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A New Visual Translation of Mary Shelley's novel
Frankenstein; or the Modern Prometheus in the TV series
Penny Dreadful

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TRABAJO FIN DE GRADO

Título

A New Visual Translation of Mary Shelley's novel Frankenstein; or the Modern Prometheus in the TV series Penny Dreadful

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation aims to analyse from a comparative approach the novel *Frankenstein; or the Modern Prometheus* (1818) and the TV series *Penny Dreadful* (2014-2016). The analysis only takes into account the novel and the series. Applying a literature into film methodology based on the principle of translation, I will put forward some of the elements which have been drawn from the novel and those which have been added or interpreted by the creator of the series John Logan. By doing so, it will be highlighted why the series, even though it adds new elements to the original novel, maintains the spirit Mary Shelley wanted to convey.

RESUMEN

Este ensayo tiene como propósito analizar mediante un estudio comparativo la novela *Frankenstein; o el Moderno Prometeo* (1818) y la serie de televisión *Penny Dreadful* (2014-2016). El análisis sólo tiene en cuenta la novela y la serie. Aplicando una metodología usada para analizar adaptaciones literarias a la pantalla basada en la traducción, pondré de relieve algunos de aquellos elementos tomados de la novela y aquellos que han sido añadidos o interpretados por el creador de la serie, John Logan. De esta manera, se recalcará por qué la serie, aun añadiendo elementos nuevos a la novela original, mantiene el espíritu que Mary Shelley quería transmitir.

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“My God is not an almighty Father,
but rather a child with an absurd amount of power.”

-Eto Yoshimura (*Tokyo Ghoul:re*)¹

1. INTRODUCTION

My purpose in this dissertation is to analyse how the story of Frankenstein is translated in the TV series *Penny Dreadful* (2014-2016), created by John Logan and produced by him and Sam Mendes. Even though the TV series blends together Shelley's novel with *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890), *Dracula* (1897) and *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) and a new original story, my focus will be on how the series draws some elements from Shelley's novel and how it changes some others to adapt it to the screen and create thus its own Frankenstein story, based on the representation of human passion and feelings. However, the TV series will be further developed in another point.

When talking about the creation of the myth of Frankenstein, it is important to underline the extent of its influence all over the times, not only in fiction but also on screen, plus its influence in popular culture, comics, anime, visual arts, and many more. The characters of creator and creation, and the questions the novel arises, for instance about God and his abandoned creation or the consequences of a human trying to surpass God's power by giving life to something which was dead, are easily recognised. Most of these come from Shelley's sources, the myth of Prometheus or John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, to name the most notable ones.

There have been many adaptations of Shelley's work to movies, TV series, theatrical plays, and many more. In 2014, *Penny Dreadful* aired for the first time; a new series which would give the audience a different approach to the original story, and which would satisfy the readers pleasantly. Though it will be developed in another point, this TV series is a breath of fresh air as it combines elements and new elements which blend in such a way that it surprises those who watch with a predetermined Creature in mind. While it does not follow the steps of its film adaptations predecessors, *Penny Dreadful* challenges the prototypical or collective image of the Creature originated from James

¹ Ishida, Sui. 2016. *Tokyo Ghoul:re*. Vol. 5, chapter 43, pg.29. Barcelona: Norma Editorial. Print. Translation from Spanish provided by me.

Whale's portrayal of the Creature in *Frankenstein* (1931), in which Boris Karloff starred for the first time Victor's creation.

But, why is this novel still so relevant even today? It is well known that *Frankenstein* deals with many contemporary themes, as scientific development and the responsibility new technologies carry, which, still today, are very relevant. Nevertheless, this is a gothic novel written in the romantic period and, as such, it deals with universal feelings. Not only that, but the emotional struggle and the non-stop search for love are underlined too, especially in the Creature, whose utmost desire is to be loved and accepted.

In a first approach to this TV series, and having read the novel before, the resemblance between Caliban, the Creature in *Penny Dreadful*, and the Creature² in Shelley's novel was the thing that appealed me the most as both of them have similar concerns about their humanity, creation and father. If we are to look at how they express themselves, we can grasp an extremely sad undertone in the words they utter, because they have been rejected by everyone and do not have love in their lives. Inner conflict is a big issue in our world and hearing both of them talking about their desire of being loved and the pain it caused them not being able to feel it was very real. So, the fact that Caliban and the Creature might happen to be dealing with this huge emotional struggle and pressure humanised them for me in such a way that I came up with the conclusion that one of the reasons why it has attracted many people until now was that, in a way, they could sympathise with them and even feel identified with their emotional struggle.

What's more, that is also why I decided not to call any of them Monster or Demon, because, to me, they are just victims of their society. They never had a say in their revival and, as if they meant nothing, they were abandoned right when they were born by the one who should have loved and taken care of them. That is why, in my opinion, it would not be fair to call the creatures any negative names as the blame of their malignance is also to be put in their creators for rejecting them. As I am not giving the doctors any negative

² From now on, I will be calling the Creature in Shelley's work "Creature" and the Creature in *Penny Dreadful* "Caliban" so as to differentiate them. In the same way, I will call the doctor in Shelley's work "Frankenstein" and the doctor in *Penny Dreadful* "Victor".

Though the Creature is not called many times as such in the novel because he is normally referred to with negative names, such as "Demon" or "Monster", in my dissertation I will explain why I have chosen "Creature" to make reference to him. Additionally, I know and understand why many critics argue about what name should be ascribed to him, but the explanation will be purely my interpretation.

names, neither will I do with the creations because, if I did it, I would have to name negatively both the creators and the creations.

My main purpose is to analyse how the story of *Frankenstein* has been translated into the subplot of Victor and Caliban in *Penny Dreadful* while maintaining the spirit of the novel. For that, I will make use of literature into film theory and, in particular, the notion of translation proposed by Linda Costanzo Cahir in her book *Literature into Film: Theory and Practical Approaches* (2006). First, I will analyse the elements which have been traditionally translated: those being the Doctor's laboratory, the assistant, the Creature's speech and appearance, and the Creature's malignance; and then I will examine those who have been radically translated, that is to say, those elements interpreted in the series by the creator: the creation of a second creature, the Bride, and how the important theme of glory and failure is depicted through poetry.

Other academic papers which focus on *Penny Dreadful* are Alison Lee and Frederick D. King's "From Text, to Myth, to Meme: *Penny Dreadful* and adaptation" (2015) and Barbara Braid's "The Frankenstein Meme: *Penny Dreadful* and *The Frankenstein Chronicles*" (2017). Principally, these two essays centre their attention on defining what is *Penny Dreadful* with respect to its original sources, that is to say, they discuss which term should be used when referring to *Penny Dreadful* –i.e. an adaptation, a meme, an appropriation or a contamination–. Other interesting studies are Stephany Green's "Lily Frankenstein: The Gothic New Woman in *Penny Dreadful*" (2017), which examines the women of the series from a rather feminist perspective, especially the character of Lily, who I will be analysing in my dissertation too; and Benjamin Poole's "The Transformed Beast: *Penny Dreadful*, Adaptation, and the Gothic" (2016), which deals with the connection this series has to the Victorian penny dreadful genre and how the series can also be regarded as an adaptation. These papers put forward interesting ideas, some of which I have found very useful for my dissertation.

In relation to the methodology followed, this essay aims to make a comparison between Mary Shelley's original work and the TV series *Penny Dreadful* through the comparative approach, taking into account those elements drawn directly from the novel and those who have been added. The comparison is not made from one novel to another, but from a novel to a TV series. As a consequence, I will make use of a methodology taken from literature into film theory suitable to the objectives to analyse the extent in which the series relates and diverges from its source. The approach I have chosen comes from Linda Costanzo Cahir in her book *Literature into Film: Theory and Practical*

Approaches, in which she puts forward the notion of translation as a way to approach literature into film adaptations.

First, it is important to explain that *Penny Dreadful* is a TV series that not only brings to the public an adaptation of Shelley's work, but also adapts other popular Victorian novels, such as *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890), *Dracula* (1897) and *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) to blend into a new narrative. Here, we need to consider the intertextuality of the series, which blends together these works with an original story and characters to create a new piece in which *Frankenstein* is one of the many subplots that gives life to the series. Intertextuality is the way in which a text or texts are related or connected with one another, in order to create a new work blending its meanings; and this is what we find in *Penny Dreadful*.

