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### Articoli/Articles

## THE JOURNEY OF THE MUTE FRANKENSTEIN OF THOMAS POTTER COOKE: TOWARDS A LANGUAGE FOR A NEW SCIENCE

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### SUMMARY

#### THOMAS POTTER'S FRANKENSTEIN

*In 1923 at the Royal Theatre English Opera House of London the journey of the mute Frankenstein of Thomas Potter Cook started. On that stage the creature born from the encounter between science and romantic genius definitively lost his voice to progressively assume more and more the appearance of a body that speaks for itself, beyond literary fact, and above all beyond verbal language. If in the novel by Mary Shelley the acquisition of a language is the main tool of identity emancipation for the indefinable 'product' of contemporary scientific culture, on stage the actor Cooke, who played that silent character 365 times, laid the foundations for one of the myths of modernity. The article questions the way in which the creature of Dr. Victor Frankenstein erupted into the European popular culture of the 1820s, contributing on the one hand to preparing public imagination for the debate on Darwinism that would take place forty years later; revealing on the other a new fundamental aesthetic perception, because the discoveries of the new sciences (chemistry, physics, physiology, etc.) became a common experience that can be found empirically.*

#### Introduction

*Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus* is perhaps the most popular novel in Western culture born of the meeting between doctors

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and poets. To narrate this organically, collecting the many studies on the subject, is Richard Holmes who in *The Age of Wonder: The Romantic Generation and the Discovery of the Beauty and Terror of Science* definitively overcomes the idea of an irreconcilability between the objectivity of science and romantic subjectivity.

In a chapter entitled *Dr. Frankenstein and the soul*, reconstructs the scientific debate in which Mary Godwin Shelley Holmes, the author of the novel, participated directly thanks to the stimuli of a very progressive family and her meeting with those poets, including her future husband Percy Bysshe Shelley, with whom she shared a curiosity for everything that was at the limit between dream and reality. It seems, in fact, that it was William Godwin<sup>1</sup> who in 1812, took his fourteen-years-old daughter, to hear a chemistry lesson in which she first learned of the studies on electricity conducted by Luigi Galvani on the muscular movement of frogs' legs and then continued by one of his pupils, the physicist Giovanni Aldini, who administered electricity to the bodies of dead criminals to see what would happen. Starting from that lesson, Mary did not stop posing the questions opened by the debate on Vitalism that took place at the Royal Society of Surgeons in London between 1816 and 1820 in fairly heated tones.

It was mostly a series of lectures open to the public, held by distinguished surgeons and specialists in comparative anatomy who discussed the idea that human life was based on a universal, physiological and invisible life force (Life Principle) capable of controlling the manifestations of life in living organisms. To support these theses, which found support in studies on magnetism and electricity, Dr. John Abernethy was challenged by Dr. William Lawrence who, on the contrary, supported the idea that medicine was a pure science and had a materialist position in human life; according to him there was no vital principle but only a human body understood as a complex physical organisation. The social, political, and teleological implications

opened up by the debate increased the interest of the Godwin-Shelley family, partly because Dr. Lawrence had meanwhile become the personal physician of Percy Bysshe. According to Holmes, Mary took literally the words that Dr. Lawrence had used in one of his lectures to discredit Dr. Abernethy, calling his theories "hypothesis or fiction"<sup>2</sup>. So it was that on the shores of Lake Geneva during the summer of 1816, in the company of doctors and poets (her husband, her half-sister Claire, Lord Byron and her personal physician, John William Polidori) Mary began to write *Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus*, considered by Holmes "the most singular literary response to the Vitalism debate"<sup>3</sup>.

It is not my intention to talk about the novel, on which there is a vast bibliography, but rather to question the way in which the creature of Dr. Victor Frankenstein erupted into the European popular culture of the 1820s, contributing on the one hand to prepare public imagination for the debate on Darwinism that would take place forty years later; and revealing on the other a new fundamental aesthetic perception, because the discoveries of the new sciences (chemistry, physics, physiology, etc.) became a common experience that can be found empirically.

