination to the visual.

Roland Barthes described Greta Garbo's «face in plaster» in Rouben Mamoulian's *Regina Christina*, released two years after the revised edition of Mary Shelley's novel, as a «face-as-object», an «archetipo del viso umano» (Barthes 1994: 639). Similarly, Karloff's abnormal features remain the archetype of the resurrected corpse, continuing to produce face-objects in time, the sight of which continuously provokes the same reaction -- «Oh! no mortal could support the horror of that countenance» (Shelley 1971: 58) – or inaugurates a new one:

> That which Duckenstein created is a marvelous land! A place made of fantastic creatures, completely invented! And so I was not witness to the end of Growl, but to his new beginning … something that would change our lives, too, forever (Enna – Celoni 2014: 46).

These are the final words of the parody. The narrator is Captain Walton, and the new beginning is that of the world of cartoons and the comic strip.

Works cited

Argiolas, Pier Paolo – Cannas, Andrea – Distefano Giovanni Vito – Guglielmi Marina, *Le Grandi parodie Disney ovvero I classici fra le nuvole*, Roma, Nicola Pesce Editore, 2013.

Argiolas, Pier Paolo, *La parodia Disney. Fisionomia di un genere composito*, Argiolas – Cannas – Distefano – Guglielmi 2013: 51-96.

Barbieri, Daniele, "Tracce di paleofumetto nell'arte del Seicento", *Lo spazio bianco*, 7 agosto 2010, http://www.lospaziobianco.it/Tracce-paleofumetto-arte-Seicento/.

Barbieri, Daniele, *I linguaggi del fumetto*, Milano, Bompiani, 1991.

Barthes, Roland, *Mythologies* (1970), It. Transl. *Miti d'oggi*, Torino, Einaudi, 1994.

Becattini, Alberto – Boschi, Luca – Gori, Leonardo – Sani, Andrea, *I Disney italiani*, Roma, Nicola Pesce Editore, 2012, 2 voll.

Belting, Hans, *Faces. Eine Geschichte des Gesichts* (2013), It. Transl. *Facce. Una storia del volto*, Roma, Carocci, 2014.

Belting, Hans, *Bild-Anthropologie. Entwürfe für eine Bildwissenschaft* (2001), trad. it. *Antropologia delle immagini*, Roma, Carocci, 2013.

Brancato, Sergio, *Fumetti. Guida ai comics nel sistema dei media*, Roma, Datanews, 1994.

Caroli, Flavio, *Storia della fisiognomica. Arte e psicologia da Leonardo a Freud*, Milano, Electa, 2002.

Celoni, Fabio, *Da Topolino a PK, i magnifici racconti di uno straordinario viaggiatore del segno*, pref. di Tito Faraci, Milano, Disney Libri, 2014.

Cometa, Michele, *Archeologie del dispositivo. Regimi scopici della letteratura*, Cosenza, Luigi Pellegrini Editore, 2016.

Cometa, Michele, *La scrittura delle immagini. Letteratura e cultura visuale*, Milano, Raffaello Cortina, 2012.

Crosby, Greg, *Pippo Frankenstein*, disegni di de Urtiaga, Hector Adolfo, *I classici della letteratura Disney*, Milano, Grandi Opere del Corriere della Sera, 2012, IV.

Distefano, Giovanni Vito, *Paperi e topi alla prova del personaggio*, Argiolas – Cannas – Distefano – Guglielmi 2013: 97-127.

20

Eisner, Will, *Comics & Sequential Art* (1990), It. Transl. *Fumetto & arte sequenziale*, Torino, Pavesio, 1995.

Elfenbein, Andrew, *Mary Wollstonecraft and the sexuality of genius*, *The Cambridge Companion to Mary Wollstonecraft*, Ed. Claudia L. Johnson, Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 2002: 228-245.

Enna, Bruno – Celoni, Fabio, "Dracula di Bram Topker", *Topolino*, colori di Mirka Andolfo, nn. 2945-2946, 2012.

Enna, Bruno – Celoni, Fabio, "Duckenstein di Mary Shelduck", *Topolino*, colori di Luca Merli, nn. 3179-3180, 2016.

Enna, Bruno – Celoni, Fabio, "Lo strano caso del Dottor Ratkyll e di Mister Hyde. Storia di una porta", *Topolino*, colori di Mirka Andolfo, nn. 3070-3071, 2014.

Fresnault-Deruelle, Pierre, *Il linguaggio dei fumetti*, Palermo, Sellerio, 1972.

Fusini, Nadia, "Introduzione", Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*, Torino, Einaudi, 2016: V-XXI.

Gaspa, Pier Luigi – Giorello, Giulio, *La scienza tra le nuvole. Da Pippo Newton a Mr Fantastic*, Milano, Raffaello Cortina, 2007.

Giovannini, Fabio – Zatterin, Marco, *Frankenstein il mito*, Firenze, Edizioni Polistampa, 1994.

Groensteen, Thierry, *Parodies. La Bande Dessinée au Second Degré*, Paris, Flammarion, 2010.

Groensteen, Thierry – Peeters, Benoît, *Töpffer. L'invention de la bande dessinée*, Paris, Hermann, 1994.

Guglielmi, Marina, "Tra fumetto e *graphic novel*. Il caso della Disney italiana", *Bande à part. Graphic novel, fumetto e letteratura*, Eds. Sara Colaone – Lucia Quaquarelli, Milano, Morellini, 2014: 163-176.

Guglielmi, Marina, *Paperi e topi alla ricerca di temi perduti*, Argiolas – Cannas – Distefano – Guglielmi 2013: 129-158.

Hutcheon, Linda, *A Theory of Adaptation* (2006), It. Transl. *Teoria degli adattamenti*, Roma, Armando, 2011.

King, Stephen, "Introduzione", Shelley – Stoker –Stevenson 2009: V-XIV.

Kunzle, David, *Father of the Comic Strip: Rodolphe Töpffer*, Jackson, University Press of Mississippi, 2007.

Filmography

Frankenstein. The Man Who Made a Monster, Dir. James Whale, USA, 1931.
Young Frankenstein, Dir. Mel Brooks, USA., 1974.
Who Framed Roger Rabbit?, Dir. Robert Zemeckis, USA, 1988.

The author

Marina Guglielmi

Marina Guglielmi teaches Comparative Literature and Literary Theory at the University of Cagliari. She is editor-in-chief of *Between*.

Email: marinaguglielmi@unica.it

The paper

Date sent: 15/05/2016
Date accepted: 30/09/2016
Date published: 30/11/2016

How to quote this paper

Marina, Guglielmi, "«The horror of that countenance» from *Frankenstein* to *Duckenstein*", *Chi ride ultimo, parodia satira umorismi*, Eds. E. Abignente, F. Cattani, F. de Cristofaro, G. Maffei, U. M. Olivieri, Between, VI.12, (2016), http://www.betweenjournal.it/