In this context, it is important to establish what is *Penny Dreadful* in relation to its sources. There has been some discussion about it. For instance, Alison Lee and Frederick D. King consider it as a contamination, which has a rather negative connotation, in which elements from one text and elements from other blend and mix to create a new work (2015: NP), and as a meme, though they do not give an extended definition of such term. This idea of a meme comes from Linda Hutcheon, who considers adaptations as that because they are retellings of stories which change with each new adaptation, but which can still be recognised (2013: 177). Moreover, in relation to memes, she explains that: "[...] Stories do get retold in different ways in new material and cultural environments; like genes, they adapt to those new environments *by virtue of* mutation – in their 'offspring' or their adaptations [...]" (2013: 32). In this way, we could consider *Penny Dreadful* as a meme because it is a reinterpretation of Shelley's novel in a new environment. Hutcheon also renders the term 'appropriation', considering it as: "[...] taking possession of another's story, and filtering it, in a sense, through one's own sensibility, interest, and talents [...]" (2013: 18), term Barbara Raid corroborates *Penny Dreadful* is (2017: 233). Nevertheless, in my opinion, the term 'appropriation', despite the fact that Hutcheon does not consider it in that way, seems to connote not giving credit to the original author or source, hence, we could not consider this TV series as such because the creator is very clear about his sources.

Even though it is obvious that the creator makes use of elements, plots and characters from many sources, combining all of them together for his own purpose, I do not consider such negative terms to define what the series is. A more neutral term, as adaptation, should be used to refer to it. An adaptation can be regarded as a new version

of the original text with alterations, adjustments, and intertextual changes (Timothy Corrigan, 2007: 30), that is to say, elements which are not present in the source text may appear. Nevertheless, with the help of Costanzo Cahir's ideas, I will later discuss whether or not this is also a suitable term.

Having said all this, in my dissertation I will be focusing on Victor and Caliban's subplot in *Penny Dreadful*. In other words, the centre of attention will fall on the part of the series based on Shelley's novel. For that, I will make use of the literature into film theory, especially the notion of translation, to see how a new story is created. Hence, the subplot could be considered a translation from Shelley's original work and thus my choice is to use this term to refer from now on to the subplot because the centre of attention of the essay is just in this aspect of the series.

From now on, I will be summarising Linda Costanzo Cahir's ideas in her book *Literature into Film: Theory and Practical Approaches* and, in particular, in its first chapter, 'The Nature of Film Translation: Literal, Traditional, and Radical'.

All adaptations are normally perceived as worse than the original work, though this is just a subjective consideration of each person. When someone sees the filmic version of a literary work and is not pleased by what he sees, he fails to acknowledge that the act of reading in itself is already a translation. Each of us has its own translation of the literary work and, as such, it is very difficult that the film conveys all the emotions everyone has felt when reading the novel.

It is important to point out the distinction between 'translation' and 'adaptation'. An adaptation conveys the idea that the same entity is just moved into a new environment, while a translation moves a text from one language into another, that is to say, a new entity, which holds an important connection with its original source, but is independent of it, is created. In this context, it is significant to take into account my consideration of the series as a text.

If we are to consider films based on novels as translations, we also need to acknowledge three principles: the translation also carries the sense of interpretation; whenever a text is translated, while a new independent work arises, at the same time it holds a strong link to the source work; and any film translator of literary works confronts the same difficulties than any other translator.

Many consider that a translation must be faithful to the original work. Nevertheless, this is a very complicated task since it is not possible to render the same beauty and meaning of the text while providing a word-for-word translation. In this way,

the creator of *Penny Dreadful* would owe no faithfulness to Shelley's work, being able to re-shape it the way he wanted and blending it with other works. What the translator needs to do is to make a contrast between what is more important to him: staying true or achieving his goals of creating something new and unique. In this way, there are three ways of translating according to Linda Costanzo Cahir in *Literature into Film: Theory and Practical Approaches* (2006):

- Literal translation: which tries to make a word-for-word translation, maintaining the plot, characters, settings and themes as similar to the source as possible. In this way, the creator of the new text does not add many new scenes and sticks to what the novel says about everything, recreating its words faithfully. (2006: 16, 19)
- Traditional translation: which, while keeping some of the original elements of the source, such as the plot, the setting or the characters, it changes others to fit the new entity. Most films follow this type of translation since they are rather faithful the novel while making some changes so they can fit or be appropriate to the new language. Some changes that fall within this category are: scenes added or deleted, the settings are modified to make them more interesting, and characters can be composites. (2006: 16, 17, 21)
- Radical translation: which changes the source as a way of interpreting it to create a fully new and independent work. This type reshapes the original work to render an interpretation of it. In this way, the author is more free to render his personal vision, while maintaining the original meaning or spirit. Radical translation allows for an unrestricted work full of new possibilities, it has the risk of distancing from the source. (2006: 17, 26, 27)

The purpose of using this methodological approach is to put forward how *Penny Dreadful* has created the subplot of Victor and Caliban having as a source Shelley's *Frankenstein*. Most of the TV series makes use of traditional translation, as it does not distance itself much from the novel, but there are some characters and themes that could be considered as radical translation.

2. FROM PAGE TO SCREEN: A SHORT REVIEW

2.1. The Origin: *Frankenstein; or the Modern Prometheus*

Frankenstein; or the Modern Prometheus (1818) was written by an eighteen-year-old Mary Shelley. Though considered a novel ascribed to the Gothic fiction genre, there is some ambiguity with respect to this issue. David Punter explains that it can be regarded as a different type of gothic as its focus of attention falls on contemporary fears and anxieties of its time –like scientific fear–, instead of the typical feudal environment (2016: 206). If we take into account Mary’s words, what she really wanted to create was a horror story: “I busied myself *to think of a story...* One which would speak to the mysterious fears of our nature, and awaken thrilling horror – one to make the reader dread to look around, to curdle the blood, and quicken the beatings of the heart [...]” (7, 8).³ Additionally, as the novel was written in the romantic period, it tackles some themes taken from romantic poetry, such as human passions and feelings; and, in a further note, the novel has also been regarded as a landmark of science fiction. As a consequence of all this, the categorisation of this novel is not an easy task. What we know is that it was an important novel of its time which still holds relevance even today.

To point out the importance the novel holds in its time, we need to look first at the scientific context of Shelley’s lived in and the fear people had towards scientific progress. There were many advancements and discoveries in this field and Shelley knew about them. Apart from scientific achievements, there were other concerns in this period. For instance, the explorations to the Arctic and the discovery of new lands, which is clearly seen both in Shelley’s work and in *Penny Dreadful*, though the character of Sir Malcom in *Penny Dreadful* is more concerned about exploring Africa rather than the Arctic since he is a product of Victorian times.

Some of the revolutionary scientific developments of the period found their way into her mind and were used as a base for her novel. One of her scientific influences was the chemist Humphry Davis, who lectured on galvanism and the appliances of electricity to explore nature and chemistry. The original idea came from Giovanni Aldini, who proved that by applying electricity into animal’s parts, the physical flexes restored the

³ From now on all quotations from Mary Shelley’s novel will be taken from *Frankenstein; or The Modern Prometheus*, 2003. The number of pages will appear parenthetically in the body of the text. This quotation is pp. 7, 8.

mobility of the said parts. What seems to have raised fear amongst the population was that this experiment demonstrated that, as Andrew Smith Explains: “[...] if the conditions were right then it should be possible to reanimate the dead with a jolt of electricity which would re-activate the body’s dormant animal electricity [...]”. What Shelley took advantage of to write her novel was the fear of humanity usurping: “[...] the authority of God in creating life [...]”, and that is what the novel represented. (Andrew Smith, 2016: 70-73)

Nonetheless, for what is worth, this novel was written during the romantic period and, as such, it holds some of its characteristics. My interpretation of the novel does not have to do so much with scientific or technological progress, but with humans and their feelings; which is what we find in the romantics, poets Shelley was pretty much in contact with –i.e. her husband Percy B. Shelley and William Wordsworth–. Their poetry focus on the expression of powerful feelings and human passions in a world where they were marginalised and rejected, much like the Creature, whose eloquent speeches look drawn directly from a romantic poem. This connection between Shelley’s novel and the romantics is emphasised even more in *Penny Dreadful*, where poems by William Wordsworth and John Clare are used to depict Victor and Caliban’s emotions and they are even used to describe their desire of glory which concludes in failure. The expression of their inner world is pretty much present, as well as their emotional struggle to carry on living with their sins upon their shoulders. As a result, I do not consider this novel a gothic work per se, but as an amalgam of romantic taste on expressing human emotions with the thrill of gothic horror.