We know from the letters of the same author that the novel's publishing success is due to the success of the first theatrical adaptation, *Presumption or the fate of Frankenstein* by Richard Brisley Peake staged at the Royal Theatre English Opera House (Lyceum) of London in 1923<sup>4</sup>. It seems fundamentally paradoxical if one thinks that on that stage the creature born from the encounter between science and romantic genius definitively lost his voice to progressively assume more and more the appearance of *a body that speaks for itself*, beyond literary fact, and above all beyond verbal language. If in the novel by Mary Shelley the acquisition of a language is the main tool of identity emancipation for the indefinable 'product' of contemporary scientific culture, on stage the actor

Thomas Potter Cooke, who played that silent character 365 times in London, Paris and Edinburgh, laid the foundations of one of the myths of modernity<sup>5</sup>.

*Seeing Frankenstein*

Mary Shelley saw her novel on stage on the evening of 23 August 1823 exactly one month after the first performance. The story of that evening reveals how the reason for such success was intuitive even before she sat in the stalls. “The playbill amused me extremely”<sup>6</sup> wrote Mary, explaining how in the list of *dramatis personae* the monster without a name (*it* in the novel) was indicated by a graphic sign, hyphens in brackets that followed the name of Cooke: “this nameless mode of naming the unnameable is rather good”<sup>7</sup> the young writer had commented, underlining how the visual language was, from the paratextual elements, fundamental in the construction of meaning (Fig. 1). From this point of view it is important to consider that Peake was a dramatic author specialised in melodrama, a spectacular form - very fashionable at the time - based on a mixture of languages (word, music and pantomime), on very specific conventions (3 acts with final tableaux, fixed characters, gothic and fantastic themes) and on a strong spectacularity linked to the visual element<sup>8</sup>.

The appeal to the main conventions of this kind was not the only guarantee of success, there was also the concrete possibility for every spectator to experience the aesthetic tension that in the novel had represented the scientific failure of Dr. Victor Frankenstein, or *the vision of the creature*, not beautiful despite the efforts of the young scientist to create it with parts of human bodies assembled in a proportionate way: “now that I had finished, the beauty of the dream vanished, and breathless horror and disgust filled my heart”<sup>9</sup>. It is precisely in the incapacity to accept such a vision that the seed of a demonic, monstrous, inevitably destructive diversity lies, because it is not recognised as a bearer of identity. What the third part of the novel tells of is

Thomas Potter's Frankenstein

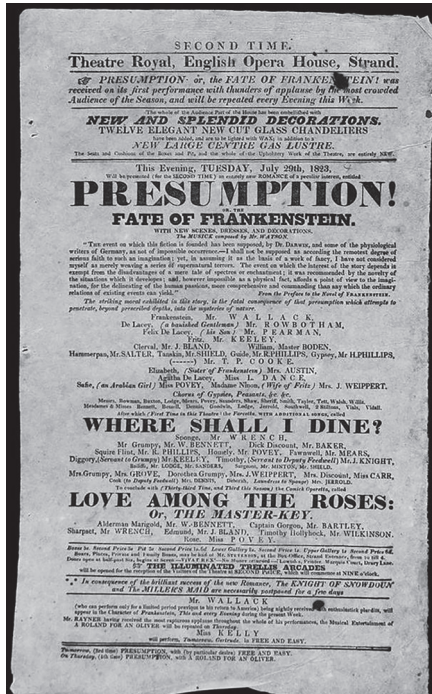


Fig. 1. Playbill of *Presumption or the Fate of Frankenstein*. Source: gallica.bnf.fr / BnF.

the tragic destiny of a creature that is not beautiful but good; eager to integrate but intended for isolation; skilled in learning but without a common territory on which to measure his knowledge; open to others but rejected by everyone. All this is communicated through the words of the creature himself, who in the book becomes the author of his own history. In the theatrical text, on the other hand, the poetic aspect of self-narration, so central to the construction of the fictional character, has no verbal pretext because here the creature embodies the Mute: one of the central figures in the tradition of melodrama, which in this adaptation is strongly renewed. In *Presumption*<sup>10</sup>, in fact, the Mute is no longer the embodiment of a well-defined moral position, he is not the virtuous victim, but rather becomes the interpreter of an

ambiguous dualism, aimed at absorbing even the physiognomy of the other typical figure of the genre, the villain. Elena Raub explains how the body of the actor Cook is the territory in which to look for traces of that dualism, which in the performative act could be communicated to the public every evening in a different way, and in a way which was always a little more nuanced<sup>11</sup> (Fig. 2).

So Mary's amused enthusiasm in front of an artistic operation which "vivified the Monster in such a manner as caused the ladies to faint away & a hubbub to ensue –however they diminished the horrors in the sequel, & it is having a run"<sup>12</sup>, should not surprise us.



Fig. 2. Thomas Potter Cooke in the character of the monster in Frankenstein, 1823, lithograph. Source: New York Library, <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/>

In fact, the scene offered the opportunity to concretely experience the physical reactions of the spectators provoked by the sight of the creature at the end of the first act when Victor Frankenstein announced the success of his scientific experiment and outlined its appearance: dull yellow, cadaverous skin, hard breathing, watery eyes, lustrous black flowing hair and black lips<sup>13</sup>.

Immediately after this first vision, translated into words by the actor James William Wallack (ca. 1794-1864) in the role of Victor, Cooke came on the scene:

*Music. The Demon discovered at door entrance in smoke, which evaporates – the red flame continues visible. The Demon advances forward, breaks through the balustrade or railing of gallery immediately facing the door of laboratory, jumps on the table beneath, and from thence leaps on the stage, stands in attitude before Frankenstein, who had started up in terror; they gaze for a moment at each other (Act I, sc. III).*

It must be said that the success of this tableau is due to the particular technical conditions of the Royal Opera House, a theatre which was very avant-garde in the use of stage machinery and has been equipped with gas lighting since 1817.

The costume designed for Cooke also had great importance; in addition to long black hair, it included light blue or grey cotton pressed on the skin like a transparent pantyhose. In this way the face, hands and bare legs of the actor are uniformed with the same cadaverous colour<sup>14</sup>. Finally, the music written by Mr. Watson, one of the members of the Royal Academy of Music and a member of the same theatre, stimulated the transition between a vision of the material scene and that of a hidden and invisible scene. In fact, beyond the external appearance with which the tableau of the monster's animation was skillfully packaged, the real key to its success is to be found in the actors' ability to transmit real emotions, giving the viewer the possibility to access the intimate and profound sphere of those char-



acters. It is worth returning to Mary's testimony to testify how much the actors' recitation, in particular Cooke's mimic language, was a guarantee of an effective vision:

*Wallack looked very well as F [Frankenstein], he is at the beginning full of hope & expectation, at the end of the 1st act the stage represents a room with a staircase leading to F[Frankenstein] workshop - he goes to it and you see his light at a small window, through which a frightened servant peeps, who runs off in terror when F[Frankenstein] exclaims "It lives!" - Presently F[Frankenstein] himself rushes in horror & trepidation from the room and while still expressing his agony & terror (—) throws down the door of the laboratory, leaps the staircase & presents his unearthly & monstrous person on the stage.*

*The story is not well managed-but Cooke played (—)'s part extremely well, his seeking as it were for support, his trying to grasp at the sounds he heard—all indeed he does was well imagined & executed. I was much amused, & it appeared to excite a breathless eagerness in the audience—it was a third piece a scanty pit filled at half price—& all stayed till it was over. They continue to play it even now ...<sup>15</sup>.*