But, why do we keep reading this story? What does it have that attracts readers so much? In words of the creator of *Penny Dreadful*: “This show is about how within all of us, we have secrets, we have demons. [...] They speak to something deeply human. I thought I just wanted to do a Frankenstein story because it was such a disturbing work of art. [...] in 1891, the world was changing” and as the historian Matthew Sweet explains: “[...] There was a sense of decadence, a sense that something might be coming to an end” (2014 A), just like now, where we fear upcoming wars and there is no sense of certainty. In *Penny Dreadful*, Logan decontextualises *Frankenstein* bringing it to Victorian times to coincide with *Dracula*, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. But, why is Shelley’s novel brought into Victorian times? The reason for that will be further developed in point 2.3.

Moreover, as pointed in the introduction, the story may still be relevant today because of its extremely sad undertones and the sympathy the Creature awakes in the reader; as well as the many re-interpretations that can arise from this novel making it an unlimited source of entertainment and discussion. Other position about the importance of the novel lies on scientific progress and responsibility. Nowadays, technology and science are advancing at a high pace and, sometimes, we cannot even foresee the consequences of that progress. What the novel teaches us is that we need to be careful when dealing with new scientific discoveries, as Josephine Johnston explains: “[...] the novel chronicles the devastating consequences for an inventor and those he loves of his utter failure to anticipate the harm that can result from raw, unchecked scientific curiosity [...]” (2017: 201). As Frankenstein created a new entity who escaped his control, humanity’s advances in artificial intelligence and robotics could end just like Shelley’s story.

The fact that *Frankenstein* has become a myth is undeniable because it has influenced many other novels, as well as movie adaptations, comic books, TV series, and it is part of our popular imagery, which will be further explored in the following point.

2.2. Adaptations of *Frankenstein; or the Modern Prometheus*

The importance of Mary Shelley’s novel has been highlighted in the previous point, but it is also relevant to put forward its film adaptations because they reflect those anxieties found in the eras they were created (Hoeveler, 1016: 175). Those series have contributed to maintain in the collective imaginary the prevailing myth of Frankenstein to the extent that, nowadays, as Mark Jancovich points out: “[...] it refers to any creation that seems to take on a life of its own, particularly a life that threatens those who have created it [...]” (2016: 190). In relation to this, Jancovich explains that the majority of adaptations are based on previous adaptations rather than on the original text, creating thus a trend (2016: 191).

Any account of the history of adaptations of *Frankenstein* must start with *Presumption; or, the Fate of Frankenstein* (1823), the first adaptation of the novel to the theatre. This theatrical adaptation by Richard Brinsley Peak, strongly influenced the drama and film adaptations that were to come. This play made three major changes later seen in James Whale’s *Frankenstein* (1931) produced by Universal Studios, changes that would root in the stereotypical ideal of the Creature: the creature not delivering any speech, the character of Fritz, and Frankenstein confessing his religious remorse

(Worland, 2007: 159). Nonetheless, the one considered a landmark because it established the popular image of the Creature is Universal's *Frankenstein*. Such is the extent of its influence that the majority following versions: "[...] had to confront it in one way or another [...]" (Worland, 2007: 157). These two versions still contain some elements of the original novel –i.e. major themes: Frankenstein's desire to conquer death, the relationship between God and its creation, and the abandoned creature–; while it added new things –i.e. new iconic settings: the cemetery or the tower of the castle– (Worland, 2007: 160). Moreover, the succeeding adaptations did not take much into account Shelley's original novel and, after *The Bride of Frankenstein* (1935) and *Son of Frankenstein* (1939), the myth was turned into a series where the centre of attention fell on the Creature rather than on Frankenstein. Just like Frankenstein had taken over his author, Shelley, now the Creature took over its creator (Jancovich, 2016: 192, 193). Moreover, with all the changes the reinterpretation of the myth is palpable.

More recent adaptations are Kenneth Branagh's *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* (1994), inspired by *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, which follows Shelley's work to some extent and is quite faithful; and *Victor Frankenstein* (2015), a kind of Sherlock Holmes film in Shelley's universe. (Jancovich, 2016: 201, 202)

It is important to point out that the universe of Frankenstein is vast and it has many layers and interpretations. In a way, as Jancovich points out: "[...] the novel's influence may be so dispersed that it is almost impossible to capture [...]" (2016: 203). When talking about classic-novels adaptations, they normally follow the source text because it has an authoritative status. (Corrigan, 2007: 33). Nevertheless, as we have seen, this is not the case of Shelley's novel. The myth of Frankenstein has expanded itself with novel rewritings and audio-visual adaptations or translations to the point that we no longer can speak of a single original text, we need to take into account the whole universe to understand the importance of it.

Nowadays, the form of TV series has started to take off and there has been a boom, especially with platforms such as Netflix, which provides the viewer with a wide range of shows to see whenever they want just with a click. As a consequence, TV series have won popularity and are highly regarded by the public and critics. Most recent adaptations of *Frankenstein* can be seen in this format, being them *The Frankenstein Chronicles* (2015), with Sean Bean in the lead role, and *Penny Dreadful* (2014-2016).

The place *Penny Dreadful* holds inside Frankenstein's world is that of a new story which decontextualises the original work and characters, bringing them into Victorian times, and blending it with other popular works of that time. Characterised by human passions and the expression of emotions, the spirit of Shelley's work is maintained in the subplot of Frankenstein in the series. But, while the series is faithful to Shelley's novel to the extent of that last idea, it is obvious that the creator decided to make changes to create his own unique story to live on in the world of Frankenstein's interpretations and translations.

2.3 *Penny Dreadful*: a New Translation

Penny Dreadful (2014-2016) is a TV series created by John Logan and produced by him, Sam Mendes and Pippa Harris. The series went along for three seasons in which the main character, Vanessa Ives, struggles with faith and the fear of being haunted by an old prophecy, which links her with Dracula and the old Egypt gods. The show, as already pointed out, talks about all those demons inside of us which feed from our anxieties, emotional conflicts and about human relationships in a supernatural world where there seems to be little hope for victory, though they always try to carry on. Moreover, this original gothic story blends together with *Frankenstein*; *the Modern Prometheus*, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, *Dracula* and *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, creating a fine and aesthetic story line. The original storylines of the novels are translated as subplots which interact with Logan's original idea. Nevertheless, the series, as John Logan explains in an interview with Michael Ausiello, had to end the moment Miss Ives came into terms with her faith, and so she did at the end of season three (Ausiello, 2016).

Now, *Penny Dreadful* is a TV series that follows the idea that you do not have to read the original novel to enjoy the story, as the executive producer of the series, Pippa Harris explains: "[...] if you knew nothing of Victorian literature and nothing of any of these books, you could come to the series and take a hugely enjoyable, exhilarating, and dark journey" (2014 A), even though John Logan started from the "original sacred texts" (2014 B).

But, what does *Frankenstein* do in Victorian times? Obviously, there is a descontextualisation of the story for a purpose. Barbara Braid explains that the Creature is not a being from nature, but a being of the city as he was created by a man in a

laboratory (Braid, 2017: 236). Victorian times held the Industrial Revolution, hence, technological progress and modernity were at their highest peak, even more than in Shelley's times. Therefore, it seems reasonable that the Creature, having been created in a laboratory, fits in that technological environment as well. Moreover, Caliban himself utters the following: "We are men of iron and mechanisation now. We are steam and turbines" and "I am modernity personified" (S01E03)⁴, continuing with the idea of revolutionary technological changes. The Creature, being the son of scientific progress, is not out of place in Victorian times. Lee and King explain the reason why, in their view, Shelley's novel cohabits so well with the other novels used as a source in the series. According to them, they all tackle the issue of scientific progress in one way or another:

By basing his series in this Victorian milieu, Logan transforms literature into a cultural myth of modernity. [...] The Victorians are an extension of modernity's mythos because they represent [...], the age of industrialization [...]. These [...] novels with their emphasis on science, on the art of urban living, [...], and on modern technologies provide ideas that *Penny Dreadful* successfully adapts. (2015: NP)

The series, in a way, is like Shelley's novel itself: within a carcass of scientific progress lies an ocean of human passions and fears that conquers the whole story. And that is also why *Frankenstein's* plot fits so well in *Penny Dreadful*, because technological or mechanical progress is mixed with human conflicts, fears and passions.

⁴ This means season 01, episode 03. From now on, I will be quoting *Penny Dreadful* as (S=seasonE=episode).