### *Being Frankenstein*

Thomas Potter Cooke was already 37 at the time of his interpretation of the monster in *Presumption*. With a surgeon for a father and a background as a sailor, Cooke entered the world of theatre for "his fine muscular figure and handsome expressive countenance"<sup>16</sup>, which guaranteed him a natural predisposition for melodrama. He had already played different villains' parts and in 1820 he had proven himself with another 'monstrous' body, that of the Polidori vampire in Robert Planché's adaptation. On that occasion William Hazlitt praised the "spirited and imposing"<sup>17</sup> recitation, qualities which were necessary only a few years later for the challenging role that required him to stay constantly on the boundary between the horrible and the sublime, in a series of scenes in which this deformed body also manifested itself for its ability to astonish on hearing a harmony of sweet sounds, and on be-



holding female forms, or in saving a human being from drowning. But as Mary acutely noted, to look beyond the visible the events and their story were not important; the important factor was the way in which the actor could make every change a singularly unique moment. Thus, for example, when the monster appeared, its "style of rushing on the stage amidst flame was truly terrific".

Its subsequent change of feelings, with the varied scenes and treatment to which it is exposed, displays, admirable *discrimination* in the performer<sup>18</sup>. The anonymous reviewer who signed the article which appeared in *The Drama; or Theatrical Pocket Magazine*, recognised Cooke's ability to distinguish, the necessary competence for any human being to adapt his psychic activity to physiological and external reality. In the particular case of Cooke, this capacity was then important because the monstrous creature he was interpreting, when he left the laboratory, had to learn to feel with his body. Thus, we read in the novel: "It is with considerable difficulty that I remember the original era of being: all the events of that period appear confused and indistinct. A strange multiplicity of sensations seized me, and I saw, felt, heard, and smelt, at the same time; and it was, indeed, a long time before I learned to distinguish between the operations of my various senses<sup>19</sup>."

Progressively the newly 'born' creature finds himself outside the laboratory, then outside the house, to find himself exposed to the elements of the world (light and air above all) which he comes to know through his senses (feeling and learning). Among all these discoveries is also that of the sounds emitted by birds until, observing unseen the life of a family, he also understands the function of language: "I realised that they could communicate with each other by making sounds. This was really a Godlike science"<sup>20</sup>. From this moment the monster in the novel begins to repeat words already heard and to reflect on their often-mysterious meaning because he lacks a material reference. The word *fire* is obvious to him, unlike the word *good*!

What happened on stage depicted this semiotic reflection because, even if the London public did not hear Cooke pronounce Fire, they watched him as his hand touched the flame, feeling heat and pain. The stage direction explicitly directs the actor to use his sensitive experience as the main communication tool:

*Music. (...) The Demon descends, portrays by action his sensitiveness of light and air, perceives the gipsies's fire, which excites his admiration - thrusts his hand into the flame, withdraws it hastily in pain. Takes out a lighted piece of stick, compares it with another faggot which has not been ignited. Takes the food expressive of surprise and pleasure. A flute is heard, without. The Demon, breathless with delight, eagerly listens. It ceases - he expresses disappointment. Footsteps heard and the Demon retreats behind the rock.*

In the years when Cooke began working on this character, pantomime was a technique which was already very advanced but in England it was mainly linked to a circus context, acrobatic and often codified in the so-called harlequinade. What probably even Cooke himself expected was that with his interpretation he was making a significant step forward in applying that technique. In addition to the “energetic pantomime” with which he trod the scenes, the actor began to be praised for his ability to express himself through his attitude to the point that “we are at no loss to understand his thoughts and his feelings, his hopes, his fears, and his mysterious designs; as soon, probably, as they may be supposed *to enter his mind*”<sup>21</sup>. It was therefore no longer a matter of using extraverbal language just to describe a character, a feeling, a story or a moral (which in the case of the English pantomime were often related to the tradition of Italian comedy and to children’s stories). The silent *Frankenstein* of Thomas Potter Cooke was able to unveil to a large audience the mysterious procedures of a mental process, that of acquiring a language which is necessary to a newborn creature to adapt to the environment that surrounds it.