3. STUDY OF *FRANKENSTEIN; OR THE MODERN PROMETHEUS* IN *PENNY DREADFUL*

Penny Dreadful makes use of *Frankenstein's* plot, themes and characters as ingredients for his own purpose. Nevertheless, Shelley's work, as already seen, is not out of place. Even more, there are some moments in which Victor and Caliban's struggles eclipse the main storyline. In this section, I will explain which elements are traditionally translated, that is to say, those which appear similarly in both the novel and the series; and those elements from which Logan departs, that is to say, those that have been radically translated and seem more like interpretations.

3.1 Traditional Translation

In the following pages, I will analyse some elements that have been traditionally translated into *Penny Dreadful*. These being: Frankenstein's workplace, where the Creature's is brought to life; the lack of assistance in his task; and the Creature, his speech, his appearance and his inner soul.

3.1.1 Workplace

To start, it is important to go where it all begun, to the Doctor's workplace. In *Frankenstein*, the doctor studies and works steadily, confined in a room at his home without confessing to anyone what his research and experiment is about as he acknowledges the fact that what he is doing may be perceived by others as horrific: "[...] One secret which I alone possessed was the hope to which I had dedicated myself; [...] Who shall conceive the horrors of my secret toil [...]" (55). Moreover, to conceal even more his undertaking, he makes use of a small laboratory in his student chambers: "[...] In a solitary chamber, or rather a cell, at the top of the house, and separated from all the other apartments by a gallery and a staircase, I kept my workshop of filthy creation [...]" (55).

In *Penny Dreadful*, John Logan knew that Frankenstein's laboratory had been portrayed in different ways before –for instance, at the top of a castle as in *Frankenstein* (1931)–, ways which do not conform to the description found in the novel. As Logan

himself explains, they faced a challenge here, so they decided to make his workplace based on an old warehouse. Victor is interpreted as someone repudiated by his wealthy family, who struggles to make a living. This vision results in a messy, industrial laboratory, where machines seem old and rusty (2014 C).



Figure 1. Victor's workshop (S03E01)

In Shelley's novel, nothing is said about the equipment and it seems there are not many tools in Frankenstein's workplace. At the time he began the experiment, he was a student and, as he picked up pieces for his Creature, he picked up pieces for his laboratory. Additionally, it follows the idea of confinement and secrecy that Frankenstein had in the novel, as the laboratory in the series is in Victor's house. It looks as if Victor did not want to be discovered, so he kept it humble not to attract indiscreet eyes.

Other interpretation of Frankenstein's workshop, as the one appearing in *Frankenstein* (1931), depicts it as a laboratory at the top of a castle, something huge and with a bigger gothic-like air, but not actually faithful to the novel. In contrast, Logan goes back to the original novel and portrays it as a little hidden workshop at his home.

3.1.2 Assistant

As commented in the previous point, Frankenstein works alone, with no one assisting him in any way. Everything his experiment requires, no helping hand appears,

he does it all by himself; from recollecting the necessary pieces for the Creature to carrying the burden and exhaustion of the impulses that bring him to carry on. Even when he is picking up new parts for the demanded mate, he follows the same steps of his first creation: total confidence and solitude, though he knows the Creature follows him, probably to check if he is keeping the promise and as a reminder that he is no longer in control of the situation as the Creature can kill another person anytime: “[...] I determined to [...] finish my work in solitude. I did not doubt that the monster followed me, and would discover himself to me when I should have finished, that he might receive his companion” (168).

The very same path is followed in the series. Victor requires no assistants neither for the creation of Caliban nor of Proteus⁵. Nevertheless, this changes in the process of creating the mate. In season one, after asking Victor for a mate, Caliban follows his creator around to remind him of his task:

CALIBAN: “Do what you have promised me.”

VICTOR: “I’m trying. It’s not an easy thing [...].” (S01E03)

Moreover, when Victor finally finds a body and is about to reanimate her, Caliban wants to take part in the process and helps him, as in S02E01, when we can see creator and creation working hand in hand to bring into live what later would cause both much trouble. In that chapter, they enter the workshop and turn the machines on in a very smooth scene where they seem to be highly coordinated.



Figure 2. Victor and Caliban working together to reanimate Lily (S02E01)

⁵ Proteus is the second creature Victor’s reanimates in *Penny Dreadful*. This creature and his relationship with Victor will be further developed in another point later in my dissertation.

The idea of both of them working together is a very interesting one because, as Caliban has been following him and pressuring him all over the process of recollecting the body, it is reasonable to see him in the reanimation procedure. What it could be interpreted from this is that Caliban wanted to control the revival of the mate in order to make sure that Victor would not fool him and destroy the body as his counterpart did in the original text.

In other adaptations, Frankenstein leaves aside the secrecy and allows himself an assistant. Two examples of this are *Frankenstein* (1931), in which the doctor works with Fritz, and *Son of Frankenstein* (1939), in which we are presented to Igor, a character who also appears in many other films as an assistant or a butler.

3.1.3 The Creature's Appearance

[...] His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath; his hair was of a lustrous black, and flowing; his teeth of a pearly whiteness; but these luxuriances only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes, that seemed almost of the same colour as the dun-white sockets in which they were set, his shrivelled complexion and straight black lips. (58)

This is the very first description of the Creature, the first look at him Frankenstein has after his reanimation in the original text. Even though he chose the most beautiful parts to make his master piece, the result is far from what the creator desired. What he founded, instead of an Adonis, was an ugly and scared creature who he abandoned with: “[...] breathless horror and disgust [...]” (58) in his heart. The typical image ascribed to the Creature people have in their imaginary is very different from Shelley's original description. The greenish being appeared first in *Presumption; or, the Fate of Frankenstein* (1823) and was perpetuated by the popular Boris Karloff's representation, making the audience keep a distorted idea of what the Creature should look like.

The translation of the Creature's appearance *Penny Dreadful* does resemble faithfully the original idea. Very similar to that horror and fear Frankenstein feels in the Shelley's masterpiece when he first meets his creation alive is what Victor experiences when he reanimates Caliban.

Additionally, it is the very same reaction the spectator may have when Caliban first appears out of nowhere to murder Proteus because he is fooled to believe that the second creature had been the first. In other words, that Proteus was, indeed, the original and that the story was going to be different from the one in the novel.

Again, John Logan confronted a big challenge in creating a physical appearance to the Creature, in a way, he had all those previous and not so faithful physical versions of him. Nevertheless, Logan explains that: “[...] Mary Shelley wrote a very particular description [...] and we don’t shy away from any of that because if we do that it would be a disservice [...]” (2014 D). As commented before, Logan just wanted to be as faithful to the novel as possible.



Figure 3. Caliban’s appearance (S01E04)

3.1.4 The Creature’s Speech

The portrayal of the Creature Mary Shelley brings the reader in her work is that of an intelligent being who learns English by listening to the lessons Felix gives to Safie. Luckily, he finds some books in the forest, those of which are written on that language he has been learning: “[...] they consisted of *Paradise Lost*, a volume of Plutarch’s *Lives*, and the *Sorrows of Werter* [...]” (130). The readings of these books produced in him: “[...] an infinity of new images and feelings, that sometimes raised me to ecstasy, but more frequently sunk me into the lowest dejection [...]” (130). What could be interpreted is that they struck such a cord in him that they affected the vision he had of his own life, they changed his perspective and gave him the explanation he sought to the abandonment

of his creator and the loneliness that filled his days. From that moment onwards, in a way, he even started questioning his existence and the purpose of his creation:

As I read, however, I applied much personality to my own feelings and condition. I found myself similar, yet at the same time strangely unlike to the beings concerning whom I read, [...]. What did this mean? Who was I? What was I? Whence did I come? What was my destination? These questions continually recurred, but I was unable to solve them. (131)

If we look at *Penny Dreadful*, the early days of Caliban after his reanimation appear in S01E03 and there it is revealed that he learned English by looking out of a window, as he says: “That upstairs window became my salvation and my tutor” (S01E03). Here we have a parallelism with the novel since the Creature learns by observing the cottagers through a hole in the hut he is hiding. Nonetheless, in contrast with the novel, Caliban does not learn to read English by reading *Paradise Lost*, but by reading poetry, Wordsworth and the Romantics in particular as they were the ones Victor liked the most. The speech Caliban uses, as the Creature’s, is rather poetic and elegant; very expressive, grandiloquent and even dramatic: “I would seek you even unto the maelstrom of the blackest tempest of the darkest night” (S01E03).

As *Paradise Lost*, a volume of Plutarch’s *Lives* and the *Sorrows of Werter* affected the Creature’s vision of life, poetry affected Caliban in the same way, something which is illustrated by showing him recite some poetic verses in the series –for instance, verses from poems by William Wordsworth or John Clare–. In a further reading of this poetic like, it could be said that Caliban finds in verses and rhythms what he does not find in real life: sympathy and a deep explanation of his feelings. The importance of Wordsworth’s verses in *Penny Dreadful* will be addressed later in my essay, but now, it is more important the figure of the poet John Clare, name Caliban uses throughout the whole second season and the third because he finds himself similar to the poet.

Caliban expresses his predilection towards this poet because he was also considered freakish and because in his poetry Clare: “[...] felt a singular affinity with the outcast and the unloved. The ugly animals. The broken things” (S02E05), something with which Caliban feels identified with. To illustrate this vision, Caliban recites Clare’s poem *I Am!*, poem that could even represent the relationship creator and creation hold:

I am - Yet what I am none cares or knows;
My friends forsake me like a memory lost:
I am the self-consumer of my woes –
[...]
And yet I am, and live –
[...]
I long for scenes where man hath never trod
A place where woman never smiled or wept
There to abide with my Creator, God,
And sleep as I in childhood sweetly slept,
Untroubling and untroubled where I lie
[...]. (John Clare, 1898: 1-3, 6, 12-16)⁶

3.1.5 The Creature's Malignance

Shelley's work follows the idea that no one is born evil, it is the circumstances in which we are raised that makes someone evil. In their first encounter, the Creature tells Victor: "[...] I was benevolent and good; misery made me a fiend. Make me happy and I shall again be virtuous" (103), which reveals that the Creature knows about his evolutions and is aware of his dreadful actions.

As new-borns, humans bear no malignance in their hearts and, as a child, the Creature was a kind being who sought nothing but being loved by someone. The moment he starts telling his story to Frankenstein, this is clearly seen. The earliest part of the tale shows the Creature as a lonely and innocent being doing his best to survive. Nevertheless, this changes once he faces humans for the first time:

[...] The vegetables in the gardens, the milk and cheese that I saw placed at the windows of some of the cottages, allured my appetite. One of best of these I entered; but I had hardly placed my foot within the door before the children shrieked, and one of the women fainted. The whole village was roused; some fled, some attacked me, [...]" (108-109).

He had already faced rejection by his father, but in this passage the rejection is transformed into violence as he is attacked. With this, the Creature learns that he needs to be cautious so, whenever he sees other humans, he hides. Later, when talking with the old man in the cottage, the Creature has acknowledged the fact that people reject him

⁶ Quoted in Frowde (204)

because of prejudice: “[...] but fortunately, they are prejudice against me. I have good dispositions, [...] they behold only a detestable monster. [...] they believe I wish to injure them, and it is that prejudice which I wish to overcome” (136) and his only goal is for people to see beyond his face and to stop linking his ugliness with malignance. But life is not as we want it to be and the Creature is not able to fulfil his desire. The rejection faced from the cottagers stuck a chord inside of him and he then swears to take revenge on humanity and on Frankenstein, as he is responsible of his creation and thus his sins: “[...] Unfeeling, heartless creator! You had endowed me with perceptions and passions and then cast me abroad an object for the scorn and horror of mankind. But for you only had I any clam for pity and redress, and from you I determined to seek that justice [...]” (141).

Nonetheless, in the end the Creature recognises and admits that his malignance is not anyone’s fault but his, especially in the passage in Shelley’s novel where, with an air of sadness, finally comes to understand that he deserves neither company nor sympathy, for his malignance is so big that even Lucifer’s cannot be compared to his:

‘Oh, it is not thus—not thus,’ interrupted the being. ‘Yet such must be the impression conveyed to you by what appears to be the purport of my actions. Yet I seek not a fellow feeling in my misery. No sympathy may I ever find. When I first sought it, it was the love of virtue, the feelings of happiness and affection with which my whole being overflowed, that I wished to be participated. But now that virtue has become to me a shadow, and that happiness and affection are turned into bitter and loathing despair, in what should I seek for sympathy? I am content to suffer alone while my sufferings shall endure; when I die, I am well satisfied that abhorrence and opprobrium should load my memory. Once my fancy was soothed with dreams of virtue, of fame, and of enjoyment. Once I falsely hoped to meet with beings who, pardoning my outward form, would love me for the excellent qualities which I was capable of unfolding. I was nourished with high thoughts of honour and devotion. But now crime has degraded me beneath the meanest animal. No guilt, no mischief, no malignity, no misery, can be found comparable to mine. When I run over the frightful catalogue of my sins, I cannot believe that I am the same creature whose thoughts were once filled with sublime and transcendent visions of the beauty and the majesty of goodness. But it is even so; the fallen angel becomes a malignant devil. Yet even that enemy of God and man had friends and associates in his desolation; I am alone. (223)

In *Penny Dreadful*, something similar happens, though not much of his early life is known. In their first encounter, Caliban tells Victor how he perceived his creator’s rejection: “The first human action that I experienced was rejection, so no wonder at my

loathing of your species” (S01E03), which shows he is not exactly like the Creature, who did not reject humanity just for one action, it took some time for the hatred to grow. Another thing which changes from Shelley’s work is that Caliban finds later, when he starts working in the theatre Grand Guignol, kindness amongst humans. Here Vincent, the owner, has no prejudice and accepts him as he looks:

VINCENT: Your visage creates challenges?

CALIBAN: It is a horror.

VINCENT: Not everywhere. There is a place where the malformed find grace, where the hideous can be beautiful, where strangeness is not shunned but celebrated. This place is the theater. (S01E03)

There he finds generosity in Maud, one of the actresses, who also does not care about the way he looks: “You don’t have to hide your face from me” (S01E08) and kisses his forehead as an act of benevolence and friendship. His stay with the Grand Guignol is very important as he discovers that some humans leave aside the prejudice and have good nature. Moreover, it means that, even though his creator does not accept him, others will. Nevertheless, he mistakes kindness for romantic love and ruins everything when he tries to take further his relationship with Maud. After Maud rejects him, her boyfriend asks Vincent to expel him and Caliban is, again, alone. (S01E08)

By then, Caliban has already murdered, as in the novel, precious people to Victor, but, as he has nowhere to go, he goes back to his creator. Caliban already knows he has malignance inside of him, that his sins are no other but his fault, and that his innocence is long gone. I find a close relation between the Creature’s speech in the quotation cited above and the following one by Caliban in PD:

What dreams I had of my mate. Of another being, looking into these eyes, upon this face, and recoiling not. But how could that happen? For the monster is not in my face, but in my soul. I once thought that if I was like other men, I would be happy and loved. The malignance has grown, you see, from the outside in. And this shattered visage merely reflects the abomination that is my heart. Oh, my creator, why... Why did you not make me of steel and stone? Why did you allow me to feel? I would rather be the corpse I was than the man I am. Go ahead, pull the trigger. It would be a blessing. (S01E08)

In both speeches, the one above and the one in page 223 already quoted, the very same idea is conveyed. The Creatures most arduous desire was to be accepted by others,

that is to say, to be loved by who they were, both physically and mentally. Nevertheless, they admit and confess that their crimes are irredeemable, resulting in rejection of their own self. In a way, both know that they no longer deserve neither to love nor to be loved, the fact that they yearned for such a thing was nothing but a mistake, in other words, that they are able to feel and have feelings is just an error committed by his God. In a way, they believe they weren't made for love. The declaration of their sins are the proof that they have evolved in a negative way, in a way they never wanted but which they cannot believe as they were innocent creatures full of pure dreams. We can see how their soul has been overcome by darkness, they are not rejected for his ugliness but for their evil nature and, as a consequence, no sympathy will they ever find, that is their punishment for all their sins.

3.2 Radical Translation

We have just seen those elements from the novel that the creators of *Penny Dreadful* translated more faithfully. It is time now to see those elements that are radically translated. There are especially interesting since they imply a further interpretation of the novel, giving answers to some questions raised in the novel but not answered, as we will see. These elements are the ones which hold a higher degree of originality and creativity, because they had to give voice and identity to Proteus, the second creature Victor reanimates, and to Lily, the bride.

3.2.1 Proteus

Proteus is the second creature Victor reanimates in *Penny Dreadful* and the first of his creatures we are introduced to in the series. A second creature does not appear at all in Shelly's original work so, what we find here, is radical translation because the source text is altered with the purpose of showing Victor as a capable and loving father to his creature, able to learn from his mistakes. As it is known, Frankenstein never dares to create another creature. This is the case of the female mate requested by the Creature, who is eventually not given life since she is destroyed by her creator before the reanimation: "[...] I thought with a sensation of madness on my promise of creating another like him, and trembling with passion, tore to pieces the thing on which I was engaged" (171). Proteus appears in the earliest part of season one and, as he is introduced,

the audience was meant to be deceived and to believe that he was Victor's first creature. Nevertheless, this radically changes early in the series when Caliban appears out of the blue murdering Proteus. After murdering the second creature, Caliban recovers his place in Victor's life as his prodigal son when he utters: "Your first born has returned, Father" (S01E02), reminding his creator never to forget his sins because, no matter what, they always come back.