*Adapting Frankenstein*

In July 1851 at the Ambigu Comique, one of the most famous theatres of the Boulevard du Temple in Paris, a mime of Italian origin reinterpreted the creature born of the encounter between science and literature. Mr. Clerto-Benini was praised by the press for his ability to produce “un grand effet de terreur et une indéfinissable émotion”<sup>22</sup> and for making madmen of people. But the interest in he who was now a real monster was also born thanks to posters with which the whole city was covered that summer to guarantee the spectators the effects of *une pièce à grand spectacle*<sup>23</sup>. We turn our attention precisely to an advertising design of the event (fig.3)<sup>24</sup> which well



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Fig. 3. Advertising design of *Le Monstre et le Magicien* produced in Paris in 1851. Source: gallica.bnf.fr / BnF.

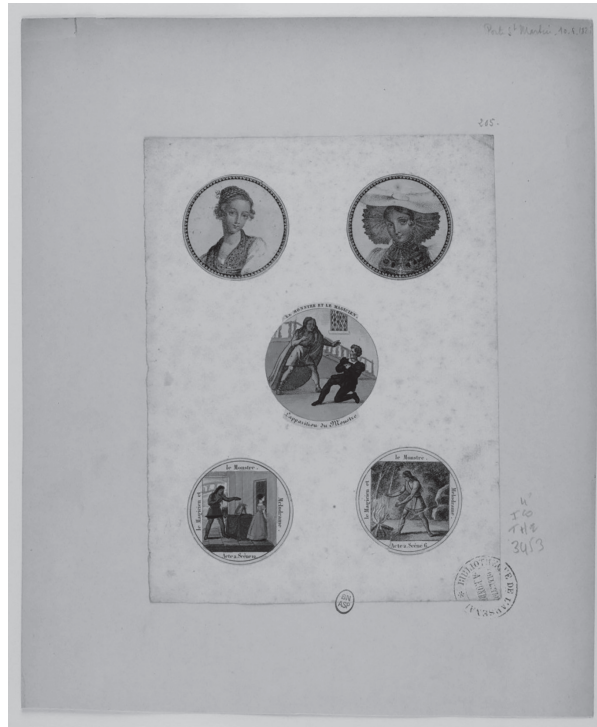
summarises the expectations of going to the theatre to see a *true* monstrous body and a *true* fire. The cartoon tells of perceptions and sensations capable of having some repercussions on the real life of the spectator: a discussion between a husband and a wife, a work obstacle for the poor prompter and a bath at the spa for two bored *flâneurs*. Let us forget this last situation and let us stop to consider the first two in which the monstrous creature under study is visible: the young wife who winks at him is seduced by his difference, while the man who is about to be swallowed by the prompter's hole is ter-



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Fig. 4. Marie Dorval (Cecilia) and Thomas Potter Cooke (le Monstre) in *Le Monstre et le Magicien* gravé par Louis Maleuvre, 1826. Source: gallica.bnf.fr / BnF.

rified. Two opposing and complementary reactions but provoked by the vision of the same body. Which is unquestionably an ugly body<sup>25</sup>. The fact that “l’homme à la mode”<sup>26</sup> of that summer in Paris was depicted in a similar caricature is perhaps the most evident demonstration of how the discourse on beauty and science of Victor Frankenstein had by the second half of the nineteenth century, been deeply absorbed, aesthetic categories in which the ugly is a vehicle of new vital principles. Confirmations in this sense came from scientific and intellectual circles: in 1853 the *Ästhetik des Häßlichen* by Karl Rosenkranz was released and a year later the theorist of social



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Fig. 5. Scenes from *Le Monstre et le Magicien*, Paris, 1826. Source: gallica.bnf.fr / BnF.

Darwinism Herbert Spencer wrote: “transitory aspects of face accompany transitory mental states, and that we consider these aspects ugly or beautiful, no one doubts”<sup>27</sup>.

From this point of view, it becomes significant that all the reviews on the show of the Ambigu-Comique are devoid of useful indications to reconstruct the appearance of the monster. Equally no iconographic support, apart from the aforementioned vignette, allows us to see how the actor appeared in that role. Almost a confirmation of the conclusions reached by Spencer saying that the physiognomy of the faces



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Fig. 6. Thomas Potter Cooke and Mr. Ménier (Zametti) in *Le Monstre et le Magicien* lithograph by L. Feillet, Source: gallica.bnf.fr / BnF.