The relationship Victor and Proteus hold is radically different from the former one he has with Caliban. One of the most important reasons for that is that Victor does not abandon Proteus as he did with Caliban. The moment of Proteus's creation that takes place in the very first episode of the series, the viewer gets to see Victor connecting the machines but, as it happens in the Shelley's novel, it is very anticlimactic. There is a mild explosion, the lights go off and the next thing we see is that the creature is not where he is supposed to be. As Victor's face shows, there is panic inside of him but, instead of running away like he did the first time, he now stays and looks for his son. Proteus comes out, looking harmless and confused. Victor is mesmerised by him and lets Proteus' curiosity run, as the creator lets his creature touch his face. This time the doctor wants to do things right and is concerned about Proteus. In this first encounter, it is important to point out that Proteus smiles at Victor, implying that he is kind and good, and Victor cries and smiles back, overwhelmed by the moment. Finally, he has achieved some glory.

Victor is later shown taking notes of his new-born's evolution while he teaches him basic human activities and behaviour, like how to eat, which Proteus learns fast, as everything (S01E02). Here Victor thinks of giving him the name Adam, the first of mankind, which reinforces the idea that Proteus was his first creature instead of the second; though it could also have been a hint that Proteus/Adam was the second, good and a success, while Caliban/Lucifer was the first, evil and a failure.⁷ Nevertheless, he turns down the option and offers the creature the possibility of choosing his own name. For that, Victor picks up Shakespeare's *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. He shows his creature the way of choosing the name haphazardly by passing the pages quickly, stopping and pointing a name, and that is what the second creature does. While passing the pages, the creature stops him and, in a random page, he points down to the name of Proteus, which is also the first word this creature utters.

⁷ Biblical references could be seen here as Lucifer was the angel God favoured the most, but he ended up banished as a fallen angel, that is to say, the first born was a failure; whereas Adam was God's masterpiece as he was created in His image and likeness.

An interesting interpretation of the choosing of Proteus's name can be found in Barbara Braid's essay (2017). She provides the idea that Victor rejects the name "Adam" for being theological and, Proteus, representing a new race, needs a different background from that of humans. Rather than a Christian background, he chooses as a base for the new race one of Shakespeare's plays, that is to say: "[...] a text of literature replaces a text of religion" [...]" (Braid, 2017: 235). It could be interpreted that what Victor wants is to raise a new mankind based on modernity and not on old texts, as Shakespeare is obviously far more modern than the Bible. In a way, this new race may have overcome the need most humans have of religion and have thus achieved a new logic or reasoning suitable to the modernity of Victorian times.

Proteus is characterised as a child, who is attached and devoted to his father, wanting to follow him around everywhere to learn new things. Curiosity runs his veins and wants to fulfil it by going into the outside world. Moreover, he also looks innocent and naïve, too pure for this world, who even cries as a little dog when his human friend leaves his side.

On one of the lessons, Victor shows him a picture of a whale and a ship, which he recognises. Additionally, surprise arises in Victor as his child is able to recite some words linked to the world of sailors, suggesting that in his previous life he could have been a sailor himself. Here, Proteus cries, as if he was missing some important part of him. When they go outside for the first time, this is confirmed. Memories start flowing into his mind and many words come again. In this outside scene, the prevailing feeling is that of hope and happiness. But, as he was probably made up from different corpses, he is made of many people, and each part had a previous life. An interesting question to arise would be: whose memories are coming back into Proteus mind? From which part which forms his body are those memories coming? It has a difficult answer and it would be interesting to further develop the idea in a subsequent essay.

Victor seems to be amending the sin he committed by abandoning Caliban by giving all the love he can to Proteus. Once Victor tells Proteus: "As you grow up, you'll learn we all do things which cause us shame. Sins we have committed" (S01E02), and appears disturbed. Seeing his creator like that, Proteus is highly concerned and pours a glass of water over him. The meaning this little action could hold would be that his child is forgiving him, he accepts that his father has done wrong in the world, but understands he is trying to make things better for them.

Disastrously, this life full of optimism is shattered to pieces the very same moment Caliban enters the scene to murder Proteus and, with him, all the dreams father and second child had of being happy. Victor will find neither comprehension nor forgiveness from Caliban, only pain. The prodigal son returns, along with the original sin which will hunt the creator all his life.



Figure 4. Victor gently caressing Proteus's face as a loving father (S01E02)

3.2.2 Lily

The Bride is an important issue to take into account when analysing both the novel and the TV series. In the original text, the Creature requests his creator a companion as a guarantee that he will leave him alone for good and, at first, Frankenstein accepts his demand. Nevertheless, as he is creating this female creature, the task seems to him: “[...] more horrible and irksome [...]” (169) every day he carries on the work. Moreover, one day, as he is sitting in the laboratory, a horrific thought comes into his mind: how will this creature behave? How will she react to the world and to The Creature? What if she rejects both? But what Frankenstein fears the most is the possibility that they might turn against all humankind as a new superior race, wiping humans from Earth: “[...] the daemon thirsted would be children, and a race of devils would be propagated upon the earth, who might make the very existence of the species of man a condition precarious and full of terror [...]” (170, 171). After that, for the safety of all humankind and its future

as a race, he promises never to bring another creature into life and does not conclude his creation.

In *Penny Dreadful*, this is tackled differently as the creation of the female creature would answer the question: what could have happened if Frankenstein had continued his work and had reanimated her? The answer to this question also appears in other films, such as *The Bride of Frankenstein* (1935) and *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* (1994).

To start with, it is interesting to note that it is Victor the one who gives her a name. As seen in the previous point, this was not the case with Proteus because Victor let the second creature choose his own name. The name Lily, as he explains, comes from the flower and its meaning is resurrection and rebirth (S02E02). Like Adam named Eve, Victor names Lily as if the story repeated itself. In a further reading, the fact that he names her could be interpreted as a sign that he wants her to belong to him as her name belongs to him; as well as an act of authority and a display of power over her.

Another important thing to take into account, nonetheless, is that both Proteus and Lily have a name from the very beginning, despite the fact of Victor giving that name or not; whereas Caliban was never given a name from his father. A name gives identity and humanity and Caliban, being the nameless first, was barely treated by his father as a human because Victor abandoned him as if he was an animal. So, in this way, it is not coincidence that Proteus and Lily have names, since Victor acknowledged them as humans and never considered them animals, while Caliban was never acknowledged as a fellow human by him, he seemed to be considered just a creature, an amalgam of parts.

Her life continues and, instead of feeling love towards his alike, towards Caliban, she feels fear. Nonetheless, feelings of affection flow towards Victor, someone she believes is her cousin. Here we can draw a comparison between Shelley's novel, Kenneth Brannagh's *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* and *Penny Dreadful*. In both Shelley's work and Brannagh's film, Frankenstein has a cousin he loves and marries to. In these two works, this cousin, named Elizabeth, is killed by the Creature in their wedding night. What changes is that, in Brannagh's film, Frankenstein is overwhelmed by pain and reanimates his cousin. Logan may have drawn the element of Frankenstein loving his cousin from the two works and the element of the bride being reanimated from the film, mixing the elements and creating his own interpretation.

What characterises Lily is kindness, purity, and servitude to her creator. The mercy of her life relies on him, making her a passive being, as Billie Piper, the actress playing her role explains: "She heavily relies on her maker to provide some kind of

identity” (2015 A). In addition, it is interesting to put forward the idea that Victor seeks in her a lover since he tries to fit her into the stereotype he has of the opposite gender: “Within it, it comes his ideals and archetypes of a woman” (2015 B) and, as Lily tells him: “You are making me into an angel, or maybe the cousin you always wanted” (S02E02); even he dresses her as he wants, in the fashion of the epoch.

Luckily, this does not keep on much further as she starts to show signs of disobedience, especially when Victor makes her wear the new clothes. The fashion of that times includes wearing high heels, something Victor likes to see Lily with, and a corset, something she cannot bear wearing. In order to regain her voice and identity, she challenges the corset, which could symbolise the prototype Victor is trying her to fit in:

LILY: I can't breathe.

VICTOR: That's the corset.

LILY: Yes, I know what it is, cousin. I'm wearing it. [...] The shoes are awfully high.

VICTOR: Yes, I picked them for that.

LILY: Why?

VICTOR: I like that in a woman.

[...]

LILY: Do all woman wear corsets?

VICTOR: Most [...]

[...]

LILY: It seems I don't have a word, cruel. The bone's digging into my skin.

[...]

LILY: The only way to prevent that [women taking over the world] is by keeping women corseted in theory and in practice.

VICTOR: They're meant to flatter the figure.

LILY: To the man's eye, anyway. All we do is for men, isn't it? Keep their house, raise their children, flatter them with our pain. (S02E04)

Here she is showing some rebellion by speaking up for herself and what she wants, apart from speaking for all women who are tired of being men's desirable objects. While she gets rid of the corset, she still keeps the high heels because he likes them.



Figure 5. Lily wearing the clothes Victor has chosen for her, unable to barely breath because of the corset (S02E04)

Her life continues and in S02E07, she wants to go alone to places, she wants to fly free and a life of her own without her cousin. Then, as Victor looks as if he is trying to control her, she wants new friends and finally she is able to go out with Dorian Gray, character based on Oscar Wilde's. This relationship is very important as he, in a way, opens her eyes:

LILY: I don't go out much

DORIAN: Your choice or his?

LILY: My cousin is protective.

DORIAN: I don't think you need much protection. You are, I believe, more capable than you perhaps appear.

LILY: I'm useless, really. [...] (S02E07)

She does not believe that she is capable of much more than to be a servant to men, though she shows some ideas against it. In this moment, the realisation that she does not have to fulfil men's desire comes into her mind, as well as the fact that she is not propriety of anyone. It could be interpreted that here she starts remembering her past self, she remembers that she was a prostitute used to be used by men; and she wants to rebel against that. To assert her new domination over men, she looks for a man in a bar to have sex with. At the beginning of the intercourse, she appears at the bottom like a submissive woman. However, her power and control starts once she appears at the top, regaining rule over herself and her life. No man will ever make her feel inferior or submissive, and she

won't be propriety of anyone. From that moment onwards, she appears differently, more resolute to fight back and to speak for herself. Most of her fight, unsurprisingly, goes against men, who she hates for the treatment she and the majority of woman have received from them.

In S02E08, Victor and Caliban are engaged in a heated conversation in which Caliban shouts: "You made her for me. She is mine. She is not yours. She is not his. She is mine. I will take her [...]" (S02E08). What he does not know is that a new Lily is going to come back, and he won't like her at all since she is of no other being but hers. In the same chapter, Caliban confronts Lily when Victor is not in the house. In the scene, Caliban wants to assert dominance over her by appearing angry and huge in comparison to her. Nonetheless, she won't let him force her in anyway and he confronts her new empowered identity:

[...] You pathetic creature. How can you imagine that I could care for you? Does that face belong alongside this? Doesn't the world smile on us? Don't we make a beautiful couple, thee and me? Shall we wander the pastures and recite your fucking poetry to the fucking cows? You are blind like all other men. [...] (S02E08)

In this quote her new assertion of dominance can be clearly seen.

In that very same scene, Lily enunciates enraged and bitter a wholesome feminist speech:

[...] We flatter our men with our pain. We bow before them. We make ourselves dolls for their amusement. We lose our dignity in corsets and high shoes and gossip and the slavery of marriage! And our reward for this service? The back of the hand the face turned to the pillow the bloody, aching cunt as you force us onto your beds to take your fat, heaving bodies! You drag us into the alleys, my lad and cram yourselves into our mouths for two bob when you're not beating us senseless! When we're not bloody from the eyes, and the mouth, and the ass and the cunt! Never again will I kneel to any man. Now they shall keel to me. [...] (S02E08)

With her words, she aims at opening both Caliban and the viewer's eyes, she wants to make us think about women's position in society and the way men assert dominance over them. First of all, the idea that, as women are seen merely as desirable objects for men, they have to do everything in hand to appear young and beautiful because, if not, they are not even taken into consideration. For men, if you are not desirable, then you are nothing.

Then, the image of women as men's slaves is put forward, as they force women into being submissive and obedient by the traditional marriage, where a woman has to take care of the husband and behave passively. This relates to the idea that, whatever women have to do, is to please men and their absurd desires. And what do women receive in return? Nothing but violence, vexation and rape, as men believe it is a woman's duty to provide everything a man requires. Men take advantage of their position of power in order to assert dominance against women, who they believe are the weak gender. Now, what Lily wants to achieve is an inversion of roles where men's actions are not left without punishment. In a way, the main goal she has is for women to take control over their bodies and lives.

Another interesting thing about this scene is Lily's consequent words to Caliban:

"[...] How clever he has been, our Creator. But our little God has brought forth not angels but demons. Thee and me, and what should be do with this power, undead thing? [...] Why do we exist? Why have we been chosen? Tell me. [...] When Victor comes home we'll put out hands around his throat together and watch him die. [...] We were created to rule, my love, and the blood of mankind will water our Garden. Us and our kin our children, [...] We are the conquerors. [...] (S02E08)

In which Frankenstein's original fear in Shelley's novel of creating a second creature that will help perpetuate this new species is brought back to life. Nevertheless, Caliban never follows her or her plan and gives up on her. In season three, Lily tries to organise a group of prostitutes in order to achieve her goal to punish men; but Dorian thwarts her plans and she leaves him at the end of the season, and the viewer does not know what becomes of her.



Figure 6. Lily after her transformation, more determined and empowered (S02E08)

Barbara Braid's paper (2017) underlines *Penny Dreadful* and its feminist politics, especially in the construction of Lily. She explains that the creation of a female creature is rather problematic as Lily is only reanimated to be a desirable object for Caliban. Much like in other adaptations of Shelley's work, the bride appears just as a mate for the male creature. In *The Bride of Frankenstein*, the bride rejects the creature, as Lily in *Penny Dreadful*, and in Brannagh's film, the bride is revived for the doctor, not for the creature. This highlights Braid's idea of the bride as a mere object for men's pleasure. In those two films, the bride kills herself. It seems that she is only reanimated for a man to have a mate, without taking into account her feelings or desires and, if she does not fulfil her task as a romantic partner, she is just killed off. In *Penny Dreadful*, she refuses to be with Caliban or Victor and chooses her own path. Even though she does not end up as a romantic mate, she is not killed. In a way, she is given a purpose, an identity and a whole story. (2017: 236)

3.2.3 The End: Poetry, Glory and Failure

As *Penny Dreadful*, Shelley's novel is highly intertextual since there are many references to other texts in *Frankenstein*. Shelley took as an inspiration many sources, amongst them we have John Milton's *Paradise Lost* or Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, works which also appear cited in Shelley's work. Moreover, she made use of contemporary poetry by her husband, Percy B. Shelley, S. T. Coleridge, Lord Byron and William Wordsworth. (Lisa Vargo, 2016: 33-37)

The poems chosen by Shelley in her novel are very meaningful in the context of her story, much like the poems Logan uses in *Penny Dreadful*. For instance, we have the already quoted *I am!* by John Clare, which represents Caliban's character and how he feels. But, from my point of view, the most important poem used in the series is William Wordsworth's *Ode on Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood*, something I will explain in this point of my essay.

Radical translation is used in *Penny Dreadful* to depict the sense of failed glory at the end of the novel. In Shelley's work, Frankenstein dies and the Creature is resolute to commit suicide. Thus, both of them have failed in achieving their goals. In the series, while neither of them dies, poetry conveys the idea that they did not succeed as death is not conceived as the ultimate consequence of failure.

In order to represent that failed glory, we have parts of William Wordsworth's *Ode on Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood* recited by Caliban at the very end of the series using a voice over. Even though there are other poems recited in the series, from my point of view, this poem could be considered the most important, one as it sums up Victor and Caliban's desire to achieve glory or their dreams, that is to say, their story. In this context, it is important to point out what "glory" means to each of them. For Victor, glory means conquering death; whereas for Caliban it is achieving a state in which he is acknowledged and loved by Victor, or by somebody else. These meanings of "glory", which could also be their dreams, the characters have in the series could be ascribed to their counterparts in the novel as well. Frankenstein states that he wants to conquer death by eradicating diseases: "[...] Wealth was an inferior object, but what glory would attend the discovery if I could banish disease from the human frame and render man invulnerable to any but violent death! [...]" (42) and the Creature long for love is seen when he asks the doctor for a mate: "[...] But now I indulge in dreams of bliss that cannot be realised. What I ask you is reasonable and moderate; I demand a creature of another sex, [...]. Oh! my creator, make me happy; [...]. Let me see that I excite the sympathy of some existing thing; [...]" (148).