“are not directly associated with moral characteristics but with intellectual ones”<sup>28</sup>. The fact of not being in front of aesthetic categories due to a common moral sense, made the monster on stage the invisible and spectral<sup>29</sup> content vector fielded by the novel: the question of the soul and the mystery of creation. In this sense it is not so much the spectacular event itself that is significant, but rather the cultural process that in a period of almost twenty years had made it possible for that monstrous body to adapt to a new aesthetic perception.

Indeed, *Le Monstre et le Magicien* staged at the Ambigu Comique in Paris in 1851 is nothing but the result of a practice of the now definitively serial adaptation of the *Frankenstein* of Mary Shelley which began not thanks to the novel, nor to the adaptation of Peake but through the journey of Thomas Potter Cooke who in the summer of 1826, together with the stage technician of the Royal Theatre, was hired by the director of the Théâtre de la Porte Saint Martin in Paris. There the English actor played that dumb role alongside Marie Dorval, one of the most important actresses of the nineteenth century, on the music of Louis Alexandre Piccinni and with the ballets of Jean Coralli.

Peake's text had therefore been rewritten for Cooke but based on the tastes of the French audience and, above all, according to the parameters of the censorship of the time. This explains, for example, the reference to the category of the fantastic and to the genre of the *féerie* evident from the title<sup>30</sup>. The scientist became a magician (Zametti) while his creature, although not yet having a proper name, was by now indisputably *Le Monstre*. The name of the character, which appears in the cast of actors from the first manuscript, however, corresponds to a reduction of all those linguistic elements that describe it. If we take the end of the first act again, at the moment of the apparition of the creature in the magician's laboratory, not only do we not find in Zametti's words useful elements to describe his physical aspect, but they direct us towards a post-human context<sup>31</sup> in which the creature is conceived more as an “object d'horreur”<sup>32</sup> than as a living being. Among other things in the



stage directions it is the animation of an object that anticipates the entry of Cooke: “la porte du laboratoire s’ouvre avec fracas, et comme forcée par le Monstre. Arrache de ses gondes, elle brise la rampe de l’escalier et tombe sur le théâtre”<sup>33</sup>. As for the character the only reference concerning his appearance is the *grand manteau* in which he is wrapped. To find out more about Cooke’s transformation, we need to turn to the pages of *Le Petit Courrier de Dames* of 15 June 1826:

*M. Cooke est un grand homme sec, assez maigre, le corps couvert d’une espèce de peau de soie verdâtre, pour imiter la couleur cadavéreuse d’un habitant des tombeaux; son visage est aussi peint au moyen d’une composition verdâtre, qui donne un air effrayant à sa physionomie. Il se cache dans les replis d’un vaste linceul. Ses yeux rouges, vifs, ses dents blanches et bien rangées qu’il a soin de montrer de temps en temps, animent ce visage sur lequel se peignent tour à tour la fureur, la joie, la douleur, l’espérance*<sup>34</sup>.

The iconographic material relating to the Parisian staging of 1826 (see figures 4, 5 and 6) allows one to notice the details of costume and make-up necessary to transform the appearance of the actor and stimulate the direct perception of the monster by an audience both real and virtual. It seems appropriate to mention Rosenkranz’s consideration in this regard when he explains that it had been “the movement of life” to disfigure all forms and traits of the creature in a spectral way<sup>35</sup>. Naturally, the German philosopher is talking about the novel and the biological adaptation to which the “human-like automaton” is subjected once it has left the confines of the laboratory. But it is clear that in a historical-artistic perspective the discourse of the *Frankenstein* of Mary Shelley becomes fertile when considered as part of that media and cultural process that allowed its production. In *A Theory of Adaptation* Linda Hutcheon clearly explains that the analogy with Charles Darwin’s theory is fertile if we consider adaptation as a process, not as a product:

*Stories too propagate themselves when they catch on; adaptations—as both repetition and variation—are their form of replication. Evolving by*

*cultural selection, 'traveling stories' adapt to local cultures, just as populations of organisms adapt to local environments*<sup>36</sup>

In this sense, and therefore as a 'travelling story', *Frankenstein* is an exemplary case<sup>37</sup>, precisely because its propagation coincided with the need of an entire generation of physicians and poets to go beyond the conventional, through a daring and subjective experimentation in fields of knowledge yet to be codified. The journey of the mute *Frankenstein* of Thomas Potter Cooke finds in fact its most obvious reasons in the context of the popular show of the post-revolutionary period that, if on the one hand it was a machine as precise as a clock, on the other it was structured on the instability of the narrative identities which was typical of adaptations<sup>38</sup>. The process of appropriation of stories, which increased the space and the modality of communication, also explains among other things why "le mélodrame fut au peuple ce que la tragédie avait été aux rois"<sup>39</sup>.

Regarding *Le monstre et le magicien* this becomes explicit if we consider the small mystery of the authorship of the adaptation. Antony Béraud and Jean-Toussaint Merle signed the print edition, two traders<sup>40</sup> able to think of the scene as a set of sound codes, visual and not just verbal. It seems, however, that already at the time everyone knew that the main author was Charles Nodier<sup>41</sup> who, before becoming a leading exponent of French romanticism, was also an entomologist, politician, linguist and assiduous traveller. The choice of anonymity has been explained as a strategy which was useful in order *not to compromise knowledge*, not unusual at the time especially in the case of those who, like Nodier, had begun their activity as a theatrical critic expressing pro-classicist positions. A radical turning point in his theatrical thought took place between 1820 and 1828, a period in which he wrote five theatrical texts entering concretely into the production machine of the boulevard scene<sup>42</sup>. During that experience Nodier developed the belief that the *mélodrame*, after

being one of the main instruments of repression of the people used in the Napoleonic regime, was revealing “la seule tragedie populaire qui convien à notre époque”<sup>43</sup>. The form suitable to express “the conflict that takes place between the world of the norm and one that goes beyond having to do with the ultra-mundane, the dream and the madness”<sup>44</sup>. With this in mind, the journey of the mute *Frankenstein* of Thomas Potter Cooke was the tangible proof of how body language could not only tell a story better than many words but also trigger the imitative-gestural process necessary to found a new language considered superior.

*Le prestige d'une imagination élevée, servie par une expression heureuse, peut produire sur vous quelque impression relative; mais demandez au grand écrivain qui agit alors sur vous, ce qu'il pense de la langue dont il se sert, quand il est obligé de l'approprier à la traduction de sa pensée. Il vous dira que cette langue est un masque, une larve, un cadavre*<sup>45</sup>.

If the value of writing was re-dimensioned, this body language became for Nodier the best medium to enlarge the borders of human knowledge<sup>46</sup>.

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23. Cfr. "L'Argus: revue théâtrale et journal des comédiens: théâtre, littérature, modes, beaux-arts", 07 juillet, 1851, p. 1.
24. The magazine from which it is taken is not indicated in the digital collection of Gallica. In any case, the incorrect cataloguing must be reported since it is not the production of 1861 but that of 1851. As can be seen from the name of the actor reported in the caption of the cartoon (Clerto-Benini, while in 1861 it was the American mime François Ravel who interpreted that role.
25. On the iconography related to the transformations of Frankenstein cf. Frayling C, Frankenstein: The First Two Hundred Years. Real Art Press; 2017.
26. Le nouvelliste, July 1851, p. 18.
27. Spencer H, Personal Beauty (1854) in Ae., Essays: Moral, Political and Aesthetic, Vol. 2, New York, Dr. Appleton and Company, p. 155. Aesthetic Evolution in Man is the title under which in 1881 the writer and naturalist Grant Allen explains in the magazine "Popular Science Monthly" that it is now impossible to separate the aesthetic sphere from the theories on the evolution of Charles Darwin: "we have to trace the progress of the sense of beauty from its first starting-point in the primitive sensibilities of the race or the individual to its highest development in the most refined and advanced of European artists" (Allen, p. 1). On the social and philosophical implications of the concept of ugliness cf. Gigante D, Facing the Ugly: The Case of "Frankenstein". ELH 2000;67(2): Summer.
28. *Ibidem*, p. 156.
29. Cfr. Rosenkranz K, Estetica del Brutto. Palermo: Aesthetica; 1994. p. 18.
30. Beraud A, Merle JT, Le Monstre et le Magicien, Mélodrame-féerie en trois actes à grand spectacle. Paris: Bezou; 1826.
31. Cfr. Ferrando F, Postumanesimo, transumanesimo, antiumanesimo, metautumanesimo e nuovo materialismo. Relazioni e differenze. Lo Sguardo - rivista di filosofia 2017;24.
32. Beraud A, Merle JT, Le Monstre et le Magicien, Mélodrame-féerie en trois actes à grand spectacle. Paris: Bezou; 1826. p. 20 (I act, sc. 15).
33. Ivi, p. 21.
34. In Picat-Guinoiseau G, Nodier et le théâtre. Paris: H Champion; 1990. p. 102.
35. Rosenkranz K, op. cit. note 29. p. 259.
36. Hutcheon L, A Theory of Adaptation. London: Routledge; 2006. p.177.
37. Cfr. Forry SE, Hideous Progenies: Dramatizations of 'Frankenstein' from Mary Shelley to the Present. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press; 1990. Glut DF, The Frankenstein Catalog. Jefferson NC: McFarland & Company; 1984.

38. Also guarantor of that instability of narrative identities of which Hutcheon speaks regarding adaptations.
39. Pyat F, in: Melai M, De l'ordre à la subversion. In: *Le mélodrame*. "TDC" n. 1061, p. 18, (accessed 21-05-2018) [https://www.reseau-canope.fr/tdc/fileadmin/docs/tdc\\_1061\\_melodrame/article.pdf](https://www.reseau-canope.fr/tdc/fileadmin/docs/tdc_1061_melodrame/article.pdf).
40. A military man, A Béraud has dedicated himself to historical essays. Author of several mélodrames. Merle JT, who at the time was the director of the Theatre, made numerous trips to London between 1922 and 1926 where he went mainly to study the stage machines and tricks of a particularly spectacular genre and where he saw Cooke on stage.
41. Cfr. Nodier C, *Le Monstre et le Magicien in Ae.*, Oeuvre Dramatique II, éd. par G Picat-Guinoiseau. Genève: Droz; 1990.
42. Regarding the early activity of Charles Nodier cfr. Picat-Guinoiseau G, Nodier et le théâtre. Cit. n. 34, pp. 5-125. See too: Randi E, Charles Nodier, *Du fantastique au théâtre*. Pasqualicchio N (edited by), *La meraviglia e la paura. Il fantastico nel teatro europeo (1750-1950)*. Roma: Bulzoni; 2013. pp. 79-90.
43. Nodier C, Introduction. In: De Pixérecourt CG, *Théâtre Choisie*. Genève: Slatkine; 1971. p. II.
44. Randi E, cit. n. 42, p. 83. Forry, Steven Earl (1990). *Hideous Progenies: Dramatizations of 'Frankenstein' from Mary Shelley to the Present*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. Donald F Glut, *The Frankenstein Catalog* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 1984). Glut's book is probably the most complete catalog of materials about or related to Frankenstein. His catalog includes nearly 2,666 listed sources of recordings, films, plays, television shows, cartoons, and comics
45. Nodier C, *Notions élémentaires de linguistique ou histoire abrégée de la parole et de l'écriture*, [1834], Jean-François Jeandillou (éd.). Genève-Paris: Droz; 2005. p. 76.
46. Cfr. Nodier C, *De l'utilité morale de l'instruction pour le peuple*. *Revue de Paris*, 1831; t. XXV: 3 avril.

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