In the third episode of the series, the very first scene shows a young Victor walking through a daffodil field –golden daffodils as in Wordsworth's poem *I wandered lonely as a cloud*– while he recites the first lines of *Ode on Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood*:

There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream
The earth, and every common sight,
To me did seem,
Apparell'd in celestial light,
The glory and the freshness of a dream.
It is not now as it hath been of yore; –
Turn wheresoe'er I may,
By night or day,
The things which I have seen I now can see no more. (William Wordsworth, 1865:
1-9)

Seconds later, he finds his dog dead and his mother tries to console him. Both have a seemingly interesting conversation about death in which Caroline tells him: “Is it an ending though, Victor? Or merely a movement? A gesture towards something else. [...] There are some things we're not meant to know; or know too soon, anyway” (S01E03). Then, his mother falls ill and dies shortly after, leaving Victor totally alone. For what it looks like, this death triggers something inside of Victor, it triggers his obsession with death and science as right after he starts studying a human anatomy book.

This can also be seen in the novel in some way because Frankenstein's want to eradicate diseases, to conquer death, may appear after his mother's death. This desire could be interpreted as a way to save everyone from what he could not save his mother from:

She died calmly; and her countenance expressed affection even in death. I need not describe the feelings of those whose dearest ties are rent by that most irreparable evil; the void that presents itself to the soul; and the despair that is exhibited on the countenance. (45)

Here we can see that Frankenstein calls the disease “irreparable evil”, which hold negative connotations. Nevertheless, that “irreparable evil”, which stands for death, will be challenged by him by creating a being. Moreover, by reanimating someone, he would have achieved his dream, to save someone from disease, though the Creature's evil was not something he expected.

It is highly significant the fact that Victor's origins appear right after Caliban's return and his killing of Proteus at the end of the previous episode. In an early stage of his life, from his mother's death to the very moment in which he creates Caliban, jumping to the moment of the creation and murdering of Proteus, Victor had inside all the hopes

and the desire for glory. With Caliban's return, part of his hopes are shattered and his life begins, in a way, to decline as he is forced to make a companion to his child. The line: "The glory and the freshness of a dream" is used to represent this early stage because he was young and 'fresh'. Additionally, the path to achieve what he yearned for was yet to be walked through, it was still a dream full of optimism. For Caliban, this stage of hope would be his journey to find love in every corner because he never gave up his search until the end.

At the very end of the series, the beginning of the poem is recited again, but this time it is recited by Caliban, with another part added:

–But there's a tree, of many, one,
A single field which I have look'd upon,
Both of them speak of something that is gone:
The pansy of my feet doth the same take repeat:
Wither is fled the visionary gleam?
Where is it now, the glory and the dream? (William Wordsworth, 1865: 51-57)

The two last verses not only finish the series but also Victor and Caliban's journey. Both of them have failed to achieve the glory they desired. The first was not able to conquer death as he wanted. The two creatures that survived were beyond his limits as he could control neither of them and he just gave up his dream. The second could never find love amongst his father, and neither could he find it in his previous life –with his wife and child– nor with Lily, the other creature made for him. Moreover, there is a reason why Caliban also recites the same passage young Victor did, and it is as a way to show that, in their present, nothing is going to be as it was in the past, when all was promising; now they have to endure the suffering and the consequences of his acts and they won't be able to see things as they used to when there was hope.

The lyrical voice in the poem asks where has all the glory and the dream gone, which could be interpreted as a way to ask what has happened to their stages of hope: the past full of goals and ambitions that have now turned into failure and regret. It is the same despairing end as found in Shelley's work, where also neither of them achieve what they desired. What the poem represents is their journey from a period full of optimism to a period of defeat. In a way, if we put together the two parts, it summarises their life and story closely.

As I see it, the poem not only has an aesthetic goal, but it also holds some meaning in the context of the series which could be extended to the novel. An important word in the analysis of this point and in the poem is “dream”. The first quoted part of the poem represents that moment in their lives when they wanted to achieve glory, when those dreams were plausible. When they were young, when Frankenstein/Victor were students and when the Creature/Caliban were beginning their path in this world, their dream was fresh, they had hope.

Nevertheless, when their world turns upside down, when they see those dreams are impossible to fulfil, this changes. In words of Frankenstein himself after he reanimates the Creature: “[...] I had desired it with an ardour that far exceeded moderation; but now I had finished, the beauty of a dream vanished [...]" (58). Here enters the second quoted part of the poem and the two last verses: “Wither is fled the visionary gleam? / Where is it now, the glory and the dream?”, when we can see how their dreams are long vanished and they do not know where hope hides anymore. The glory they wanted to reach when achieving their dreams cannot be reached and so their story ends.

4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, there are many things taken from the original novel maintained in *Penny Dreadful*. One crucial element drawn from the novel is the question of the innocence of a new-born creature who is abandoned to its own fate in a world he knows nothing about, which is related to the consequences this abandonment has. Both the Creature and Caliban grew up alone, without the love and teachings of a caring father. In their adulthood, they rebel towards their creator, yearning for something they never had. As my interpretation of the novel had to do with human feelings and passions, I believe the series depicts this theme extremely well as Logan put forward Caliban's feelings and inner struggles. Logan characterised him as a human and not as a nameless animal without speech, like in other adaptations. For this, the Creature's counterpart in *Penny Dreadful* is faithful to Shelley's original idea.

Overall, in the series we have reproduced the main elements of the original novel. The challenge of this *Penny Dreadful*, as emphasised by Logan, was to overcome other adaptations which were deeply rooted into the collective imaginary and which failed to represent, generally, faithfully the novel. In this matter, he stuck to the text regarding Frankenstein's workplace as being a secluded and secret place, the lack of an assistant in the process of the creation since others would not understand it, the physical appearance of the Creature and the way he eloquently speaks, and the evolution he has from an innocent being to an evil spirit.

In contrast, there are other elements in which the series is different from the novel. *Penny Dreadful* departs from the novel in some questions only to give answers. For instance, the what could have happened if Frankenstein had taken care of his first born is tackled through the character of Proteus, a second creature which does not appear at all in the novel. In his little appearance and relationship with his father, we can see how this creature is kind, curious and intelligent, as well as happy without any malignance. With love and patience, any child would feel wanted and, if Frankenstein/Victor had not run away and had taken responsibility of their actions, the Creature/Caliban would have probably been like Proteus since what they needed was just calming words and not rejection. The series gives Victor the space to atone for his original sin, to compensate for having abandoned his first child by being a caring father for the second, showing that he is capable of loving.

Moreover, it also answers to the “what could have happened if the female mate had been reanimated”. Barbara Braids analyses other adaptations, like *The Bride of Frankenstein* and *Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein*, in the matter of the bride, explaining the fact that she is just there to be a desirable object to the main men in the Frankenstein universe and, if she does not fulfil this task, she is murdered (2017: 236). *Penny Dreadful* brings the feminist reading into its plot and gives the bride a voice and a purpose away from being a whore. I have stopped myself the most in this particular point because she appears as a complex character. She evolves from an innocent and ideal girl at the mercy or oppression of men into a very capable and independent woman. It is a different perspective of the bride which treats her with the respect she deserves.

Another element from which the series departs from the novel is in the depiction of the theme of glory and failure, interpreted in a poetic way using Wordsworth work. In the novel, both seek glory in different ways and both fail to achieve such desire. Moreover, their ultimate failure is represented by death, whereas in *Penny Dreadful* they are still alive when it finishes. The poem *Ode on Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood* catches the spirit of their stories in an honourable and faithful manner, which gives the series an unforgettable final touch.

Though *Penny Dreadful* makes use of elements taken directly from Shelley’s novel, what makes the series special are the added pieces which enrich the characters and go deeper into their evolution and complexity, awakening and showing the viewer new layers of interpretation.

The analysis of the translation of *Frankenstein* into *Penny Dreadful* does not finish here. Because of the limitations of time and space, I have left out many elements worth analysing in future papers. Some of these aspects are the analysis of the intertextual relationships of the series with other visual texts, such as previous film adaptations of the novel or the series *The Frankenstein’s Chronicles*; the connection of *Penny Dreadful* not only with Shelley’s novel but with what has been named the Myth of Frankenstein, in other words, the place of the series in the evolution of the myth; and how the characters and the plot drawn from *Frankenstein* interact with the two other major texts of Victorian Gothic novel that are also part of the series, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *Dracula*.

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